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Joint  
Advanced  
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Program

INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE ANALYSES

## **The Battle for Fallujah** *Al Fajr—the Myth-buster*

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Major Robert Castro, US Marine Corps

with Ms. Dianne Fuller

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## Preface

This paper was prepared under two task orders: Fallujah Battle Reconstruction (JFCOM-JCOA), and The Battle for Fallujah—Success in the Urban Battlefield, for the Director, Joint Center for Operational Analysis (JCOA), Joint Forces Command (JFCOM). It addresses the task order objective of contracts DASW01-04-C-0003 and W74V8H-05-C-0042.

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In particular we would like to thank the Multi National Force-Iraq, the Multi National Corps-Iraq, the 5th Special Forces Group, and the Multi National Force-West commands and staffs and all the military and civilians, Coalition and Iraqi that provided resources and took time out of their busy schedules to support the project.

The Joint Advanced Warfighting Program (JAWP) was established at the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) to serve as a catalyst for stimulating innovation and breakthrough change. It is cosponsored by the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics; the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and the Commander, JFCOM. JAWP includes military personnel on joint assignments from each Service and civilian specialists from IDA. JAWP is located in Alexandria, Virginia, and includes an office in Norfolk, Virginia, to facilitate coordination with JFCOM.

This paper does not necessarily reflect the views of IDA or of IDA's sponsors. Our intent is to stimulate ideas, discussion, and, ultimately, the discovery and innovation that must fuel successful transformation.



## **Dedication**

The Advisory Support Team (AST) members (currently known as transition teams) are the face of the US commitment to the Iraqis. As the Iraqis stand up and the Coalition stands down, these courageous teams will be the lasting presence of the Coalition. They are a critical enabler and an integral link to US national objectives and strategy.

The IDA study team had the opportunity to work through these teams in its search for the various Iraqi individuals and units associated with the study. During the battlesite survey in Iraq, there was nothing but praise from the Iraqis for the AST members. Names like Zacchea, De Oliveira, Cornell, Miller, Symons, Curwen, and many others will become part of the Coalition's legacy to Iraq and synonymous with American ideals of courage, commitment, and freedom.



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# Executive Summary

Iraq endured a number of changes during 2004. The year can be characterized as chaotic, transitional and, condition-setting:

1. Chaotic and reactionary as major force rotations occurred during January through March and as the Coalition contended with critical combat actions in the Sunni Triangle as well as in the Shi'a community from April through May.
2. Transitional as the Coalition<sup>1</sup> and Iraqi Government underwent major reorganization and leadership changes during the summer.
3. Condition-setting and proactive from October through December as the Coalition and Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) set the conditions for a elections in January 2005.

Additionally, 2004 began and ended with Fallujah in the headlines.

The study of the battle for Fallujah, sponsored by the Joint Forces Command, Joint Center for Operational Analysis, explored the operational and strategic lessons from Operation AL FAJR (also known as Fallujah II), emphasizing:

- Coalition forces' operational-level planning and execution.
- Teaching Iraqis to plan and execute a major military operation.
- Coaching Iraqis on the use of information operations (IO) to beat the enemy's information-operations campaign.
- Building Iraqi self-confidence and external respect to help the transition to sovereignty.<sup>2</sup>

The study approach traced the development of the competencies of teaching, coaching, and building (TCB) from Operation VIGILANT RESOLVE through Operation AN NAJAF and finally to Operation AL FAJR. The approach also highlighted the political, security, and IO aspects of 2004 as they relate to those operations, for project analysis. In particular, the project

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<sup>1</sup> The Coalition does not include the Iraqis.

<sup>2</sup> Task Order objectives, CB-8-2516, May 2005. Additionally, Task Order AJ-8-2465, November 2005, emphasized the role played by Multi-National Force-Iraq in enabling host nation leadership and forces to play important roles in the battle, particularly in carrying out information operations.

highlighted the evolving lessons and the application of those three competencies from the strategic to the tactical levels. As an example, at the operational and strategic levels the Multi-National Forces–Iraq (MNF-I) and US Embassy partnered with the newly formed IIG to set the conditions for AL FAJR and, subsequently, the elections. That philosophy of teaching, coaching and building was institutionalized with the development and assignment of Advisory Support Teams (ASTs) to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). It was also reflected at the tactical level as Regimental Combat Team 1 (RCT-1) supported, trained, and mentored the ISF and assigned them important, relevant missions within their capabilities.

A number of themes emerged from the study:

- The importance of relationships and team-building,
- Political-military dynamics and how each supports the other,
- The difficulty and importance of information operations (IO).

According to GEN George Casey, he and Ambassador John Negroponte committed early-on to the idea that, “The military and civil side had to work together...and this one team, one mission had to include the Iraqi Government. We set out to help make...this Interim Iraqi Government successful.”<sup>3</sup> He also emphasized the importance of the political-military dynamics in setting the conditions for AL FAJR.

AL FAJR provided a turning point in Iraqi progress. During AL FAJR, the Coalition-led partnership wrested the initiative from the insurgents, rapidly triggered and negotiated a series of events to which the insurgents couldn’t respond or sustain a response, and maintained the initiative, subsequently allowing the Iraqis to assume the lead as the partnership executed the January 2005 elections.<sup>4</sup>

GEN Casey best captured the importance of AL FAJR to the overall war:

I don’t believe that the elections would have come off if there was still a safe haven in Fallujah. I’m absolutely convinced of that. It was part of the overall psychological impact on the Iraqis to say, maybe we *can* do this. It was one of the things that caused them to step up and vote and make a choice, and on the 30th, they did.<sup>5</sup>

Although 2004 was a year of change in Iraq, November 2004 through January 2005 defined a turning point in Iraqi progress. Commencing with a crucible event for the Iraqis—AL

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<sup>3</sup> GEN George Casey, interview with the authors, American Embassy, Baghdad, 6 February 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Albeit with a very forward-leaning Coalition.

<sup>5</sup> GEN George Casey interview, 6 February 2006.

FAJR—and culminating with a glimpse of democracy—the elections—it was the first of many turning points the nation would have to negotiate before realizing democracy and independence.

The study included more than 100 interviews, which included GEN George Casey, Commander, MNF-I; the former Iraqi Prime Minister, Dr. Ayad Allawi; members of MNF-I, Multi-National Corps–Iraq, and Multi-National Force–West; Iraqi Security Forces, and Fallujah residents.

As GEN Casey said, Fallujah is an excellent study in political-military interaction. This project shows that those interactions and relationships were as important at the tactical level as they were at the operational and strategic levels.



# 1 Introduction

On 31 March 2004, four US contractors were ambushed in Fallujah. The charred remains of two of the brutally beaten bodies were hung from the ramparts of the old North Bridge near the hospital. During a savage demonstration, locals cheered and one Iraqi held a sign underneath one of the lynched bodies that read: *Fallujah is the cemetery for Americans*.<sup>6</sup> Coalition administrator Paul Bremer said there would be a response:

The acts we have seen were despicable and inexcusable; they violate the tenets of all religions, including Islam, as well as the foundations of civilized society. Their deaths will not go unpunished.<sup>7</sup>

During the next month the Coalition would:

1. Commit, via Operation VIGILANT RESOLVE, the 1st Marine Division (MARDIV) to gain control of the city and demonstrate Coalition resolve;
2. Accede to a cease-fire under national (Iraqi), regional, and international pressures; and
3. Cede control of Fallujah to the Fallujah Brigade.

The Fallujah Brigade—an *ad hoc* organization consisting of Saddam-era Iraqi military leaders, Fallujah residents, *Jundi*,<sup>8</sup> and insurgents—was lauded by the Iraqis as “Fallujans securing Fallujah.”

By July, however, Fallujah was infested with insurgents, and US officials characterized the Fallujah Brigade as a “failed experiment.”<sup>9</sup> The strategic outcome for the Coalition was much worse: for many Iraqis, Fallujah represented the Coalition’s defeat and the insurgents’ victory.<sup>10</sup> The Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) and the Coalition finally regained

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<sup>6</sup> Colin Freeman, “Horror at Fallujah,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 31 April 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Robin Young and Bill Delaney, “Bremer Vows Fallujah Investigation,” *Here and Now*, 1 April 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Arabic word for Iraqi soldiers.

<sup>9</sup> LtGen James Conway quoted, “Failed Strategy in Falluja?” CNN.com, 14 September 2004 <[www.cnn.com/video/world/2004/09/14/mcintyre.falluja.mistake.cnn?iref=videosearch](http://www.cnn.com/video/world/2004/09/14/mcintyre.falluja.mistake.cnn?iref=videosearch)>.

<sup>10</sup> “Many enlisted following a great battle they considered a great victory—the April 2004 fight for Fallujah,” Abu Nour, insurgent and kidnapper of Jill Carroll; Jill Carroll, “The Jill Carroll Story,” *Christian Science Monitor* (18 August 2006) <[www.csmonitor.com/specials/carroll/index.html](http://www.csmonitor.com/specials/carroll/index.html)>.

control of Fallujah during Operation AL FAJR in November/December 2004. Described by GEN Casey, Commander, MNF-I as “an excellent study in political-military interaction,”<sup>11</sup> Operation AL FAJR was one of the significant events that led to successful Iraqi elections in January 2005.

## A. Background

The purpose of this study is to analyze the operational and strategic lessons from the battle for Fallujah, emphasizing:

- Coalition forces’ operational-level planning and execution,
- Teaching Iraqis to plan and execute a major military operation,
- Coaching Iraqis on the use of information operations (IO) to beat the enemy’s information campaign, and
- Building Iraqi self-confidence and external respect to help the transition to sovereignty.<sup>12</sup>

The study approach traced the development of those competencies above, from their genesis in VIGILANT RESOLVE through Operation AN NAJAF to AL FAJR. The approach also highlighted the political, security, and IO aspects of 2004, and in particular the above operations, for project analysis. Throughout this document, the reader may see alternate names for operations. A guide is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1. 2004 Operations Relevant to the Project**

Operation Name	Also Known As	Location	Dates
VIGILANT RESOLVE	Fallujah I	Fallujah	4 Apr–1 May 2004
AN NAJAF	Pacific Guardian (rarely used)	An Najaf	5–27 Aug 2004
BATON ROUGE	Samarra	Samarra	1–4 Oct 2004
AL FAJR	Fallujah II	Fallujah	8 Nov–23 Dec 2004

The reader also needs to be aware of alternate naming conventions for the 4th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 1st Iraqi Intervention Forces (IIF) Division. The 4th Battalion of the 1st IIF Brigade, a key Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) unit for the study, was reflagged the 3rd

<sup>11</sup> GEN George Casey interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Task Order objectives, CB-8-2516, May 2005. Additionally, Task Order AJ-8-2465, November 2005 emphasized the role played by Multi-National Force-Iraq in enabling host nation leadership and forces to play important roles in the battle, particularly in carrying out information operations.

Battalion, 1st IIF Brigade in 2005. For the study period of 2004, the reader will see it written as the 4th Battalion; however, we met with members of the 3rd Battalion, its current name, about Fallujah.

References to the Coalition in this publication do not include the Iraqi Government and references to Coalition forces do not include the ISF. Efforts to describe command relationships between Coalition and Iraqi forces were stymied by an immature ISF command structure. More-often-than-not, those command relationships were assumed, based on ISF capabilities at the time, rather than officially agreed and delegated to the Coalition by the Iraqis. Additionally, attempts to define command relationships spawned new non-doctrinal terms. In addition to using the term Coalition- or Iraqi-led partnership, “hand-con” seemed to be an apt descriptor of the command relationship when Coalition forces worked with the ISF. When asked about command relationships, LtCol Joe L’Etoile, who had spent four tours in Iraq spanning 2003 to 2007 (two of which were as a battalion commander) in Fallujah remarked:

...it depends on the province and the time frame. Prior to Transfer of Sovereignty (TOS) the ISF, such as it was, was clearly OPCON to the Coalition as we were removing commanders, re-task organizing units etc. Now most of this was at a local level as there really was no effective national ISF C2 architecture.

After TOS [30 June 2004], we began losing the ability to remove commanders and reassign/re-task organize units. In the period from post-TOS to “overwatch” we exercised TACON over ISF units. We could tactically employ and determine battlespace, but we were past determining C2 relationships within and between ISF units.

During Al Fajr the command relationship was closest to OPCON less the authority to hire and fire commanders. We did have the authority to break up units, for example penny pack or pull a company here or a company there from Iraqi battalions.

Toward the end of my experience [2007] complicating all of this was the local nature of these arrangements. The difference between having TACON of a non-compliant ISF unit and being “partnered” with a compliant ISF unit was tremendous (the latter being much more effective—an argument for HANDCON). Also, overwatch is not a doctrinal term (in terms of a command relationship) and is usually executed according to the eye of the local beholder.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> LtCol Joe L’Etoile, G-3, 1st MARDIV during 2004 and battalion commander 2/7 Marines in 2005 and 2007 email exchange with Bill Knarr 26 May 2009.

## B. Hypothesis

*Teaching* Iraqis to plan and execute a major military operation, *coaching* the Iraqis on using information operations, and *building* Iraqi self-confidence and external respect enabled the Iraqis to play a key role in the victory during AL FAJR.

The study hypothesis links the study objectives of *teach, coach and build*, as an antecedent to the hypothesized outcome or consequence—victory during AL FAJR. It asserts that *teaching, coaching, and building* enabled the Iraqis to contribute to that victory, and implies that the victory contributed to the US goal of helping create a free and democratic Iraq.<sup>14</sup> It also assumes there were mechanisms<sup>15</sup> in place for the Coalition to teach, coach, and build the Iraqis and the Iraqi security structure, and that one can attribute growth in the Iraqi security posture to those mechanisms.

Those mechanisms could be formal or informal. One example of a formal mechanism was the creation of the Coalition Military Assistance Transition Team (CMATT) to help train the Iraqis. Other formal mechanisms included assigning the ASTs to Iraqi battalions and above. An example of an informal mechanism would be the mentoring and coaching LTG Abdul Qadir, the Iraqi Ground Force Commander during AL FAJR, received from LtGen John Sattler, Commanding General, Multi-National Force–West (MNF-W) and Col Osamah Jammal, G-3, I Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) (Forward). Those mechanisms will be discussed in detail later.

In this sense, *teaching* Iraqis addresses the individual or organization, *coaching* deals with IO, and *building* pertains to a general sense of confidence, either individually or within Iraqi organizations.

## C. Model

There were a number of models we could have used to organize and visualize the data including DIME, PMESII, LOO, and DOTMLPF.<sup>16</sup> We chose a hybrid—political, security, and IO (PSI)—for the following reasons:

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<sup>14</sup> Fact Sheet: the Transition to Iraqi Self Government, the White House Office of the Press Secretary, 24 May 2004. Also addressed in President Bush’s speech to the Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 24 May 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Mechanisms include organizations and processes.

<sup>16</sup> DIME—Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic; PMESII—Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, and Infrastructure; LOO—Lines of Operation; DOTMLPF—Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leader Development and Education, Personnel, Facilities.

- Political—In this type of conflict, political and security aspects are so intertwined that both must be addressed, especially because the project objectives specified operational and strategic lessons. GEN Casey confirmed this later in the study when he noted that Pol-Mil interaction was critical to success.
- Security—Security remains the number one challenge in Iraq and must be met not simply on the national level, but on local and regional levels as well. Although the study does not address the “police” aspects of the ISF, it does recognize that local security “policing” issues are at the heart of Iraq’s stability.
- IO is one of the study tasks,<sup>17</sup> and as many have said, “This is truly an information war.”

Economics is also an extremely important part of the equation, as Coalition forces and the Iraqi Government partnered to reconstruct and reimburse communities after large-scale operations. Due to the project’s scope, economics is not a major focus area, but reconstruction efforts are discussed after IO at the end of the PSI analysis in the relevant chapters.

## D. Methodology

The methodology consisted of looking at teaching, coaching and building within the domains of the model, PSI. The application is provided in chapters 3 and 4 and particularly Chapter 5, The Hypothesis: Teaching, Coaching and Building.

Additionally, TCB/PSI methodology is progressive in addressing TCB contributions to political, security and IO interactions; it is a method for looking at the development of a single issue or combination of issues across another dimension, time. As an example, the TCB competencies and the PSI model provide two of the axes or dimensions to the methodology. An analysis of PSI and TCB intersections using a matrix reflected in Appendix E provided a way of looking at some of the factors important to the study via indicators. Metrics associated with the indicators and applied to the responses allowed the team to assess and compare the development of the Iraqi Government and Iraqi Forces at key events during 2004.

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<sup>17</sup> Referred to in Task Order 2516, as part of “Coaching the Iraqis on the use of IO,” and in Task Order 246523 as, “analyze the role played by Multi-National Force-Iraq in enabling host nation leadership and forces to play important roles in the battle, particularly in carrying out information operations...”

## E. Collection Plan

The collection plan focused on the Task Order project objectives (PO)<sup>18</sup> via Critical Information Requirements/Information Requirements (CIR/IR) in the form of questions-to-be-answered.

### 1. Information Tracking Worksheet

The collection plan included the Information Tracking Worksheet (extract at Figure 1), which linked the CIR and IR to the project objectives and provided the foundation for more detailed research instruments. Those instruments included questionnaires, surveys, and interview lead sheets, as well as a site survey checklist for battle reconstruction purposes. Figure 1 indicates that only 30–65% of the information was available through state-side sources and that interviews with Iraqis, GEN Casey, and access to MNF-I archives were required to credibly support the project. It also identified the critical information sources shown in Figure 2.

Relevant PO	CIR/IR	Source	Updates	% cover - 10 Dec 05	Action - Followup
1,3	1. What are/were the strategic and operational objectives during 2004? In general, how were those objectives reflected in Fallujah I, Najaf, Samarra, and Fallujah II? Did objectives or methods change? If so, how?	National Security & Military Strategies, UNSCR 1511/1546, MNFI Campaign Plan, OPLANs, OPODs, FRAGs, Reports to Congress	July 05- document search and interviews in August - December 2005 of state-side accessible participants	65%	Interviews w/ Dr. Allawi, GEN Casey, Dr Rubai'e, etc. MNF-I archives
1,2,3	2. Are the study objectives of "Teach, Coach, Build" (TCB) congruent with the strategic, operational and tactical objectives, i.e., are/were they explicitly or implicitly incorporated into how the MNFI/MNCI did business? Describe in terms of the Political, Security and Information Operations (PSI) implications.	Plans (Campaign), OPODs from MNFI for tactical. Particular interest in Coalition Military Assistance Transition Teams (CMATT) and Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF)	June - December 2005 interviews of available command and staff for MNF-I, MNC-I, MEF and attached units.	60%	Interviews w/ Dr. Allawi, GEN Casey, Dr Rubai'e, etc. MNF-I archives
1,3,4	7. What was the IG/ISF relationship with the populace they protected? . A. Were the ISF Jundi from the area? B. Were they respected by the residents?	ASTs members, AARs, Iraqi Security Forces, Fallujah residents, storekeepers, children	AARs and interview of available AST members	30%	Interview Iraqis, primarily Fallujans

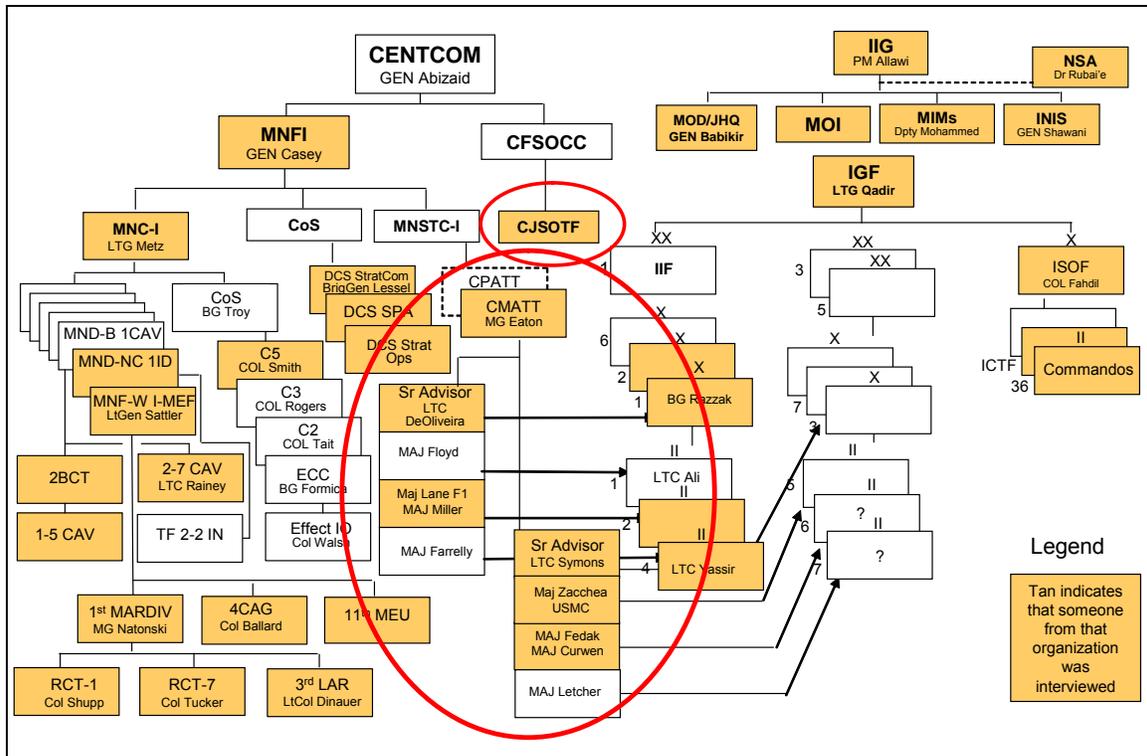
Note: Column 1 reflects the Project Objectives (PO) that the CIR/IR supports. In summary, PO1 is operational and strategic planning and execution, and application of TCB; PO2 is the evolution of TCB during 2004 events; PO3 is vertically looking at the application of TCB from the tactical to the strategic during Al Fair, and PO4 is identifying vignette candidates for reconstruction - those tactical events with operational and strategic implications

Figure 1. Information tracking worksheet excerpt, December 2005

### 2. Critical information sources

People and organizations important to the study consisted of Coalition, Iraqi, and insurgents. The critical information sources are organized in a modified US Central Command (CENTCOM), IIG, and ISF organizational chart reflecting the structure in Iraq during the latter part of 2004.

<sup>18</sup> The project objectives were taken from Task Order for CB 8-2516 and are summarized in the Note in Figure 2. The hypothesis competencies of teaching, coaching, building—or the study objectives—are embedded within project objective 3. Project objective 4, *Identifying vignette candidates for reconstruction*, was added later from discussions with the sponsor on Task Order 246523 objectives.



**Figure 2. Critical information sources**

Those organizations most relevant to the study include MNF-I, the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) of the Combined Joint Special Operations Component Command (CFSOCC), the IIG, and the Iraqi Ground Forces (IGF).<sup>19</sup> Iraqis interviewed also included locals, children, students, businessmen, and Fallujah council members. Although some insurgent perspectives are provided here from open-source material, the majority are provided in a classified appendix to this study, published separately.

### Multi-National Force–Iraq

Figure 2 includes the operational units under the Multi-National Corps–Iraq (MNC-I), MNF-I staff elements, and the Multi-National Security and Transition Command–Iraq (MNSTC-I).

The CMATT and the ASTs, outlined in the large red circle in the figure, are prime examples of TCB mechanisms that contributed to success during AL FAJR. A number of TCB-type mechanisms exist at the MNF-I staff level. As an example, the Deputy Chief of

<sup>19</sup> The tan blocks in the chart indicate that someone from that organization was interviewed. If the block contains a name, normally the commander, that was the person interviewed. If it doesn't contain a name, then someone else within the organization was interviewed.

Staff for Strategy, Plans and Assessments planning process with the IIG involved Iraqi committees at the ministerial, deputy ministerial, and working group levels to facilitate coordinating and vetting actions.<sup>20</sup>

The project team had an opportunity to meet with many of the Coalition unit commanders and their staffs in the United States before deploying to Iraq to meet with the Iraqis and GEN Casey and his staff.

### **Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force**

One of the core competencies of Special Operations Forces (SOF) is Foreign Internal Defense (FID). However, as a low density/high demand capability, there are not enough SOF to train and develop all of the Iraqi forces. So the SOF focused their talents on their Iraqi counterparts. The CJSOTF (smaller red circle in Figure 2), expert in FID, played a critical role in developing the Iraqi SOF.

### **Iraqi Ground Forces of the Iraqi Security Forces**

Points of contact for the ISF were primarily identified during stateside interviews. A majority of the information came from the US ASTs because of their close relationships with the Iraqi forces. The team found many of the Iraqi military leaders who participated in VIGILANT RESOLVE, AL FAJR or AN NAJAF during 2004 were still associated with the same units when the team visited in 2006. Those individuals/organizations the team were most interested in included, in order of priority:

- LTG Abdul Qadir, Iraqi Ground Force Commander in Fallujah, later the Commander of all Iraqi Ground Forces and currently the Minister of Defense;
- Iraqi SOF because they were involved in all four battles of interest: VIGILANT RESOLVE, AN NAJAF, Samarra, and AL FAJR;
- 1st IIF Brigade, because their units were involved in VIGILANT RESOLVE, AN NAJAF, and AL FAJR;
- 3rd Iraqi Armed Forces (IAF) Brigade because they were involved in AN NAJAF, Samarra, and AL FAJR; and
- 2nd IIF Brigade because they were involved in AL FAJR and remained in Fallujah as controlling forces.

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<sup>20</sup> Although some questioned the utility of those committees and groups in late 2004, because it was difficult to determine their contributions, we believe starting that process and developing those organizations to emphasize the planning and coordination may have been beneficial in and of itself.

Hence, there were several locations in Iraq the team needed to visit. Due to time and transportation constraints, the team was unable to visit 3rd IAF Brigade.

All interviews with Iraqi Security Forces required an interpreter except for LTG Nasir al-Abadi, Deputy Chief of Staff, Iraqi Joint Forces and Mr. Mazin Muhammad Rhada, interpreter for the 1st Iraqi IIF Brigade and previously an interpreter for the CPA.

### **Iraqi Interim Government**

Members of the IIG were interviewed because they were critical to the Pol-Sec interaction. We were fortunate to be able to interview Dr. Ayad Allawi (Figure 3), the former Prime Minister; Dr. Mowafak al-Rubai'e, the National Security Advisor; GEN Mohammed Abdullah al-Shawani, the Director of the Iraqi National Intelligence Service; and GEN Babikir Baderkahn Zibari, Chief of Staff of the Iraqi Armed Forces. The only one that required an interpreter was GEN Babikir.



**Figure 3. Interview with former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi**



**Figure 4. Authors talking with Fallujah college students**

## Residents of Fallujah

Although not reflected in Figure 1, the team also had an opportunity to talk with Fallujah businessmen, children, and local college students (Figure 4).<sup>21</sup>

## F. AL FAJR Battle Reconstruction

Appendix F discusses the use of gaming technology to reconstruct events. The Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) is known for reconstructing historical events in simulation for historical analysis, leadership development, and experimentation. Examples include “73 Easting” from the 1st Gulf War, and “Mazar-e Sharif: The First Victory of the 21st Century” from Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.<sup>22</sup> The concept for Fallujah was to take a significant tactical event with strategic implications and reconstruct the event using gaming technologies. The result of that effort is discussed in Appendix F.

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<sup>21</sup> One of the objectives was to determine whether Coalition and Iraqi forces were building “external respect” from the Iraqi population. Hence, we asked children “Do you want to be a *Jundi* when you grow up?” to determine whether children thought it was a respectable or desirable profession.

<sup>22</sup> IDA partnered with the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency for both projects.

## 2 Chaos

*Crowds of howling horsemen lined the road for several miles. Fallujah itself was ablaze with flags, packed with people. Scores of tribal horsemen encircled the [soon-to-be King Faisal's] motorcade, bellowing cheers, wheeling around the cars, kicking up clouds of dust...the Chief of the Dulaim, Ali Suleiman came out to meet them.*

—From *Desert Queen*<sup>23</sup>

Fallujah—a Sunni town of about 259,000 people—lies 40 miles west of Baghdad. A major stop along the smuggling route from Syria and Jordan to the Iraqi capital, Fallujah has challenged authority throughout its history, revolting against the Ottomans during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, against the British Mandate in 1920, and even threatening Saddam Hussein himself. Fallujah has long been known as a renegade city. Untamable.

A number of reports indicate that Fallujah was initially receptive to the Coalition when its forces entered Iraq in March 2003.<sup>24</sup> That quickly changed. On 28 April 2003, responding to hostile small arms fire, Coalition forces fired into a crowd of demonstrators, killing several people. And with that, some contend, the Iraqi insurgency was born.<sup>25</sup>

### A. Setting the Stage for 2004

A multitude of events and issues helped set the stage for 2004. The Iraqis we interviewed talked about a general lack of security, but specifically and almost unanimously mentioned:

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<sup>23</sup> Janet Wallach, *Desert Queen: The Extraordinary Life of Gertrude Bell* (New York: Anchor Books, 2005), 315–16. Gertrude Bell (1868–1926) played a critical role in obtaining support of Arab leaders for the British Empire during and after World War I. In Fallujah, she worked to build consensus for Faisal bin Al Hussein Bin Ali El-Hashemi's coronation as King of Iraq, reflecting the importance of the tribes and Fallujah to that decision. In this July 1921 meeting, they were seeking support from Ali Suleiman, Chief of the Dulaim.

<sup>24</sup> Mr. Saif Rahman, interview with the authors, Baghdad, 5 Feb 2006. At the time of the interview, Mr. Saif was the chief of staff for Dr. Hachem al-Hassani, who was speaker of the Iraq Parliament and a member of the Iraqi Islamic Party. He started working for Dr. Hassani in early 2004.

<sup>25</sup> National Public Radio, "Spread of Iraqi Insurgency Feared in Arab World," *Morning Edition*, 3 April 2006.

- Disbanding of the military, CPA Order #2
- De-Ba'athification, CPA Order #1
- Seeing the United States as occupiers versus liberators
- Insufficient troop levels to protect the borders
- Looting and lawlessness
- Lack of control on weapons and ammunition stockpiles
- Firing on demonstrators in Fallujah by Coalition Forces

Additionally, Iraqi interviewees pointed out that certain Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) policies indicated above—such as de-Ba'athification, the dissolution of the Armed Forces, and the failure to provide security—alienated the people and helped set the conditions for the insurgency.<sup>26</sup> These actions also enabled foreign fighters and criminals to prosper. Interviewee comments on select topic from the above, follow.

## 1. Security and disbanding the army

Allawi indicated that security was his biggest challenge and that he “was disappointed when the military was dismantled.”

Security cast a strong shadow on the entire situation. We had a very difficult situation, both from a political and security point of view. This kept turbulence in the political scene, and the turbulence and inadequacy of the security opened the doors widely to regional intervention and local insurgency prevailing in various places in the country.<sup>27</sup>

## 2. De-Ba'athification

“We have to immediately revisit de-Ba'athification. We need to recognize the top generals and give them an advantage,” Dr. Rubai'e said. De-Ba'athification and dissolving the Army humiliated 12,000 top generals and sent them to the street. Instead:

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<sup>26</sup> Additionally, comments such as “Bring ‘em on,” by President Bush on 3 July 2003 (Sean Loughlin, “Bush Warns Militants Who Attack US Troops in Iraq,” CNN.Com/Inside Politics, CNN Washington Bureau, 3 July 2003), and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld’s characterization of the insurgents as “dead-enders, foreign terrorists and criminal gangs” (Douglas Jehl with David E. Sanger, “Iraqis’ Bitterness Is Called Bigger Threat Than Terror,” *New York Times*, 17 September 2003) underestimated the power, depth, breadth, and momentum of the building insurgency.

<sup>27</sup> Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, interview with the authors, Baghdad, 6 February 2006.

We should have made the de-Ba'athification a judicial process, not a political process. It's a law, it has to be. Who applies the law? Politicians? You don't give it to politicians because then it becomes a political settlement.<sup>28</sup>

### 3. Occupier vs. liberator, open borders, looting, lawlessness

GEN Babikir passionately discussed what he concluded were Coalition mistakes committed immediately following the invasion. These included fostering the perception of the Coalition as an occupier rather than a liberator, security issues like insufficient troop levels to protect the borders, and not stopping the looting and lawlessness that occurred immediately following the end of major combat operations:

When the Americans were here and they saw people were looting everything, they were actually closing their eyes...a lot of ammunition and weapons fell into hands of the wrong people and they would let it go. They thought these weapons and ammunition would go away, but it came back to haunt them.<sup>29</sup>

### 4. Catalyst for the insurgency

If Fallujah had been friendly to the Coalition in the immediate aftermath of the invasion, what changed? Although many factors contributed to the insurgency's development, one of the IDA research leads was to determine which event (or events) was the catalyst for the insurgency. We proposed it was the March 2004 Blackwater incident. Mr. Saif Rahman, chief of staff for Dr. Hachem al-Hassani, disagreed:

The Blackwater incident was not the catalyst. Resentment was already bubbling beneath the surface....The anger among the Fallujans simply manifested itself in their treatment of the men from the Blackwater Personal Security Detachment.<sup>30</sup>

Interviewees repeated that, in fact, the killing of the demonstrators was the principal catalyst for the insurgency in Al Anbar province. Saif agreed.

The Fallujans say that there was one incident in April 2003 that cast a dark shadow on their relationship with the US military. From the Fallujans' perspective, they were having a peaceful demonstration at one of the schools in the city. US Forces fired on the demonstrators and killed several of them. After that incident, things went sour. Al Anbar is a traditional tribal area with tribal

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<sup>28</sup> Dr. Mowafak al-Rubai'e, interview with the authors, Baghdad, 29 January 2006.

<sup>29</sup> GEN Babikir Baderkahn Zibari, interview with the authors, Baghdad, 3 February 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Mr. Saif Rahman, interview with the authors, Baghdad, 5 February 2006. At the time of the interview, Mr. Saif was the chief of staff for Dr. Hachem al-Hassani, who was speaker of the Iraq Parliament and a member of the Iraqi Islamic Party. He started working for Dr. Hassani in early 2004.

law. Because the Fallujans felt that the US military killed one of them, then they were honor-bound to exact revenge.<sup>31</sup>

Some contend that the implications were much greater than violence in Fallujah, that the event breathed life in to the insurgency in Iraq.<sup>32</sup>

## B. January–May 2004

Concurrent to all of this [VIGILANT RESOLVE], you have the problems going on down south [south of Baghdad]...this was the closest the Anti-Iraqi Forces ever came to achieving an operational-level victory, or even achieving strategic effects through military action.<sup>33</sup>

January to May of 2004 was a time of chaos in Iraq. Major force rotations; major flare-ups in the Sunni town of Fallujah and Shi'a communities in and south of Baghdad required extending forces already in Kuwait and poised for redeployment. Conflicting relationships among the major players in Iraq, and revelations of prisoner mistreatment at Abu Ghraib prison fueled the insurgent IO campaign and greatly eroded US credibility in Iraq and the International arena.

### 1. Force rotations, sectarian strife and Coalition support

During January–March 2004, more than 100,000 US service-members rotated in and out of Iraq as part of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM II. This included the deployment of the 1st MEF to relieve the 82nd Airborne Division in Al Anbar province.<sup>34</sup> The 82nd did

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<sup>31</sup> Mr. Saif Rahman interview, 5 February 2006.

<sup>32</sup> LtCol Dave Bellon, S-2, RCT-1 in 2004, was with TF Scorpion in 2003. He remarked that activities in Fallujah were influencing TF Scorpion's area south of Fallujah in 2003. During one of the raids, TF Scorpion captured a number of insurgents. During tactical questioning he over-heard a flurry of comments about Fallujah. "I said to one of the interrogators, 'Ask them about Fallujah.'" And I remember this guy, the look on his face. I'll never forget it. He said, 'Ah, Fallujah, that's where the real men are.'" It just struck me; it's like talking to a guy in Single A baseball and asking him about the big leagues, and him saying 'That's where I am going to go.'" And I remember thinking, 'We are going to fight it out in Fallujah.'" LtCol Dave Bellon, telephone interview with Bill Knarr, 4 November 2005. *Morning Edition*, "Spread of Iraqi Insurgency"; the broadcast attributed the birth of the insurgency to that event based on interviews with Iraqis.

<sup>33</sup> LtCol Joseph L'Etoile, interview with the authors, Fallujah, 16 January 2006.

<sup>34</sup> The MEF's introduction into Al Anbar would end up being the first time a unit remained there for any length of time. From March 2003 until March 2004, unit responsibility for Al Anbar changed five times: 3rd ACR to 82nd to 2BCT/3ID to 3rd ACR to 82nd and finally to I MEF in March 2004.

not have the troop strength to maintain a permanent presence throughout the province or, especially, to control Fallujah and other urban areas.<sup>35</sup>

Sectarian strife was accentuated by the Ashoura massacre on 2 March, which killed 271 and injured 500 Shi'a Muslims. The event was marked by a series of planned terrorist explosions in Karbala and near the Kazimiya Shrine in Baghdad. The terrorist leaders that planned the Karbala attack operated out of Fallujah.<sup>36</sup>

On 11 March, a coordinated series of bombings against Madrid's commuter train system killed 191 and injured 1,755. Although the bombing did not occur in Iraq, it affected Spain's commitment to Iraq. Spain would withdraw its forces by May 2004,<sup>37</sup> quickly followed by Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and the Philippines.

## 2. VIGILANT RESOLVE

On 31 March 2004, four days after the MEF Transfer of Authority (TOA) from the 82nd Airborne division, four US contractors were ambushed in Fallujah. Brutally beaten and burnt, the charred remains of two of the victims were hung from the ramparts of the old North Bridge near the Fallujah Hospital.

During the next month the Coalition would, in succession, 1) Commit, via VIGILANT RESOLVE, the 1st MARDIV to show resolve and avenge the deaths of the contractors;<sup>38</sup> 2) Submit to a cease fire under regional, Iraqi, and international pressures; and 3) Cede control of Fallujah to the Fallujah Brigade. A number of events and actions contributed to that sequence and the ensuing chaos.

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<sup>35</sup> Carter Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29 (June 2006): 423–452.

<sup>36</sup> Malkasian, "Signaling Resolve," 423–452.

<sup>37</sup> This was one of the most obvious instances of terrorist pressure succeeding by changing the political leadership and policies within a country. The Madrid bombing occurred three days before elections in Spain. Al Qaida claimed responsibility for the bombing, citing Spain's sending troops to Iraq and supporting the Coalition. The party opposing the then-current Popular party—the Socialist Party led by Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero—was voted into power and immediately announced the withdrawal of Spanish forces. Jeffrey Young, "Madrid Bombing Anniversary: One Year Later," VOA, Washington, 10 March 2005.

<sup>38</sup> Although 1st MARDIV was given the mission, it only had one Regimental Combat Team to commit to the fight—RCT-1. RCT-7 was responsible for the area out west to the Iraq-Syrian border. 1st MARDIV would move RCT-7 to set up an outer cordon west of Fallujah and pull one of its battalions to support RCT-1. There simply weren't enough forces to take Fallujah, secure the border, and set up a seamless cordon around the city. Moving RCT-7 from the border proved fatal for Coalition sympathizers in that area. The insurgents took advantage of the reduced security and assassinated many of the supporters there. Those that weren't killed were intimidated. Col Craig Tucker, former RCT-7 commander, telephonic interview with Bill Knarr, 19 October 2005.

Conflicts occurred between the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) and the CPA: The IGC felt it was not informed of the decisions affecting Fallujah. For the most part, attempts to use Iraqi forces to help control Fallujah failed, because the 505th and 506th Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) Battalions refused to deploy. Additionally, the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Brigade was ambushed during its road march from Baghdad to Fallujah and refused to continue after the ambush with some *Jundi* switching to the insurgents' side.<sup>39</sup>

One glimmer of hope was the 36th Commandos—organized, trained, and mentored by the 5th US Special Forces Group (SFG). Elements of the 36th showed up for the fight and were committed to supporting the Coalition.

Additionally, Saif Rahman, Hassani's chief of staff and part of the Iraqi Government's team for negotiating with Fallujah representatives, commented that the Sunni community was outraged over perceived Coalition atrocities in Fallujah. Perceptions that were certainly influenced by the insurgents' messages from Fallujah, which dominated the media.

The 4th or 5th of April, the Jazeerah reporter starts talking about the civilian casualties in Fallujah and the humanitarian disaster, which enrages the Sunni populations....We had a meeting with Ambassador Bremer, General Sanchez...British Ambassador David Richmond...and Ambassador Jones. We told them that the situation was critical and the IIP [Iraqi Islamic Party] was considering pulling out of the governing council unless the situation was stopped.<sup>40</sup>

Losing the Iraqi Islamic Party, a major Sunni constituency, threatened to jeopardize the transfer of sovereignty in June. Bremer reconsidered the assault.<sup>41</sup>

The CPA directed a cease-fire, and VIGILANT RESOLVE was terminated. LtGen James Conway, I-MEF Commander at the time, would later comment that the attack and abrupt halt were ordered over his objections: "When you order elements of a Marine Division to attack a city, then you really need to understand what the consequences of that are going to be."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Major Abed Al Jabar, Company Commander, and Convoy Commander for April 2004 convoy into Fallujah, interview with the authors, 20 January 2006, 2nd Battalion Headquarters, Husaybah, Iraq; COL Peter Monsoor, 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division, discussions on 19 April 2006 at IDA.

<sup>40</sup> Mr. Saif Rahman interview, 5 February 2006

<sup>41</sup> Dr. Rubai'e indicated that Ambassador Bremer "could not wait to go home," was on a "countdown to June," and didn't want anything to prevent his departure.

<sup>42</sup> Conway did not agree with the order to assault the city; he felt there may have been more appropriate options given the amount of force it would take to later police and patrol the city. He also disagreed with the order to stop. CNN.com, Outgoing Commander questions U.S. Strategy on Falluja, 14 Sep-

The implemented alternative was the Fallujah Brigade. Some Iraqis lauded the Fallujah Brigade—an ad hoc organization consisting of Saddam’s former Iraqi military leaders, residents, *Jundi*, and insurgents—as “Fallujans securing Fallujah.” But there was considerable controversy. Allawi, then Head of the Security Council, opposed standing up the Fallujah Brigade:

Some groups within the CPA and Multi-National Force advocated establishing a militia in Fallujah made up of the old Army, later called the Fallujah Brigade. I was adamantly against this concept. Instead of adding another militia to ones that already existed, we needed to dismantle them.<sup>43</sup>

LTG Nasir al-Abadi, Deputy Chief of Staff, Iraqi Joint Forces, echoed Allawi’s concerns and expressed his doubts about the intentions and commitment of the Fallujah Brigade.

The problem was that many of the people in these units were old Saddam military....The members of this newly formed brigade refused to wear our [new Iraqi military] uniforms. In fact, they insisted upon wearing old, green Iraqi Army uniforms. This, at least in my mind, was an indication that they had no intention of cooperating....This brigade, which was formed from local Sunnis, was just playing for time and wanted money for their so-called services.<sup>44</sup>

Some say that the Coalition and Iraqi Government did not give the Fallujah Brigade sufficient opportunity to prove themselves. GEN Mohammed Abdullah al-Shawani, the Director of the Iraqi National Intelligence Service, claims that the Fallujah Brigade was successful until they stopped receiving salaries:<sup>45</sup>

They secured the city for five months, not a single bullet. No one gets killed in Fallujah, and nobody fired at an American—not even a bullet. But this was against the government agenda.<sup>46</sup>

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tember 2004. The decision to stop may have been worse than the decision to start; see later discussions on the impact of operational decision-making on strategic goals. In an interview with the authors on 1 December 2005 at the Pentagon, Conway relayed his concerns, voiced at the time, over the decision to stop the assault: “Look at the signal you send to the rest of the world about one, our ineptitude—all of us...and two, you hand a victory to the insurgents who are just about to [surrender] and then, what do we do with this place? That was always the question, ‘What’s the end-state here?’”

<sup>43</sup> PM Ayad Allawi interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>44</sup> LTG Nasir al-Abadi, interview with the authors, Baghdad, 3 February 2006.

<sup>45</sup> According to GEN Shawani, the Army and Marines were paying the salary of Fallujah Brigade members. The IG never paid them. GEN Babikir, confirming Shawani’s comment, indicated that the Ministry of Defense (MOD) wasn’t going to pay the Brigade’s salaries because the Brigade wouldn’t take orders from the MOD.

<sup>46</sup> GEN Mohammed Abdullah al-Shawani interview, 5 February 2006.

On the other hand, LtCol Joseph L'Etoile, 1st MARDIV G-3 during 2004, commented that the Fallujah Brigade was never successful and existed only until they stopped receiving their salaries. Commenting on the assertion that nobody fired at an American, he said, "Not true!!" The American military was shot at every time they drove past Fallujah.<sup>47</sup>

However, the Marines and Army could no longer fund the Fallujah Brigade, and according to Shawani, the Iraqi Government would not:

These guys don't believe in the MOD [Ministry of Defense]...and the MOD doesn't recognize them. They cut their salaries, no more money, and nobody wanted them anymore. Al Qaeda came. They started giving them between \$500 and \$1,000, so most of them quit and became insurgents.<sup>48</sup>

Saif agreed with Shawani's comments in general, adding that the Fallujah Brigade was not equipped to fight the insurgents. He also contended, in consonance with Shawani, that the Iranians were supporting the conflict in Al Anbar.<sup>49</sup>

According to Rubai'e, the Marine assault, withdrawal, and subsequent handoff of Fallujah's security to the Fallujah Brigade was a turning point in the war because it sent a signal that the Coalition could be repelled by the insurgents. It also gave credence to the Fallujah Brigade, which was essentially made up of insurgents and former Iraqi military. According to Rubai'e, "After that [the handoff to the Fallujah Brigade], the bad guys entrenched themselves in the city, and the city was a symbol, even among the Arab world."<sup>50</sup>

MG Mehdi Sabih Hashem al-Garawi echoed others' comments, like Rubai'e's and Allawi's, that VIGILANT RESOLVE was a turning point in favor of the insurgents: "During Fallujah I, when the Marines left, it was a turning point. The insurgents gained strength from that event."<sup>51</sup> This event perpetuated the myth that Fallujah was an untamable and renegade city.

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<sup>47</sup> LtCol Joseph L'Etoile interview, 23 August 2008.

<sup>48</sup> GEN Mohammed Abdullah al-Shawani interview, 5 February 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Mr. Saif Rahman, interview with the authors, Baghdad, 5 February 2006. At the time of the interview, Mr. Saif was the chief of staff for Dr. Hachem al-Hassani, who was speaker of the Iraq Parliament and a member of the Iraqi Islamic Party. He started working for Dr. Hassani in early 2004.

<sup>50</sup> Dr. Mowafak al-Rubai'e interview, 29 January 2006.

<sup>51</sup> MG Mehdi Sabih Hashem al-Garawi, Commander, Public Order Division interview with the authors, Baghdad, 31 January 2006.

### 3. Shi'a Uprising

At about the same time as VIGILANT RESOLVE, much of the Shi'a community was alienated and the armed flare-up of Muqtada al-Sadr's supporters in Sadr City, Karbala, An Najaf, and Al Kut occurred. This was the result of several events:

- 28 March, the CPA shut down Muqtada al-Sadr's newspaper, *Al Hamza*, for "inciting violence."
- 2 April, the Coalition arrested a key al-Sadr lieutenant, Mustafa al-Yacoubi, for the murder of Ayatollah Abdul Majid al-Khoei in June 2003 in An Najaf.
- 5 April, the CPA issued an arrest warrant for Muqtada al-Sadr for the murder of Ayatollah Abdul Majid al-Khoei in June 2003.

GEN Babikir advised Bremer that it was imprudent to arrest al-Sadr at that time:

These were huge mistakes...all of a sudden a war broke out...we advised them [the CPA] to defer the al-Sadr issue until later. I said, 'Let's finish up the Fallujah issues first.'<sup>52</sup>

Additionally, making security enforcement more difficult, some Coalition Partners had rules of engagement (ROE) that prohibited them from taking offensive action. Specifically, the Polish, Spanish, and Ukrainians had defensive ROE. According to LTC Andrej Dominik, Polish liaison officer, "We were not allowed to conduct offensive operations, and we could not do anything with the Mahdi Militia because of our ROE...this was the first time we [Polish troops] have had to fire our weapons since World War II."<sup>53</sup> BrigGen John Kelly, Assistant Division Commander of the 1st MARDIV, indicated that these "redlines" were common.

Apparently we butted up against one of the Polish redlines on what they could do and couldn't do...this was common. In An Najaf we had the Bulgarians, we had the Ukrainians in Al Kut...they all had this prohibition against doing anything offensive.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> GEN Babikir Baderkahn Zibari interview, 3 February 2006. During March–June 2004, Babikir was assigned to the MOD under the CPA. He advised Bremer to defer pursuing al-Sadr because they didn't have the resources to address a "second front"—Fallujah being the first.

<sup>53</sup> LTC Andrej Dominik, interview with the authors, Camp Victory, Iraq, 28 January 2006. Dominik added that, in addition to different ROE, having 27 countries as members of MND-Central South, made communications difficult.

<sup>54</sup> BrigGen John Kelly, Legislative Assistant to the Commandant of the Marine Corps (at the time of the interview), interview with the authors, Pentagon, Washington, DC, 28 October 2005.

Subsequently, elements of the 1st Armored Division, who, having already served 12 months had been replaced by the 1st Cav Division, and moved to Kuwait for redeployment to home station, were instead extended for three more months and deployed to Karbala, An Najaf, and Al Kut to quell the insurrection. Sadr would rise again, but in the meantime, by late May, the Shi'a communities were stabilized.

Many contend that the Sunni insurgent actions in Fallujah and al-Sadr's Mahdi Militia actions in and south of Baghdad were a coincidence, that there was no collusion between the two groups.<sup>55</sup> However, the Prime Minister disagreed:

There was a flare-up, and people linking themselves to Fallujah...creating links to the insurgency from Fallujah to Samarra and Mosul to Baghdad. And there were meetings between Muqtada al-Sadr and the...outfit in Fallujah and Sunni.<sup>56</sup>

#### 4. Organizations and relationships

In addition to events that contributed to the chaos during January through May 2004, we asked Iraqis about organizations and relationships: Which organizations were in place to support teaching, coaching, and building, and how well did the various organizations work together?

The question of relationships was relevant because teaching, coaching, and building depended on an environment of cooperation and mutual support. Both Allawi and Rubai'e noted that the Combined Joint Task Force 7 (CJTF-7, predecessor to MNF-I), CPA, and IGC did not work well together. Bremer's attitude toward the IGC disappointed Rubai'e:

He formed the governing council, but he didn't give it any authority, and he referred to it in the book in a very rude way.<sup>57</sup> He said the council can't organize a parade, let alone lead a country. He was looking at us in a derogatory way. I understand his language. Nine out of ten of my colleagues of the 25 [in the council], they didn't understand; a lot of them, they don't understand English, the way he was talking, very patronizing.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> One of the research questions was to determine if insurgents in Fallujah were colluding with al-Sadr's militia in An Najaf. L'Etoile expressed a middle-ground on this topic: "Planned collusion may not have existed, but opportunistic collusion or cooperation" did via television and Al Jazeera reporting, which enhanced the insurgents' situational awareness.

<sup>56</sup> PM Ayad Allawi interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>57</sup> Rubai'e refers to Bremer's book, *My Year in Iraq: The Strategy to Build a Future of Hope*.

<sup>58</sup> Dr. Mowafak al-Rubai'e interview, 29 January 2006.

Allawi spoke tactfully about the relationship between Bremer and LTG Ricardo Sanchez, commander of Coalition forces in Iraq:

I tried to explain things to Bremer and Sanchez. Sanchez was a good person, but it didn't seem to me that the chemistry between Sanchez and Bremer was that good, so this led to more confusion.<sup>59</sup>

Babikir's response to a question about the MEF's actions during VIGILANT RESOLVE and the development of the Fallujah Brigade provides insight into the relationship among the CPA, MEF, and CJTF-7:

Even Bremer was against it [the Fallujah Brigade]. But he didn't want to disappoint the Marines. He didn't want to give an order. I didn't know why that was; why he didn't give an order. Didn't he have the authority to give the order?

[Complicating this,] The Marines had their own orders. When I told LTG Sanchez what we should do, he said, these are Marines and we can't tell them what to do. I was always confused. Is this the military? Who is running these guys?<sup>60</sup>

LTG Abadi was the advisor to MG Paul Eaton, whom some call the "Father of the Iraqi Army."<sup>61</sup> Abadi explained the process of establishing the Iraqi Army and noted problems between the Iraqi Army and the MOD:

My position was advisor to General Paul Eaton, who was the first MNSTC-I commander. He was a real gentleman. He started the Iraqi Army. He had to start from scratch. There was a disconnect between the Ministry of Defense and the Iraqi Army. In June 2004, when authority was transferred to Iraq, this issue reached a crisis point. David Gompert was recruiting civilians for the MOD; however, something went wrong with the connection with the Army.<sup>62</sup> Paul Eaton always tried to see that there was a connection between the military and civilian leadership. Come June, we had two [disparate] organizations [the MOD and Army]. Many problems persist because too many things were done in the MOD and not in the military.<sup>63</sup>

On the other hand, there seemed to be a lot of respect for the Coalition advisory effort. Both Abadi and Mr. Mazin Muhammad Rhada, interpreter for the 1st Iraqi IIF

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<sup>59</sup> PM Ayad Allawi interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>60</sup> GEN Babikir Baderkahn Zibari interview, 3 February 2006.

<sup>61</sup> LTG Nasir al-Abadi, interview with the authors, Baghdad, 3 February 2006.

<sup>62</sup> David Gompert was the senior US civilian advisor for National Defense in Iraq during late 2003 and early 2004. He replaced Walter Slocombe. Gompert was responsible for formulating policy, creating institutions, and advising the Iraqi political leadership on the full range of national security matters.

<sup>63</sup> LTG Nasir al-Abadi interview, 3 February 2006.

Brigade and previously an interpreter for the CPA, spoke highly of Eaton's efforts to organize the Iraqi Army. The Iraqi forces also spoke highly of the ASTs that worked with them (discussed in Chapter 4).

## 5. Most Iraqi forces chose not/refused to fight

In Fallujah, the 505th and 506th ICDC Battalions isolated themselves from the conflict—they did not want to fight other Iraqis, and with families and friends in Fallujah, they were easily intimidated.

Attempts to commit Iraqi Army elements from outside Fallujah fared no better. On or about 4 April 2004, the 2nd Iraqi Battalion in Taji was alerted to move to Fallujah. MAJ Abed al-Jabar, commander for the 25-vehicle convoy, said that the Coalition left the Iraqis out of the convoy planning process and routed the convoy through an area that the Iraqi forces would not have recommended.

When we started moving to Fallujah from Taji, we arrived in an area in Baghdad called Shohola [transcribed phonetically]....When we passed this area, the enemy shot at us, so we drove fast. One soldier, a driver...stopped his truck in the middle of the street; the convoy divided into two parts. When they attacked us, all the soldiers dismounted...to protect the convoy. But this is a Shi'a army and because Muqtada al-Sadr is a Shi'a, they [Iraqi forces] refused to shoot them [Militia and insurgents].<sup>64</sup>

Abed went on to say that al-Sadr's Mahdi Militia had attacked the convoy because of previous Coalition force actions, such as the warrant for al-Sadr's arrest. According to Abed, the purpose of the attack was twofold: (1) to stop the Iraqi unit from going to Fallujah, and (2) to kidnap the American advisors. Although the Iraqi battalion refused to continue to Fallujah, they did not betray their American advisors:

I remembered one good thing. Some militia wanted to attack the American soldiers, and they want to kidnap them or attack them or shoot them, but the Iraqi soldiers protected them and saved them from the militia.<sup>65</sup>

In defense of their refusal to fight other Iraqis, Abed added that the New Iraqi Army (which would become part of the ISF in June) was not designed for this type of mission, it was chartered to fight an external enemy, not other Iraqis.<sup>66</sup> Eaton echoed that:

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<sup>64</sup> MAJ Abed al-Jabar, interview with the authors, Hussaybah, 20 January 2006.

<sup>65</sup> MAJ Abed al-Jabar interview, 20 January 2006.

<sup>66</sup> Hence, the stand-up of the IIF in August 2004 by Prime Minister Allawi. This force was chartered to fight insurgents.

This Battalion was recruited to defend Iraq from enemies without. They have TVs in their day room, they are watching Al Arabiya, and Al Jazeera, and they see this firestorm of Fallujah and they think that they are going in to fight side by side with the Marines against Iraqis. Hence, they reminded us in a particularly energetic way, that that's not what they signed up for.<sup>67</sup>

When asked if there was a relationship between the Mahdi Militia and Fallujah insurgents, Abed said that there was not:

There is no relation between the Mahdi Militia and the insurgents in Fallujah. Muqtada al-Sadr ordered the attack on the convoy because there were some problems between him and the Coalition forces.

However, not all of the ISF dissolved or refused to fight in Fallujah. One glimmer of hope was the 36th Commandos. They were organized, trained, and mentored by the 5th SFG and fought in support of the Coalition throughout 2004.

As mentioned above, while Coalition actions against al-Sadr enraged the Shi'a community and al-Sadr's Mahdi Militia revolted in and south of Baghdad, elements of the ICDC, primarily Shi'a, refused to support the Coalition and fight the Militia. During April 2004, 30% of the ICDC *Jundi*—about 10,000 of the 33,000 (Figure 5)—didn't show up for work and some switched allegiance to the insurgency or to the Militia.<sup>68</sup> According to LTC Scott Kendrick, S3 of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Cav Division (Black Jack Brigade), "They didn't come to work...they were not going to participate in anything that was counter-Shi'a, so they just went home."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> MG Paul Eaton, telephone interview with Bill Knarr, 14 November 2005.

<sup>68</sup> During interviews with ISF members who fought against the Mahdi Militia, we were corrected several times when we referred to the Mahdi Militia as insurgents. We were told they were not insurgents, they were Sadr supporters.

<sup>69</sup> LTC Scott Kendrick, interview with Bill Knarr, Fort Hood, Texas, 30 June 2005. 2BCT was partnered with the 303rd ICDC Battalion. Later (in late April/early May), they started returning to work. When asked why, Kendrick responded, "They came back like there was nothing wrong [and said], 'We're not mad at the Americans anymore.'"

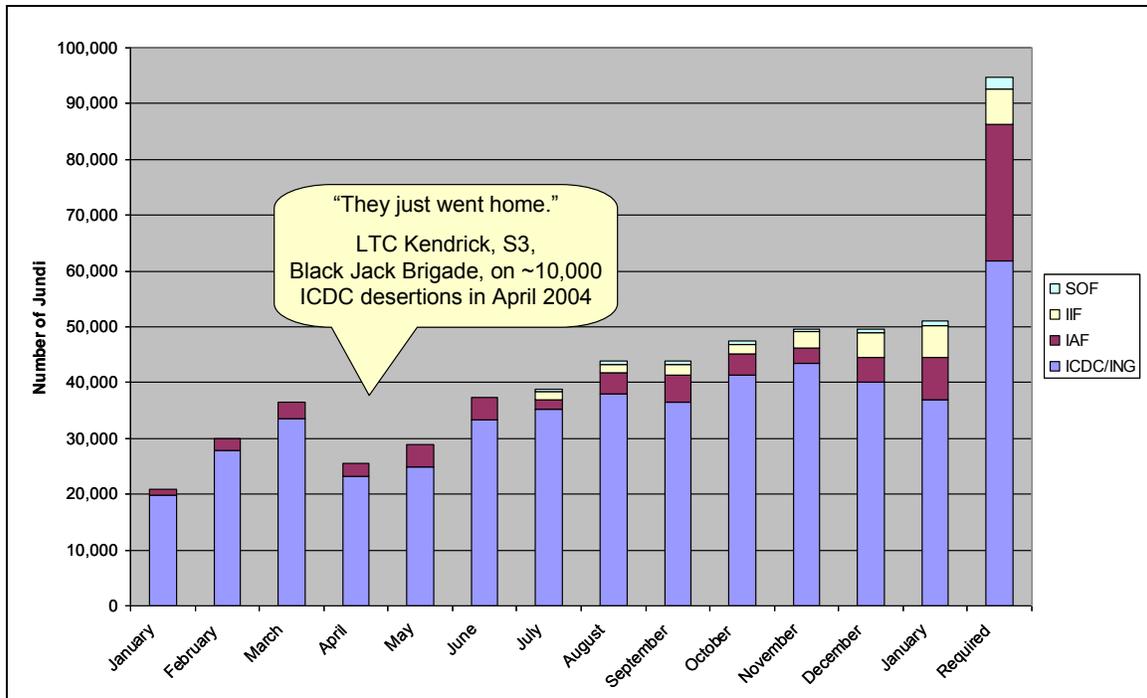


Figure 5. Troop strengths of Iraqi Armed-, Intervention-, Civil Defense Corps/National Guard- and Special Operations Forces, 2004–05<sup>70</sup>

## 6. Information operations implications

During this period, Coalition IO was a failure. The insurgents dominated the media. Imagery and media reports emanating from the Fallujah Hospital focused on human suffering, civilian casualties, and collateral damage, all of which had a devastating impact on local, national, regional, and international opinions toward the Coalition’s actions in Fallujah.

In addition, the Iraqis viewed the Marines’ pullout and handover of Fallujah to the Fallujah Brigade as a Coalition defeat and an insurgent victory—a victory that would inspire others to join the insurgency. Many Iraqis thought that resisting the Coalition was futile until that happened.<sup>71</sup>

Even the Coalition was divided over what was the most appropriate course of action in Fallujah. The United Kingdom opposed the assault on Fallujah and what it characterized as the “heavy handed tactics used by the Americans.”<sup>72</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Chart developed from Brookings Index January–April 2005, and Dept. of Defense/Dept. of State Weekly Status Reports May 2004–January 2005

<sup>71</sup> Jill Carroll, “The Jill Carroll Story,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 August 2006 <[www.csmonitor.com/specials/carroll/index.htm](http://www.csmonitor.com/specials/carroll/index.htm)>.

<sup>72</sup> Greg Lewis, “Welsh Troops Face Fallujah Backlash,” *Wales on Sunday*, 17 October 2004.

In 2006, experts would refer to Operation VIGILANT RESOLVE as an example of losing the media war.<sup>73</sup> Without access to the city, Coalition and Western media could not determine the truth and refute the insurgents' claims. Additionally, Al-Sadr was a step ahead of the Coalition and dominated the news emanating from Shi'a areas. Although locals in Karbala, An Najaf, and other areas tired of his militia, he clearly controlled the information environment. The Coalition was simply unprepared. Horrific images of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib delivered the knockout punch. Insurgents used those images in recruiting campaigns, and to encourage insurgents not to surrender for fear they would be treated similarly.<sup>74</sup>

Prime Minister Allawi summarized January–May of 2004:

As we went to June, everything was boiling throughout the country; there were links between all of these [the events in Fallujah, Sadr city, An Najaf, Karbala, Al Kut]. So this was the scene as sovereignty was transferred. I think the reason was a lack of vision and a lack of real consultation with the Governing Council and Security Committee. I think half-hearted and half-cooked measures were taken on the operations. On the political front, the landscape was confused with no attempt to link the political landscape with the insurgency.

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<sup>73</sup> Ralph Peters, "Lessons So Far: Hard Truths to Learn from Israel's War on Hezbollah," *New York Post Online Edition*, 13 August 2006.

<sup>74</sup> Capt Mike Dubrule, commanded I-MEF HUMINT unit during AL FAJR, telephone interview with the authors, 17 August 2006.



### 3 Transition From Chaos to Condition-Setting

A number of transitions perpetuated and intensified the chaos that characterized the first five months of 2004:

- In May, CJTF-7 transitioned to MNF-I and MNC-I.
- In June, MNSTC-I was established to help the Iraqi Government stand up the ISF.
- On June 28, two days ahead of schedule, the IGC was dissolved, and the IIG was established; with that, sovereignty transferred from the CPA to the IIG.<sup>75</sup>
- Upon the transfer, the CPA dissolved and the US Mission (Ambassador and country team) was established.

Despite their initial contribution to the chaos, those transitions brought a new team, additional resources, a campaign plan, and an objective: successful elections on 30 January 2005.

This chapter addresses those transitions, describes the battle of An Najaf—a major test for this new Iraqi Government—and summarizes the political, security and IO aspects of this period.

#### A. CJTF-7 Becomes MNF-I and MNC-I

CJTF-7 was overwhelmed as it tried to deal with the tactical-through-strategic challenges as well as training the New Iraqi Army (soon to become the Iraqi Army and part of the ISF). By mid-May, CJTF-7 had become two organizations: MNF-I and MNC-I.<sup>76</sup> “The MNF-I will focus on building a partnership at the national strategic level with the ministers of Defense and Interior and the armed forces and government of the country,”

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<sup>75</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1546 replaced UNSCR 1511 on June 8 recognizing the forthcoming transfer of sovereignty.

<sup>76</sup> Official website of Multi-National Force–Iraq, <[www.mnf-iraq.com/archive/Mission.htm](http://www.mnf-iraq.com/archive/Mission.htm)> updated 25 May 2005, described the MNF-I mission as, “In partnership with the Iraqi Government, MNF-I conducts full-spectrum counter-insurgency operations to isolate and neutralize former regime extremists and foreign terrorists, and organizes, trains, and equips Iraqi security forces in order to create a security environment that permits the completion of the UNSCR 1546 process on schedule.”

Sanchez said in a 42nd ID newsletter article.<sup>77</sup> Subordinate to the MNF-I, the MNC-I was responsible for command and control of Coalition operations throughout Iraq; MNC-I commanded six units: four multi-national divisions, one multi-national force, and a logistical support area that provided logistical support throughout the theater.<sup>78</sup>

## B. Standing up the MNSTC-I

In June 2004, the MNSTC-I, as an element of the MNF-I, stood up under the Command of then-LTG David Petraeus. Its mission was to:

Assist the Iraqi Government in the development, organization, training, equipping, and sustainment of Iraqi Security Forces capable of defeating terrorism and providing a stable environment.<sup>79</sup>

The MNSTC-I assumed command of the CMATT and Civilian Police Assistance Training Teams (CPATT). While some might conclude that MNSTC-I was simply a new name for MG Eaton's Office of Security Cooperation, there were major differences in command relationships, resourcing, and responsibilities.<sup>80</sup> As an example, the MNSTC-I now had a lieutenant general (3-stars) in command, and the CMATT and CPATT each had brigadier general (1-star) commanders. Most importantly, this extra resourcing and elevation of the commands emphasized the importance of their functions. Additionally, the ISF was now responsible for providing security for the Iraqi people against a growing insurgent threat and not just simply for defending Iraq's borders.

## C. The IIG and Sovereignty

On 1 June 2004, the IIG was activated with Sunni Muslim Sheikh Ghazi al-Yawar as president; Ayad Allawi, a Shi'a Muslim, as prime minister; two deputy presidents; and 26 ministers. On 8 June, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted UNSC Resolution 1546, which: (1) endorsed the formation of the IIG, (2) sanctioned the presence of Coalition forces at the request of the IIG for up to 12 months, (3) expanded the United Nations' role in Iraq; and (4) requested international assistance for the Iraqi people.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> LTG Ricardo Sanchez quoted in "42nd ID Command Information," *Rainbow Ready News* 1 (1 June 2004): 1.

<sup>78</sup> Multi-National Corps-Iraq Homepage, "Mission," <[www.mnci.centcom.mil/mission/default.htm](http://www.mnci.centcom.mil/mission/default.htm)> accessed 19 April 2006.

<sup>79</sup> Multi-National Security Transition Command Iraq, "Mission," <[www.mnstci.iraq.centcom.mil/mission.htm](http://www.mnstci.iraq.centcom.mil/mission.htm)> accessed 17 August 2006.

<sup>80</sup> MG Paul Eaton interview, November 2005.

<sup>81</sup> United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1546, 8 June 2004, adopted 8 June 2004.

On 28 June, two days earlier than planned, sovereignty transferred from the CPA to the IIG.<sup>82</sup> Allawi, proclaiming security as his most important challenge, immediately moved to meet this challenge by:

1. Establishing a National Safety Law, which allowed the Government to impose a state of emergency for 60 days and included provisions for curfews, checkpoints, detaining suspects, and eavesdropping.
2. Creating the ISF by establishing the IIF as a counterinsurgency force,<sup>83</sup> renaming the ICDC as the Iraqi National Guard,<sup>84</sup> and establishing a National Directorate for internal security.
3. Developing an amnesty plan for insurgents, including militia members.
4. Requesting international support to help train and equip the new security forces.

#### D. The US Embassy, the MNF-I and a Plan

With establishment of a US Embassy in Baghdad, Ambassador John Negroponte arrived as the senior US civilian leader to work with GEN Casey, the new MNF-I commander. The two men met in Washington beforehand, where they discussed an initial strategy and recognized the value of building relationships. According to Casey:

The military and civil side had to work together, so we agreed on the one-team, one-mission concept. We were here about two weeks after meeting with the Iraqis and realized that, no kidding, there really was a sovereign Iraqi government here, and that ‘one team, one mission’ had to include the Iraqi government. So, we updated our notion. We set out to help make the Iraqi government, this Interim Iraqi Government, successful.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> The CPA transferred sovereignty two days early to diffuse insurgent activities targeted at the ceremony on the announced date of 30 June 2004.

<sup>83</sup> This was in response to the 2nd Battalion’s refusal to fight in Fallujah. Recall that one of the reasons the Iraqi soldiers didn’t fight was because they didn’t think the Army’s mission was to fight other Iraqis. The IIF was chartered to fight the insurgency (Iraqis as well as foreign fighters) and the leadership ensured that everyone who joined the IIF knew that.

<sup>84</sup> He recognized that units recruited to fight in their local area could be intimidated in their local area. The trend would be to transition the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps into the Iraqi National Guard, and by January 2005, the IIG would start integrating the Iraqi National Guard into the Iraqi Army.

<sup>85</sup> GEN George Casey interview, 6 February 2006.

Upon arriving, they commissioned a Red Team to assess the threat. From the Red Team's findings they developed a campaign plan and agreed on the objective of successful elections in January 2005.<sup>86</sup>

## E. The Battle for An Najaf

An Najaf was significant for a number of reasons:

- it is the fourth largest city in Iraq with a population of 679,000;
- its population is mostly Shi'a;
- it has historically been pro al-Sadr;
- its cemetery is one of the largest in the world at 4 x 2.5 km;
- the Imam Ali Mosque is the most holy Shi'a shrine in Iraq;
- the Kufah Mosque is the second oldest mosque in Iraq, and al-Sadr preached out of the Kufah Mosque;
- both al-Sadr and Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraq's most prominent Shi'a cleric, resided in An Najaf.<sup>87</sup>

From April through July there was a succession of Coalition forces responses for the An Najaf area: The 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) deployed to An Najaf from 20 April to 17 June, in response to requests for additional support from MND-Central South (CS) and local officials. On 17 June, Task Force Dragon, a battalion-sized task force from 1st Infantry Division, replaced 2nd ACR and conducted limited stability and combat operations until it was replaced by the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) Special Operations Capable (SOC) on 31 July.<sup>88</sup> Figure 6 identifies key areas during Operation AN NAJAF in August.

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<sup>86</sup> GEN George Casey interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>87</sup> Ayatollah Sistani supports an Islamic state that is compatible with elections, freedom of religion, and other civil liberties. Sistani does not support violent confrontation with the United States; however, he defied US authorities when their plans conflicted with his views, most notably during the organization of the IGC—the process by which the CPA would transfer sovereignty to the Iraqi Government—and the election process. Dr. Mowafak al-Rubai'e interview, 29 January 2006.

<sup>88</sup> This same general pattern led to the March–April firestorm in Fallujah: units rotating through the area, too few troops to control the area, and depressed conditions fertile for recruiting anti-Coalition and anti-Iraqi forces. Much like April when the MEF had just completed TOA with the 82nd Airborne Division and when the insurgents ambushed the contractors, the 11th MEU(SOC) just completed TOA with its predecessor.

On 2 August, Mahdi Militia forces attacked Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 1/4 patrol in An Najaf. Although al-Sadr later claimed his militia was responding to Marine attacks, it was suspected he was just looking to create chaos. On 5 August, the Militia attacked the police station in An Najaf, and Governor Adnan al-Ziruffi requested assistance from the Iraqi Government and the Coalition.

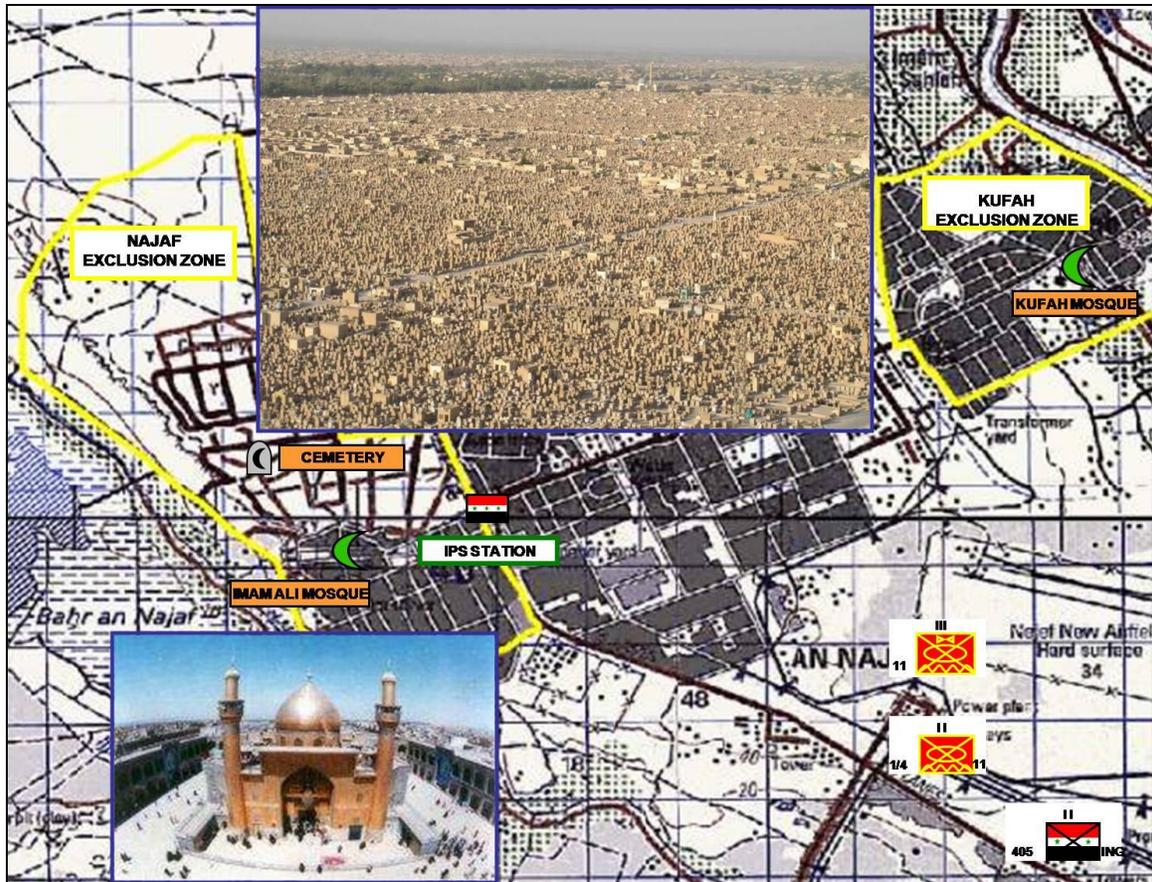


Figure 6. An Najaf key areas<sup>89</sup>

LtCol John Mayer, Commander, BLT 1/4 described the initial fighting on the night of the 5th and the call for help from the Governor:

I got a call from the governor saying 200 militiamen were about to overrun the police station, so we launched our Rapid Reaction Force. Sure enough there was a pretty good fight going on, from the cemetery into the police station.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Extracted from 11th MEU and III Corps presentations.

Initially, the MEU had to contend with wide exclusion areas around the cemetery and mosques that were providing sanctuary for the Militia. That quickly changed as elements of the BLT continued to receive fire from the cemetery and responded to the downing of a Huey helicopter.

We began fighting from the north, and this lasted into daybreak. Early in the morning a Huey got shot down....In order to protect the helicopter [and get it out of there]...we pushed into the cemetery. As soon as we pushed into the cemetery, that's when the big fighting started. We became fully engaged.<sup>91</sup>

On 6 August, Grand Ayatollah Sistani, who had served as a calming influence on al-Sadr and the Shi'a community, left for London to undergo heart surgery.

Figure 7 summarizes the sequence of events, mission, and task organization during Operation AN NAJAF. The upper right quadrant depicts the area of concentration in late August (around the Imam Ali Mosque); the lower right summarizes the political, security, and IO aspects of the operation.

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<sup>90</sup> LtCol John Mayer, telephone interview with Bill Knarr, 28 September 2005.

<sup>91</sup> LtCol John Mayer interview, 28 September 2005.

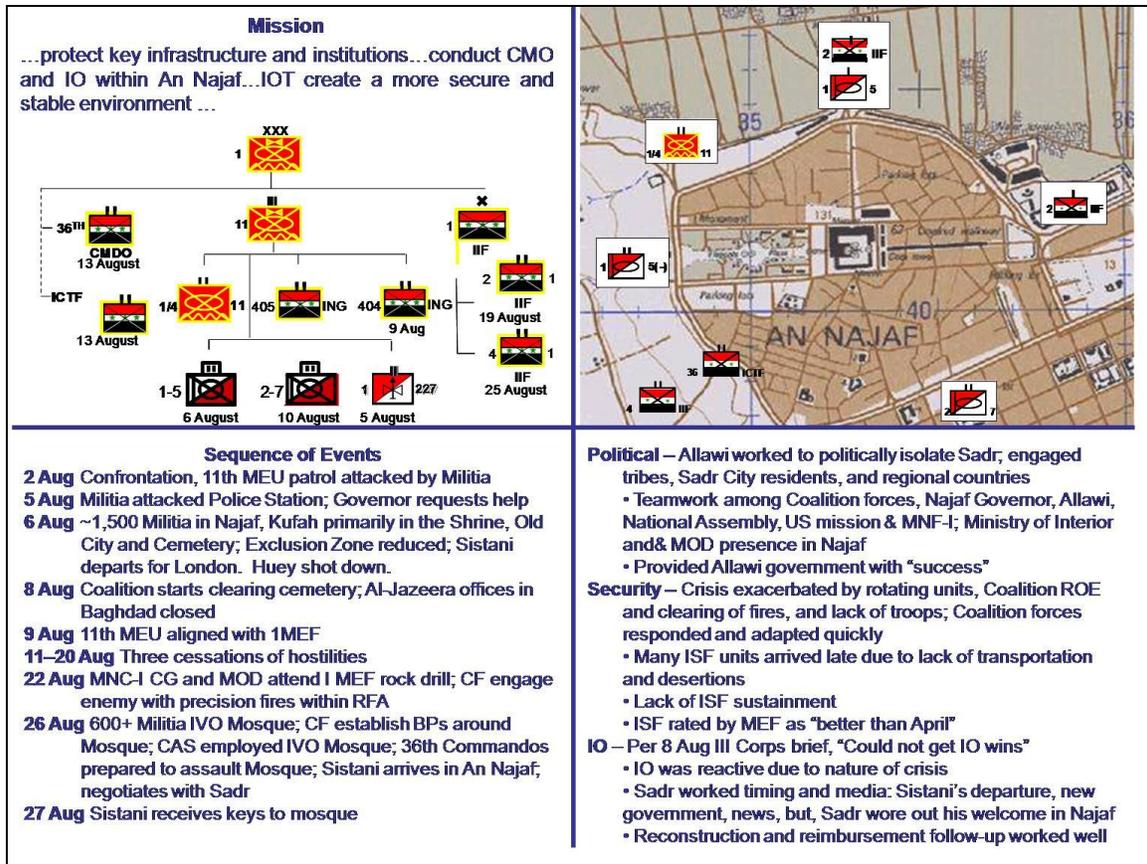


Figure 7. Operation AN NAJAF<sup>92</sup>

Note the introduction of 1-5 and 2-7 Cavalry from the 1st Cavalry Division on 6 and 10 August, respectively, to support the fight. Mayer spoke of the militia’s response to the introduction of tanks and Bradleys:

Boy, you drive a tank into a city and they are going to attack it. They would swarm upon the tank and fire upon it. We learned real quick that they had nothing that could kill a tank or a Bradley. The RPGs [rocket propelled grenades] would bounce off, and then we’d use a combination of driving the tanks and Bradleys just enough into the city to get them to start firing while we had AC-130s over head, which would pick up the movement. The AC-130s are very precise; it was easy to get their fires cleared, especially if they had known targets.

As the situation heated up, Casey asked himself, “How can we help this new Iraqi Government succeed?”

<sup>92</sup> Information extracted from 11th MEU and III Corps presentations, interviews with PM Ayad Allawi and GEN George Casey, and “Battle for An-Najaf, August 2004,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, December 2004.

We set out in Najaf to help the Iraqi Government achieve its first success. We told ourselves that this could be a unifying event for this new government...it was really an opportunity for Prime Minister Allawi to demonstrate his strength as a leader, and he really did.<sup>93</sup>

## 1. IIG actions

Allawi acted immediately to counter al-Sadr:

As Najaf was brewing, I was doing several things. One was to influence al-Sadr's territory to get rid of the insurgency in Baghdad and elsewhere to isolate Najaf. The second was to arrest key members of Sadr's organization who were uncompromising and who were assets to the Iranians. The third thing was to cut the link between al-Sadr, Najaf, Fallujah, and northern Babylon.<sup>94</sup>

Allawi also spoke to King Abdullah in Jordan, President Mubarak of Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates Army Chief of Staff. Jordan sent armored vehicles (though not in time for AN NAJAF) and Egypt sent weapons. This was encouraging for all Iraqis in An Najaf. Allawi then held almost-daily meetings with Casey and Negroponte. They agreed to several principles:

We decided on the objectives: Sadr's militia must surrender their arms, leave the Mosque, leave the city, and never come back to the city. The final point—criminal charges against Sadr—he would have to deal with them through the judicial system or through the tribal system here in Iraq; we would give him time. So we agreed on these conditions with the MNF, that we should not back away from these principles.<sup>95</sup>

Allawi then went to Sadr City, met with the clerics, and bought their weapons from them for US\$12 million. Next, he went to An Najaf to enlist the help of the tribes.

Rubai'e, as Iraq's National Security Advisor, was the principal IIG official to deal with al-Sadr. He drafted terms for a cease-fire, coordinated it with Negroponte and Casey, got Allawi's approval, and sent it to al-Sadr via an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps representative. Allawi then asked him to go to An Najaf to meet with al-Sadr; Rubai'e was reluctant but acquiesced. He spoke of the first scheduled meeting with al-Sadr and how it was derailed:

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<sup>93</sup> GEN George Casey interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>94</sup> PM Ayad Allawi interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>95</sup> PM Ayad Allawi interview, 6 February 2006.

I was set to meet al-Sadr at 6:00 at an agreed upon address...I was delayed [by the Marines] until 7:00...when the Marines swooped in on that address and killed a few of the militia men....Sadr was clever enough not to be there...he was three or four doors away. There was no way on earth anyone can convince me it was not a setup. I was infuriated—I could have been told!...I lost Sadr’s trust. He never left the Mosque after that.<sup>96</sup>

Although the operation to capture al-Sadr failed, Rubai’e regained al-Sadr’s trust and worked out new terms. He got al-Sadr to sign the plan, but before Rubai’e could add his signature, Allawi told him not sign the plan and to return immediately to Baghdad.

When I got back, I went straight to Allawi’s office. I said, ‘What is going on?’ Allawi responded, ‘We don’t want to negotiate with this man.’ To this moment, I still don’t understand what happened.<sup>97</sup>

Rubai’e speculated that, in Allawi’s eyes, al-Sadr had not been humbled enough. Allawi’s account of the situation and his guidance to Rubai’e was somewhat different:

I recall there was a national security advisor [Dr. Rubai’e] who went there and instead of telling them these are the demands of the government, he went there to negotiate. He made it public in the media that the government was negotiating...There were no negotiations; they were demands....This guy called it negotiations, and I removed him.<sup>98</sup>

## 2. ISF participation

As the IIG—primarily Allawi, Rubai’e, and other staff members—played a major role in events in An Najaf, the ISF was still developing; hence, Coalition forces provided the majority of combat power there. In support, the ISF deployed the 36th Commandos, the Iraqi Counter Terrorist Force, the 2nd and 4th Battalions of the 1st IIF Brigade (the new counterinsurgency force), and elements of the Iraqi National Guard (ING).

COL Fahdil Jamal, Commander, 36th Commandos, trained his unit under the mentorship of the 5th SFG and was prepared to physically remove al-Sadr’s force from the Mosque. According to Rubai’e, Allawi was ready to commit those forces. By all accounts the 36th Commandos were prepared.

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<sup>96</sup> Dr. Mowafak al-Rubai’e interview, 29 January 2006.

<sup>97</sup> Dr. Mowafak al-Rubai’e interview, 29 January 2006.

<sup>98</sup> Although Allawi “removed” Dr. Rubai’e, he went on to say that Dr. Rubai’e had a five-year contract with the CPA as National Security Advisor. This may explain why the Coalition still calls him the National Security Advisor even though the Prime Minister named another Iraqi to that position.

LTC Yassir Haziz Muqmad, executive officer of 4th Battalion, 1st IIF Brigade during AN NAJAF, was conducting presence patrols and search operations in Sadr City when the battalion was told to move to An Najaf. The unit relocated on 25 August and conducted checkpoint, escort duties, and search operations in support of the Coalition forces. LTC Yassir spoke of the difficulties working with the Coalition, both in Sadr City and An Najaf:

This time between Sadr City and Najaf was a very hard time for the Coalition forces because they started to learn about the new Iraqi Army, to train them and put them to the test. Most of the new Iraqi Army is from the old army. There are different rules and different relations.<sup>99</sup>

COL Mulvenna, Chief of Staff, CMATT, and BG Schwitters, Commander, CMATT, visited the 4th Battalion to watch its deployment. Mulvenna clarified Yassir's comments:

We showed up at Arista Mya and the AST leadership had literally just got done pulling down soldiers from the fences who were trying to flee with their rifles and weapons. General Schwitters and I met with the Battalion XO [executive officer, LTC Yassir], the CO was already in Najaf but he was weak. The XO said the soldiers left because they were afraid and needed to have more stressful training....This guy was an ex-special forces Iraqi, this guy was ready to die of shame in front of us. Embarrassed, he thanked us for the US contribution. He realized that we shed our blood and left our families and his own countrymen will not stay and fight. Of course you can't be mad at him because he stayed. General Schwitters didn't get upset, he said, 'This is certainly a terrible situation but I'd rather go fight with your remaining two Companies than with those guys who left and shamed you.' That Battalion operated at about 50% for quite a while. And they did it very effectively, and I think they got rid of the Battalion Commander.<sup>100</sup>

By the end of August, the Mahdi Militia was cleared from An Najaf and isolated in the Imam Ali Mosque. As noted earlier, the 36th Commandos were prepared to assault the Mosque when Grand Ayatollah Sistani returned from London and negotiated its return.

But the fight wasn't over. Yassir's unit was responsible for negotiating with al-Sadr and clearing his office complex in the city once al-Sadr left the Mosque. Yassir described the environment:

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<sup>99</sup> LTC Yassir Haziz Muqmad, current Commander of the battalion, interview with the authors, Al Qaim, 19 January 2006.

<sup>100</sup> COL James Mulvenna, telephone interview with the Bill Knarr, 14 October 2005. Mulvenna was Chief of Staff, CMATT in 2004.

We lived in a bad situation at that time in Najaf because there were many militias ready to fight, especially from Iran. There are many Iranians still inside the office [al-Sadr's area of control] ready to fight. I started searching. We pushed two companies to search inside the office. The problem is that there are many rooms underground that are supposed to be searched also. We captured weapons, different kinds. They filled two 5-ton trucks.<sup>101</sup>

Although the IIF and Iraqi Special Operations Forces left An Najaf after the fighting subsided, the 11th MEU(SOC) continued to develop, train, and mentor the ING and the Iraqi Police in An Najaf so they could assume security responsibilities.

## F. Summary: PSI

### 1. Political

The political implications during this transitional period were immense. The transfer of sovereignty, dissolution of the IGC and the CPA, establishment of the IIG, US Embassy, and MNF-I produced quick results across political, security, and IO elements. Additionally, Allawi brought firm, committed, secular leadership. IIG and ISF action in An Najaf also told the world that the Iraqi Government would not tolerate anyone breaking the rule of law, and that it was not focused solely on the Sunnis.<sup>102</sup>

When asked if stabilizing An Najaf was an Allawi government success or a Sistani success, GEN Casey said:

An Najaf gave Allawi and the government a success. It was back and forth—was it a Sistani success? Was it an Allawi success? The government came together, they had crisis; they solved the crisis together with our help. And they came out of it a winner, so that was an important element going into Fallujah.<sup>103</sup>

On the negative side, the IIG was an appointed rather than elected government, and because of his previous association with the Central Intelligence Agency and US government, Allawi would never shake the Iraqi perception that he was too closely partnered with the “Occupiers.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> LTC Yassir Haziz Muqmad interview, 19 January 2006.

<sup>102</sup> PM Ayad Allawi interview, 6 February 2006, echoed by Mr. Kael Weston, State Department Representative to Fallujah, in a telephone interview with Bill Knarr, 26 May 2006.

<sup>103</sup> GEN George Casey interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>104</sup> PM Ayad Allawi established links and worked with the CIA to oust Saddam. Laurie Mylroie, “US Bureaucracies still Messing Up Iraqi Democrats,” *New York Sun*, 28 February 2003.

Another area to consider in Coalition operations is chain of command. When the 11th MEU(SOC) entered An Najaf, it was assigned to MND-CS, which was commanded by the Polish. The Poles were operating under a more defensive ROE as dictated by their nation's policy. To streamline command and control, to include fires authorizations, An Najaf was realigned under the MEF. In addition, I-MEF (Forward), commanded by BrigGen Dennis Hejlik, was established in An Najaf "because of Coalition diplomatic sensitivities and the increasing size and complexity of the urban operations in Najaf and Kufa."<sup>105</sup>

## 2. Security

Allawi's security plan recognized the limitations of the IAF charter and the ICDC elements and corrected those limitations with the development of the ISF.<sup>106</sup> The ISF included all security forces, provided oversight for the ING and established the IIF, formed specifically as a counterinsurgency force.<sup>107</sup> How did those security forces fare during this period?

From An Najaf in August, the I-MEF assessed the ISF and IIF as "bright spots."<sup>108</sup> The 36th Commandos, one of the Special Operations Battalions, provided intelligence to the Coalition and was prepped to take down the Imam Ali Mosque if al-Sadr's militia refused to leave. The IIF battalions arrived during the last week of the conflict. The 2nd Battalion worked with 2-7 Cav and performed rear security and some clearing operations.<sup>109</sup> COL Mulvenna, former Chief of Staff, CMATT, described the IIF battalions' performance:

The 2nd Battalion already down there did good work. Over the weekend, 4th Battalion got orders to move out of Sadr City to Najaf, and nearly half the Battalion went AWOL.<sup>110</sup>

The ING unit (405th) received accolades from their IIF advisors for clearing operations and traffic control points.<sup>111</sup> But the Special Forces Advisors indicated that the Iraqi

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<sup>105</sup> "Battle for An-Najaf, August 2004."

<sup>106</sup> The term *Iraqi Security Forces* recognized the importance of military forces as well as border forces and police forces to Iraq's overall security. Although it would take a while to develop the police forces as a critical element of the security program, the need for the capability was finally recognized.

<sup>107</sup> The ING would be integrated into the Iraqi Army in 2005.

<sup>108</sup> Because this paper is focused on Teaching, Coaching, and Building the Iraqis, it doesn't address or do justice to the great work done by the Coalition forces, in particular the 11th MEU working with other US forces and with the Iraqis, both military and civilian, through all phases of the operation. "Battle for An-Najaf, August 2004."

<sup>109</sup> This was the battalion that had refused to fight during Operation VIGILANT RESOLVE.

<sup>110</sup> COL James Mulvenna interview, 14 October 2005.

<sup>111</sup> "Battle for An-Najaf, August 2004."

unit leadership—even down to the platoon level—depended too much on advisors, and disintegrated during one of the operations.<sup>112</sup>

Sustainment would be a continuing challenge for all of the units; the Coalition had to care for, feed, and house the Iraqi units when they showed up in An Najaf. MAJ Scott Jackson, XO, 2-7 Cav discussed logistic support for the 2nd Battalion, 1st IIF Brigade.

They showed up with a host of US contractors and mission support staff. I was working out of the back portion of the TAC/TOC when this American contractor with an AK-47 came up and said, ‘I’m the logistics coordinator for the 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 1st Division—where can we set up?’ We kind of worked it out on a ‘handshakecon’ relationship. We tried to figure out how to work LOGPACs for the Iraqis.<sup>113</sup>

Additionally, the Iraqis depended on operational support, close air support, medical evacuation (MEDEVAC), communications, fire support, and other services through US advisors embedded with their units.

### 3. Information Operations

Although IO was certainly better in August than during April–May, the Coalition was still reacting, still in crisis management mode.<sup>114</sup> The III Corps’ (MNC-I headquarters at that time) after-action report on AN NAJAF indicates that the Coalition was still trying to obtain an IO win. The same report cites the transfer of sovereignty as the single most important IO event: “This not only lends credibility to our IO message, but when delivered by an Iraqi to Iraqis, it resonates very effectively.”<sup>115</sup> AN NAJAF would also highlight the importance of religion, politics, and culture in developing the IO plan—even for secular political leaders.

Although the IO effort seemed reactive and behind the power curve, LtCol Gary Johnston, S-3, 11th MEU, believed the reconstruction and reimbursement effort was an IO winner:

Where I think we did win at IO was at the tactical level. Every time we took something out—whether it was a school that had to have a Maverick [missile]

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<sup>112</sup> 5th SFG members, interviews with Bill Knarr, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, 8 November 2005.

<sup>113</sup> TOC stands for Tactical Operations Center, and a TAC is simply a forward TOC. MAJ Scott Jackson, interview with Bill Knarr, Fort Hood, Texas, 25 June 2005. Further study is needed to lay out the implications of the Iraqi MOD’s inability to meet the Title 10-like responsibilities to keep pace with the “fielded formations” side.

<sup>114</sup> III Corps G-3 staff members, interviews with Bill Knarr, Fort Hood, Texas, 3 August 2005.

<sup>115</sup> III Corps untitled presentation to JFCOM, Joint Urban Operations Office, dated 6 September 2005.

dropped in it to kill militia fighting out of it—within 24–48 hours we were down in those schools with a local contractor and civil affairs reps seeing what it would take to fix the school. We’d start working on it, even while we were fighting. That wasn’t lost on the locals. We were also assessing damages to houses and injuries to civilians and compensating them on the fly, which is something they had never seen in 30 years under Hussein...I think that word got out relatively quickly that, ‘Hey, these guys aren’t just blowing up our hotels and our livelihood, they are actually replacing and rebuilding things as the fight is going on.’”<sup>116</sup>

As Johnston’s comment indicates, developing, funding, and executing reconstruction projects on the heels of combat operations was critical to success. Reconstruction activities became part of civil-military operations that positively affected the political, security, and IO aspects of Operation AN NAJAF.

According to MNC-I, local political support, ISF, IO, and funding all needed to be in place before the kinetic solution. GEN Casey summarized the primary lessons he took from An Najaf:

From Najaf, we developed our principles, once we go in and fight to take over a place, we are only going to relinquish control to capable Iraqi Security Forces. And two, we’re going to work reconstruction efforts, to work the other lines of counterinsurgency operation to enhance the success.<sup>117</sup>

Clearly, the situation in Iraq improved during the summer of 2004. Although transition, by its nature, contributed to the chaos of the first half of the year, it brought much needed change in organization, resources, policy, and leadership.

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<sup>116</sup> LtCol Gary Johnston, telephone interview with the authors, 26 September 2005.

<sup>117</sup> GEN George Casey interview, 6 February 2004.

## 4 Battle for Fallujah: Setting Conditions for the Election

While Iraq was moving in so many directions, changing in so many ways, seemingly positive, conditions in Fallujah worsened.

By late July 2004, the city was infested with insurgents. The Fallujah Brigade was characterized as a failed experiment.<sup>118</sup> Strategically, Fallujah was a disaster. According to Dr. Rubai'e, Fallujah had become an insurgent sanctuary and symbol:

The Marines got out of the city...pulled back because there was a deal there that the Fallujah Brigade would go ahead [and provide security]. [The Marines] gave them [the Fallujah Brigade] arms, but they [the Fallujah Brigade] didn't deliver. After that, the bad guys entrenched themselves in the city, and the city was a symbol even among the Arab world, even when we went for the second time, in November.<sup>119</sup>

The insurgents used the city to make improvised explosive devices (IEDs), hide caches, and generate spiritual energy that inspired the insurgency nationwide. Fallujah also became the in-country nucleus for insurgent IO. Studio-quality media and propaganda were created and distributed via networks to regional, national, and international audiences.<sup>120</sup> However, the torture chambers, beheadings, and extremist activities were a double-edged sword—although intended to promote jihadist ideas, they also disillusioned some of the moderates and nationalists. This created a rift within the insurgency.<sup>121</sup>

During September–December 2004, Coalition forces and the IIG focused on setting the conditions for the January 2005 election, and eliminating insurgent sanctuaries was critical to holding nationwide election.

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<sup>118</sup> Conway, "Failed Strategy."

<sup>119</sup> Dr. Mowafak al-Rubai'e interview, 29 January 2006.

<sup>120</sup> MajGen Richard Natonski, Commander, 1st Marine Division (1st MARDIV) interview with the authors, Camp Pendleton, California, 9 Dec 2005.

<sup>121</sup> LtGen John Sattler and LtCol Daniel Wilson, "Al Fajr: Battle for Fallujah Part II," *Marine Corps Gazette*, July 2005.

## A. Next Sanctuary: Samarra

The MNF-I Campaign Plan directed the Coalition to control certain cities considered critical to country-wide security. Samarra followed An Najaf on the list of places to clean up, but the Iraqis had little to say about the operation in Samarra, perhaps due to its brevity. GEN Babikir noted, “We were planning that operation for a long time, but it didn’t take that long. A very successful operation.”<sup>122</sup>

LTG Qadir, as the Deputy for Operations for the Iraqi Forces before Operation AL FAJR, also characterized the operation as successful, but noted that “Samarra was a small operation. It was a battalion operation, and it took one day; it was not as big [as Fallujah].”<sup>123</sup>

Conditions in Samarra almost allowed MG John Batiste, Commander, 1st Infantry Division, to progress from Phase 2 (Shaping) to Phase 4 (Reconstruction or Stability) and bypass combat operations.<sup>124</sup> But due to worsening conditions, he executed Operation BATON ROUGE during 1–4 October to regain control of the city. The political-military interaction, use of force, and reconstruction efforts during BATON ROUGE reinforced processes, actions, and relationships that helped prepare everyone for AL FAJR.

## B. The Challenge of Fallujah

Intelligence planning, preparation, and hindsight provide a clearer picture of the importance of Fallujah to the insurgency (see Figure 8). The insurgents comprised former regime elements, Islamic extremists, tribes seeking power, and criminals. They had been establishing fighting positions and obstacles in depth throughout Fallujah for seven months. The insurgents also made it extremely difficult for Coalition HUMINT operations. The Commander of the Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha (SFODA) operating in Fallujah discussed the difficulty he had recruiting sources:

From about August to October there were just mass killings down in the city, and the insurgents were so paranoid of spies that they were just killing people; people being murdered and their heads cut off....This particular individual wanted to work Fallujah. I was just ecstatic because I needed someone else in there and he said he could do it. He went into Fallujah and about four days into

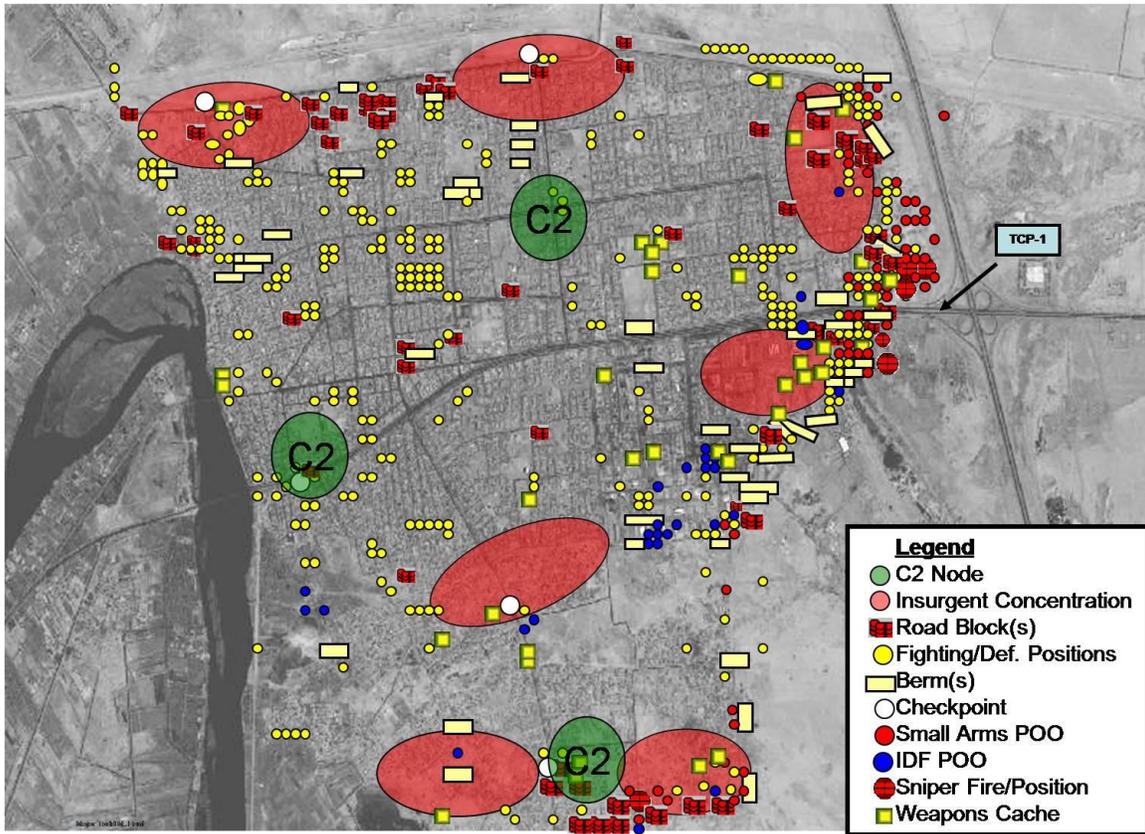
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<sup>122</sup> GEN Babikir Baderkahn Zibari interview, 3 February 2006.

<sup>123</sup> LTG Abdul Qadir, interview with the authors, Camp Victory, Baghdad, 25 January 2006.

<sup>124</sup> Having said that, the 1st Infantry Division worked hard to set those conditions. GEN George Casey interview, 6 February 2004.

his first visit down there he came back and said, 'I'm done.' He had quit. He said, 'That place is out of control; I'm never going back down there.'<sup>125</sup>



Source: 1st MARDIV

**Figure 8. Fallujah threat overview, October 2004**

Although HUMINT operations were extremely difficult, 1st MARDIV managed to develop a comprehensive threat picture through a series of feints and collection. Then-Maj Dave Bellon described building the intelligence picture:

We worked the Whisper Campaign to shake up the city to create instability, to exercise movement of the enemy. Again, we knew the enemy was a very mobile force inside the city. So we would, through a combination of kinetic and non-kinetic means, get the enemy to move and uncover, like create a feint for instance in the north and we knew there was a very strong cell in the south. We didn't know if they were tied together, meaning, would they reinforce and how could we interdict, or how could we then put our plan in place to stop that movement. So, through a combination of means, information operations, and

<sup>125</sup> Commander, 5th SFODA, interview with Bill Knarr, Fort Campbell, Tennessee, 5 April 2006.

maneuver, we would feint and attack in certain parts of the city and study the movement inside the city to see how and if they were moving and then we would come up with a plan to interdict that movement on D-Day.<sup>126</sup>

MajGen Natonski described it as a continuous process of intelligence driving operations and operations driving intelligence:

So in September you see an insurgency that is using Fallujah to re-arm, refit, rest, launch attacks, and then fall back to the sanctuary of Fallujah. All the while during the summer, Dave Bellon and 1st Marines had developed an Intel picture on the city....in October this [Figure 8] is what we faced to the best of our Intel collection in the city. As you can see, very heavily oriented in the east.<sup>127</sup>

### C. The Question of AL FAJR

When GEN Casey arrived in Iraq, he was not convinced that the Coalition and Iraqis had to assault Fallujah. As the insurgent picture became clearer, however, he saw this insurgent sanctuary—exporter of terror throughout Iraq—as a major obstacle to the January election. He and Amb Negroponte worked to convince Allawi that a major assault on Fallujah was the right thing to do.

But Allawi also recognized that the situation in Fallujah had grown progressively worse and constituted an obstacle to elections in January; he didn't need convincing.<sup>128</sup> When asked, 'Why before the January elections?' Allawi provided several reasons:

- We couldn't later because by then things would have been out of control . . . I was frightened that if we didn't hit the insurgency hard things would again flare up in the rest of Iraq. Sadr would rise and they would see the government as weak.
- No matter what we tried, the Iraqi forces still might not be ready [responding to pundits who claimed the ISF were not prepared] . . . .
- I believed....that the reconstruction working group was ready to take over [one of the lessons from VIGILANT RESOLVE—to have a plan in place for after combat operations], and
- The negotiations [with the insurgents and representatives of Fallujah] had ended.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> LtCol Dave Bellon interview, 4 November 2005.

<sup>127</sup> MajGen Richard Natonski, interview with the authors, Camp Pendleton, California, 9 December 2005.

<sup>128</sup> GEN George Casey interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>129</sup> PM Ayad Allawi interview, 6 February 2006.

In consultation with Casey, Negroponte, and principals within the Iraqi Government, Allawi agreed to the assault on Fallujah.<sup>130</sup>

## D. Learning Lessons: Setting Conditions for AL FAJR

Regimental Combat Team-1 (RCT-1) had been planning for the assault on Fallujah since VIGILANT RESOLVE. They knew they were going back, they just didn't know when. Now everyone was involved, instead of a single team bearing the responsibilities for most of the fighting in Fallujah while a thinly stretched 1st MARDIV attempted to contain the rest of Al Anbar province, as it had during VIGILANT RESOLVE.

The Coalition and Iraqi Government were sensitive to the failures and successes of the past year. Some lessons had already been applied during the transition phase: developing the IIF for counterinsurgency operations,<sup>131</sup> developing a plan, and teamwork. During this time—September–December 2004—a number of the lessons from 2004 were applied as the Coalition and Iraqi Government readied for Operation AL FAJR and moved towards the election:

- Ensured that forces were available throughout the theater, to include handing over Fallujah to competent Iraqi forces.
- Closed the borders to intruding insurgent forces.
- Ensured adequate logistics were available throughout the fight.
- Maintained lines of communications.
- Minimized the non-combatant population in Fallujah.
- Ensured there was a resourced reconstruction plan for post-combat operations.
- Captured the IO initiative by pre-empting the insurgents' use of IO.

The following discussion captures the ideas and opinions of those interviewed during the study with regard to the lessons learned and incorporated into the preparation for

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<sup>130</sup> Additionally, GEN Casey was asked if the timing of the US elections had any impact on his decision to conduct the assault on 8 November. He responded, "I actually wanted to start it before the US elections because I didn't think anyone would believe we would do it, Allawi couldn't make the timing. . . . That [the date of the US elections] really wasn't a factor, and the President we have gave us the flexibility and it just wasn't a factor."

<sup>131</sup> As a counterinsurgent force, there were no questions that they were to fight insurgents—Iraqi or foreign—thereby addressing the earlier complaint of Iraqi soldiers that they did not join to fight other Iraqis, but to defend the borders.

AL FAJR. They are categorized as Political, Security, Information Operations, and Reconstruction.

## 1. Political

GEN Casey continued to emphasize the political-military dynamics inherent in the situation:

This was political-military interaction and how the political side sets up military success. The Iraqi Interim Government [Allawi] got the government [the IIG] on board....This was a joint Coalition-Iraqi operation, and the IIG had the lead on selling it to the Iraqi people...had the lead on selling it to the countries of the region, because it was regional pressure that caused the first Fallujah to really come unglued.<sup>132</sup>

Allawi understood his responsibilities and the gravity of the decision. He listed his preliminary actions:

For the second Fallujah, I dismantled the Fallujah Brigade, beefed up the intelligence information on Fallujah and engaged the Iraqis. I appointed an Iraqi commander who was from Fallujah. We also embarked on a media campaign. Finally, I conducted meetings with people linked with the insurgents.<sup>133</sup>

The media campaign was conducted “throughout the Arab world, throughout the country so everyone would understand.”<sup>134</sup> Political actions to set the conditions for AL FAJR included:

- Soliciting regional support. Allawi contacted President Mubarek in Egypt, King Abdullah in Jordan, and others before the operation.
- Informing the Iraqi Government and people. Allawi informed all of Iraq that the impending assault on Fallujah was directed against the terrorists, not against the people of Fallujah.
- Exhausting political options. Allawi was adamant about meeting with those linked to the insurgents and wanted to make sure he had done all he could to negotiate a settlement before committing to military action.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> LTG Richard Natonski interview, 9 December 2005.

<sup>133</sup> Allawi intended to appoint an Iraqi commander from Fallujah; however, one could not be found and MG Qadir was appointed as the Iraqi Ground Force Commander for AL FAJR. PM Ayad Allawi interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>134</sup> PM Ayad Allawi interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>135</sup> PM Ayad Allawi interview, 6 February 2006.

Despite Allawi and Casey's conviction that the assault on Fallujah was necessary, there were some within the Iraqi Government and Coalition who disagreed or who were reluctant to support military action at that time:

- Dr. Rubai'e, the National Security Advisor, felt that the assault could be deferred until after the election. Similarly, the Iraqi Islamic Party, the major Sunni contingent, encouraged more negotiations.
- Sheikh Ghazi al-Yawar, the President of Iraq, who had interceded to stop the first Fallujah, was adamantly opposed to the assault.
- The United Kingdom, which had disagreed with the Coalition's approach to VIGILANT RESOLVE and what it considered America's heavy-handed tactics, also voiced reservations over AL FAJR.<sup>136</sup> However, the MNF-I's request to move the UK Black Watch unit to the Fallujah area to support the operation required UK Parliamentary approval. Request and approval ensured that any reservations the United Kingdom might have had were reconciled before the battle. That said, there was still reluctance, albeit unofficial, within UK ranks.

During AN NAJAF, Casey had asked how the Coalition could help the new IIG be successful; during AL FAJR he asked, how could the Iraqi Government help the Coalition?<sup>137</sup>

We were looking at the situation in Fallujah. Just a hugely difficult urban fight. So we started asking ourselves, what can the government do for us that will make our job easier?...the emergency decree they put out said 24-hour curfew, no one's allowed to carry guns, the police force is disbanded, no driving...a range of measures that made target selection and engagement easier.<sup>138</sup>

## 2. Security

LTG Thomas Metz, Commander, MNC-I, vowed that Operation AL FAJR would not be a crisis response action like VIGILANT RESOLVE and operations to quell the Shi'a uprising in April–May had been. Conditions were being set, including increased troop levels to secure critical areas of the country.

I based almost everything on the lessons I learned in April...an attack into Fallujah could potentially create another uprising around the country, and so it was a total Corps operation....The Corps focused on resources and getting the

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<sup>136</sup> Greg Lewis, "Welsh Troops Face Fallujah Backlash," *Wales on Sunday*, 17 October 2004.

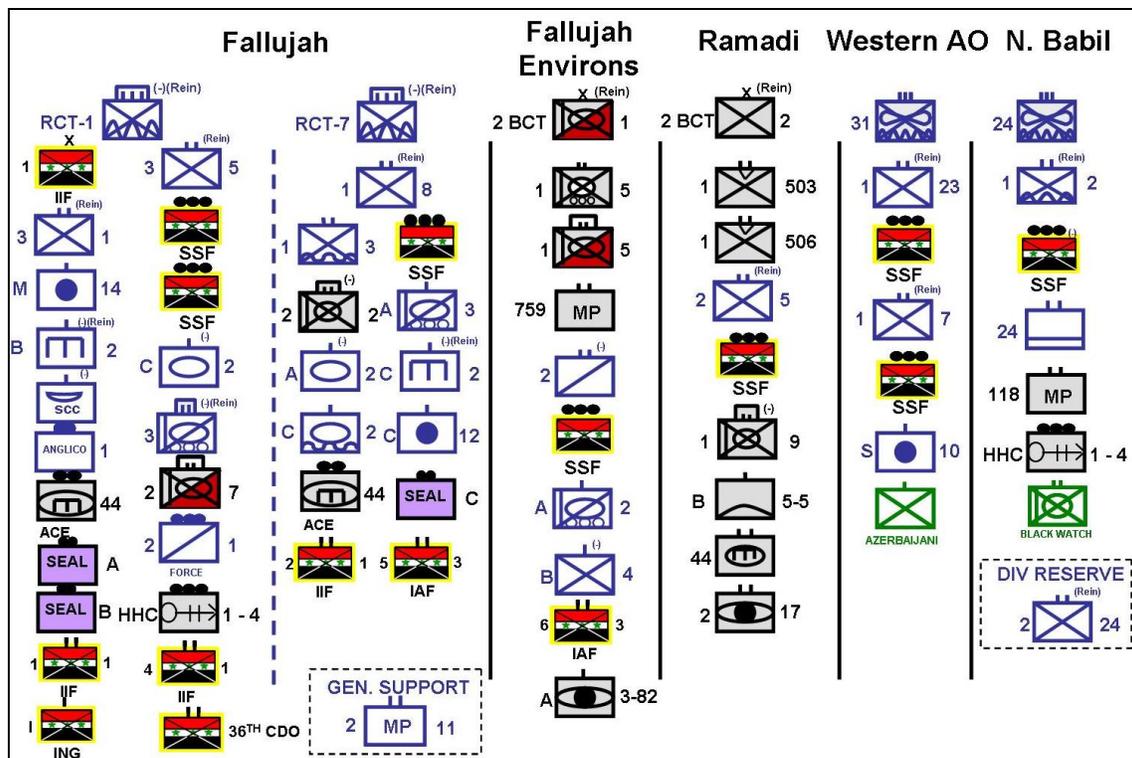
<sup>137</sup> GEN George Casey interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>138</sup> According to Casey, this is the emergency decree that Allawi announced on the eve of the assault.

plan for the whole country, everything from border closings to doubling stock-  
 ages of class III and V.<sup>139</sup>

Logistics had been a major problem during April–May 2004, so to preclude a recur-  
 rence, MNC-I positioned forces to secure lines of communication. Additionally, the MEF  
 built a supply depot they called the Iron Mountain to ensure critical supplies were pre-  
 positioned to support the battle.

The number of Coalition and Iraqi forces involved in the main assault force and ad-  
 jacent areas was far more robust than those available for VIGILANT RESOLVE.<sup>140</sup> (See Fig-  
 ure 9 for AL FAJR task organization).



Source: 1st MARDIV

Figure 9. Task organization for Operation AL FAJR

Of particular concern was ISF operational competence. Would they stand and fight?  
 Were they capable, sufficient, integrated, and sustainable? Was there a plan to hand over

<sup>139</sup> LTG Thomas Metz, USA, telephone interview with Bill Knarr, 19 Dec 2005. Metz was Deputy Com-  
 mander CJTF-7, Feb—May 2004, and Commander, MNC-I, May 2004-Feb 2005. Classes of Supply III  
 and V refer to petroleum, oils, lubricants (POL) and ammunition, respectively.

<sup>140</sup> Coalition forces available to VIGILANT RESOLVE consisted of a Regimental Combat Team with, even-  
 tually, four Marine battalions committed to the city.

the security of Fallujah to a competent ISF after the combat operations? The Coalition and Iraqi Government discussed these issues, which had surfaced in previous operations, before the assault. However, they knew that it took time to teach, coach, build, organize, and equip a competent ISF.

During VIGILANT RESOLVE, four under-strength Iraqi battalions were available; only elements of the 36th Commando Battalion remained to fight. During AL FAJR, the ISF would field elements of the 1st Iraqi Intervention Forces (IIF) Brigade (headquarters and three battalions), the 3rd Brigade of the 5th Iraqi Division (headquarters and two battalions), the 36th Commando Battalion, and small platoons of Iraqi Specialized Special Forces (SSF) to support the Marine battalions.<sup>141</sup> However, the Iraqi on-hand strength was less than might be expected. For example, LTC Yassir Haziz Muqmad, commander of 4th Battalion, 1st IIF Brigade was authorized a force of 759 personnel, but had only 300 on hand for AL FAJR.<sup>142</sup> Most Iraqi battalions were at 50–60% strength—crucial to computing combat power. Yassir did say that their individual equipment, weapons, body armor, helmets, and night vision goggles were in good condition.

There was also a difference in opinion concerning the ISF's readiness. Allawi told Casey that he preferred the Iraqi Forces to lead, but there were a number of factors to consider when determining the ISF's role in the operation:<sup>143</sup>

- It was going to be a difficult fight. Fallujah was an icon of insurgent strength and the insurgents had been building defensive positions and recruiting since April.
- Failure was not an option. The operation had to be an overpowering, quick victory—there could be no hesitation or the insurgent's IO system could turn the outcome into an insurgent victory and IIG/Coalition defeat.
- It was a Coalition-led, ISF-supported fight that had to have an Iraqi face.<sup>144</sup>
- Despite the number of Iraqi units trained and organized, they were still a relatively small and inexperienced force. Although the ISF participated in previous combat

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<sup>141</sup> The Iraqi brigade headquarters elements were present, and in some cases participated in planning, but control of the Iraqi battalions was vested in the Coalition.

<sup>142</sup> A major weakness at the operational and strategic levels was payday. There was no direct deposit, so every payday, the Iraqi soldiers took their paychecks home. This meant at least one-third were always gone.

<sup>143</sup> PM Ayad Allawi interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>144</sup> Natonski was correct in saying AL FAJR needed the Iraqi capability, not just the facade, but ISF forces were limited and they had to be used where it would most benefit the mission—in some cases that was simply an Iraqi face. The authors would venture that the political imperative was to involve the Iraqi forces regardless of the potential for teaching, coaching, building.

operations, they had not led the charge in those fights, and particularly not against a well entrenched enemy. Additionally, the ISF still relied heavily on the Coalition for operational support and sustainment and were not resourced or experienced to lead that type of fight. This would be highlighted later during RCT-1's assessment of the Iraqi forces that they would fight alongside.

Was Allawi aware of the disparity between ISF capabilities and the difficulty of the upcoming fight? Was he aware of the stakes if the ISF did not perform well? Casey's response to Allawi was, "We [LTG Petraeus was with him at the time] don't think the Iraqi units are ready."<sup>145</sup> Hence, the ISF were relegated to a supporting but necessary role in AL FAJR.

To meet Casey's guidance of relinquishing control of the city to a capable ISF, the MOD and Ministry of Interior (MOI) were to provide additional forces—the 2nd IIF Brigade and Public Order Brigades, respectively—to secure the city following major combat operations.

### 3. Information Operations

IO had been a dismal failure during VIGILANT RESOLVE. The Coalition and Iraqi Government needed to address several questions as they prepared for AL FAJR: How do we retain the IO initiative? How do we ensure the freedom of our IO and control the enemy's use of it?

Brig Gen E. F. Lessel, USAF, Director of Strategic Communications (STRATCOM), who was responsible for both public affairs and IO, had three large tasks: (1) ensuring effective strategic communications for MNF-I, (2) working strategic communications on an interagency level, and (3)

helping the Iraqi Government do strategic communications. The Iraqi media didn't know how to do interviews, they weren't familiar with the free press, they didn't know how to ask questions during interviews...we ended up helping the Iraqi Government establish a communications directorate.<sup>146</sup>

As such, Lessel worked closely with Allawi's staff to coordinate media events and releases.

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<sup>145</sup> PM Ayad Allawi interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>146</sup> Brig Gen E.F. Lessel, USAF, interview with Bill Knarr, Washington, DC, 28 December 2005.

An excellent example of IO is the name adopted for the AL FAJR operation. Originally called Operation PHANTOM FURY, Lessel recognized—as did Casey and Allawi—the negative implications of a US moniker:

We went back to the IIG and said, ‘What would you call this?’ They responded ‘Operation AL FAJR, New Dawn.’ Lexicon was very important...cultural aspects we have to think through from an IO standpoint: it’s what you say...who says it, when you say it, and to what audiences.<sup>147</sup>

Fortunately, Allawi understood his media mission and—according to Casey, Lessel, and others—was good at it. Allawi’s concept was that

One of the components necessary in dealing with Fallujah was to keep the media coverage throughout the Arab world, throughout the country so everyone would understand. I went two days before the operation started and spoke about Zarqawi, and I said specifically that he had taken the honorable people of Fallujah as hostages. I felt it was very important...that we keep the people of Iraq informed that we are not after the people, we are after the terrorists.<sup>148</sup>

Metz understood the necessity of IO as well and vowed not to lose that contest again. In preparation for AL FAJR, he developed what he called the IO threshold. The purpose of the IO threshold was to

...enable the MNC-I commander to visualize a point at which enemy information-based operations (aimed at international, regional, and local media coverage) began to undermine the Coalition forces’ ability to conduct unconstrained combat operations.<sup>149</sup>

This didn’t mean the Coalition couldn’t cross the IO threshold, but it did mean that when it did, it had to complete the operation within days and hours. Having said that, the MNF-I, MNC-I, and MNF-W plan included “courses of action to mass effects in the information domain, thereby raising the IO threshold and creating additional ‘maneuver’ room for combat operations in Fallujah.” They did this by countering the enemy IO, and conducting IO shaping operations to “build a strong base of support for combat opera-

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<sup>147</sup> The literal translation of *al fajr* is *dawn*. III Corps, which provided the nucleus of the MNC-I command and staff, is also known as the Phantom Corps.

<sup>148</sup> PM Ayad Allawi interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>149</sup> LTG Thomas Metz and LTC James Hutton, “Massing Effects In the Information Domain: A Case Study in Aggressive Information Operations,” *Military Review* (May-June 2006): 2–12.

tions in advance of the operation; in other words, we were able to raise the IO threshold.”<sup>150</sup> For Metz, IO success meant completing the military mission.

One of the failures of VIGILANT RESOLVE was the absence of Western media, or, for that matter, any media that wasn’t pro-insurgent, in Fallujah. For Operation AL FAJR, Coalition forces planned a robust media embed program, an example of which is discussed later in this chapter.

## 4. Reconstruction

A major contributor to IO is an effective post-combat reconstruction program. In preparing for Operation AL FAJR, General Casey kept in mind one of the lessons learned during Operation AN NAJAF: to use reconstruction efforts and other lines of counterinsurgency operations to build upon success.<sup>151</sup>

Allawi was just as adamant about the reconstruction effort. His concern during VIGILANT RESOLVE was, “What should we do after we liberate Fallujah?” For AL FAJR, he formed a team to take care of Fallujah administration and services.<sup>152</sup> Allawi appointed Dr. Hachem al-Hassani, Minister of Industry and Minerals, as head of the Iraqi Reconstruction Committee and, before allowing AL FAJR to proceed, he ensured that the committee was prepared for post-combat reconstruction.

As conditions were being set, 1st MARDIV prepared to execute AL FAJR.

## E. Operation AL FAJR

The 1st MARDIV’s mission was to attack “to destroy anti-Iraqi forces in Fallujah in order to establish legitimate local control.”<sup>153</sup> The Commander’s intent was to: eliminate Fallujah as an insurgent sanctuary, set conditions for local control of the city, and support the MNF-I’s effort to secure the approaches to Baghdad. The operation consisted of five phases:

- I. Preparation and Shaping
- II. Enhanced Shaping
- III. Decisive Offensive Operations

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<sup>150</sup> Metz and Hutton, “Massing Effects,” 6.

<sup>151</sup> GEN George Casey interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>152</sup> PM Ayad Allawi interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>153</sup> MajGen Richard Natonski interview, 9 December 2005. Extracted from the briefing provided by MajGen Natonski.

#### IV. Transition

#### V. Transfer of Control

Additionally, MajGen Natonski issued a letter to the Division leaders that embraced the concept of teach-coach-build, emphasized the objectives of a free and democratic Iraq, recognized the insurgents' strategy, and highlighted the importance of reconstruction.

In support of the Iraqi Interim Government, we will assault into the city using the principles of speed, mass and shock to rapidly throw the insurgent resistance off balance...It is critical to bring our assault phase to a conclusion as quickly as possible. In this way, we can meet the IIG's desire to return Fallujah to the Fallujans and deny the insurgents the IO victory they will seek by forcing a protracted fight and the publicity that entails.

This is a Coalition fight. We will be attacking alongside the brave soldiers of the Iraqi Security Forces, men who will fight to give their families a chance to live in the free society that the elections in January will help facilitate. Be proactive in highlighting the actions of the Iraqi forces and reach out to incorporate them into your operations. The future security of Iraq depends on them, and your efforts will build confidence, self esteem, and tactical expertise among their soldiers. As you prepare for the fighting ahead, remember to set your sights on the rebuilding that will follow.<sup>154</sup>

The following discussion of the battle phases centers on teaching, coaching, and building the Iraqis.

### 1. Preparation & Shaping: Training and Integrating Iraqi Forces

The Coalition and Iraqi Government played a major role in setting the conditions for success at the strategic and operational levels. At the tactical level, 1st MARDIV executed a series of feints and raids that supported intelligence collection and analysis that fed targeting and additional operations. Those feints and raids also deceived and confused the enemy about the time and place of the main attack.<sup>155</sup> 1st MARDIV also conducted a series of unit

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<sup>154</sup> MajGen Richard Natonski, "To the Leaders of the 1st Marine Division," November 2004.

<sup>155</sup> We venture no one was deceived on the time and place of the main attack when the forces started lining up north of the city. However, at the tactical level, it appears the insurgents anticipated the strike from the east and southeast because of their emplacement of defensive positions and obstacles. The exception is the interior of the Jolan and the approach to the Hadrah mosque (refer to Figure 2 for locations) which one would have expected to be defended. However, when the insurgents saw the build-up on the eve of the assault, they didn't have time to adequately re-orient those defenses.

movements, battle handovers, and integration of joint<sup>156</sup> and combined forces to set conditions within the province for the battle.

The myth of Fallujah remained for the Iraqi soldiers, even as they prepared for AL FAJR. Fallujah was a new mission for the 1st Brigade, 1st IIF Division, considered one of the best in the ISF, but when they heard *Fallujah*, “everybody was scared.”<sup>157</sup> Getting some of the units there was a challenge. MAJ John Curwen, Senior Advisor to the 6th Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division, described two events that had a significant impact on the 6th Battalion’s confidence before deploying:

[The first event] was the massacre of 46 or 47 soldiers from a Battalion in the 7th Brigade, who had just finished basic training and were taken off a bus and killed probably about 40–60 km from Kirkush on their way on leave. That caused a number of soldiers—a number of whom were there truthfully because it was a job that paid money—it gave them pause.

The second event was when they found out that they were deploying to Fallujah, and they discovered this before they actually left. The Battalion went from 700+ down to 229 soldiers when we hit the ground in Fallujah.<sup>158</sup>

Maj Michael Zacchea, USMC, Senior Advisor for the 5th Iraqi Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 5th IAD, also talked about the number of AWOL soldiers in his unit:

We did have a lot of desertions right before the Battle of Fallujah. We had one entire company, about 120 Iraqis just up and left. I don’t know how that could possibly have happened, because 120 guys walking through the desert—I don’t know how anybody doesn’t see them—but they were just gone. But the people who remained were solid.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Although the focus of the paper is on the development of the Iraqis, team-building by 1st MARDIV was just as important with sister services [Army, Navy (SEALS/SEABEES), USAF (dog teams/JTACS) and the British Black Watch. Prior coordination with the air forces of the Army, Navy, Marines, Air force, and SOF also paid huge dividends.

<sup>157</sup> Mr. Mazin Muhammad Rhada, 1st IIF Brigade interpreter, interview with the authors, Al Qaim, 20 January 2006.

<sup>158</sup> Major John Curwen, telephone interview with the Bill Knarr, 3 October 2005. According to Curwen, *Jundi* were paid for work they had done, and *when to pay* the *Jundi* became a major decision. The 6th Battalion opted to wait and not pay their soldiers until they were in Fallujah and the 5th Battalion paid them before departing for Fallujah. Some *Jundi* from 5th Battalion quit before deployment and others from 6th Battalion left (*deserted* may come to mind, but there were no hard penalties for leaving the Army—this was a job to most) after they arrived in Fallujah.

<sup>159</sup> *Morning Edition*, NPR, “Marines Discuss Training of Iraqi Troops,” 21 June 2006, with Maj Michael Zacchea and 1st Lt Seth Moulton.

Col Craig Tucker, Commander, RCT-7, which was responsible for the assault on the east side of Fallujah, also commented that at the beginning of Fallujah, “I assessed the IIF as capable of doing company-level operations with a fairly capable advisory team.”<sup>160</sup>

Although an advisor’s principal job was to advise the Iraqis, the ASTs also needed to advise and update the Coalition on how to best employ the Iraqi forces since the ISF’s mission, structure, and capability during 2004 had evolved and matured. MAJ Fred Miller explained:

Maneuver commanders confuse the Iraqi Army with ICDC or ING. The Iraqi Army is truly an army, these guys go through basic training, advanced individual training, the officers go through officer basic courses, they get collective training, they have METL [mission essential task list], they are organized and trained like a regular army unit. The ICDC and ING, for the most part, are local hires who go through a two-week training program, are given an AK-47, and told to go out and do good things in the communities they live in. So most maneuver commanders...break ING up at the platoon level and task organize platoons to say, another Coalition platoon. So when we get into Fallujah we have to educate them [Coalition] on our capabilities as a unit. The worst thing I could have done was to break my unit up into platoon-size elements.<sup>161</sup>

Miller went on to say that he was fortunate to work with maneuver battalion commanders who were willing to listen and trusted his judgment as the advisor.

MAJ Curwen, Senior Advisor to the 6th Battalion, echoed those comments:

Colonel Kendrick and Colonel Formica did an excellent job working with the Iraqi Battalions. From the very beginning, Colonel Formica invited Colonel Jewad, the Iraqi Battalion Commander, to the Operations Order briefing. Colonel Jewad took part in the Operation Order brief like any of the other Battalion Commanders in the 2nd Brigade.<sup>162</sup>

Although the ASTs worked hard to prepare their Iraqi units for AL FAJR, the 1st MARDIV now needed to integrate them into its formations. The division started by building the Iraqi units a place to live and train. Within days, the Seabees erected the East Fallujah Iraqi Camp to billet and train the Iraqis. Col Michael Shupp, Commander, RCT-1, explained how timely assessment of ISF capabilities guided training:

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<sup>160</sup> Col Craig Tucker, telephone interview with author Bill Knarr, 19 October 2005.

<sup>161</sup> Miller interview, 30 August 2005.

<sup>162</sup> Major Curwen interview, 3 October 2005.

When we got them, we had to do an assessment to find out what their capabilities were because all previous ISF were really questionable. We had to find their level of proficiency...at the squad and company level, I believe is where they fell out. But no fire support, no medical support per se, and then we had to train them. So we had a small cadre. They did rules of engagement, the medical classes, the Law of Land Warfare, geometry of fires...then we even put them through a live-fire tactic...where they went into the shooting houses and onto the range, so we could see how good they actually were.

Shupp also stressed building relationships:

Dinners, personal get-togethers were where we got to talk to them, but then we also brought the Iraqi staffs in...24 hours prior we started giving them presentations on what we were actually going to do. No written orders. The training team liaison gave those [orders] to them, hours before the operation so that nothing would be compromised.<sup>163</sup>

Mr. Mazin, interpreter, 1st IIF Brigade, echoed Shupp's comments:

[Col Shupp and MajGen Natonski] use the Iraqis like a partner. There is no more difference between the Iraqis and the Americans. They share everything—about intelligence information, about the planning, and moving together...We are working together, it is very good.<sup>164</sup>

Not only did Natonski and Shupp treat the Iraqis as partners, so did the ASTs. Mazin commented that LTC Marcus De Oliveira, the Senior Advisor to the 1st IIF Brigade, and General Tarik, the 1st IIF Brigade Commander, had a great relationship: "There is no difference between them—they eat together and they work together."

The ASTs' primary responsibility was training and advising the ISF. One of the major weaknesses noted of the Iraqi military was leadership. LTC Rodney Symons, Senior Advisor for the 3rd Iraqi Brigade, 5th Division, reflecting on leadership development techniques that proved effective, cited "leading by example":

They saw that we lead from the front; we endure the same hardship. If we tell you to do something, we are going to go out and do it ourselves. That was just a function of leadership and the soldiers took great comfort that there was an American right there beside them as they launched to secure an objective, or they did an attack by fire, and they went in to kick in a door of a house. They

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<sup>163</sup> MajGen Richard Natonski interview, 9 December 2005. Natonski emphasized the team-building aspects.

<sup>164</sup> Mr. Mazin Muhammad Rhada, interpreter, 1st IIF Brigade, interview with the authors, Al Qaim, 20 January 2006.

[advisors] were getting shot at; they were fighting alongside and in some cases they were helping to lead the soldiers.<sup>165</sup>

This was not an isolated comment. During interviews, leadership traits consistently became topics of discussion when speaking of teaching, coaching, and building the Iraqi forces. Leading by example was by far the most important training and confidence-building method the Coalition forces used.

In addition to the ASTs, 1st MARDIV provided liaison elements to ISF units to help coordinate operations and arrange support. Communications between the ISF and Coalition forces were crucial, and these liaison teams helped maintain this link.

In addition to the team building activities, MajGen Natonski spoke of the command relationship with the ISF:

We basically had TACON of the 6 ISF Bns. C2 was passed to the Regt/BCT level. There really wasn't much of a C2 structure above the Bn level in 2004. We also had ADCON over them for supply. All ammo, fuel, and food was provided by the USMC.<sup>166</sup>

Due to the number of civilians in Fallujah, one of VIGILANT RESOLVE's challenges had been to positively identify the enemy. Rather than announcing an evacuation, the Coalition initiated rumors—dubbed the Whisper Campaign—that the offensive was about to start. Combined with Allawi's announcement regarding Fallujah, the residents took the hint and started leaving in October; only ~5,000 remained at the time of the actual assault.

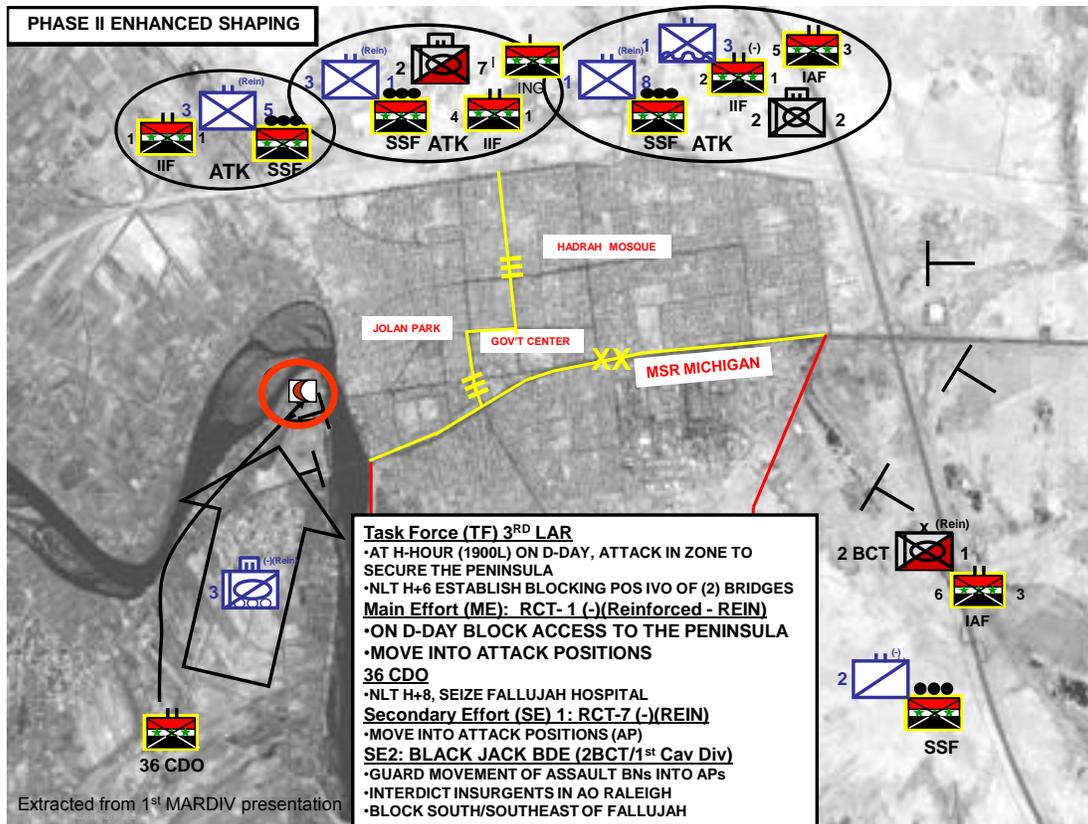
## 2. Enhanced Shaping: D-Day, 7 November 2004

Fallujah was isolated on D-Day via electronic attack, dynamic cordon to the south-east (by 2BCT of the 1st Cav Division), securing the bridges on the west, the peninsula assault, joint fires, and the movement of forces to the north into attack positions (see Figure 10). The Fallujah Hospital was also seized.

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<sup>165</sup> LTC Rodney Symons, USA, telephone interview with Bill Knarr, 26 Aug 2005.

<sup>166</sup> MajGen Natonski, former Commander 1st MARDIV during AL FAJR, email exchange with Bill Knarr, 8 September 2009.



**Figure 10. Operation AL FAJR, Phase II: Enhanced Shaping, 7 November 2004**

During VIGILANT RESOLVE, the insurgents had used the hospital as a command center, which contributed to their IO success by providing a platform to disseminate disinformation. Denying them that platform and conduit was the reason for seizing the hospital early in AL FAJR. In addition, the 36th Commandos, an element of the Iraqi Special Operations Forces, took the lead and gave the IIG and Coalition an effective IO platform.

The hospital area, at the north end of the peninsula on the west side of Fallujah, is circled in red in Figure 10. Figure 11 is a higher resolution view of the area. The old North Bridge, the site of the Blackwater contractor mutilations, is within one hundred meters of the hospital.



Image courtesy of National Geospatial Agency

**Figure 11. Fallujah Hospital and the old North Bridge**

During their time training under the 5th Special Forces Group (SFG), the 36th Commandos had become expert in reconnaissance, HUMINT, and direct action operations, such as seizing and clearing sensitive sites and targeting terrorists. They operated with distinction during VIGILANT RESOLVE, were prepared to seize the Imam Ali Mosque in An Najaf, and seized the Golden Mosque and hospital during Operation BATON ROUGE in October. They also conducted weekly operations in and around Baghdad.

One of the reasons the 36th performed so proficiently was the time and resources the 5th SFG invested in its development. The 5th SFG established, trained, mentored, and partnered with the unit since November 2003. (Figure 12 shows the assault teams during mission rehearsal with their advisors before the assault.)

At 2200 hours on 7 November, as the 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion (3rd LAR) secured the peninsula and set up blocking positions on the North and South Bridges leading from the peninsula to Fallujah, the 36th Commandos entered the hospital compound and had it secured by midnight. By early the next morning, they had vetted the residents and staff and found insurgents, small arms, and RPGs among them.



Image courtesy of 5th SFG

**Figure 12. 36th Commandos' mission rehearsal**

During the operation, one combat cameraman and two advisors outfitted with helmet-mounted video cameras taped the operation. The helmet-mounted video was fed back to the MEF to exploit for IO purposes.

Embedded with the 36th Commandos, in addition to their 5th SFG advisors and combat cameraman, were one television reporter and two journalists; the reporter was Kirk Spitzer of CBS news (Figure 13).

Spitzer, with camera rolling, followed Assault Team A of the Iraqi forces as they stormed the main entrance to the hospital complex. At 0200, still at the hospital, he broadcast video clips via satellite to the CBS news facility in London, to be rebroadcast to CBS in New York. The Strategic Communications plan included the American public as well as the international community.

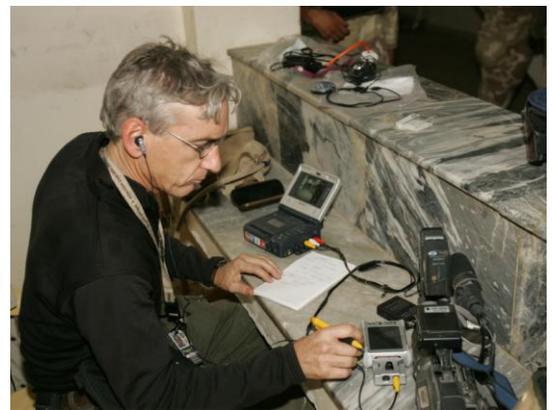


Image courtesy of 5th SFG

**Figure 13. Newsmen Kirk Spitzer at the hospital during AL FAJR**

A combat cameraman, SSG Brett Bassett, accompanied Assault Team B on the east side of the hospital, capturing footage of the 36th Commandos as they entered the hospital and cleared their sector (Figure 14).

As the 36th, accompanied by Bassett, moved through the doctor's lounge in the middle of the hospital, they paused in front of a television. There, they saw themselves conducting the operation (Figure 15) they had completed roughly two hours earlier. Surprised, they turned to Bassett for an explanation.



Image courtesy of 5th SFG

**Figure 14. 36th Commandos seize Fallujah Hospital, 7 November 2004**



Image courtesy of 5th SFG

**Figure 15. Al Jazeera broadcast of 36th Commandos' hospital seizure**

Bassett didn't know how Al Jazeera was obtaining the video; he only knew it wasn't his. The 5th SFG personnel thought Al Jazeera had intercepted Spitzer's transmission to London. Although Allawi had kicked the network out of Iraq during the summer of 2004, Al Jazeera was the first to air video of AL FAJR combat operations; Spitzer's footage didn't air on US national news channels until later on 8 November. It is ironic that an Arabic news media organization, which did not support Coalition and IIG operations in Iraq, was first to broadcast news of the operation's success—probably giving it more impact and credibility.

A FBIS translation of an Al Jazeera 0700, 9 November broadcast addresses the capture of the hospital and reveals the “spin” Al Jazeera put on the Coalition/ISF seizure of the hospital:

Targeting medical installations in Al Fallujah is at the heart of the strategy of the Americans, who say that hospitals, schools, and mosques are used by fighters to protect themselves and that medical sources were not honest in their reports on the size of civilian losses during the April operation. Another reading says that targeting hospitals is aimed at destroying a neutral witness to the battle and depriving the injured of medical treatment.<sup>167</sup>

Elements of the 1st IIF relieved the 36th Commandos at the hospital the next morning.

### 3. Decisive offensive operations

#### a. Assault

MajGen Natonski described the array of Coalition forces as they moved into attack positions on 8 November:

I was wandering all across the front, meeting with the units as they moved into attack positions, and it was awe inspiring. At that moment, this was the greatest concentration of combat power on the face of the earth...as you looked at the attack forces ready to cross and surround the city, they were a combination of Army and Marine forces with their Iraqi counterparts.<sup>168</sup>

Not surprisingly, this array of forces was a tremendous confidence builder for the Iraqi soldiers. LtCol Michael McCarthy, Chief of 1st MARDIV's Effects Coordination Cell, was with Natonski at the time:

You could see the Iraqis drive around in their trucks and it would be kind of quiet, until they got the sense of it. Look at all this stuff! Literally, they would cheer and wave and they knew, 'We are on the right side.' They didn't really know what was going on, but once they took a look around and saw tanks and Marines and soldiers, and guns and helicopters, you could see their calmness, 'We are actually on the winning team this time.'<sup>169</sup>

The assault, Phase III-A, started at 1900 local on 8 November with 2-7 Cavalry leading the main attack for RCT-1 in the west (see Figure 16). Its mission was to penetrate and secure the Jolan district—a heavily defended and difficult area because of its Byzantine architecture and close-quarter structure.

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<sup>167</sup> FBIS media file GMP20041109000056—Al-Jazirah Correspondent on Military Operation in Al-Fallujah City.

<sup>168</sup> MajGen Richard Natonski interview, 9 December 2005.

<sup>169</sup> LtCol Michael McCarthy, interview with the authors, Camp Pendleton, California, 9 December 2005.

Col Shupp introduced the 4th Battalion, 1st IIF Brigade (left-most Iraqi unit circled in red, Figure 16) to the fight on 9 November. They were responsible for the lines of communication security on Phase Line Henry, the north-south road through the city (yellow line north of the Government Center). Their mission was to prevent leakers from 7th Marines' area of operations from flowing into the Jolan, moving east to west. Shupp backed them up with one company of mechanized infantry; they had no heavy weapons and no fire support except as provided by the Coalition. Shupp spoke of his concerns:

I was desperately concerned about blue-on-blue casualties created by these forces....To make sure there was no confusion, my regimental staff walked them into their battle positions. As we walked them into town, there were all sorts of negligent discharges and young Iraqi soldiers firing at ghosts in buildings; they were just scared to death. Their Sergeant Major shot himself in the foot, an accidental discharge. So we walked them into position, and this battalion did a tremendous job under LTC Yassir.<sup>170</sup>

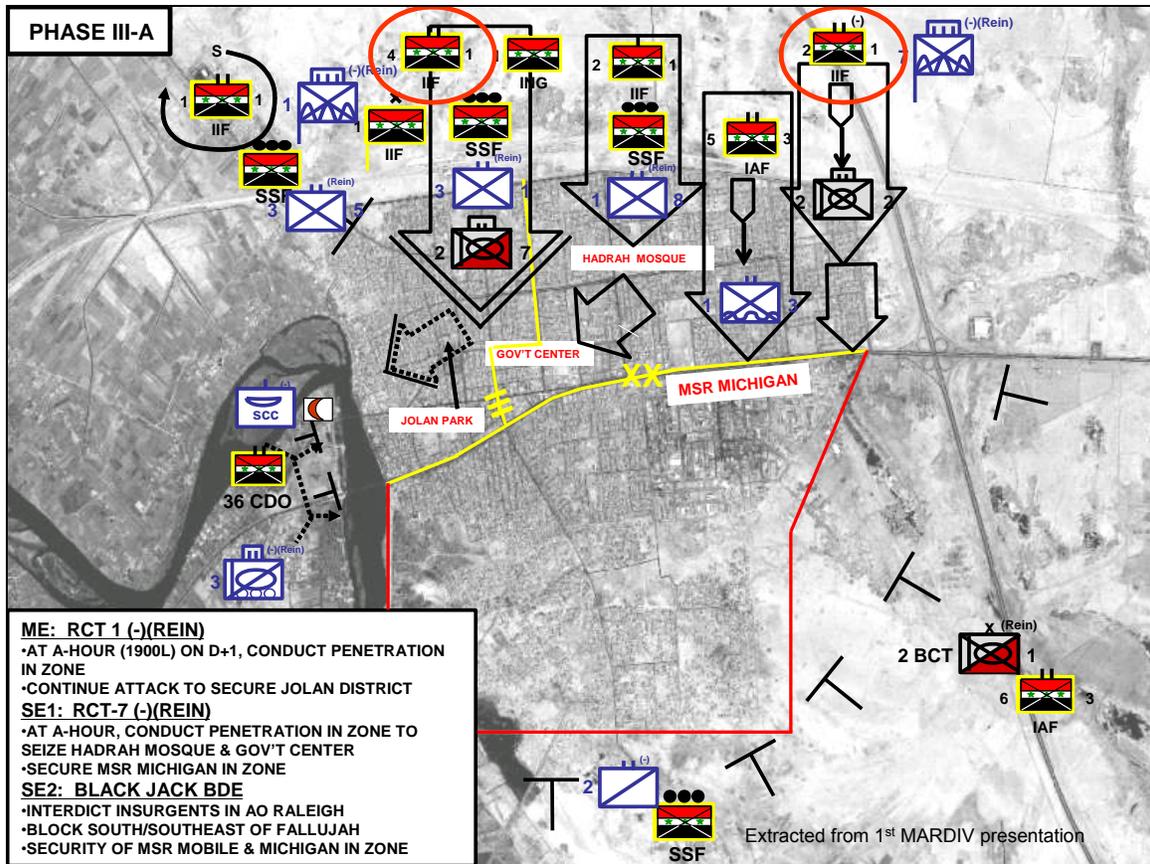
RCT-7 conducted a supporting attack to the east, seizing the Hadrah Mosque and Government Center and securing main supply route (MSR) Michigan. Col Tucker used elements of the 2nd Battalion, 1st IIF Brigade to back them up.

The 2nd Battalion was one of the units that had refused to fight in Fallujah in April 2004, but this time, according to SSG Bryan Reed, an advisor to the battalion, the unit wanted to come back: "They had something to prove," and in the heat of battle, "they exceeded everyone's expectations."<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Shupp interview, 9 December 2005.

<sup>171</sup> SGT Jared Zabaldo, MNSTC-I Public Affairs, "MNSTC-I ASTs Led the Way in Iraqi Fight for Fallujah," *The Advisor*, 27 November 2004.



Source: 1st MARDIV

**Figure 16. Operation AL FAJR, Phase III-A: Assault, D+1, 8 November 2004**

Developing these *Jundi* from mutineers and deserters into a combat force is a tribute to their advisors and Coalition partners. Part of the advisor's art of teaching and building confidence is to understand the Iraqi unit's capabilities, and to recognize the fine line that separates building confidence from over-commitment. LTC Marcus DeOliveira, USA, Senior Advisor to the 1st Brigade, reflected on finding the right balance:

We tried to put them in situations where they felt comfortable. We didn't try to overextend them. If we kept raising the bar each time we put them in different situations, they slowly gained confidence and eventually conducted a night attack into Fallujah alongside Marines—which is what the 2nd Battalion eventually did.<sup>172</sup>

According to MAJ Fred Miller, Senior Advisor, 2nd Battalion, 1st IIF Brigade, the 2nd Battalion was broken down into company-sized elements and the two companies

<sup>172</sup> LTC Marcus DeOliveira, telephone interview with Bill Knarr, 20 July 2005.

attached to 2-2 Infantry “secured the rear of the task force as it pushed south...and helped to clear certain objectives and neighborhoods along the way.”



**Figure 17. MAJ Fred Miller, senior advisor, and an Iraqi soldier during AL FAJR**

Photo by US Army SGT Zabaldo

This wasn't as simple as it might sound. Beginning 9 November, the 2nd Battalion ran into entrenched insurgents who had evaded the 2-2 Infantry and organized their defenses in depth. The fighting was heavy and *Jundi*, Soldiers, and Marines continued the fight south through Fallujah.<sup>173</sup> The 2nd Battalion—in fact all of the participating Iraqi forces—were better trained when they entered Fallujah during AL FAJR than during VIGILANT RESOLVE and AN NAJAF, and a much more developed, experienced, and confident force when the fighting was finally over.

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<sup>173</sup> The intensity of the fighting in parts of Fallujah was unimaginable. Vivid descriptions are in many of the tactical reviews provided by imbeds, BLOGs, documentaries, and award citations that followed. The authors ask that readers keep that in mind as they view the fight from the teaching, coaching, building perspective.

It was also important to publicize the Iraqi's contributions to the fight. In accordance with Natonski's intent, 1/8 Marines capitalized on "Kodak moments"—opportunities to put Iraqis in the lead. When 1/8 with Iraqi forces captured the Government Center, the media release was of the Iraqi soldiers raising the Iraqi flag over the Government Center (see Figure 18).

### **b. Search and Attack**

On 11 November, RCT-1 and RCT-7 continued their penetration past MSR Michigan into the south of the city, and on 13 November, entered Phase III-B, Search and Attack. Despite Allawi's announcement on 13 November that the city was secure, a lot of clearing and fighting remained to remove entrenched insurgents who were missed during the initial drive through the city.<sup>174</sup> At that time, the Army units, specifically 2-7 Cav and 2-2 Mechanized Infantry, returned to their parent units; however, the 2BCT of the 1st Cav Division still maintained blocking positions to the southeast.

The ISF conducted a variety of missions, including platoon- to battalion-sized operations, maintaining traffic-control points, clearing operations, and direct action. Coalition commanders assessed the various forces. During the IDA team's interviews, the most important comments concerned missions that the Iraqis were reported to have executed more effectively than Coalition forces: identifying foreign fighters, locating caches, and clearing culturally sensitive areas. The Iraqis forces' capability to converse with detainees and identify country of origin was remarkable:

They could go into a house after Soldiers or Marines had gone through and because they knew the architecture and they knew the layout, they found caches that we missed. When it came to prisoners, you'd line up a row of detainees and they'd go down the line and tell you, 'He's Saudi, he's Syrian, he's Tunisian,



Image courtesy MNF-I Public Affairs Office

**Figure 18. Iraqi soldiers raising the Iraqi flag over the Government Center in Fallujah**

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<sup>174</sup> Although there was no question it would be a Coalition and Iraqi victory, some would suggest that Allawi's seemingly premature announcement was part of his information campaign.

he's Egyptian.' Just like you'd say, 'He's from Boston, he's from the South, he's from New York,' by their accent. They proved invaluable.<sup>175</sup>

LTC Yassir said they had identified Algerian intelligence officers and went on to talk about locating caches:

The Coalition forces were supposed to search this area, but when we searched the area [after the Americans], we found horrible things. Big caches. The Americans didn't enter the concrete. The insurgents placed the cache underground, and then they covered it with concrete and put on the air cooler. They hid all these caches. They dug in the garden, the house garden, inside the house. We found big caches there.<sup>176</sup>

He then discussed an operation when his battalion identified, tracked, and attacked insurgents that had successfully snuck into RCT-1's rear area in the Jolan district. He found terrorists in several houses that the regimental assault force had already moved through—

There were some bad guys behind us ...we controlled our fire and watched as the terrorists moved into four houses. When my two platoons surrounded them...my men surprised them and started to shoot them. We killed 11 of the enemy.<sup>177</sup>

Shupp's confidence in the 4th Iraqi Battalion's capabilities grew, and eventually he assigned them their own battlespace to control and clear.

While the Iraqi forces continued to develop and grow, they did have their weaknesses. Natonski noted that sustainment was expected to be a long-term operational issue and there were a number of tactical issues that would take time to fix:

Now for weaknesses. Fire discipline left a little to be desired. When they pulled the trigger, it was usually until the magazine was empty. They had the tendency to drift out of their sector when they saw a place to loot. You know the ROE was important. We had ROE cards printed in Arabic to give them, however, most of them probably couldn't read it, so they also had the verbal reinforcement before they went into the battle. They emulated the soldiers and Marines that they were serving with, and they had American advisors who were key.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> MajGen Richard Natonski interview, 9 December 2005.

<sup>176</sup> LTC Yassir Haziz Muqmad interview, 19 January 2006.

<sup>177</sup> LTC Yassir Haziz Muqmad interview, 19 January 2006. This "tactical patience" also reflects a maturity that normally comes with experience.

<sup>178</sup> During Saddam's era, the Army looted area residences—some would comment that the residences constituted their "shopping center." One of the most difficult things to teach or change will be the *Jundi's*

In culturally sensitive areas, the Coalition continued to use Iraqis, but this was dictated before Fallujah. In An Najaf, Allawi directed that only Iraqis would enter the Imam Ali Mosque. The same occurred in Samarra. The Geneva Convention protects culturally sensitive areas unless they are being used for military purposes, whereupon they lose their protected status. In most cases, despite the fact that a mosque lost its protected status under the Geneva Convention, the Coalition opted for Iraqis to clear the site so the insurgents would be unable to exploit it for their information campaign.

As the kinetic fight continued, the non-kinetic fight, including IO, was pursued at all levels. Indeed, the media campaign was a critical and integral part of the operation. While Allawi was the spokesman at the strategic and national levels, LTG Abdul Qadir, the Iraqi Ground Force (IGF) Commander during AL FAJR, worked hand-in-hand with LtGen Sattler, the I-MEF Commander, while operations were on-going to address operational and tactical issues with the media at the Rotunda at Camp Fallujah (see Figure 19).



Courtesy of MNF-I Public Affairs

**Figure 19. Press conference (l-r): LtGen Sattler, Commander, I-MEF; Mr. Nakib, Allawi's spokesman; LTG Qadir, Commander of Iraqi Ground Forces for AL FAJR**

COL Powl Smith, the IO Officer for the Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Communications, MNF-I, commented on working with the Iraqis in dealing with the media:

It took a while to find a guy who wasn't afraid to get in front of the camera. We had to give them public affairs training. 'Don't be afraid of the camera, tell

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understanding of the Army's mission. In a dictatorship, that mission is to protect the dictator; in a democracy, the mission is to protect the people. MajGen Richard Natonski interview, 9 December 2005.

your story...of your units...of your country.’ We finally got Qadir, as the Commander of the Iraqi forces, to stand up next to General Sattler and give their joint briefing. This gave it a lot more credibility.<sup>179</sup>

A significant part of these meet-the-press sessions included images of insurgent torture houses, vehicle-borne IED (VBIED) construction, and propaganda. DeOliveira commented on the Iraqi support:

Every couple days General Qadir would come into Fallujah alone or with General Sattler and he would gather up stuff to show on TV. The Iraqi soldiers were pretty keen at picking up items of IO value, whether it was a head-cutting saber or masks or DVDs, and they would pass it to him. At Camp Fallujah they would do a daily press conference. That was probably the first time I saw the Iraqis really put some effort towards IO.<sup>180</sup>

But it wasn’t always easy, especially in the beginning: “For the most part, the Iraqis would shy away from the media—no pictures, no names. You’d almost have to beg them, ‘Come on, you gotta do this!’ Then they’d show up.”<sup>181</sup>

### **c. Pursuit and Exploitation**

In conjunction with operations in Fallujah, pursuit and exploitation operations in outlying areas were extremely important to killing and capturing insurgents and keeping them off balance before the election. Figure 20 provides a timetable of unit actions at various locations throughout Al Anbar province. RCT-7 was withdrawn from Fallujah in mid-December to pursue the enemy in the Nassir Wal Salam area. 2BCT of the 1st Cav Division continued to operate in communities around Fallujah through mid-December. While this maneuvering was important at the operational level, LTC Akrum, Deputy Commander, 2nd Brigade, 1st IIF Division, said its significance was also recognized at the tactical level:

The big lesson we learned from Fallujah battles: we are supposed to keep chasing the insurgents. We don’t stop when we capture Fallujah, we need to keep looking for insurgents.<sup>182</sup>

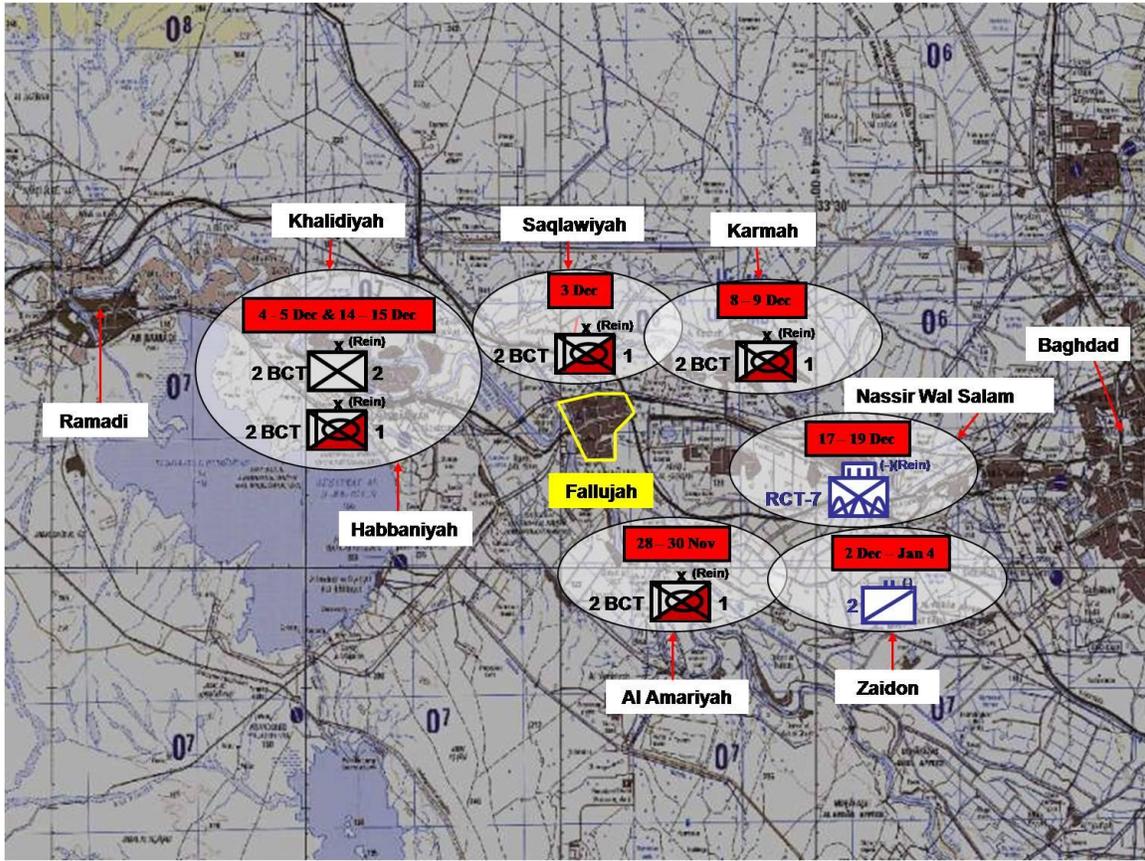
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<sup>179</sup> Smith’s comment about being afraid to get in front of the camera wasn’t referring just to being camera shy. In many cases, the Iraqis were concerned about their safety and that of their families. This was probably most prevalent at the lower levels and in unsecured areas. COL Powl Smith, interview with Bill Knarr, Institute for Defense Analyses, Virginia, 12 December 2005.

<sup>180</sup> LTC Marcus DeOliveira interview, 20 July 2005.

<sup>181</sup> LTC Marcus DeOliveira interview, 20 July 2005.

<sup>182</sup> LTC Akrum, Deputy Commander, 2nd Brigade, 1st IIF Division, interview with the authors, East Fallujah Iraqi Camp, 16 Jan 2006.



Source: 1st MARDIV Slide

Figure 20. Operation AL FAJR: Pursuit and Exploitation, 28 Nov 04–4 Jan 05

Because of the insurgent threat that developed in Mosul, 1-5 Stryker Battalion was recalled to Mosul (they had come from Mosul to support AL FAJR). GEN Casey said that developments in Mosul caused real concern. In particular, if the conflict in Mosul prevented the people from voting, that could affect the validity of the election. Fortunately, Mosul recovered, and its people were able to participate in the January election.

#### d. Setting Conditions for Phase IV

Before the city could be returned to its residents, it needed to be cleared of unexploded ordnance, standing water, and the dead. Fallujah sits below the Euphrates' water level and one of the water pump stations was damaged during the battle.<sup>183</sup> The standing

<sup>183</sup> Damage to the pump station elicited a number of questions about the care taken when targeting critical infrastructure. Some have questioned, in general, the level of collateral damage within the city and asked if it was necessary. Damage to buildings was justified to save Coalition and ISF lives—they were ordered to clear the area against an enemy that came to die, that had embedded itself in such a way as to increase the likelihood of inflicting Coalition and ISF casualties. The damage caused city leaders in Mosul and Ramadi, among others, to pause and say they did not want a Fallujah-like fate for their cities.

water hid unexploded ordnance and decaying bodies. Additionally, the electric grid, water treatment, and sewage systems were in such disrepair that they needed to be replaced entirely. To deal with the human remains, I MEF, 1st FSSG, set up a mortuary to the east of the city near the cloverleaf. They brought in Muslim clerics to advise and ensure that the bodies were prepared and buried in accordance with Islamic rites.

The Coalition took lessons it had learned in Operation AN NAJAF on planning and reconstruction and applied them in Fallujah. Commander of IGF for AL FAJR, LTG Abdul Qadir was impressed that the Coalition was simultaneously conducting combat operations and reconstruction:

I have never experienced such things before, but even from the first phase of the battle, I saw something very unique. The [Coalition] was already building and fixing things, but they were still in the battle. This is something I have never seen in any other Army, and I am impressed.<sup>184</sup>

On 3 December, in preparation for the transition phase, BG Mehdi Sabih Hashem al-Garawi arrived with his Public Order Brigade. He recalled that day as one of the hardest of his life. Many of his soldiers did not want to enter the city, and 14 of his officers mutinied. To maintain control, he had to eat with them, sleep with them, and lead them into combat—to the point that he led small teams to clear buildings. He finally gained the confidence of his people.<sup>185</sup>

In addition to the Public Order Brigade, the 2nd Iraqi Brigade, 1st IIF Division, entered Fallujah to replace the 1st Iraqi Brigade. This unit, along with the 4th Brigade, partnered with the Marines to control the city.<sup>186</sup> According to LTC Akrum, Deputy Commander, 2nd Brigade, 1st IIF Division, the 2nd Brigade worked for Col Shupp, RCT-1, and cleared, stabilized, and helped repopulate areas north of Phase Line Fran (MSR Michigan in Figure 21).<sup>187</sup>

After the 1st Brigade was done with Fallujah and the insurgents, it was our mission to clean up caches and weapons. We found many weapons buried un-

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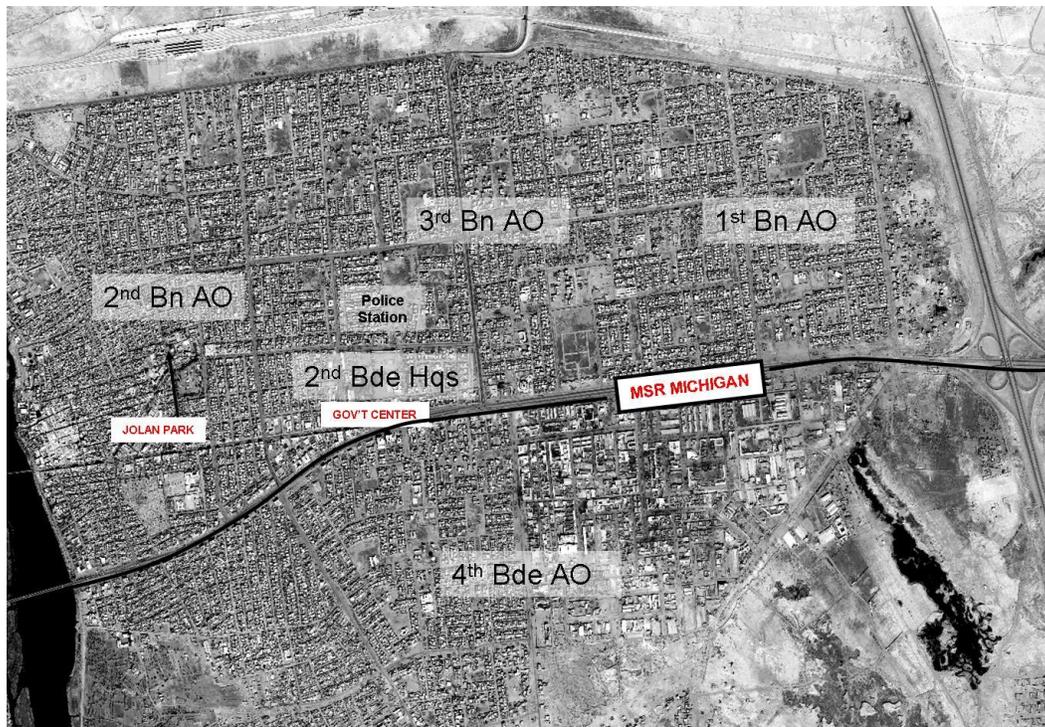
<sup>184</sup> LTG Abdul Qadir, interview with the authors, Camp Victory, Baghdad, 25 Jan 2006.

<sup>185</sup> MG Mehdi Sabih Hashem al-Garawi, interview with the authors, Baghdad, 31 Jan 2006.

<sup>186</sup> Col John Ballard, USMC, Commander, 4th Civil Affairs Group during AL FAJR, interview with Bill Knarr, Anacostia Naval Station, 18 Jul 2005. Ballard discussed the importance of establishing a police force in Fallujah upon transition. Although promised several times by the Ministry of Interior, the force did not materialize until much later. Col Ballard provides a good description of the reconstruction efforts in his book *Fighting for Fallujah*, 2006.

<sup>187</sup> Shupp spoke highly of the 2nd Brigade. The Iraqi brigade's leaders were passionate about what they were doing, possessed a detailed understanding of what they and their units did, and there was depth to the contributions they made.

der the buildings, and we found a lot of buildings where they put bombs inside the buildings. There were so many bodies in the street.<sup>188</sup>



Base image courtesy of National Geospatial Agency

**Figure 21. 2nd IIF Brigade area of operations**

On 9 December, Allawi announced that Fallujah would be opened for resettlement on 23 December. In preparation for the next phase, he had appointed Hachem al-Hassani of the Iraqi Islamic Party (and Minister of Industry and Minerals) as coordinator of the administration of Fallujah and had him “prepare a program for how to deal with and control Fallujah after we have taken it from the terrorists and insurgents.”<sup>189</sup>

#### 4. Transition

During Phase IV, clearing operations continued. Additionally, the Civil-Military Operations Center was established; remains, rubble, and water were removed; unexploded ordnance and caches were cleared; and entry controls were established in preparation for resettlement.

<sup>188</sup> Akrum interview, 16 January 2006.

<sup>189</sup> PM Ayad Allawi interview, 6 February 2006.

In addition to establishing entry-control points and a population resettlement plan, RCT-1 also organized and established Humanitarian Assistance Sites throughout the city that provided food, water, and clothing to the returning residents (see Figure 22). Natonski said that every head of household was immediately paid \$200 for damages.<sup>190</sup>

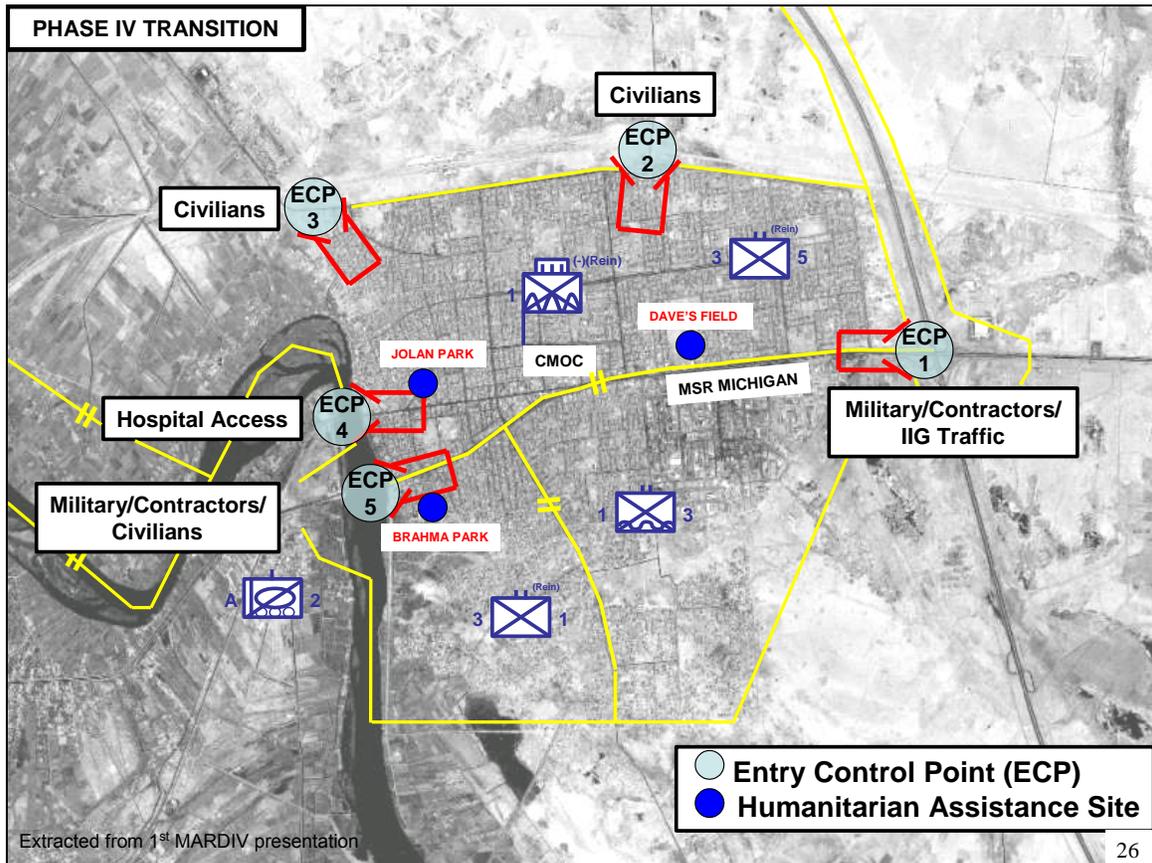


Image courtesy 1st MARDIV

Figure 22. Operation AL FAJR, Phase IV: Transition

BG Mehdi, Commander, Public Order Brigade, was responsible for escorting residents back to their homes; he recalled that as the second most difficult time in his life. The residents did not trust the Iraqi soldiers, and Mehdi personally led them back to their homes:

<sup>190</sup> MajGen Richard Natonski interview, 9 December 2005.

My duty was to convince families to go back to their houses...they had no idea what was waiting for them. There was no trust. I was going to be the first one walking and afterwards came the residents.<sup>191</sup>

Initiated during the transition phase, the Inter-ministerial Fallujah Working Group met twice a week. The first meeting was in Fallujah, the second in Baghdad. While Hassani headed the group, the real workers were Deputy Minister Mohammed Abdullah Mohammed, who ran the council meetings in Baghdad with the other ministries, and Engineer Basil Mahmoud, who ran the meetings in Fallujah and effectively became the city manager of Fallujah during that period.<sup>192</sup> The Fallujah meetings continue today.<sup>193</sup>

Mohammed was probably proudest of the 150 teams assembled to assess the damage to the 2,500 houses in Fallujah. Although he thought they did good work, he felt the reimbursement was late and still not complete as of our interview (more than a year later). Total housing damage was assessed at US\$492 million. The Iraqi Government provided US\$175 million for housing. In addition, the Iraqi Government provided US\$100 million and the MNF-I US\$92 million for reconstruction projects. The priority of those projects was developed at the Fallujah weekly meetings.<sup>194</sup>

Col John Ballard, Commander, 4th Civil Affairs Group, commented on the reconstruction priorities.

We probably did not understand as well as the Iraqis how important education was. We probably didn't understand as much about religious ministry support. We probably didn't understand as much about housing. We were looking at what we called the critical infrastructure such as electricity and water. They would have put electricity way at the top of the list, wouldn't have cared as much about water, would have cared more about housing and education.<sup>195</sup>

## 5. Transfer of Control

In addition to reconstruction, another continuing effort was the transfer of control to the Iraqis—Phase V of the operation. When interviewed in January 2006, COL Raid Ja-

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<sup>191</sup> BG Mehdi interview, 31 January 2006.

<sup>192</sup> Col John Ballard, "C4ISR/C2 Architecture: A Case Study of Iraqi-MNF Interoperability in Iraq," presented at 10th Annual Command and Control Research and Technology Symposium: The Future of C2 Multinational Force and Host-Nation Administration in Wartime Iraq, an Inter-ministerial Approach.

<sup>193</sup> Material date is August 2008.

<sup>194</sup> Deputy Minister Mohammed, interview with Bill Knarr, Ministry of Industry and Minerals, Baghdad, 2 February 2006.

<sup>195</sup> Col John Ballard, interview with Bill Knarr, Anacostia Naval Station, Washington, DC, 18 July 2005.

sen Aidar, Commander, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, indicated that a challenge in transferring control would be developing a trusted police force in Fallujah:

Our sources of information tell us that there is a lot of cooperation between Iraqi police and the insurgents. Maybe they work with them, or maybe they help them. Maybe the insurgents have pressure on the Iraqi police, or maybe they are afraid of the insurgents because of their families.<sup>196</sup>

Finally, in October 2006, Iraqi soldiers assumed control of the Fallujah Civil-Military Operations Center, and eventually, in September 2007, the 2nd Iraqi Brigade withdrew from Fallujah leaving security of the city to the local police and government.

## F. The Election in Fallujah

During the January 2005 election, there were five polling centers in Fallujah; the ISF provided security. Approximately 8,000 people—the majority of voters in Al Anbar Province—showed up to vote in Fallujah.



Images courtesy 1st MARDIV

**Figure 23. January 2005 elections in Fallujah**

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<sup>196</sup> COL Raid Jasen Aidar, interview with the authors, East Fallujah Iraqi Camp, 16 January 2006.

Despite what most would call a low turnout, the opportunity to vote was important to support a valid election, and the effects were much greater than could be judged at that moment. Kael Weston, State Department representative in Fallujah, described how Fallujan participation in follow-on elections increased dramatically:

You went from the biggest kinetic fight of the whole campaign to an opportunity for these Sunni Arabs...to turn out to vote, and they did....If you fast forward to October 15th following a *fatwa* issued by the Imams of Fallujah...you had over 180,000 voters in Fallujah...Then in December [2005], of course, the word was out that everyone needed to vote.<sup>197</sup>

The Battle for Fallujah opened the door for the democratic process in Fallujah and the entire nation. The implications are discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>197</sup> Kael Weston, telephone interview with Bill Knarr, 26 May 2006.

## 5 The Hypothesis: Teaching, Coaching and Building

*Teaching* Iraqis to plan and execute a major military operation, *Coaching* the Iraqis on using information operations, and *Building* Iraqi self-confidence and external respect enabled the Iraqis to play a key role in the victory during AL FAJR.

The study hypothesis links the study objectives of *teach, coach and build*, as an antecedent to the hypothesized outcome or consequence—victory during AL FAJR. It asserts that *teaching, coaching, and building* enabled the Iraqis to contribute to that victory, and implies that the victory contributed to the US goal of helping create a free and democratic Iraq.<sup>198</sup> It also assumes there were mechanisms<sup>199</sup> in place for the Coalition to teach, coach, and build the Iraqis and the Iraqi security structure, and that one can attribute growth in the Iraqi security posture to those mechanisms.

This chapter seeks to determine whether the information collected and developed during the study and provided here supports the hypothesis. It will provide an overview of the TCB contributions to PSI and the conclusion of whether or not the hypothesis is supportable.

### A. Political, Security, and Information Operations

Iraq endured a number of changes during 2004. The year has been characterized as chaotic, transitory and, condition setting. The evolution from chaos to condition-setting revolved around relationships. Teaching, coaching, and building couldn't mature until those relationships developed.

According to Iraqi leaders such as Allawi, Rubai'e, and Babikir, relations among the CPA, IGC, and Coalition were extremely poor at the beginning of 2004. The turning point that occurred between May and August resulted from—

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<sup>198</sup> Fact Sheet: the Transition to Iraqi Self Government, The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 24 May 2004. Also addressed in President Bush's speech to the Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 24 May 2003.

<sup>199</sup> Mechanisms include organizations and processes.

1. The transition to a better resourced and more capable Coalition organization;
2. The transfer of sovereignty to Iraq, which required that interpersonal and organizational dynamics change;
3. The development and execution of a plan with vision and milestones; and most importantly,
4. The assemblage of a team committed to working together.

Recall Casey's and Negroponte's commitment that "The military and civil side had to work together, and this one team, one mission had to include the Iraqi Government. We set out to help make this Interim Iraqi Government successful."

## 1. Political

GEN Casey understood and emphasized the importance of the political-military dynamics in setting the conditions for success in AL FAJR.

This was political military interaction and how the political side sets up military success....[Allawi] got the government on board...had the lead on selling it to the Iraqi people...and the lead on selling it to the countries of the region, because it was regional pressure that caused the first Fallujah to really come unglued.<sup>200</sup>

### a. A Coalition-led partnership

Organizations—such as the Ministerial Committee on National Security, the Deputy Ministerial Committee on National Security, and Joint Working Groups—were established to facilitate coordination between the Coalition and the IIG. Those organizations and processes were, however, in their infancy and the IIG did not have the capacity or resources to meet all the challenges it faced. Fortunately, in addition to councils, committees, and working groups, mechanisms evolved to support this effort and included providing Coalition advisors to the various Iraqi ministries and government agencies. Those organizations and advisors within the MNF-I worked aggressively with the Iraqis—and especially with the Prime Minister—to plan and execute Operation AL FAJR. Additionally, both Casey and Negroponte met frequently with Allawi, both formally and informally, to discuss what the Coalition-Iraqi team needed to do to succeed the second time Coalition forces entered Fallujah.

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<sup>200</sup> GEN George Casey interview, 6 February 2006.

Although the IIG structure was immature and fragile, some of the preparation for AL FAJR could be accomplished only by the Iraqis. Allawi, with a lot of help from the Coalition, succeeded. He was integral to the process and had the lead for setting the political conditions for success.

Allawi understood his responsibilities and, in preparation for AL FAJR, engaged his countrymen, embarked on a media campaign within Iraq, and “conducted meetings with people linked to the insurgents.” In addition, he contacted regional leaders to solicit their support for the upcoming operation. Only after exhausting all political options did he agree to the operation.

Although the IIG, and particularly Allawi, made valuable contributions that only an Iraqi could make, COL Casey Haskins, Chief of Plans, in the Deputy Chief of Staff’s office for Strategy, Plans and Assessments, MNF-I in 2004, put the Coalition-Iraqi relationship in perspective: “There were other opportunities where the Iraqis were in charge—Samarra at the political level, the elections—but not Fallujah [AL FAJR]. Fallujah was a Coalition-led partnership.”<sup>201</sup>

## **b. Rules of Engagement**

During VIGILANT RESOLVE, the insurgents hid among the people, making positive identification for the Coalition extremely difficult. During AL FAJR, the Coalition did a number of things to minimize the number of non-combatants moving within the city. The Whisper Campaign encouraged residents to leave the city, which drastically reduced their numbers. In addition, under the advisement of the MNF-I staff, Allawi’s emergency decree established a 24-hour curfew, prohibited carrying guns, disbanded the police force, and prohibited driving—measures to limit the movement of insurgents and separate combatants from non-combatants.

ROE briefings to both the Coalition and Iraqi forces included these updated criteria. ROE cards distributed to Coalition forces were also given to the Iraqis in Arabic.<sup>202</sup> Additionally, RCT-1 provided the ISF instruction at the East Fallujah Iraqi Camp on ROE and the Law of Land Warfare. This was a prime example of teaching the Iraqis the importance of the rule of law, which in turn supported IO because it reduced collateral damage and provided more protection for non-combatants.

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<sup>201</sup> COL Casey Haskins, interview with Bill Knarr, Norfolk, Virginia, 23 September 2005.

<sup>202</sup> Due to illiteracy within the ISF, it was important to brief them on the ROE as well.

## 2. Security

During the summer of 2004, Allawi reorganized the ISF and expanded its authority to address internal security issues that surfaced during the first part of 2004. They were now authorized to fight the internal threat—the insurgency—and not just to protect the borders. This fledgling force, consisting of several battalions, supported Operations AN NAJAF, and later, BATON ROUGE in Samarra. Although they had vastly improved during the past year, the ISF still had a long way to go in terms of capacity, integration, sustainment, and capability, as it prepared for AL FAJR. A significant addition to developing TCB was the stand-up of the MNSTC-I, under the Command of then-LTG David Petraeus, to help the Iraqi Government develop, organize, train, equip, and sustain the Iraqi Security Forces.<sup>203</sup>

### a. ISF status going in to AL FAJR

**Capacity.** There were six under-strength Iraqi battalions available for the fight, none of which had experienced the intensity Fallujah promised. In addition, when viewed from a total force structure perspective (see Figure 9 in Chapter 4), they comprised a small percentage of total forces committed to AL FAJR.

**Integration, internal and external.** ISF internal integration or composition was a major issue with the Shi'a comprising the vast majority of the ranks. Additionally, many of the ISF units had not worked with the 1st MARDIV; hence, integrating the ISF with Coalition units during AL FAJR required additional planning and training.

**Sustainment.** Sustainment and support remained a challenge, but the promise that Coalition liaison or transition teams would be able to request immediate backup, CAS, and MEDEVAC boosted the ISF soldiers' confidence, as did knowing they were would be evacuated to a Coalition hospital if wounded.

**Capability.** ISF capability remained a question for Allawi, who wanted the ISF to lead the fight. However, Casey had a much better grasp than the Prime Minister of the ISF's capability and what was at stake should the ISF fail.

The MNSTC-I worked hard to help develop the ISF from institutional training base through combat operations. The ASTs embedded with Iraqi units as they were initially

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<sup>203</sup> Multi-National Security Transition Command Iraq, "Mission," <[www.mnstci.iraq.centcom.mil/mission.htm](http://www.mnstci.iraq.centcom.mil/mission.htm)> accessed 17 August 2006.

organized provided continuity throughout their training and development. The ASTs were the mainstays of Coalition support to ISF units.

### **b. Advisory Support Teams**

An advisor's principal job was to advise the Iraqis. But they also had a responsibility to advise and update the Coalition on how to best employ the Iraqi forces. Employment considerations had changed considerably since early 2004 when the ICDC and ING were employed as squads and platoons. Now the Iraqi forces were capable of conducting company and battalion-sized operations.<sup>204</sup>

Part of the advisor's art of teaching and building is to understand the Iraqi unit's capabilities, and to recognize the fine line that separates building confidence from overcommitting the unit. Putting them in positions in which they were comfortable and "raising the bar" each subsequent operation helped to build and increase their confidence. This resulted in a much more capable unit, compared to VIGILANT RESOLVE, as they entered Fallujah with the Marines.<sup>205</sup>

Advisor LTC Rodney Symons reflected on some of the leadership concepts that may seem second nature to most Coalition leaders:

They saw that we lead from the front, we endure the same hardship, if we tell you to do something, we are going to go out and do it ourselves. In both Samarra and Fallujah in some cases, had my ASTs not been out front leading and pushing soldiers, stuff would not have happened. That was just a function of leadership and the soldiers took great comfort that there was an American right there beside them as they launched to secure an objective, or they did an attack by fire, and they went in to kick in a door of a house. They were getting shot at, they were fighting alongside and in some cases they were helping to lead the soldiers.<sup>206</sup>

This was not an isolated comment. During interviews, leadership traits consistently became topics of discussion when speaking of teaching, coaching, and building the Iraqi forces. Leading by example was by far the most important training and confidence-building method the Coalition forces used.

The ASTs did heroic work during AL FAJR. Advisor Maj Michael Zacchea had one of the more challenging assignments with the 5th Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Division.

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<sup>204</sup> MAJ Fred Miller, Senior Advisor, 2nd Battalion, 1st IIF Brigade interview, 30 August 2005.

<sup>205</sup> LTC Marcus DeOliveira, telephone interview with Bill Knarr, 20 July 2005.

<sup>206</sup> LTC Rodney Symons, telephone interview with Bill Knarr, 26 August 2005.

During the road march to Fallujah, the unit ran a gauntlet of fires and was ambushed twice. The night before the attack, a company of 120 Iraqis deserted, but, according to Zachhea, the rest of the unit was solid. He had one advisor killed and four wounded during the battle. The 5th Battalion had two Iraqis killed and 28 wounded.<sup>207</sup>

But each Iraqi unit developed at a different rate. While elements of the 1st IIF Brigade and 3rd IAF Brigade continued to build individual and collective skills, the 36th Commandos was ready to conduct unit operations, and, under the mentorship of the 5th SFG, executed the first engagement of the operation: seizing Fallujah Hospital. The seizure was practically flawless—the insurgents were caught by surprise and much of the combat activity increased only after the Coalition was in control of the hospital and the peninsula.

Members of the 5th SFG rated the 36th Commandos as capable of conducting complex battalion operations in a mid-high intensity environment. The hospital seizure was a great example of teaching, coaching, and building. That said, the 36th Commandos still depended on the Coalition for operational, administrative, and logistical support.

### **c. 1st MARDIV's guidance and RCT-1's execution**

MajGen Natonski's guidance to the division embraced the concept of teach, coach, and build, promoted the objectives of a free and democratic Iraq, recognized the insurgents' strategy, and highlighted the importance of reconstruction.<sup>208</sup> RCT-1's actions reflected that guidance. They used the East Fallujah Iraqi Camp to billet, assess, and train the Iraqis. Although the ASTs executed an extensive train-up in preparation for AL FAJR, RCT-1 developed its own intense short-course in Law of Land Warfare, geometry of fires, live fire tactics, and clearing buildings, before integrating the ISF into their formations—a mechanism for teaching as well as building Iraqi confidence.

Another mechanism that enabled teaching, coaching, and building, albeit informal, was building relationships through dinners and personal get-togethers. It made an impression on the Iraqis—they commented that Natonski and Shupp treated the Iraqis like partners by eating and working together.<sup>209</sup>

As partners and mentors, the Marine Commanders weren't going to commit the Iraqis to something beyond their capabilities. Shupp's regimental staff provided moral and physical support by walking the 4th Battalion, 1st IIF Brigade into battle positions before

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<sup>207</sup> *Morning Edition*, "Marines Discuss Training."

<sup>208</sup> MajGen Richard Natonski's letter to the division before Operation AL FAJR.

<sup>209</sup> Mazin interview, 26 January 2006.

the assault. The Iraqi battalion fired at ghosts out of nervousness, but that subsided as they watched and learned from the Coalition forces.

Although the ISF (barring the Iraqi Special Operations Forces) may have begun hesitantly, reluctantly, some grew in confidence and expertise to a point where they earned their own battlespace. Shupp's confidence in the 4th Iraqi Battalion's capabilities increased, and eventually he assigned them their own battlespace and mission to control and clear. This reflected a definite progression in military skills as well as confidence.

Among the many cases of building Iraqi confidence, one of the most important occurred the night before the attack. The Iraqi forces looked around them, saw the array of tanks, guns, helicopters, Marines and Soldiers—and realized “they were on the right side.” According to LtCol McCarthy, “you could see their excitement, yet calmness as they thought, ‘We are actually on the winning team this time.’”<sup>210</sup>

#### **d. Relinquishing control to a capable ISF**

One of GEN Casey's principles from AN NAJAF was that once Coalition forces went in to fight and take over a place, they were only going to relinquish control to capable ISF. Although some contend that the follow-on Iraqi occupation force was too small, and that those Iraqi units that did show up had to be trained, the 2nd IIF Brigade and MG Mehdi's Public Order Brigade proved exceptionally capable during the following year.<sup>211</sup>

#### **e. Iraqi comments—the value of the Fallujah experience**

LTG Abdul Qadir, Iraqi Ground Force Commander in Fallujah, commented on the value of AL FAJR to build the confidence of the Iraqi *Jundi*:

AL FAJR broke the wall between the Iraqi soldier and the terrorist. It gave the Iraqi soldier more enthusiasm about fighting terrorism. The Iraqi Army became fighters of terrorists. Now you see that hundreds of officers and soldiers go on TV. Now they are not afraid to be on camera or TV. So after AL FAJR, it became a national operation that we go to defeat terrorism.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> McCarthy interview, 9 December 2005.

<sup>211</sup> Col John Ballard, Commander, 4th Civil Affairs Group, was frustrated that they did not receive the full contingent of follow-on Iraqi forces as promised. Shupp, though subsequently pleased with the Public Order Brigade and 2nd IIF Brigade, had to train those forces before they assumed their responsibilities in the area of operation.

<sup>212</sup> Qadir interview, 25 January 2006.

Mehdi remarked that AL FAJR was a turning point for the MOI—”This was the first combat for the Public Order Brigade and they succeeded.” He was exceptionally proud when Col Shupp later called them, “the Marines of Iraq.”<sup>213</sup>

### 3. Information operations

During VIGILANT RESOLVE, the insurgents clearly owned the IO initiative. The Coalition couldn’t catch-up. But during AL FAJR, the Coalition led IO via the Whisper Campaign, media operations, and by electronically and physically restricting the insurgents’ IO capabilities. An example was cutting the power in Fallujah, jamming the insurgents’ communications and launching the 36th Commandos in the first engagement against the hospital—an insurgent IO node.<sup>214</sup>

At the strategic level, Allawi clearly understood it was his job to manage global, regional, and national perceptions. Despite the Coalition’s help, only an Iraqi could manage those perceptions and talk to other Iraqis. And given the Coalition’s botched performance during VIGILANT RESOLVE, the Coalition understood how difficult that job was. The Coalition also understood that this could only buy a narrow window of time.

During AL FAJR, STRATCOM was the “supported” rather than the “supporting” element. According to Brig Gen Lessel, STRATCOM responsibilities included helping the Iraqi government’s strategic communications—another organization that supported the development of the Iraqi Government. One example was to suggest that the operation’s name be an Iraqi one rather than an American one. It was Allawi who dubbed the operation *Al-Fajr* (New Dawn). However, this was a two-way street: STRATCOM had to vet actions with the Iraqi Government to ensure they were coordinated and appropriate.

While Allawi was the spokesman at the strategic and national levels, Qadir worked hand-in-hand with LtGen Sattler to address operational and tactical issues with the media at the Rotunda at Camp Fallujah. A significant part of these meet-the-press sessions included images of insurgent torture houses, VBIED construction, and propaganda (see Figures 24 and 25).

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<sup>213</sup> BG Mehdi, Commander, Public Order Brigade, interview, 31 January 2006.

<sup>214</sup> GEN Babikir Baderkahn Zibari, Chief of Staff of the Iraqi Armed Forces, made it clear that the Iraqis had no real IO capability, and their actions were mostly in the realm of media operations.



Image courtesy 1st MARDIV

**Figure 24. Weapons cache found by the Coalition and ISF**

At the tactical level, the Coalition had an extensive media embed program with 90+ embedded journalists. This was the quickest way to get the story out, something the Coalition has been unable to do during VIGILANT RESOLVE.<sup>215</sup> When asked if there were Iraqi media embeds with Iraqi units, COL Smith indicated that the Iraqi media simply weren't ready to accompany combat units for extended periods of time.

Getting the story out was also at the mercy of other news priorities. As an example, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's death on 11 November captured a lot of regional and international news that might otherwise have been focused on AL FAJR. This may have been a benefit.

Al Jazeera's airing of the 36th Commando raid at the hospital was an IO success that covered the tactical to strategic: aired by an international news agency that did not support the Iraqi Government or Coalition forces, it was even more credible.

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<sup>215</sup> There were rules, but the media were not encumbered by the bureaucracy that news releases from a unit required.

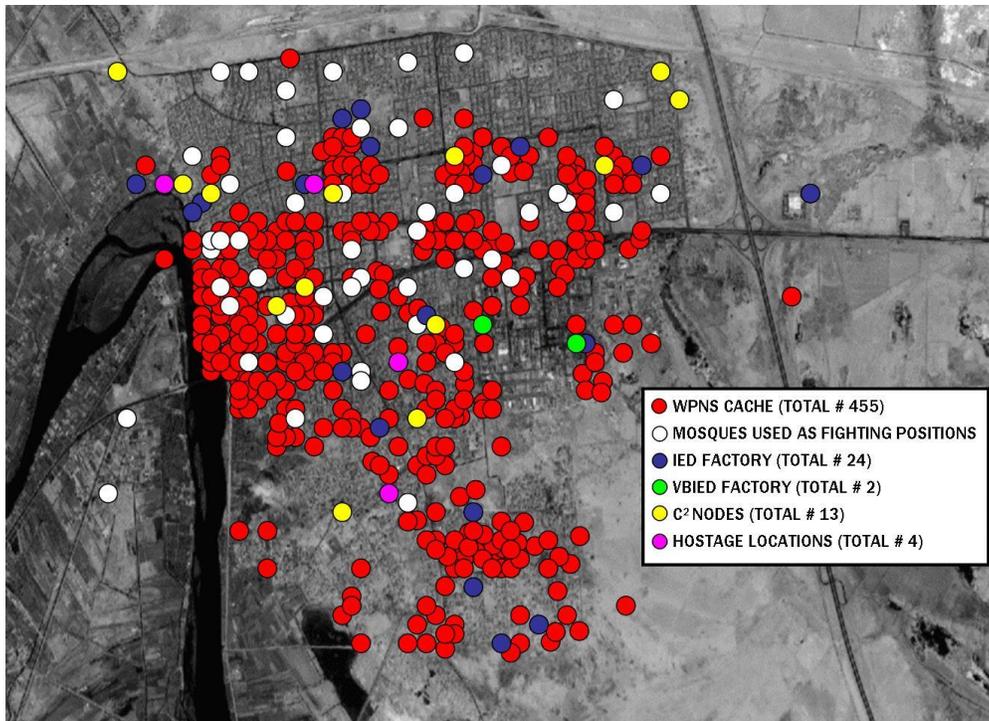


Image courtesy 1st MARDIV

**Figure 25. 1st MARDIV discoveries in Fallujah**

A large part of IO involves controlling the enemy’s use of the media and restricting flexibility. During AL FAJR, the insurgent IO apparatus simply could not keep up with the Coalition. Even a spokesman for the insurgent-led Mujaheddin Shura Council in Fallujah, Abu Assad Dulaimy, said “We admit we lost the media battle.”<sup>216</sup>

IO was a success during AL FAJR;<sup>217</sup> however, the effort to develop and execute the IO plan highlighted the policy seams between IO, the Public Affairs Office (PAO), and Psychological Operations (PSYOP).

Although discussed separately here, IO is part of all lines of operations. For example, reconstruction efforts and paying Iraqi families for damage to their homes was as much an IO message as it was part of reconstruction.

## B. TCB/Pol-Sec Assessment

The TCB competencies and the PSI<sup>218</sup> model provide two axes or dimensions to the methodology. A detailed assessment, at Appendix E provides a way to examine some of

<sup>216</sup> Karl Vick, “Fallujans To Begin Returning Home,” *Washington Post* (18 December 2004) A2.

<sup>217</sup> The military mission was completed.

the factors important to the study via indicators. Metrics associated with the indicators and applied to the responses allowed the team to assess and compare the development of the Iraqi Government and Forces at key points during 2004:

- April 2004, post-VIGILANT RESOLVE
- September 2004, post-AN NAJAF, and
- late December 2004, post-AL FAJR.

During VIGILANT RESOLVE there was no functional Iraqi government or military; hence, the Iraqis were rated as *incapable* of governing or providing security.

During September 2004, post-AN NAJAF period, the operation in An Najaf was successful, and it gave the Allawi government a model for planning AL FAJR. At the end of the period the Iraqis were rated as partially capable with substantial operational and logistics support required in both the political and security domains.

After the last period, late December 2004, post-AL FAJR the Iraqis were rated in the political and security domains as capable with moderate advisor support but still requiring substantial operational and logistics support.

Scores progressively increased in the political domain because of Allawi's involvement, particularly with respect to building alliances, working with the media, and setting the conditions for the battle. Scores also increased in the security domain because the ISF evolved from a force that chose not/refused to fight to units that were provided their own battle space—although still requiring significant operational and logistics support.

As mentioned above, there were a number of limitations to the assessment, especially in sample-size and validity of the numbers:

- During AL FAJR only six under-strength battalions were part of the ISF force—a small and select (they were the best at the time) sample.
- Although the assessment uses a Likert-like scale, the numbers are informed guesses based on very limited input.

The real value of the TCB/Pol-Sec Assessment was to help focus the study on teaching, coaching, building, the relevant indicators associated with those competencies and to provide a general overview of the Iraqi development during 2004.

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<sup>218</sup> After several assessments it was found that the “I” column for IO was redundant/already accounted for in the “C” row, Coaching the Iraqis on the use of IO, hence the “I” column was dropped..

Although the TCB/Pol-Sec assessment indicated a marked improvement in Iraqi capability, it shows only that the Iraqis were capable of contributing and not necessarily that they *played a key role* as the hypothesis contended. The next section discusses whether that improvement in capability in fact translated into a *key role*.

## C. Hypothesis—Conclusions

Evaluating the hypothesis can be done by looking backwards from 1) Victory to 2) the Iraqi contribution to 3) the significance of teaching, coaching, and building as competencies.

### 1. Was AL FAJR a victory?

The 1st MARDIV's mission was to attack to destroy anti-Iraqi forces in Fallujah in order to establish legitimate local control. The intent was to eliminate Fallujah as an insurgent sanctuary, to set conditions for local control of the city, and to support the MNF-I effort to secure approaches to Baghdad. This mission was accomplished. The larger political aspects of a military victory in Fallujah—to support the January 2005 election and US objectives and strategy in Iraq—will be discussed later. Yes, in sum, AL FAJR was an unequivocal military victory.

### 2. Did the Iraqis play a key role in that victory?

Yes. Could Coalition forces have taken Fallujah without the ISF? Certainly. However, the Iraqi's primary contributions did not lie in their military might, but in Allawi's efforts to set the political conditions.

On the security side, the Coalition capitalized on Iraqi expertise to attack sensitive targets, identify foreign fighters, find caches, and work with the Iraqi people. According to MajGen Natonski and others, this in itself was a significant contribution.

The Iraqi Government, specifically Prime Minister Allawi, played a decisive role in AL FAJR. He set the conditions, regionally and nationally, for success. Only an Iraqi could have done that. There are many Fallujans today, according to State Department representative Kael Weston, who wish Allawi were in charge—they considered him hard but fair to both the Shi'a and the Sunni. The Coalition couldn't have started AL FAJR without the efforts of the Allawi government.

### 3. Did teaching, coaching and building enable the Iraqis to play a key role?

#### **a. Teaching Iraqis to plan and execute a major military operation**

The Iraqi Government, in particular Prime Minister Allawi, played an important part in planning and executing AL FAJR. Yet he could not have done it without the planning, advice, and hands-on assistance of the MNF-I staff and advisors.<sup>219</sup>

Operational security concerns limited Iraqi participation in the planning process; however, teaching the ISF to execute military operations was conducted at the various Coalition-supported schools and continued via the transition teams at the unit's home station and during combat operations. Those teams became critical to the day-to-day development of the ISF. The follow-on partnering and training of ISF by the 1st MARDIV was critical to integrating the ISF into the Coalition formations.

#### **b. Coaching the Iraqis in the use of IO**

There was a concerted effort at the strategic level to work with the Iraqis in formulating the right message. Mr. Thair Nakib, spokesman for Allawi, mentioned his work with BrigGen Lessel and his STRATCOM people to stay ahead of developing situations and deliver a consistent, coordinated message.

At the operational and tactical levels, LTG Metz spoke of the IO threshold and maintaining maneuverability within that threshold by using all IO capabilities. The primary spokesman for the ISF was LTG Qadir, Iraqi Ground Force Commander in Fallujah. Qadir who worked very well with LtGen Sattler of the MEF to deliver ahead-of-the-game coordinated messages. The following all served to maintain the Coalition and Iraqi IO initiative:

- Allawi's initial coordination to set the conditions,
- the 36th Commandos' (mentored by 5th SFG) seizure of the hospital—an insurgent IO node during VIGILANT RESOLVE,
- the immediate turnaround of captured documents and materials on insurgent atrocities,
- the dominance of reporting from embeds associated with Coalition units over the reporting from insurgent sources; and

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<sup>219</sup> In some cases, this frustrated the MNF-I staff due to the Iraqi lack of people and structure to support the staffing process.

- the ability to limit the insurgents' communications and media operation.

The message that came through is that strategic communications and IO is hard work, but in this case, successful.<sup>220</sup>

### **c. Building Iraqi self-confidence and external respect**

The Coalition built Iraqi self-confidence by making sure the Iraqi forces were ready before committing them to battle and, then, by matching their capabilities with missions. Allawi's proposal to have the ISF lead the attack would have been disastrous and would have undone the previous six months' hard work to build those forces. The ISF possessed low-density, high-demand capabilities that could not afford to be squandered. Not only did the ISF need to survive to fight another day, but its morale and the country's confidence in its capabilities were based on its performance. On the other hand, setting the conditions for its success, showing the *Jundi* that they were partnering with a winning team, walking them into position, and later assigning them their own battlespace, not only helped build individual and unit confidence, but also stimulated external respect. This, however, requires time to nurture and grow and will require consistent ISF victories and a mutual respect between the ISF and the people.<sup>221</sup>

The final answer, then, is *Yes* to the study's hypothesis: *Teaching* Iraqis to plan and execute a major military operation, *Coaching* the Iraqis on the use of IO (in the Iraqi's case, the media), and *Building* Iraqi confidence and external respect did enable the Iraqis to play a key role in achieving victory in AL FAJR.

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<sup>220</sup> Success in this case was the ability to complete the military mission.

<sup>221</sup> One of the businessmen on the street of Jolan Park said that the Americans showed a lot more respect for the Fallujans than the ISF did.

## 6 Beyond the Hypothesis: Implications of AL FAJR, Themes and Conclusions

The study focused on teaching, coaching, building, and how those competencies enabled the Iraqis to contribute to the AL FAJR success. But the story of AL FAJR is far richer when viewed in the broader context of the political and security objectives and the psychological impact it had on the Iraqi people. The study concludes by highlighting three underlying themes from the project and a summary of 2004 and AL FAJR's contributions to Iraq.

### A. Implications of AL FAJR

#### 1. The Myth-buster

Before the Americans arrived, Fallujah had a reputation as a renegade city. VIGILANT RESOLVE and the Fallujah Brigade perpetuated the Fallujah myth and inspired the insurgency. Although Fallujah's culture and spirit will live on, aspects of the Fallujah myth could be addressed only through force. As such, AL FAJR:

- Eliminated Fallujah as an insurgent stronghold and sanctuary,
- Dispelled the myth that the Coalition was afraid to invade and that Fallujah was invincible,
- Prompted other “renegade” cities to reflect on a Fallujah-like fate, and
- Built Iraqi confidence.

The Iraqi soldiers exemplify such a change: When told they were going to Fallujah, many deserted. Compare that to the confidence they exhibited after their AL FAJR experience; as BG Mehdi remarked, AL FAJR was a turning point for his forces—”This was the first combat for the Public Order Brigade and they succeeded.”<sup>222</sup>

Many Iraqis considered AL FAJR a victory for all of Iraq and not just Fallujah.<sup>223</sup> LTG Qadir commented that the true value of AL FAJR was the confidence and experience instilled in the *Jundi*; they were no longer afraid to fight the terrorists.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> MG Mehdi Sabih Hashem al-Garawi, interview with authors, Baghdad, 31 January 2006.

<sup>223</sup> Akrum interview, 16 Jan 2006.

<sup>224</sup> LTG Abdul Qadir, interview with authors, Camp Victory, Baghdad, 25 Jan 2006.

Mr. Mazin, interpreter for 1st IIF Brigade, spoke of the psychological effects of AL FAJR on other would-be insurgents and renegade cities:

[When AL FAJR began,] most of the insurgents escaped to Ramadi. Tribes in Ramadi fought them there. They said, ‘We don’t want our city destroyed like Fallujah.’<sup>225</sup>

Casey also spoke of the power of victory in Fallujah and its influence in Ramadi:

AL FAJR left a lasting impression on the city. These guys respect strength, and that’s something that I had to balance all the time because cannons aren’t necessarily the best solution in a counterinsurgency environment....People in Ramadi say they talk about not wanting to be Fallujah. We say ‘we are not going to have al Qaeda safe havens; if you are harboring al Qaeda we are going to come and get them.’ Fallujah is at the back of everyone’s mind.<sup>226</sup>

AL FAJR was a crucible event, a major battle for the minds of the Iraqis. As such, it was not only a major military victory, but a psychological victory for Iraq and the Coalition.

Additionally, AL FAJR opened the door for the democratic process in Fallujah, as discussed earlier, and throughout the nation.

## 2. Setting Conditions for the National Election

The trauma AL FAJR and follow-on operations wrought upon the insurgents kept them off balance, denying them time to regroup and stabilize.<sup>227</sup>

At the same time, the Coalition’s forewarning of the coming battle to encourage the residents to leave Fallujah also allowed insurgent leaders to flee before the assault. This gave the insurgents an opportunity to plan and execute attacks elsewhere while the Coalition and ISF committed forces to Fallujah. Mosul was the epicenter of that activity.

Insurgent spokesman Abu Assad Dulaimy admitted they lost the media battle but was not ready to concede the military battle: “Mosul is the right hand of Fallujah and

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<sup>225</sup> Mr. Mazin Muhammad Rhada, 1st IIF Brigade interpreter, interview with authors, Al Qaim, 20 Jan 2006.

<sup>226</sup> GEN George Casey interview, 6 February 2006.

<sup>227</sup> “Why the Future is Fallujah,” *Strategy Page.com*, 27 March 2006 <[www.strategypage.com/htmw/htinf/articles/20060327.aspx](http://www.strategypage.com/htmw/htinf/articles/20060327.aspx)>; also see the classified appendix to the study. Referring to the Battle of Fallujah, November 2004, “The terrorists that got out, later all repeated the same story. Once the Americans were on to you, it was like being stalked by a machine. The often petrified defender could only remember the footsteps of the approaching American troops inside a building, the gunfire and grenade blasts as rooms were cleared, and the shouted commands that accompanied it....The defenders could occasionally kill or wound the advancing Americans, but could not stop them. Nothing the defenders did worked.”

helped us open a new front to fight the Americans.”<sup>228</sup> Fortunately, the Coalition and the Iraqis contained that crisis in Mosul.

The national election in January 2005 was relatively quiet and the UN-supported International Mission for Iraqi Elections, headed by Canada, indicated that the Iraqi election generally met international standards.<sup>229</sup> This was a major political and psychological victory for Iraq and the Coalition.

## B. Themes

This project has highlighted a number of themes of particular importance to the preparation for, and execution of, AL FAJR. Those themes were further highlighted by the contrast between conditions during the first five months of 2004 and those leading up to and including the elections of January 2005. They include:

- The importance of relationships and team-building
- Political-military dynamics and how each supports the other
- The difficulty and importance of IO

### 1. The importance of relationships and team-building

The evolution from chaos to condition-setting revolved around relationships. Poor relations among the major players prior to the transition led to dysfunctional organizations. Working with and developing Iraqi capabilities couldn’t mature until those relationships developed. A primary enabler of that evolution was the assemblage of a team committed to working together and the development of relationships.

Additionally, team-building with the Iraqis became everyone’s business—not only through formal organizations such as MNSTC-I and the ASTs, but also through adaptable arrangements. Examples include Coalition units partnering to coach and train Iraqi units, LtGen Sattler’s mentoring of LTG Qadir, and 1st MARDIV’s approach to developing relationships and camaraderie at dinners and get-togethers beyond the formal preparations for battle. This was reflected at the top, MNF-I/Embassy/IIG as well as at the tactical level.

Critical to building relationships are the ASTs. There was nothing but praise from the Iraqis for the ASTs and their leading by example was by far the most important training

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<sup>228</sup> Karl Vick, “Fallujans To Begin Returning Home,” *Washington Post* (18 December 2004) A2.

<sup>229</sup> That might not have occurred had the people of Fallujah not had the opportunity to vote. Additionally, per Kael Weston, the effects of AL FAJR on Fallujah residents’ inclination to vote wasn’t realized until that Fall at the constitutional referendum and at the December 2005 elections.

and confidence-building method employed by Coalition forces. Names like Zacchea, De Oliveira, Cornell, Miller, Symons, Curwen, and many others will become part of the Coalition's legacy to Iraq and synonymous with American ideals of courage, commitment, and freedom. The AST members are the face of the US commitment to the Iraqis. These courageous teams will be the lasting presence of the Coalition as it stands down.

## 2. Political-Military dynamics and how each supports the other

GEN Casey and Ambassador Negroponte committed early-on to the idea that, "The military and civil side had to work together...and this one team, one mission had to include the Iraqi Government."<sup>230</sup> During the operations in Najaf, the Coalition looked for ways the military could support "this new Iraqi government." During AL FAJR, Casey emphasized the importance of the political-military dynamics in setting conditions for AL FAJR.

Political-military dynamics are probably best reflected in the linkage between AL FAJR and the January 2005 election—military strategy supporting a political objective.

## 3. The difficulty and importance of Information Operations

As the United States continues to grapple with doctrinal differences between IO, PAO, and PSYOP, some wonder at Americans' ability to advise in this area. But, given the Coalition's botched performance during VIGILANT RESOLVE, there was a concerted effort at all levels, strategic thru tactical, to make IO work during AL FAJR.

How successful were the Coalition and Iraqis during AL FAJR? Abu Assad Dulaimy, spokesman for the insurgent-led Mujahidin Shura Council in Fallujah, acknowledged, "We admit we lost the media battle ..."<sup>231</sup>

## C. Summary

Iraq endured a number of changes during 2004. The year can be characterized as chaotic, transitional and, condition-setting:

1. Chaotic and reactionary as major force rotations occurred in January through March and the Coalition contended with critical combat actions in the Sunni Triangle as well as in the Shi'a community from April through May.

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<sup>230</sup> GEN George Casey interview, 6 Feb 2006.

<sup>231</sup> Karl Vick, "Fallujans To Begin Returning Home," *Washington Post* (18 December 2004) A2. Also note that Abu Assad Dulaimy is part of the same tribal confederation as Ali Sulaiman, Chief of Dulaim during Gertrude Bell's time—see beginning quote—relationships run deep.

2. Transitional as the Coalition and Iraqi Government underwent major reorganization and leadership changes during the summer.
3. Condition-setting and proactive from October through December as the Coalition and IIG set the conditions for successful election in January 2005.

Additionally, 2004 began and ended with Fallujah in the headlines.

AL FAJR provided a turning point in Iraqi progress. During AL FAJR, the Coalition-led partnership wrested the initiative from the insurgents, rapidly triggered and negotiated a series of events to which the insurgents couldn't respond or sustain a response, and maintained the initiative, subsequently allowing an Iraqi-led partnership to execute the January 2005 election.<sup>232</sup>

GEN Casey best captured the importance of AL FAJR to the overall war:

I don't believe that the elections would have come off if there was still a safe haven in Fallujah. I'm absolutely convinced of that. It was part of the overall psychological impact on the Iraqis to say, maybe we *can* do this. It was one of the things that caused them to step up and vote and make a choice, and on the 30th, they did.<sup>233</sup>

Although 2004 was a year of change in Iraq, November 2004 through January 2005 defined a turning point in Iraqi progress. Commencing with a crucible event for the Iraqis—AL FAJR—and culminating with a glimpse of democracy—the elections—it was the first of many turning points the nation would have to negotiate before realizing democracy and independence.

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<sup>232</sup> Albeit with a very forward-leaning Coalition.

<sup>233</sup> GEN George Casey interview, 6 February 2006.



## Appendix A: Abbreviations & Acronyms

AST	Advisory Support Team
AWOL	absent without leave
BLT	Battalion Landing Team
Brig Gen	Brigadier General–US Air Force
BrigGen	Brigadier General–US Marine Corps
BG	Brigadier General–US Army
CAG	civil affairs group
Capt	Captain, US Marine Corps or US Air Force
Cav	cavalry
CENTCOM	US Central Command
CJTF-7	Combined Joint Task Force 7
CMATT	Coalition Military Assistance Training Teams
COL	Colonel, US Army
Col	Colonel, US Marine Corps or US Air Force
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
CPATT	Civilian Police Assistance Training Teams
G-3	Operations Staff at Division Headquarters
GEN	General, US Army
Gen	General, US Marine Corps or US Air Force
ICDC	Iraqi Civil Defense Corp
IDA	Institute for Defense Analyses
IED	improvised explosive device
IGC	Iraqi Governing Council
IIF	Iraqi Intervention Forces
IIG	Iraqi Interim Government
ING	Iraqi National Guard
IO	information operations
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
JAWP	Joint Advance Warfighting Program
JCOA	Joint Center for Operational Analysis
JFCOM	United States Joint Forces Command
LtGen	Lieutenant General, US Marine Corps
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel, US Army
LT Col	Lieutenant Colonel, US Air Force

LtCol	Lieutenant Colonel, US Marine Corps
LTG	Lieutenant General, US Army
MAJ	Major, US Army
Maj	Major, US Marine Corps or US Air Force
MajGen	Major General, US Marine Corps
MARDIV	Marine Division
ME	main effort
MEDEVAC	medical evacuation
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force
MG	Major General, US Army
MNC-I	Multi-National Corps–Iraq
MND-CS	Multi-National Division–Central South
MNF-I	Multi-National Forces–Iraq
MNSTC-I	Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq
MSR	main supply route
POO	point of origin
RADM	Rear Admiral, US Navy
RCT	Regimental Combat Team
ROE	rules of engagement
RPG	rocket propelled grenade
S3	operations staff officer below division level
SE	secondary effort
SFG	Special Forces Group
SFODA	Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha
TOC	tactical operations center
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VBIED	vehicle-borne improvised explosive device
XO	Executive Officer

## Appendix B: References

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## **Appendix C: Maps**

Note: North is towards the top of all maps as you read them.

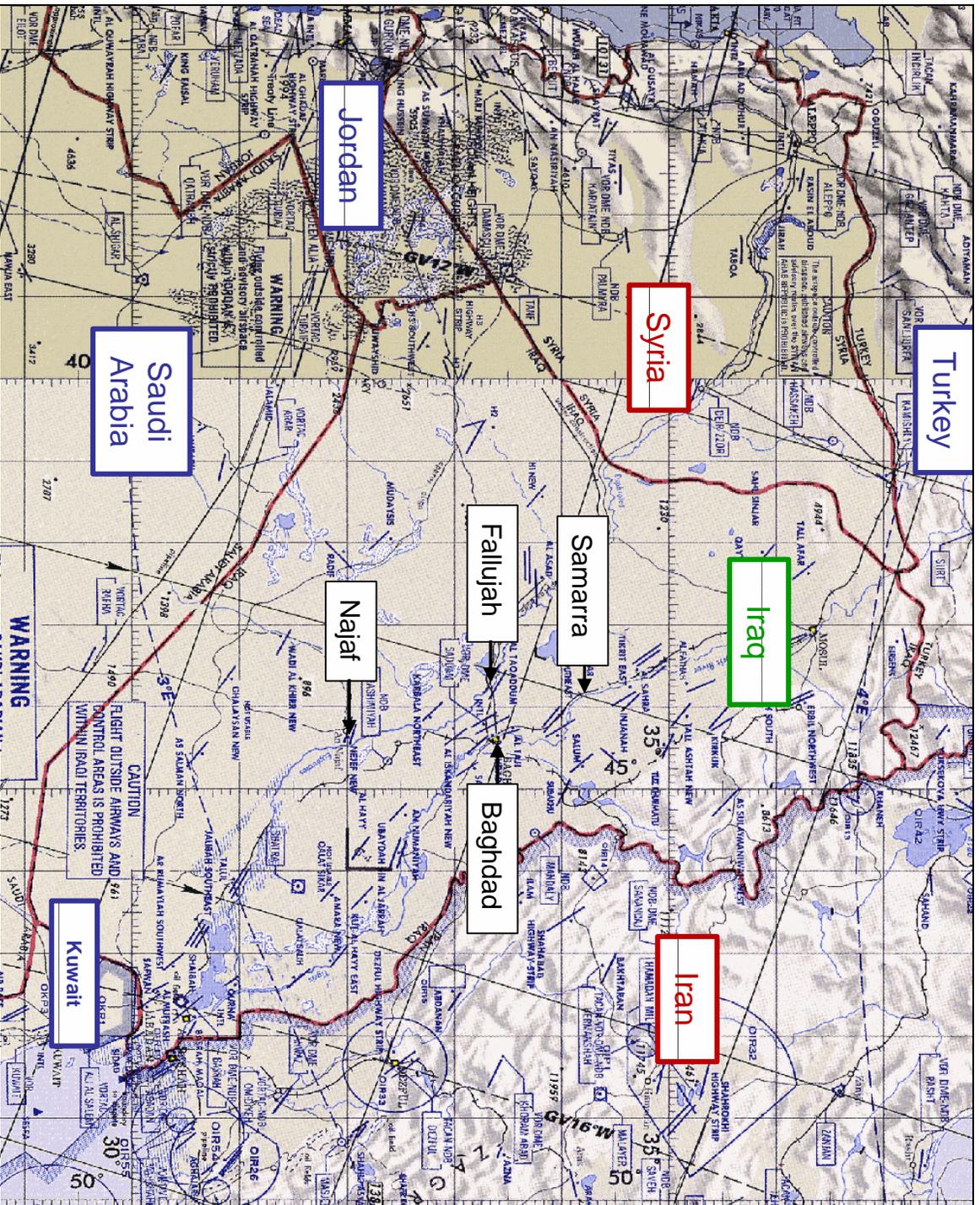
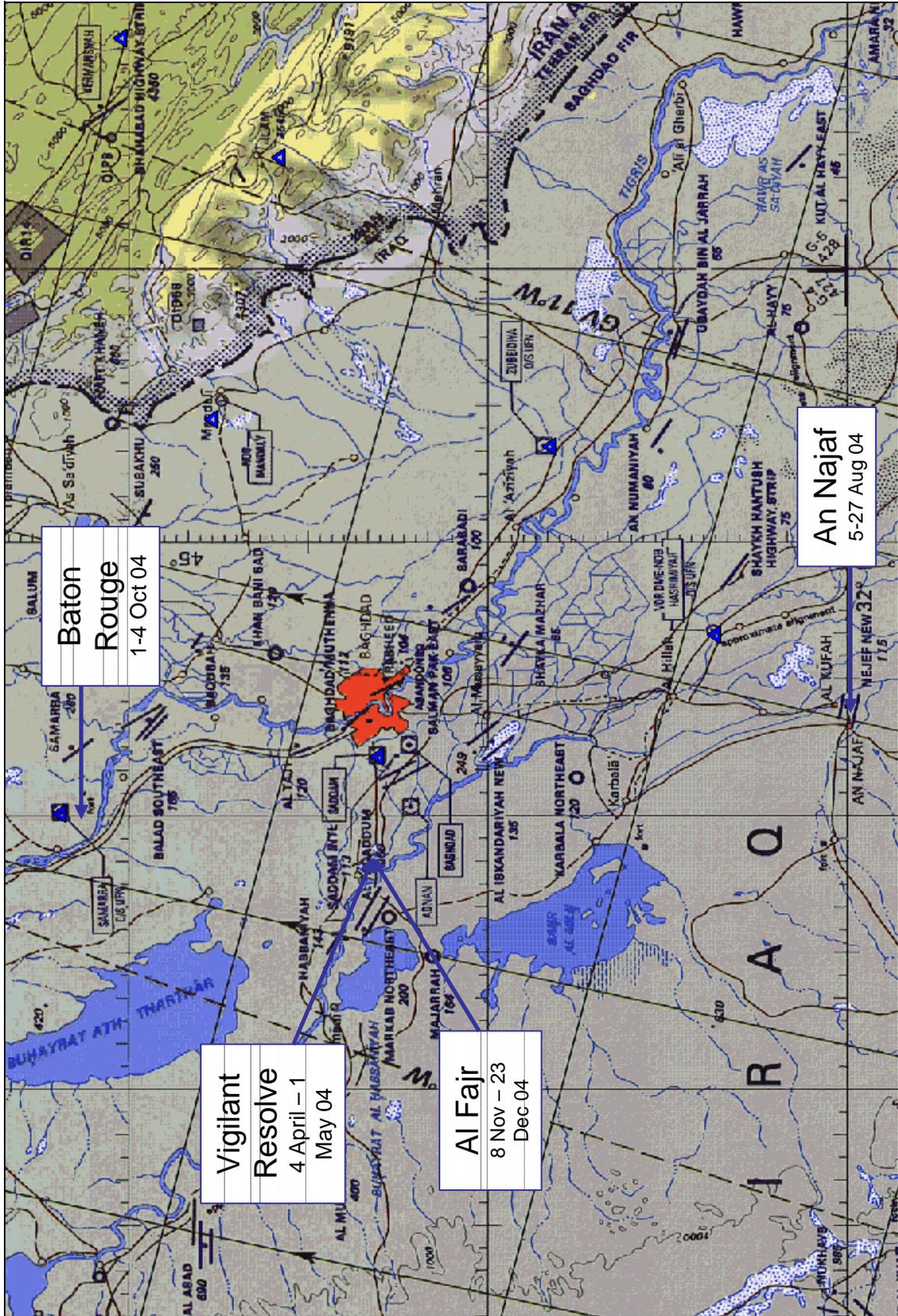


Figure C-1. Map of Iraq and its neighbors

Base map courtesy of National Geospatial Agency



Base map courtesy of National Geospatial Agency

Figure C-2. Map of military operations in Iraq during 2004

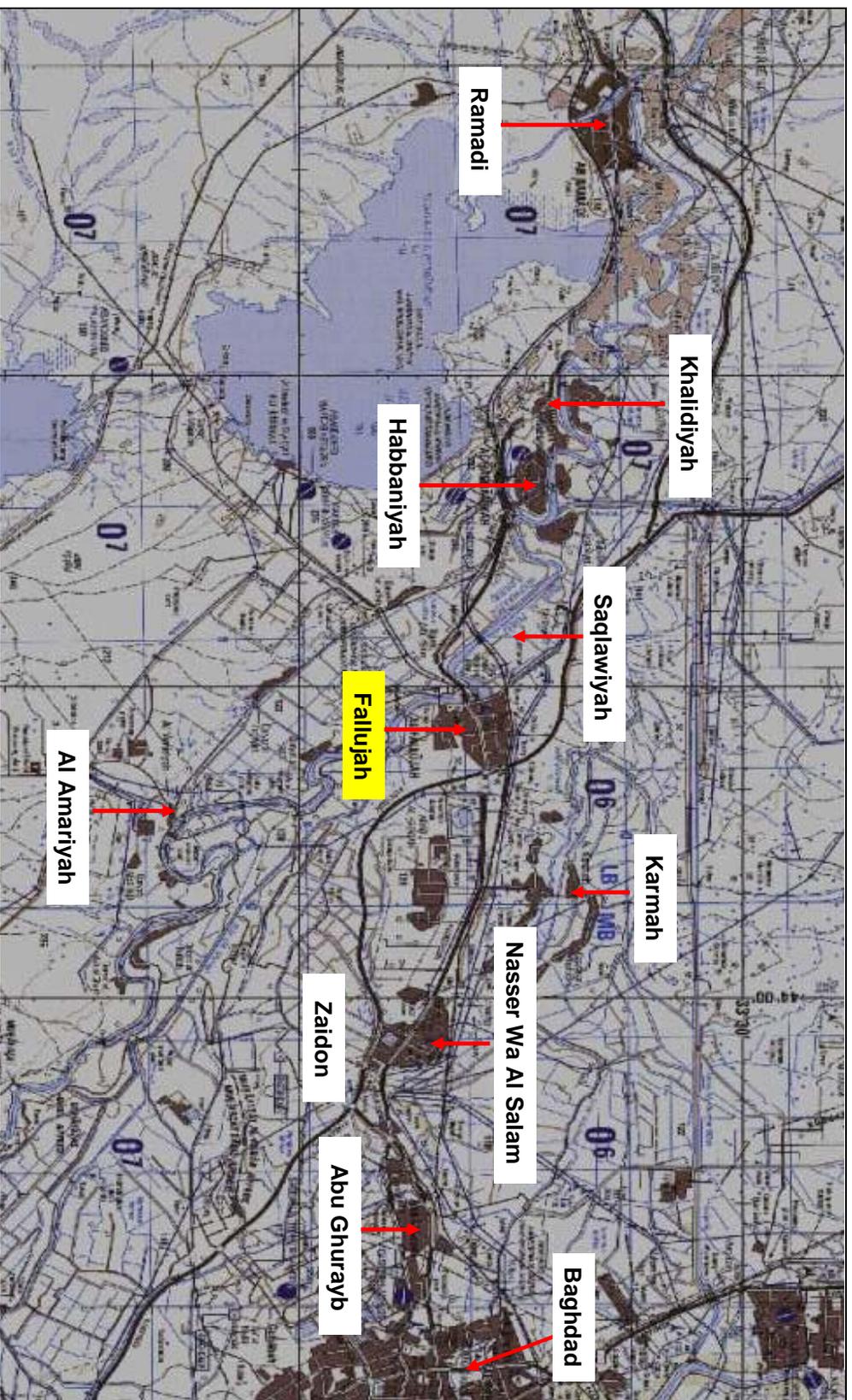


Figure C-3. Map of Fallujah and surrounding cities

Image courtesy of 1st MARDIV

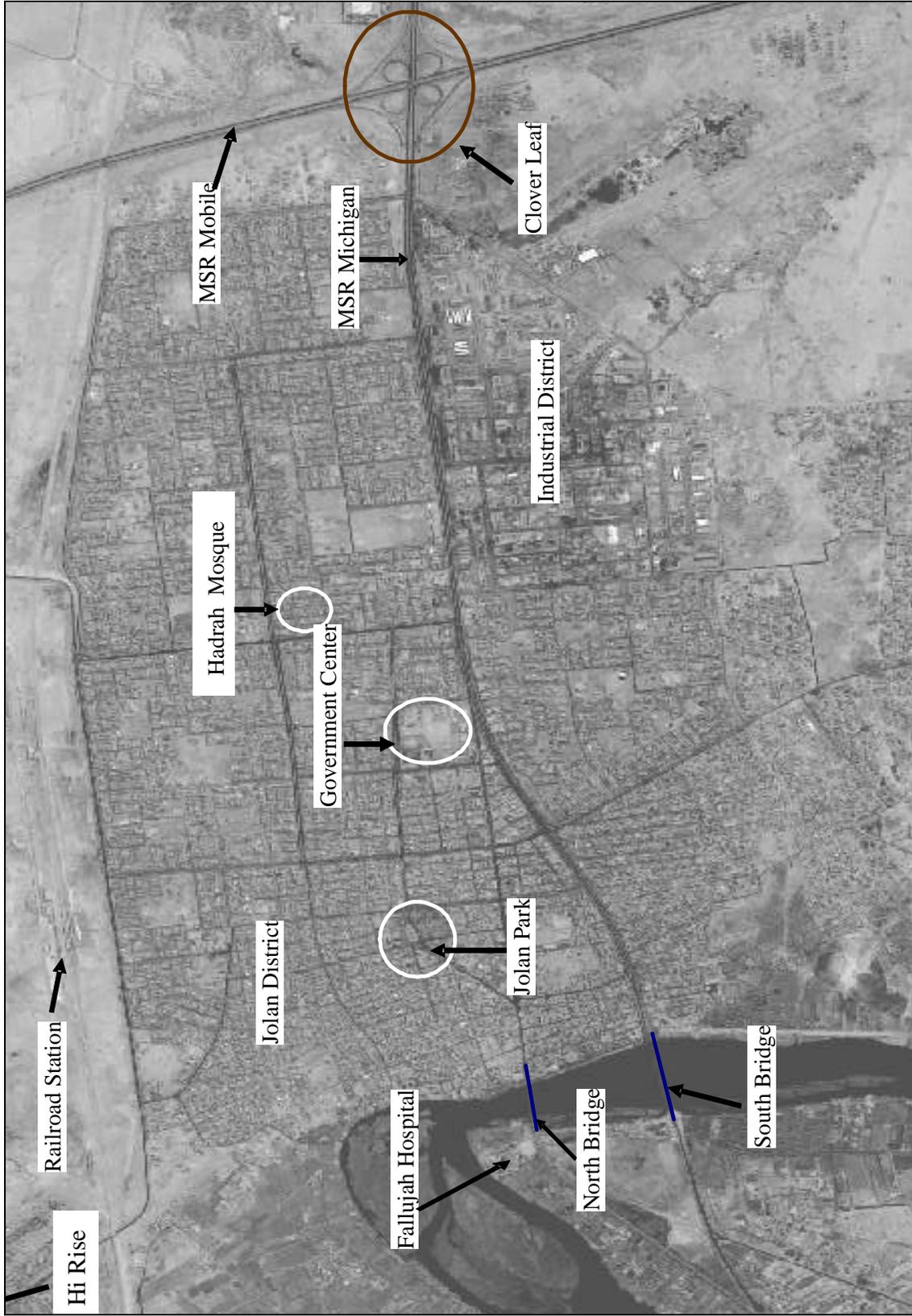


Image courtesy of 1st MARDIV

Figure C-4. Map of Fallujah



## Appendix D: Chronology of 2004 Events

### January–March, Operation IRAQI FREEDOM II Major Force Rotations

- 2 Mar, Ashoura massacre, 271 killed
- 8 Mar, Interim Iraqi constitution signed
- 11 Mar, Madrid Bombing
- 28 Mar, CPA closed Sadr's Baghdad newspaper
- 31 Mar, Blackwater contractors killed in Fallujah

### April, “April Uprising,” Fears of a Sunni/Shi'a collusion

- 2 Apr, One of al-Sadr's lieutenants arrested
- 4 Apr–1 May, Operation VIGILANT RESOLVE (Fallujah I)
- 5 Apr, CPA announces Iraqi arrest warrant for al-Sadr in connection with the murder of a Shi'a cleric the previous year
- Late Apr, photos released of Abu-Gurayb
- 25 Apr, Bremer warns of situation in An Najaf
- Spain begins withdrawing from Iraq (An Najaf)
- 30 Apr, Siege of Fallujah ends at the urging of Iraqi politicians; Fallujah Brigade formed

### May

- 4–22 May, 1/1AD(-) fights Mahdi Militia for Karbala
- 15 May, CJTF-7 inactivates and MNF- Iraq activates
- 17 May, IGC President Izz al-Din Salim killed by car bomb in Baghdad

### June

- 8 Jun, UNSCR 1546 adopted
- 20 Jun, IIF established.
- 28 Jun, CPA turned over sovereignty to the IIG

### July

- ICDC redesignated the ING
- Sadr tensions in Sadr City as well as An Najaf (Building since April)

### August

- 4 Aug, Campaign Plan published
- 2–14 Aug, Coalition and ISF defeat Mahdi Militia in Al Kut
- 5–27 Aug, An Najaf, Operation PACIFIC GUARDIAN
- 19 Aug Iraqi National Assembly elected and seated

### October

- 1–4 Oct, Samarra, Operation BATON ROUGE
- 23 Oct, Massacre of Army recruits; Allawi blames Coalition for the massacre

### November

- 8 Nov–23 Dec, Operation AL FAJR (Fallujah II)
- 28 Nov, Militants storm police station in Samarra

### December, Setting conditions for the elections

- Operations conducted in Sunni Triangle and Triangle of Death (south of Baghdad) and Mosul
- 29 Dec, ING to be incorporated into Iraqi Army on Jan 6



## Appendix E: Teaching, Coaching, Building/ Political-Security Matrix

Project hypothesis:

*Teaching* Iraqis to plan and execute a major military operation, *coaching* the Iraqis on the use of information operations, and *building* Iraqi self confidence and external respect enabled the Iraqis to play a key role in achieving victory in AL FAJR.

The competencies—teaching, coaching, building (TCB)—and the model, PSI, provide two axes or dimensions to the methodology. An analysis of TCB and PSI intersections via a matrix provided a method of looking at some of the factors important to the study. Specifically, each cell formed by the intersection of TCB and PSI is populated by one or more indicators—observable conditions or characteristics that would indicate T, C, or B had any discernible effect on P, S, or I. Metrics associated with the indicators and applied to the responses (Likert-type scale) allowed the authors to assess and compare the development of the Iraqi Government and Forces over an added axis of time. The matrix is called the Teaching, Coaching, Building (TCB)/Pol-Sec matrix and is used to assess various characteristics of the political and security dimensions of Iraqi organizations and to track their progress through 2004.

As shown in Figure E-1, the hypothesis antecedents of teach, coach, build are listed vertically, and the model metrics are listed under the *Political* and *Security* categories on the horizontal.<sup>1</sup> The cells provide the indicators, or information requirements to be investigated. Security metric 3 (S3) provides an example—*ISF is visibly executing important and relevant operations*—which implies that an enabler (CE), also called a mechanism *exists to encourage or enable ISF involvement; ISF participation in the process*. That becomes the core enabler that allows teaching, coaching, building to occur.

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<sup>1</sup> Information operations is addressed in the *Coaching* line and also embedded throughout the matrix. As the authors originally exercised the “I” column, it became so redundant with the *Coaching* line that it was deleted.

TCB are referred to as competencies. They are the study objectives and antecedents for the hypothesis		<b>Political</b>		<b>Security</b>			
	Metric	<b>P1</b> IG Involved in Strategic & Operational planning; plans linked to political objectives	<b>P2</b> IG sets political conditions for success -- isolates the threat	<b>S1</b> ISF leadership involvement in the operational planning and approval process	<b>S2</b> ISF trained and equipped to execute military operation	<b>S3</b> ISF visibly executing important, relevant security operations	<b>S4</b> Iraqis (IG, ISF, and citizens) recognize importance of ISF missions and respect the ISF
	Core enabler <b>CE</b>	1-IG Democratic, constitutionally elected; 1-mec-hanism /organization (Coalition and Iraqi) exists that encourages involvement. 1-IG leadership actively participates/negotiates (3 pts possible)		1-Mechanism/organization (Coalition & Iraqi) exists that encourages involvement 1-ISF participate in process (2 points possible for ISF core enablers)			
	Teaching Iraqis to plan and execute <b>T</b>	1-Degree to which Iraqis supported the development of a plan 1-linkage of plan and execution to political objectives (2 points possible) <b>CE + Total = P1T</b> (5 points possible/cell)	1- Build alliances internationally, nationally, and regionally. 1- Work w/provincial governments & local tribes to gain support & isolate threat	3-Degree to which ISF helped develop plan  <b>Each TCB/PS cell is an indicator and is rated</b>	1-ISF soldiers are equip-ped & qualified on personal weapons, 1-ISF equipped & trained to execute platoon, company, battalion . . . sized operations 1-Leaders, officers and NCOs, train and lead soldiers	This section constitutes 3 separate cells w/points: 1. Level of ops (squad, plt, co, bn, bde), 1. Complexity of ops (TCP, cordon & search, clearing, etc.) 1. Intensity of ops	3-ISF is trained to understand the importance of perceptions in executing the mission and those perceptions can contribute or detract from mission success
	Coaching the Iraqis on IO (media ops) <b>C</b>	2-Iraqi Leadership independently seeks IO opportunities and coordinates IO efforts <b>CE + Total = P1C</b>	Set the conditions: 1- Establishes media opportunities -- keeps people informed of mission, rationale, and how they can assist 1- Controls the threats use of media	1-ISF understand the value and process by which IO is an integral part of those operations 2-ISF integrates IO into the plans 0	1-Training includes the importance of IO to the success of the operation, 1-Exercises include and assess IO; 1-leaders are coached on IO opportunities	1-IO is introduced at the various levels and 1-into the various operations, 1-ISF leaders provide input on IO opportunities to support operations	1-ISF receives constructive feedback [increasingly positive] on activities from coalition as well as peers, IG and citizens 2-ISF takes corrective actions
	Building Iraqi respect <b>B</b>	2- Iraqi Civilian leadership visibly takes responsibility and executes plans as their own <b>CE + Total = P1B</b>	2-One team; one fight, internally & externally (w/Coalition) Up and down chain. Leaders talk to the soldiers; let them know they are doing the right thing and the civilian leadership supports them.	3-Feedback mechanisms are also built into plans to provide lessons -- those mechanisms build confidence in what works and what doesn't.	3-Training reflects pride in equipment & includes feedback mechanism that reflects and rewards performance	3-ISF units are increasingly independent (ISF embedded in US unit, US Advisors embedded in ISF units, ISF operate independently),	1-Leaders and soldiers are dependable, committed -- low absenteeism, 1-Citizens understand necessity of ISF ops; are treated humanely, 1-Enemy (via docex, IIRs) respects ISF
		<b>Total (P1T + P1C + P1B)/3 = P1</b>	<b>Total (P2T + P2C + P3B)/3 = P2</b>	<b>Total (S1T + S2C + S3B)/3 = S1</b>	<b>Total (S2T + S2C + S3B)/3 = S2</b>	<b>Total (S3T + S3C + S3B)/3 = S3</b>	<b>Total (S4T + S4C + S4B)/3 = S4</b>
		<b>Total (P1 + P2) /2 = P</b>		<b>Total (S1 + S2+ S3 + S4)4=S</b>			
		Each TCB cell can total 5 points (core enabler plus the available cell points).					
	Color Codes	Not Evaluated (NE)	1 - incapable of executing political or security ops even w/substantial spt	2 - Partially capable; requires substantial advisor, ops, & sustainment spt	3 - Capable w/moderate advisor spt and substantial ops spt and sustainment	4- Capable of independent ops in select areas; needs Ops and sustainment spt	5 - Capable of Independent operations

**Figure E-1. Pol-Sec/Teaching, Coaching, Building Matrix**

The indicators for TCB as they apply to the categories/domains of *Political* and *Security* are within each cell. Each TCB cell will have a rating from 1–5 (that includes the score that might be received from the core enabler).<sup>2</sup> Cell averages are totaled below for an overall average of **Political** and **Security** for the time frame. Those scores are color-coded to provide a general overview of Iraqi development for the period.

An assessment was done at three points during 2004: April, post-Vigilant Resolve; September, post-AN NAJAF; and late December, post-AL FAJR. Side-by-side assessments for VIGILANT RESOLVE, An Najaf, and AL FAJR are presented in Figure E-2.

<sup>2</sup> Ratings were developed primarily from interviews but also considered insights and assessments from other sources such as MNF-I reports.

Metric	Fallujah I				Najaf				Fallujah II			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Core Core enabler	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	IG sets involved in planning & approval										
Teaching the Iraqis to plan and execute	3-Degree to which ISF helped develop plan? No. 2: 1-Link to provinces & objectives? No. 2: T=1.2	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8
Coaching the Iraqis on IO (media ops)	2-Iraqi Leadership media independent opportunity? No. 2: 1-Link to provinces & objectives? No. 2: T=1.2	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8	1-IG Democratic, elected? No. 2: 1-Mechanism/organization exists? No. 4: 1-IG leadership activity participants? No. 2: T=8
Building Iraq respect	2-Civilian leadership takes responsibility and executes plans? No. 4: T=1.2	2-Civilian leadership takes responsibility and executes plans? No. 4: T=1.2	2-Civilian leadership takes responsibility and executes plans? No. 4: T=1.2	2-Civilian leadership takes responsibility and executes plans? No. 4: T=1.2	2-Civilian leadership takes responsibility and executes plans? No. 4: T=1.2	2-Civilian leadership takes responsibility and executes plans? No. 4: T=1.2	2-Civilian leadership takes responsibility and executes plans? No. 4: T=1.2	2-Civilian leadership takes responsibility and executes plans? No. 4: T=1.2	2-Civilian leadership takes responsibility and executes plans? No. 4: T=1.2	2-Civilian leadership takes responsibility and executes plans? No. 4: T=1.2	2-Civilian leadership takes responsibility and executes plans? No. 4: T=1.2	2-Civilian leadership takes responsibility and executes plans? No. 4: T=1.2

Color Codes	Not Evaluated (NE)	1 - incapable of executing political or security ops even w/substantial sp	2 - Partially capable; requires substantial advisor ops. & sustainment sp	3 - Capable w/moderate advisor sp and substantial ops and sustainment	4 - Capable of independent ops in select areas; generally needs Ops and sustainment sp	5 - Capable of independent operations
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Figure E-2. TCB/Pol-Sec Assessment, 2004

During VIGILANT RESOLVE, there was no functional Iraqi government or military, hence the solid red cells on the left of the matrix indicating *incapable*.<sup>3</sup> The only Iraqi military units available were elements of the 36th Commandos, and they participated in small numbers.

Operation AN NAJAF (center of Figure E-2) was successful. Operations in An Najaf provided the Allawi government a success and a model for planning AL FAJR. Operations in Samarra (not indicated) during September/October served as another step along the road in developing the Iraqi forces.

There were a number of improvements while preparing for and executing AL FAJR, most notably in the political arena (green cells). This area was heavily influenced by Prime Minister Allawi, particularly with respect to building alliances, working with the media, and setting the conditions for the battle.

Although IO was limited primarily to media operations, ISF contributions included collecting visuals such as the pictures of the torture rooms and caches for LTG Qadir and others to use during their meet-the-press sessions.

The gray or *not evaluated* elements of the ISF for planning and feedback reflect that the ISF, except for a few officials, were not part of the pre-battle planning process.

Some events affected more than one area. For example, the number of desertions in a unit reflected unit morale/absenteeism (cell B-Security 4) and affected the size of unit operations (cell T-Security 3). Such factors complicated efforts to establish reliable performance metrics; for instance, it was difficult to rate a unit on battalion- or company-sized operations when its unit strength equaled only that of a large company or platoon, respectively.

There were a number of limitations to the assessment, especially with respect to sample size and validity of the numbers; for example:

- There were only six under-strength battalions as part of the ISF force—a small and select sample (they were the best at the time).
- Although the assessment uses a Likert-like scale, the numbers are informed guesses based on very limited input.

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<sup>3</sup> Due to the limited space in Figure E-2, the indicator descriptions were abbreviated. Please refer to Figure E-1 for the complete indicator descriptions.

Accordingly, the true value of the TCB/Pol-Sec matrix and Assessment was focusing the project on teaching, coaching, building; and the relevant indicators provide a general overview of the Iraqi development during the period.

Most of the individual cell assessments (and descriptions) were developed from discussions during interviews. As an example, the security metric (S3 at Figure E-1) of *ISF executing important relevant operations*, was complex and included several areas: level of operation, complexity of operation, and intensity of operation. As an example, level of operation spanned from squad operations to brigade (assessed from 1–5 respectively); complexity considered traffic control point operations on the lower end (1) and direct action as a result of the unit’s own intelligence effort at the higher end (5). To collect and display that type of information, a more detailed table was developed. In some cases the table was completed telephonically; in others it was completed during a face-to-face interview. Some tables were completed and returned by the interviewees. The table included 10 parameters for unit assessment, as reflected at Table E-1.

An example is provided by Maj Zacchea in Figure E-3. Zacchea was the Senior Advisor for the 5th Battalion, 3rd Iraqi Army Division. More compelling than his numerical assessment are his comments. Zacchea was embedded with the unit from March 2004 to February 2005, wounded twice, and awarded the Lion of Babylon by Prime Minister Al-lawi for his actions with the unit. He put his heart and soul into working with the Iraqis, as did many other advisors.

## 5/3 IAF Assessment – Al Fajr

- 5/3 battalion was least "mature" of all units that made the assault. In existence for less than 6 months; only 3 months out of its training phase.
- Notified 20 Oct 2004 that we were going to Fallujah. Heated debate with the Iraqi leadership, the Iraqi leadership did not want to pay the soldiers until the battle was finished. We decided to tell the soldiers that we were indeed going to Fallujah and withheld pay until we got to Fallujah. A near-riot ensued, in which several fist-fights broke out, but the officer leadership brought the battalion under control.
- The battalion was carrying ~ 550 on its rolls, with 25% on leave at any given time, and maybe another 10% UA (unaccounted) We had maybe 330 ~ 350 souls on hand at any given time to defend Taji, train, and conduct operations. Operational tempo was heavy, with the soldiers working 12 on/12 off every day for two weeks on the perimeter, and engaged virtually every day with insurgents.
- During the week before we went to Fallujah, about 75~80% of the battalion deserted, including the battalion commander. Within a few days, most of them came back. The Iraqi leadership, including the battalion commander, told me that they had gone home to bring their possessions and say goodbye to their families.

	3 <sup>rd</sup> Bde/5 <sup>th</sup> IAF Div	
	5 <sup>th</sup> Bn Z	6 <sup>th</sup> Bn
1.Resourced – Individual	3	
2.Resourced – Unit	2	
3.Unit level operation	3	
4.Operation complexity	5	
5.Operation intensity	5	
6.Level of Dependency	2	
7.Leadership	3	
8.Morale	2-3	
9.Level of Performance	4	
10. Sustainment		
Comment	* see attached	
Total/10	29.5/9=3.26	

- We went to Fallujah with ~ 440 souls, with a rear party of ~50.
- Deployment day we ran a gauntlet of fire the whole way from Taji to Fallujah. Ambushed twice, each time at an overpass with an overhead IED initiating the ambush. Each ambush was supported by machine guns and RPGs and/or mortars. We lost a total of 4 vehicles, 1 killed, 16 wounded.
- After we paid the battalion, we had a company's worth of soldiers desert (about 120), led by several officers and the battalion Sgt Major (all Sunni). Not every Sunni officer deserted, but the ones that did were.
- One Kurdish company commander deserted on the eve of the rehearsal 6 Nov. This event made national news.
- We made the assault with 321 Iraqis. We spent 7 weeks in the city in urban combat. We captured the Al Tawhid wa Jihad mosque, the Al Mujahareen mosque, the Islamic benevolent Society of Fallujah complex, and the Al Hadhrah Al Muhammadiyah mosque. We captured more than 100 insurgents, and killed ~ approximately 60. We captured just ridiculous amounts of explosives, weapons, ammo, actionable intelligence, and Al Qaeda.
- All told, the Iraqis had 2 killed and 31 wounded in Fallujah, and we left with 288 remaining. Of the 8 advisors on my team, 4 of us were wounded
- The Iraqis were pretty decent at defending a position. We were counterattacked at the Al-Hadhrah mosque a couple of times. They were not as aggressive in the assault, and required Americans leading from the front, and Americans pushing them from the rear. However, they were fearless in staying with the Americans leading the assault or counter-attack.
- After the battle, we suffered reprisal attacks. We had at least 3, and maybe 6, killed; 2 were beheaded. Several were abducted and tortured, returned to us broken.
- The battalion was infiltrated by an insurgent from the al-Dulaimi, whose mission was to assassinate me and the other Americans, but an Iraqi soldier he tried to recruit went to his chain of command, and they informed us in a timely manner, and we had the assassin arrested.

Senior Advisor Assessment

**Figure E-3. Example of a senior advisor's assessment**

Assessment areas in Figure E-3 are described in Table E-1. Descriptions were refined during interviews.

At the time of this assessment, ISF sustainment depended wholly on the Coalition and was not rated. Although a total score is provided, it does not necessarily translate directly to the metric sheet because some of the topics (such as level of dependency, leadership and morale) were assessed in other areas of the matrix.

There was a marked difference between the Coalition-supported unit's ratings of the ISF, which tended to be lower, compared to AST ratings of the same unit.

**Table E-1. ISF Assessment for AL FAJR**

Rate the areas from 1–5, 1 being poor, 3 average and 5 very good	
<b>1. Resourced–Individual</b>	<p>Individuals have serviceable/capable weapons, ammunition, body armor, helmets, Common Table of Allowance (CTA) 50 equivalent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (1) Unserviceable individual weapons, lack of ammunition, insufficient body armor, etc.</li> <li>▪ (2) Serviceable weapons, ammunition (but in short supply), sporadic uniforms, less than 50% CTA</li> <li>▪ (3) Serviceable weapons, helmets, body armor, ammunition (sufficient but not full basic load), 90% uniforms, no night vision systems, 50–70% CTA</li> <li>▪ (4) Same as level 3 but with ammunition (basic load) and uniforms, no night vision systems, CTA 71–90%.</li> <li>▪ (5) Includes night vision systems, basic load of ammunition, uniforms, boots. CTA greater than 90%.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Resourced–Unit</b>	<p>Units have Table of Organization and Equipment (TOE) type equipment on hand and serviceable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (1) &lt; 40%</li> <li>▪ (2) 40–55%</li> <li>▪ (3) 56–70%</li> <li>▪ (4) 71–89%</li> <li>▪ (5) 90–100%</li> </ul>
<b>3. Unit level of operation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (1) Squad</li> <li>▪ (2) Platoon</li> <li>▪ (3) Company</li> <li>▪ (4) Battalion</li> <li>▪ (5) Brigade</li> </ul>
<b>4. Operation complexity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (1) Tactical Control Point (TCP); presence</li> <li>▪ (2) Cordon and Search</li> <li>▪ (3) Combat Patrol; clearing</li> <li>▪ (4) Direct Action or human intel collection</li> <li>▪ (5) Direct Action and Human Intel</li> </ul>
<b>5. Operation intensity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (1) Benign: no missions–1 per month</li> <li>▪ (2) Light: 1–2 missions/wk</li> <li>▪ (3) moderate: 3–4 missions/wk</li> <li>▪ (4) moderate-heavy: 5–7 missions/wk</li> <li>▪ (5) Heavy: 8+ missions/wk</li> </ul>
<b>6. Level of dependency</b>	<p>Integrated into coalition operations at various levels from full dependency to independent operations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (1) AST assessed ISF as not ready for missions</li> <li>▪ (2) ASTs actively supporting unit operations by visibly providing guidance/directions</li> <li>▪ (3) ASTs playing moderate role in unit operations</li> <li>▪ (4) ASTs playing no visible support role in unit operations–as if they were observers</li> <li>▪ (5) unit performing independent operations</li> </ul>
<b>7. Leadership</b>	<p>Organization, planning and rehearsal, initiative, aggressiveness, officers led from front, officers related to non-commissioned officers/<i>Jundi</i>, set example, tactical ability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (1) No leadership involvement</li> <li>▪ (2) Leaders, not in charge and noticeably following advisor lead</li> </ul>

*continued, following page*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (3) Leaders taking charge of training, planning, organizing, and executing missions but with noticeable input from advisors</li> <li>▪ (4) Same as level 3 but with little input/guidance from advisors</li> <li>▪ (5) Iraqi leaders independently taking charge of training, planning, organizing and executing missions</li> </ul>
<b>8. Morale</b>	<p>Number of desertions, lethargy between actions, misbehavior—looting, indiscriminate fire, treatment of detainees, [lack of] initiative, [lack of] unit cohesion, prior experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (1) greater than 30% desertions prior to combat operations, numerous ROE violations such as lack of PID, willful collateral damage, looting during clearing operations, lack of respect by populace, weapon safety violations (negligent discharges)</li> <li>▪ (2) 30% desertions prior to combat operations, negligent discharges, various ROE infractions, lack of respect by populace</li> <li>▪ (3) 80% of unit present for combat operations, generally followed ROE, 30% of unit with prior operational experience, no safety issues (negligent discharges)</li> <li>▪ (4) 90% of unit present for combat operations, no desertions, 50% prior operational experience, no safety issues, followed ROE, self respect, generally respected by populace</li> <li>▪ (5) 95% of unit present for combat operations, no desertions, followed ROE, respected by populace, self respect, unit esprit, seasoned combat unit</li> </ul>
<b>9. Level of performance</b>	<p>Defensive or offensive oriented? i.e., Encountered fire, Returned fire, Moved under fire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (1) Ran</li> <li>▪ (2) Pray and spray</li> <li>▪ (3) Defended position: Encountered fire, returned fire</li> <li>▪ (4) Moved/maneuvered under fire</li> <li>▪ (5) offensive oriented</li> </ul>
<b>10. Sustainment</b>	Not evaluated

Although the TCB/Pol-Sec Assessment indicates a marked improvement in Iraqi capability, it shows only that they were capable of making a contribution, and not necessarily that they ‘played a key role’ per the hypothesis contention. (It is also important to note that Iraqi development, in-and-of itself, is not sufficient to succeed.)

Figure E-4, developed for discussions (described as food-for-thought) with interviewees, illustrates the relationship between Iraqi dependence on Coalition support and time as Coalition efforts to teach, coach, and build continued to develop Iraqi capabilities (large arrow below the black line). The red line is an estimate of insurgent capabilities drawn from insurgent activities reflected during the period. It proposes that defeating the insurgency—building Iraqi capabilities to exceed insurgent capabilities—requires Coalition and Iraqi actions in all lines of operations (large arrow above the black line) to gain the support of the people and undermine insurgent capabilities.

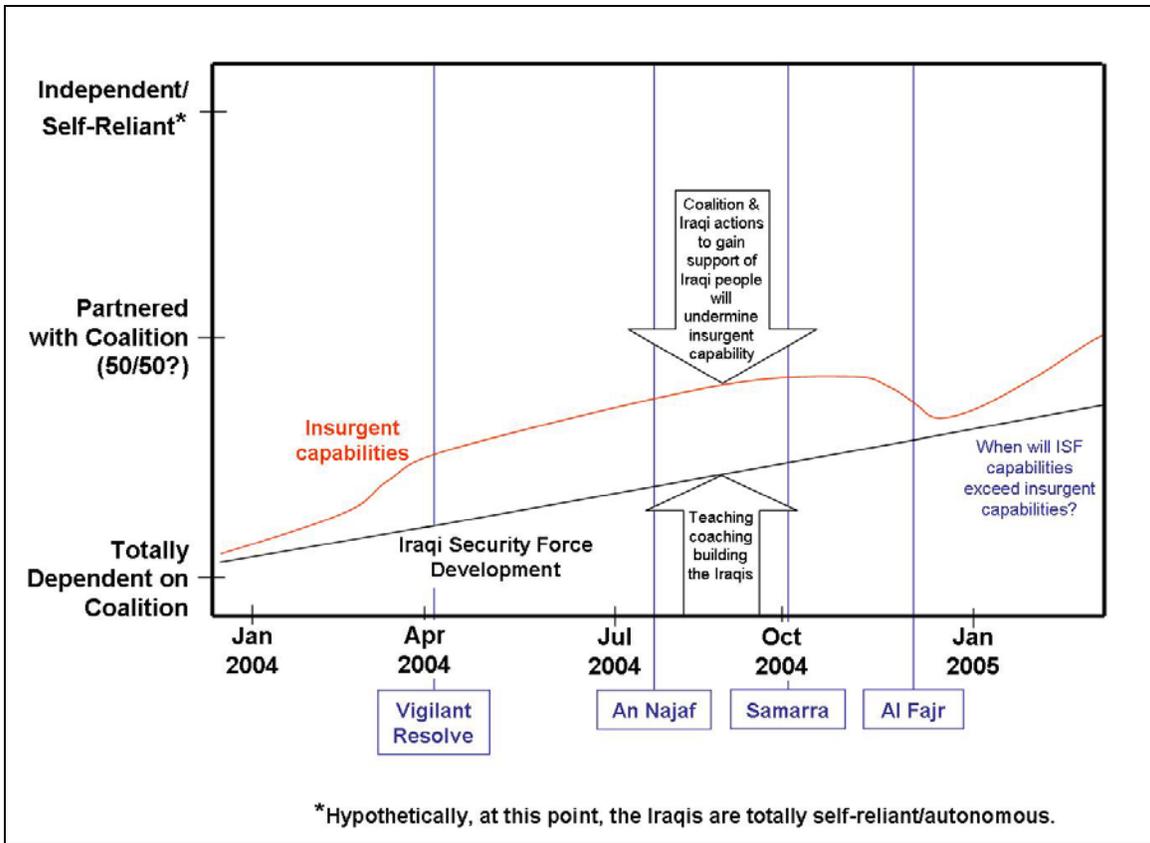


Figure E-4. Iraqi security dependency on the Coalition, January 2004–January 2005



## Appendix F: Battle Reconstruction

The study of the Battle for Fallujah, sponsored by the Joint Forces Command, Joint Center for Operational Analysis (JCOA), explored the operational and strategic lessons from Operation AL FAJR with emphasis on 1) Coalition operational-level planning and execution, 2) teaching the Iraqis to plan and execute military operations, 3) coaching the Iraqis on information operations, and 4) building Iraqi self confidence.

In this Appendix, we will discuss the battle reconstruction concept and approach, the vignette selected for the reconstruction, the storyline with prevalent themes, the various aspects of the reconstruction, and its use as a training and education resource.<sup>4</sup>

### A. Purpose and Background

IDA is known for reconstructing historical events in simulation for historical analysis, leadership development, and experimentation. Examples include “‘73 Easting” from the first Gulf War and “Mazar-e Sharif: The First Victory of the 21st Century” from Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. Although its scope is far narrower than those two ventures, one of the objectives for the Battle for Fallujah project was to reconstruct a significant tactical event with strategic implications using gaming technologies in lieu of simulation as an element of the overall reconstruction. JAWD staff members teamed with the Life-time Learning Division from the Combined Arms Support Command (CASCOM) and Kuma Reality Games to create such a scenario.<sup>5</sup>

Many people perceive a reconstruction as an application to portray tactical events. However, if done right, critical tactical events can be woven together to reflect operational and strategic implications. One example is using the 36th Commandos, an Iraqi capability, to seize the Fallujah Hospital as the first engagement of AL FAJR, an engagement that would be publicized by national and international media.

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<sup>4</sup> Keith Halper, CEO, Kuma Reality Games, coauthored this appendix.

<sup>5</sup> This appendix responds to the “reconstruction” aspects of Task Order AJ-8-246523.

## B. Approach

The teaming arrangement was a “handCon” partnership of interested parties to determine whether a vignette could be reconstructed to meet the interests of everyone involved. CASCOM wanted to reconstruct a vignette that could be used for training and leadership development. IDA sought the same objectives but its scope was much broader to include operational and strategic lessons and a faithful reconstruction for historical analysis as well as research, development and experimentation—the same purpose the IDA/Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency team pursued during the ‘73 Easting and Mazar-e Sharif reconstructions. But this time, instead of using simulation, IDA wanted to determine whether gaming technology could support the reconstruction objectives. The approach included:

- **Data Collection.** Use the on-going data collection for Operation AL FAJR to identify critical events throughout the battle that, once reconstructed, would reflect major operational and strategic lessons. The collection for reconstruction is much more extensive than for an after action report or lesson learned, because it is much more detailed and media-intensive. Interviews require video or audio and transcripts in order to efficiently find and extract themes and visually present different perspectives.
- **Vignette Selection.** Prioritize candidate events based on the lessons they convey (in accordance with project and study objectives), the complexity of the reconstruction, and the availability of resources. Draft the selected vignette/storyline in PowerPoint; determine media/resource availability.
- **Preliminary Design Review.** Meet with gamers, simulation experts, and IDA’s Communications Services Group graphics personnel. Discuss objectives, organize data collection materials, and present the storyline. Determine gaps and opportunities.
- **Reconstruction Architecture.** In accordance with the design review, develop reconstruction architecture and integrate Kuma’s development requirements.
- **Reconciliation and Development.** Simultaneous with Reconstruction Architecture, continue to reconcile and develop the selected vignette/storyline in PowerPoint (self-contained to run autonomously) and, later, commit to a Flash reconstruction that capitalizes on and integrates graphics, video, and the gaming effort. This requires continued reconciliation between the storyline, resources (primarily media), and team (graphics and gaming) capabilities.

- Products. The “Battle for Fallujah” product was limited to the PowerPoint prototype, and Kuma’s/CASCOM’s progress on the gaming segment; however, the ultimate goal was three-fold:
  - A 10–15 minute storyline video—simply, tell the story.
  - An interactive DVD that provided a reconstruction of the event in Flash that capitalizes on select graphics, video, and Kuma’s gaming efforts. The result would be a training and education resource for tactical through strategic lessons from AL FAJR.
  - A serious game, developed by Kuma that would provide 1) the tactical storyline, and 2) as an element of the reconstruction, an interactive gaming capability for training, leadership development, and team-building. As an example, a scenario for exercising the military decision-making process, standard operating procedures, order preparation, issue and execution, AARs, and role playing for Coalition, Iraqi team-members and others.

## C. Selecting a Vignette for Reconstruction

Although MNF-I led the planning and execution of AL FAJR and bore the brunt of combat operations, the fledgling Iraqi Government and ISF contributed in areas where Coalition Forces were less capable, and, for certain actions, some would contend, incapable. Examples include setting the political conditions regionally and nationally for Operation AL FAJR, finding caches, identifying and exploiting foreign fighters, and searching sensitive areas like mosques. At the heart of each of those examples is cultural nuance—not only within Iraq, but regionally and internationally.

Additionally, the orchestration of ISF tactical operations yielded strategic successes when Coalition Forces may have won a more efficient tactical victory but without the strategic benefit. The 36th Commandos’ seizure of the Fallujah Hospital on 7 November 2004, as the opening action of AL FAJR, was such an operation—a tactical event with strategic implications. Although there were a number of candidate vignettes, the seizure of the Fallujah Hospital was selected for reconstruction for the following reasons:

1. It was a high priority target. The hospital was a significant insurgent information operations node during VIGILANT RESOLVE in April 2004. The purpose of seizing it during AL FAJR was to deny the enemy the opportunity to use it again for IO purposes.

2. It signaled the beginning of Operation AL FAJR. The 36th Commandos, supported by the 5th Special Forces Group (SFG) advisors, provided an IO opportunity to showcase an Iraqi capability.<sup>6</sup> This worked better than had been hoped. The seizure was first aired by Al Jazeera, a news service unfriendly to the Coalition and Iraqi Government making it even more credible, certainly much more credible than if aired by Western-based news services only.
3. It was a combined/joint operation. Led by the Marine 3rd LAR, Task Force Wolfpack included a Marine LAR and straight-leg infantry company, Marine PSYOP and civil affairs teams, an Army Bradley unit from the 2BCT/2ID, an Army Sapper detachment including Armored Combat Earthmovers (ACE) from the 44th Combat Engineers, as well as the Iraqi 36th Commandos and elements of the Army's 5th SFG. Additionally it included close air support from the Navy and the Marines.
4. It exemplified the project's objectives. This vignette best exemplified all four of the project areas, in particular, "teach, coach and build."

But this Iraqi seizure of the hospital didn't just happen. It took more than a year to teach the Iraqis how to plan and execute a military operation, coach them on strategic communications, and build their confidence.

## D. Background: Teaching, Coaching and Building the Iraqi Special Operations Forces

The Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF) were born of a need for an Iraqi Government offensive capability to counter an emerging insurgent threat. The intent was to merge fighting forces and intelligence feeds from five of the primary political parties and create 1) a multi-ethnic Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) battalion designed to conduct battalion-and-below offensive operations, and 2) an Iraqi Intelligence Center, or Fusion Cen-

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<sup>6</sup> This adds a different twist to T.E. Lawrence Article 15 of his "Twenty-seven Articles," *Arab Bulletin*, 20 August 1917, "Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably well than that you do it perfectly. It is their war and you are to help them, not to win it for them." He was probably emphasizing the development of the Iraqis as a capability, but today we have to also consider the Iraqi face and the IO implications.

ter, to provide the feed or link with Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF)-7 command and control elements.<sup>7</sup>

The ICDC, later called the 36th Commandos, was to comprise 540 personnel: 108 of the best militia, already trained and equipped, from members of each of the five political parties. They were to be operational in 30 days and, indeed, executed their first mission on 25 December 2003.

VIGILANT RESOLVE was the first test for the Iraqi Forces. The 36th Commandos earned their reputation from the media during that operation because they were the only Iraqi force that held during the fighting. However, they were right at the breaking point and some Commandos quit the unit afterward.

Despite media accolades, there were some serious weaknesses in leadership and training. After VIGILANT RESOLVE was ended, the commander of the 36th was replaced and the unit was extensively trained by elements of the 5th SFG. Using their special operations skills, they developed targets on mid- to upper-level insurgents, terrorists, and foreign fighters. As the unit trained and continuously exercised a spiral development process of integrated intelligence and operations, the SF advisors evaluated progress and adjusted training and operations accordingly. The unit continued to develop and—because of the importance of intelligence to the mission—expanded to include the Iraqi Special Operations Reconnaissance Element. Additionally, the Iraqi Special Operations capability expanded beyond the 36th Commandos to include the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Force (ICTF).

Muqtada al Sadr's uprising in An Najaf during August 2004 was an opportunity for the 36th to demonstrate its capability. It became clear to senior Iraqi Government officials that an Iraqi force was needed to clear the Imam Ali Mosque. LTC Kelley, Commander, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 5th SFG, was the single point of contact responsible for coordinating SOF snipers, certain HUMINT elements, and the assault force comprising the 36th Commando's and Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Force advised by US Special Forces. The ISOF reconnaissance operators got inside the city of Kufah, inside the old city of An Najaf, and inside the Imam Ali Mosque to observe and track Sadr's actions. Thus, some of the best intelligence was from the ISOF reconnaissance operators. Although Sistani's return from London and discussions with Sadr obviated the need for an assault on the Shrine, the ISOF proved they were prepared and eager to make the assault.

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<sup>7</sup> The five political parties included the Iraqi National Accord, the Iraqi National Council, the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party. The Intelligence Fusion Center was never developed.

Insurgent action in Samarra was another opportunity for the ISOF.<sup>8</sup> Two ISOF members were from Samarra and were invaluable to the intelligence collection effort. They did great work on the reconnaissance mission, which then led to the Commandos conducting a successful assault on the Golden Mosque. There were two major lessons from Samarra applied to Fallujah, and specifically to seizing the hospital: 1) Although helmet-mounted cams were critical to recording events, quick, and strategic dissemination of information depended on embedded media; 2) Their second target in Samarra was the hospital, as such, aide packages, doctors, and medical supplies were critical to continued hospital operations.

## E. Storyline: Seizing the Peninsula and Fallujah Hospital

Operation AL FAJR consisted of five phases:

- I. Preparation and Shaping
- II. Enhanced Shaping
- III. Decisive Offensive Operations
- IV. Transition
- V. Transfer of Control

The 36th Commandos executed the hospital seizure during Phase II, D-Day, 7 November 2004. The purpose of Phase II was to physically and electronically shape the battlefield, confuse the enemy as to the timing and direction of the main assault, and support an IO event—the 36th Commandos seizure and clearing of the hospital.

The storyline chosen<sup>9</sup> for the reconstruction comprises three increasingly detailed levels: seizing the peninsula, seizing the hospital, and Company Team B's assault. The serious game element of the reconstruction encompasses this last level and will be discussed in section C below.

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<sup>8</sup> The ISOF now consisted of the 36th Commandos and ICTF; both were used in operations in An Najaf and Samarra.

<sup>9</sup> Recommended by the authors and approved by JCOA.

## 1. Peninsula: preparation and assault

The 3rd LAR, commanded by LtCol Dinauer (Figure F-1), headed what became Task Force Wolfpack and would be responsible for securing the peninsula and setting the conditions for the 36th Commandos to seize the hospital. The 3rd LAR's AO was in the far southwestern portion of Al Anbar province bordering Jordan and Syria. On 24 October, 3rd LAR (-) arrived in Habbaniyah. Under the operational control of 2nd BCT, 2nd Infantry Division in Ar Ramadi, they conducted a relief in place with the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry, began planning for AL FAJR, and started to build the task force (see Figure F-2).



Figure F-1. LtCol Steve Dinauer issuing Operations Order

Some of the attachments were unexpected add-ons and were coordinated as the planning developed. Charlie Company 1-9 (C/1-9) Infantry is a good example. When the unit arrived, COL Patton, Commander, 2nd BCT, 2 Infantry Division in Ar Ramadi asked Dinauer if he needed anything; Dinauer suggested a company of Bradleys. He got 15 Bradleys and 4 M1A1s.

The 113th Combat Service Support Company, a unit normally in direct support to a regiment, was invaluable in providing logistics to the task force because it minimized the logistical dependence on the RCT-1 that received its support from Camp Fallujah, on the other side of the city.

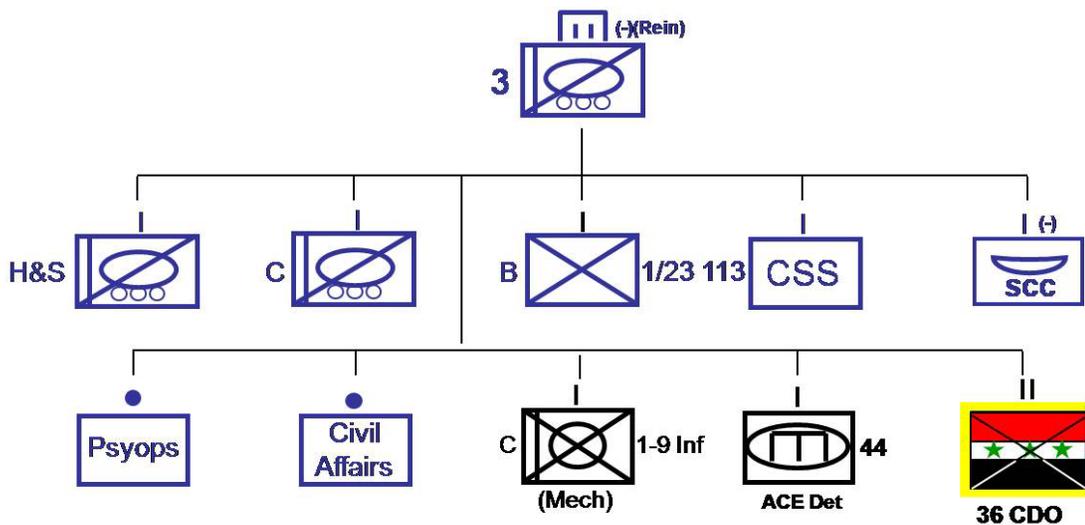


Figure F-2. Task Force Wolfpack Organization

Additionally, somewhere along the way, Dinauer's XO made a deal with an artillery unit supporting the Air Wing in Taqaddum to supply seven-ton transports for the 36th Commandos, because all they had were the thin-skinned Toyota pickup trucks.

During an interview that was included in the reconstruction, Dinauer discusses his mission:

The mission was to secure the hospital, and the two bridges, thereby isolating the peninsula and removing the hospital as a means of propaganda for the enemy. And possibly using it for us for things such as civil affairs, treating wounded civilians, and prosecuting fires into the city in support of the maneuver elements coming north to south.<sup>10</sup>

Mission objectives are listed on his battle map at Figure F-3.

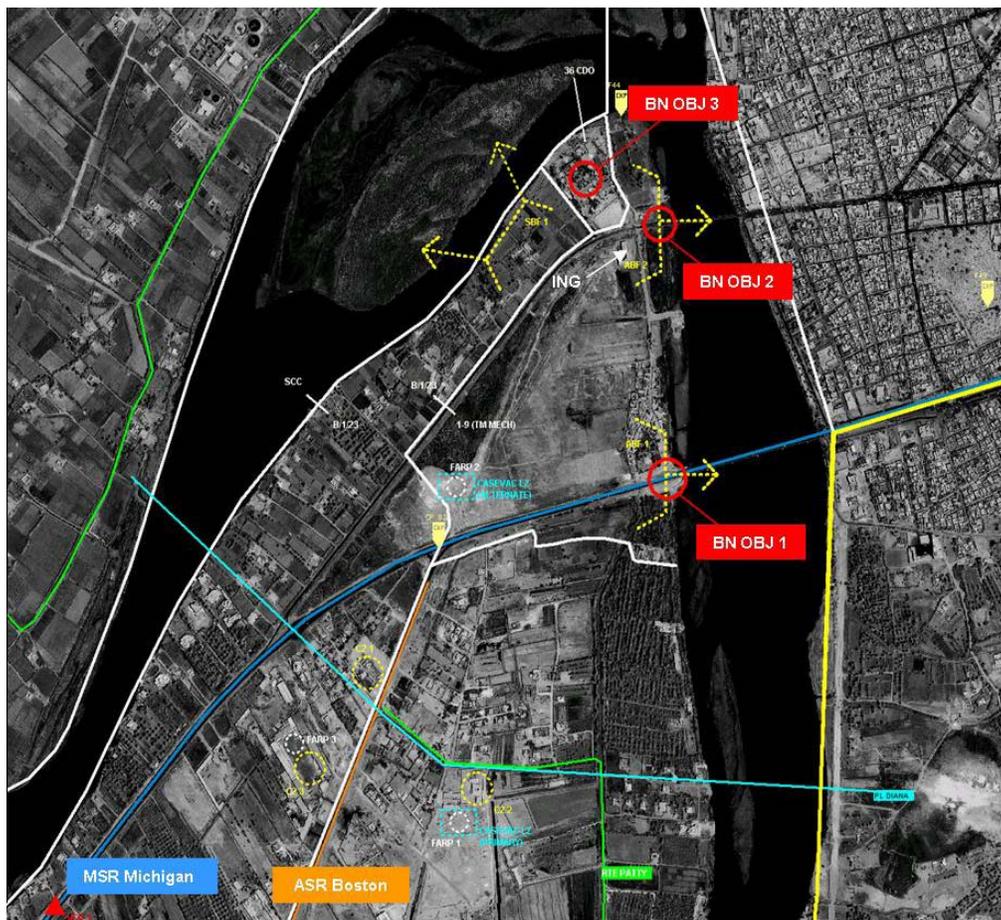


Image courtesy LtCol Dinauer

**Figure F-3. Battle Map of the Peninsula indicating Objectives 1–3: BN OBJ 1, Southern Bridge; BN OBJ 2, Northern Bridge; BN OBJ 3, hospital area**

<sup>10</sup> LtCol Stephen Dinauer, interview with Bill Knarr, Newport News, RI, 10 May 2006

The 3rd LAR and 36th Commandos executed their rehearsal several days before the mission and linked-up the evening of 7 November to proceed to their battle positions. Line of Departure time was 1900 7 November 2004.

The order of march up main supply route (MSR) Michigan was C/1-9 with the Sappers, 3rd LAR forward command post, and then the 36 Commandos. Concurrently, up route Boston was the C/3rd LAR, followed by Bravo 23 (B/1-23) and then CSS 113, which sent assets such as the heavy bulldozers forward to help dig in unit positions.

At ~2025, Cobras working forward of the assault force reported receiving fire from the ING building on the peninsula near BN OBJ 2. Rattler 41 (an F18C) and Rattler 42 (an F14B) from the USS Kennedy received the call from Rico and dropped two GBU 32 1,000-pound bombs (joint direct attack munitions) on target at 2042 effectively silencing any additional insurgent fires from that location.

At ~2050, C/1-9 passed the release point (RP) (see Figure F-4) and attacked to seize Objectives 1 and 2. The 36th Commandos followed in trace of C/1-9 and prepared to seize the hospital. B/1-23 and C/3rd LAR continued to attack north in Company zones, in the west and east respectively.

By 2100, C/1-9 reached Objectives 1 and 2, and by midnight the Sappers from the 44th Engineer Battalion began to work on the north bridge (Figure F-5). Dinauer describes the activity:

ACEs went forward with stuff already in their buckets. They went to the middle of the bridge, lifted the bucket, pushed the dirt out, and then the sappers, with wire, went and were wiring this stuff in. They were taking sporadic small arms fire. I was up there on the North Bridge with the sapper platoon sergeant, and out of the darkness you can hear that old bridge just rumbling as the ACE comes creaking back; then on either side are Army sappers, a real motivating sight to see. They just laid this obstacle and no one was going to get through there.

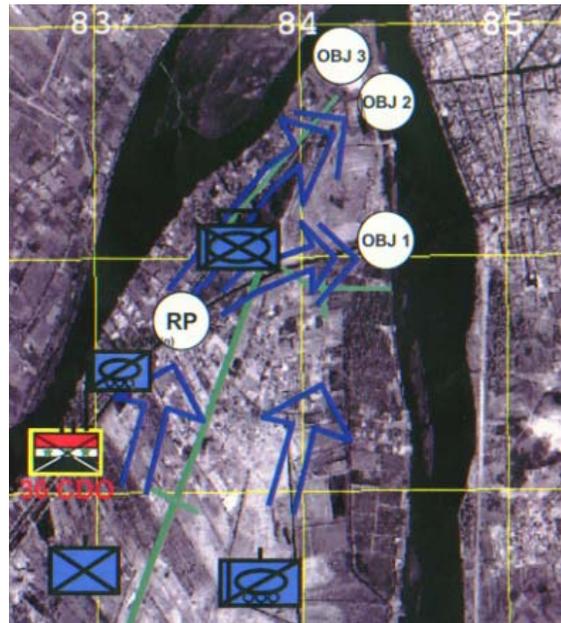


Image courtesy LtCol Dinauer

**Figure F-4. Battle Plan:  
Seizing Battalion Objectives**

They even put a sign on the front, we tried to be very direct, that said, “If you come across this barrier you are going to be shot.” We didn’t want any ambiguity on what the purpose of that was.



Courtesy 5th SFG

**Figure F-5. Seen using night vision device.  
1. North Bridge, 2. ACE on the bridge, 3. ACE on the road to the bridge**

Richard Oppel, a *New York Times* journalist embedded with the 36th Commandos in the hospital, describes the significance of the battle on the peninsula:

A few hundred yards away [from the hospital], an important strategic, as well as symbolic, battle was playing out: American troops, fighting to secure the western end of the two bridges across the Euphrates River, received intense fire from fortified insurgent positions on the east side of the river. One of the bridges was the scene of the grisly episode on March 31, when Iraqis hung the charred and dismembered bodies of at least two of four American security contractors who had been killed from the bridge’s spans.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout the night and following day, Task Force Wolfpack engaged insurgents across the river with organic as well as rotary- and fixed-wing support (Figure F-6).

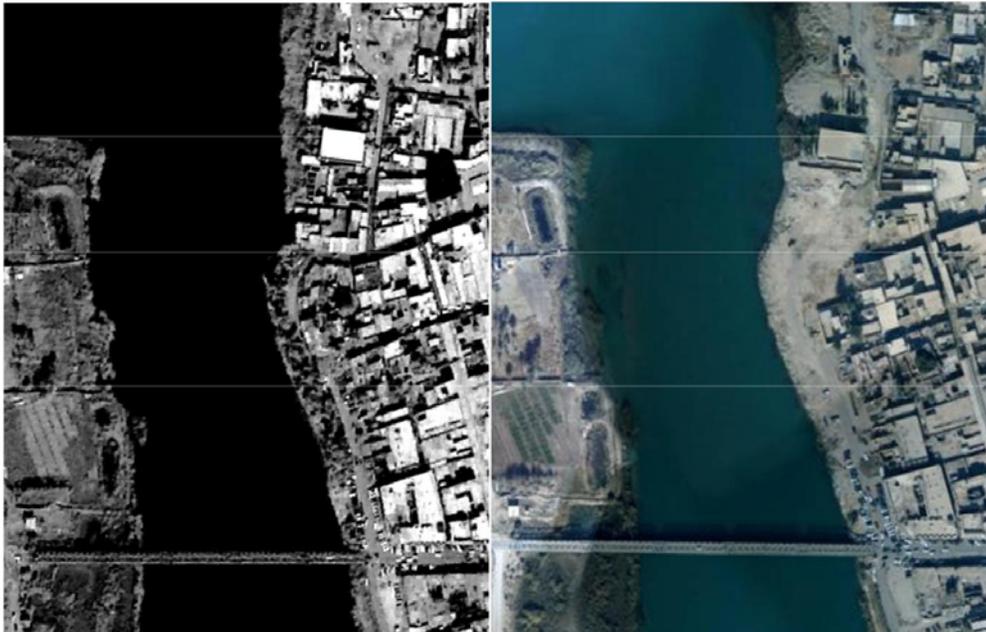


Video courtesy of 5<sup>th</sup> SFG

**Figure F-6. Sequence of photos show F-14s/JDAMS targeting insurgents on the east side of the Euphrates**

<sup>11</sup> Richard Oppel, “Attack by Joint Force: Early Target of Offensive is Hospital,” *New York Times*, 8 November 2004.

Due to the short distance from the insurgent-occupied building on the east side of the river and the insurgents' ability to range Coalition Forces with RPGs, mortars, snipers, machine guns, and small arms, the Coalition was forced to eliminate much of the insurgents' sanctuary along the east coast of the Euphrates. The change in landscape can be seen in Figure F-7.



Photos courtesy of NGA

**Figure F-7. Comparison of waterfront property before and after AL FAJR (white dotted lines for reference)**

Task Force Wolfpack remained on the peninsula until 24 November, preventing insurgents from escaping Fallujah and contending with IEDs and an active insurgent contingent on the peninsula and in Habbaniyah and Taqaddum (see Figure C-3 in Appendix C). They then conducted a relief in place with elements of the 2nd LAR and left the AO for Taqaddum.

## 2. Hospital: 36th Commandos and 5th SFG

By the time the 36th Commandos entered AL FAJR, they were expert in reconnaissance, HUMINT, and direct action operations like seizing and clearing sensitive sites and targeting terrorists. They seized the Golden Mosque and hospital during Operation BATON ROUGE in Samarra in October, and also conducted weekly operations in and around Baghdad. One of the reasons the 36th performed so proficiently was the time and resources the 5th SFG had invested in them.

As the 3rd LAR secured the peninsula, and set up blocking positions on the North and South Bridges leading from the peninsula to Fallujah, the Commandos, (commanded by COL Fahdil Jamal, later to command the ISOF Brigade) (Figure F-8) and 5th SFG advisors, entered the hospital area at 2200 with two assault forces—Company Team Alpha and Bravo. Figure F-9 depicts the battle plan.



**Figure F-8. COL Fahdil, ISOF Commander discusses 36th Commando's actions on 7–8 November 2004**

Team A was tasked to clear Sector A and Team B, Sector B. Both teams announced their mission status as they secured the various buildings and synchronized their actions at the phase lines. For example, Team Bravo would announce via radio to Fahdil and one of the SF advisors, “Building 1 cleared, 2 cleared...cleared to Phase Line 1.” The 5th SFG team lead would then report the status to the SFG liaison at the MEF Headquarters.



Image courtesy NGA

**Figure F-9. Fallujah Hospital Complex with Operations Overlaid**

IO was an integral part of the operation. LTC Robert Kelley, Commander, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> SFG (Figure F-10) had wrestled with the IO challenges for the past year. He implemented the use of helmet cams as a means of capturing all activities in an operation, not only for IO, but for legal reasons. He was confident in his people's abilities to make the right calls, but the enemy had become extremely adept at fabricating stories, so Kelley went to great lengths to ensure the integrity of his operation. Two SFG advisors, outfitted with helmet-mounted video cams, video-taped the operation. The intent was to edit the video on site and then deliver it to the MEF.



**Figure F-10.  
LTC Robert Kelley,  
SF Commander**

In addition, SSG Brett Bassett, a combat cameraman, accompanied the unit. Combat camera and helmet cam video helped the reconstruction significantly, not only in the form of continuous video to document the actions at the hospital and on the peninsula, but to provide timelines for the events. Those video timelines were reconciled with activi-

ty reports, interviews, and after action reports to create a credible spreadsheet reflecting activities for 7–8 November on the peninsula (extract in Table F-1).

**Table F-1. November 7–8 timeline and summary of events for Task Force Wolfpack (extract)**

Time	7 November 2004 Summary of Events	Source
1900L	TF Wolfpack LD from ASP Rock - Line of March on Route Michigan is C/1-9 with the Sappers, 3rd LAR forward CP, and the 36th Commandos. C/3rd LAR, B/2/3, CSS 113 move on Route Boston	D OPORD, AAR
~2025L	Cobras working forward of the assault force report receiving fires from the Iraqi National Guard (ING) Building	DI
~2042L	Rattler 41 an F18C and Rattler 42, an F14B from USS Kennedy received the call from Rico and dropped two, GBU 32 1,000 pounders (JDAM) on target at 2042L local effectively silencing any additional fires from that location.	DI & ATO
~2100 L	C/1-9 reaches objectives 1 and 2, South and North Bridges respectively; C/3rd LAR and B/1/23 attack in company zones to secure west and east sectors respectively	D OPORD
2154L	36th Commandos stopped 500 meters from gate - B Company in the lead	B1
2202L	Company Team Bravo breaches building Sector B. Company A team splits with SFA1 initially securing Buildings 5-7 and SFA2 securing Complex 1-4.	B1
2238L	Viper Zulu reports to Viper 6 that sector Bravo 2/3 is secure.	V1
~2245L	Iraqi at computer terminal; another sorting through office papers	B1
~2300	Hospital area secured – continuing to vet civilians	V1
	8 November 2004 Summary of Events	
0008L	Insurgents engaging ACE, tank and Bradley; engineers creating fighting positions for tanks	DI & V2AB
0013L	ACE crossing North Bridge to set up obstacles on east side	DI & V2AB
0041L	SF Advisor met w/LtCol Dinauer, 3rd LAR Cdr	V2AB
0100L	SF Advisor radios report to Headquarters; Headquarters requests IO footage; HET and 3rd LAR commander on site.	V2AB
~0140	All battalion objectives secure and obstacles on bridge complete	D-AAR
Notes:	Source code: D is LtCol Dinauer; V is Viper (SF); B is SSG Bassett. The number after the Letter refers to the video provided	

The timeline, along with photography, annotated imagery, and video provided the necessary details for the reconstruction. The best example is that of Team Bravo breaching, clearing, and securing Building 3. Bassett accompanied Team Bravo through Sector B and provided some outstanding coverage of their activities; hence that portion meets a critical reconstruction requirement: detailed accounting and media support.

### 3. Company Team B's assault

Company Team B entered the hospital complex through the eastern gate and breached the hospital via an entrance between buildings 2 and 4 (Figure F-11). They then split into

two elements: one, designated SF1, moved towards the doctors' lounge area in B-3. (The photo embedded in Figure F-12 shows they already controlled the situation in B-3 at 2207). They were quickly moving to secure the building. The second team, SF2, moved to clear Building B-2.<sup>12</sup>

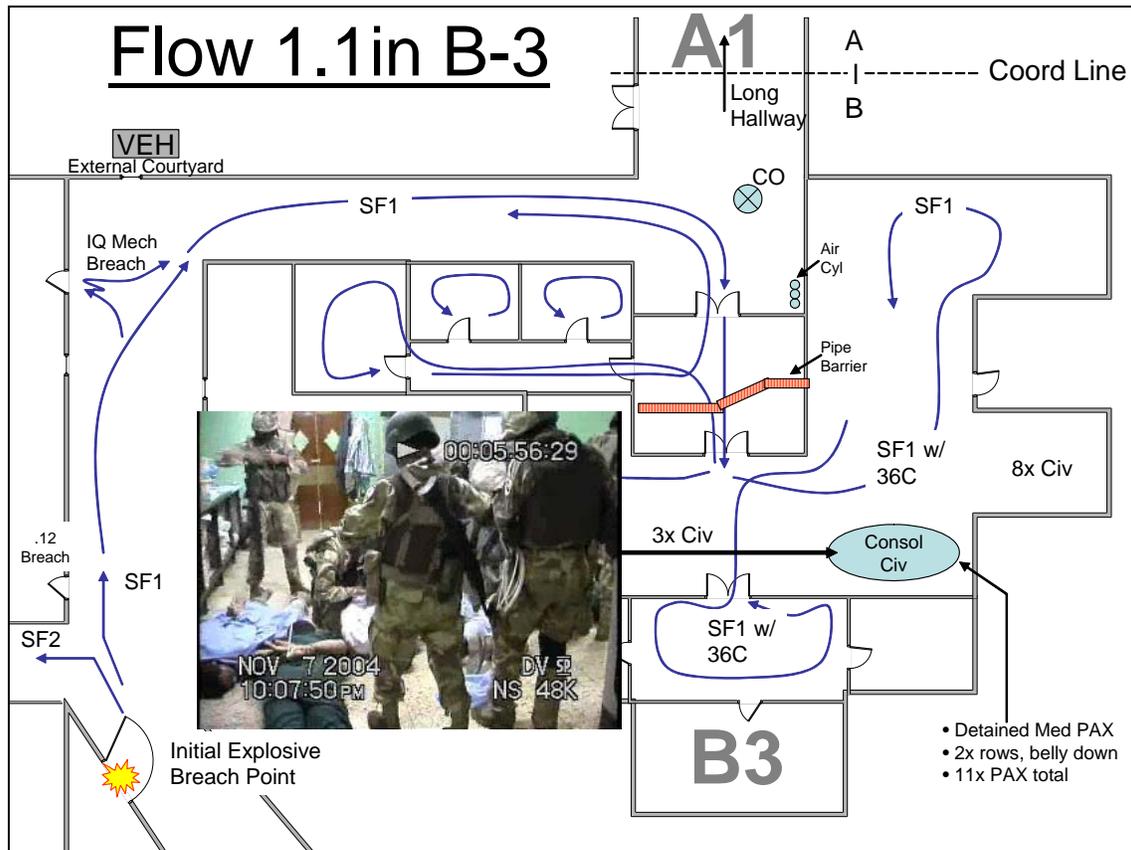


Figure F-11. Company Team B Flow Diagram

## B. Reconstruction: Lessons from Tactical to Strategic

The purpose of this section is to discuss the reconstruction of Phase II, focusing on the 36th Commandos' seizure of the hospital and inherent lessons.

As mentioned above, the vignette chosen for the reconstruction took place during Phase II. Heading into Phase II, we find that during Phase I a number of the strategic and operational conditions were set for AL FAJR; in fact, the theme in the reconstruction for Phase I is "Setting the Conditions for Success." For example, Prime Minister Allawi has

<sup>12</sup> These types of diagrams were developed from the helmet cam and combat camera video that was given to Kuma for the reconstruction. Mark Nutsch, IDA did a superb job recreating events from the myriad of video provided by the 5th SFG and SSG Bassett.

contacted the heads of the regional countries, met with representatives from Fallujah, and, via the media, addressed the Iraqis. At the operational level, LTG Metz, Commander, MNC-I has applied a number of lessons from VIGILANT RESOLVE, such as increasing levels of Class III and V, closing the borders, and increasing the troop level to support the operations. Additionally, most of the residents have evacuated the city and the threat has been mapped out to include obstacles, command and control nodes, approximate numbers of insurgents, and so on.

The reconstruction theme for Phase II is “Getting the Story Out.” Although the gaming effort focused on the tactical level, the overall goal of the reconstruction was to reflect the total picture, tactical to strategic. To avoid getting too far down a path only to discover something couldn’t be done, the storyline for Phase II was first drafted in PowerPoint to run autonomously, and later to be converted to Flash. The following provides a glimpse of the structure of that reconstruction, patterned after the Mazar-e Sharif reconstruction, and provides some of the screen captures from the storyline.

## 1. Lead-in: Getting the story out

LTC Kelley was tremendously confident in his people’s ability to document and submit information for release, but he wasn’t as confident in the bureaucracy that controlled and approved news releases. Although there were a number of improvements implemented within the SOF community to increase the timeliness of information releases, the process still wasn’t as good as the insurgent’s IO system. Kelley continued promoting the helmet cams and granting release authority to the lowest level, but for AL FAJR, strategic dissemination depended on embedded media. In addition to their 5th SFG advisors and combat cameraman, the 36th Commandos had embedded with them three newsmen: one television reporter, one journalist, and a cameraman. The TV reporter was Kirk Spitzer of CBS.

Spitzer’s news clips were featured on many of the major networks, and the CBS clip is used as the lead-in for Phase II to introduce the “Getting the Story Out” theme (Figure F-12).



Figure F-12. Reconstruction: CBS Newscast Introducing Phase II

## 2. Segments: Organizing the story

Each segment of the reconstruction advances the storyline for the Phase; they are numbered along the bottom of the screen.

### **Segments 1–3: Isolating the City and Deploying the Forces**

During Segments 1–3, MajGen Natonski discusses the electronic and physical isolation of Fallujah, and the deployment of forces (see Figure F-13).



**Figure F-13. Reconstruction: Isolating the City**

*That day of the seventh....That is when we actually commenced the total isolation of the city. From an electronic perspective, we cut the power in the city, and without power, it's tough to charge cell phones. We knew what nets to jam that we could disrupt their command and control; their frequencies that control the IEDs.*

*And that's when the Blackjack Brigade set up their positions on the east and southern portion of the city. We brought our joint fires to bear. Physically we moved our forces into their attack positions.*

*We commenced the peninsula attack to block the two bridges. We wanted the hospital because that had been a command and control node. The first offensive action in Operation AL FAJR was conducted by the 36th Commandos. We wanted to project an Iraqi show.*

### **Segments 4–7: Seizing the Peninsula**

During these segments, LtCol Dinauer talks about his mission and task organization and outlines the operation on the peninsula, part of which is discussed in section E above (see Figure F-14).

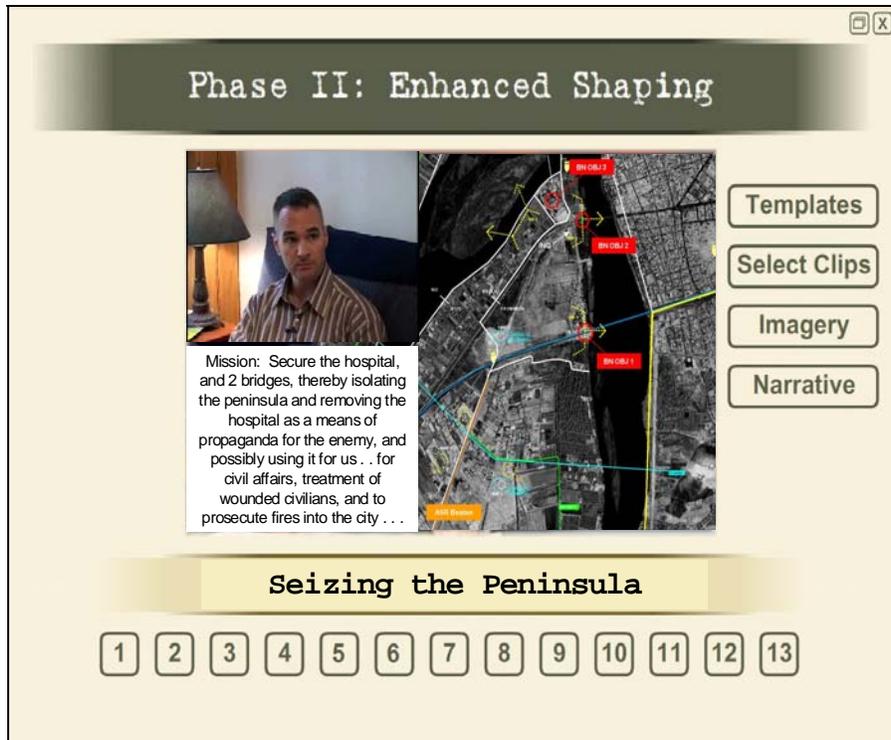


Figure F-14. Reconstruction: Seizing the Peninsula

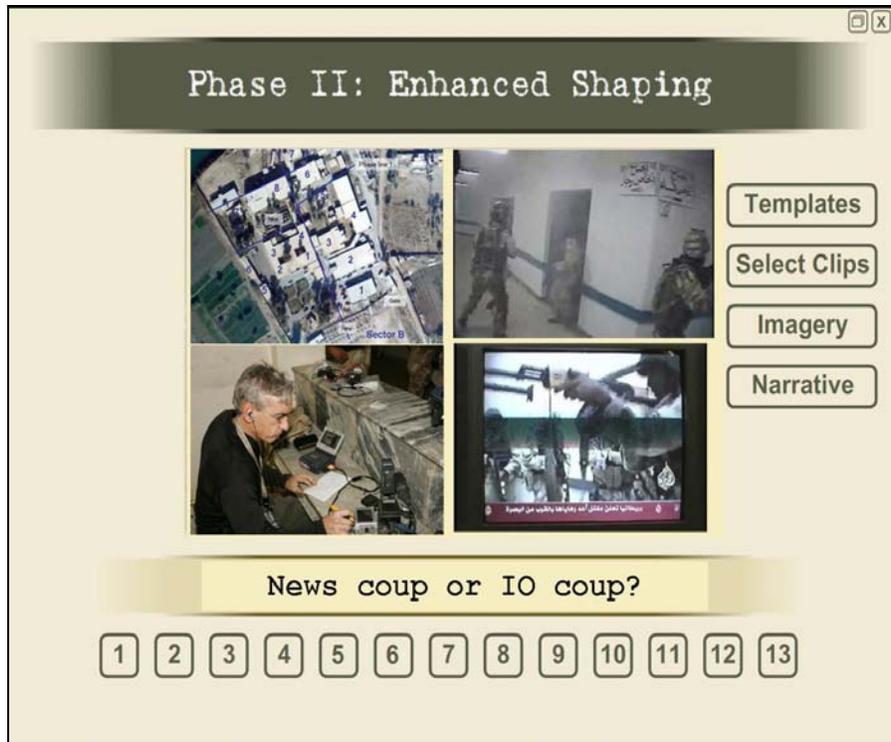
### Segments 8–11: Securing the Hospital

These segments introduce the storyline discussed earlier and provide the rest of the strategic communications story from the lead-in on Kirk Spitzer’s work. The lead-in only addressed the airing of the 36th Commando actions by US National News, but the Strategic Communications Campaign included the international and Arab communities as well as the American public. Unbeknownst to the 5th SFG, Spitzer’s video footage was also aired by Al Jazeera—even before CBS or any other news agency had broadcast it.

Spitzer, with video camera rolling, followed Assault Team A of the Iraqi forces as they entered the main entrance of the hospital complex. At 0200, still inside the hospital, he uploaded the video to CBS news facilities via his laptop, satellite, and file transfer protocol link. After doing so, he went to the hospital parking lot to broadcast the raw video to London where it would be edited and rebroadcast back to CBS in New York.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Anonymity is a necessity for many ISOF operators as over 20 of these soldiers were assassinated from 2003-2009. In November of 2004, many of the ISOF operators’ family and friends did not know they were in the military, let alone assaulting Fallujah. News media was allowed to embed with SF only if they agreed to censor names and faces of SF and ISOF Soldiers. CBS agreed. Their plan was for Kirk Spitzer to transmit raw footage to London, where they would blur out the faces, and then pass the footage to NY. Al Jazeera apparently pirated and broadcast the uncensored feed. This put ISOF Soldiers’ lives at risk; many were upset over the broadcast. .

The combat cameraman, SSG Bassett, accompanied Assault Team B on the east side of the hospital, capturing footage of the 36th Commandos as they entered the hospital and cleared their sector (Figure F-15, top right video). As the 36th, accompanied by Bassett, moved through the doctors' lounge area in the middle of the hospital, they paused in front of a television. There, they saw themselves as they conducted the operation (Figure F-15, bottom right video). They were surprised and turned to Bassett for an explanation.



**Figure F-15. Reconstruction: News Coup or IO Coup?**

Bassett didn't know how Al Jazeera was obtaining the video, but he knew it wasn't his video. The 5th SFG personnel present thought Al Jazeera had probably intercepted it as Spitzer was transmitting to London. Although Allawi kicked Al Jazeera news media out of the country during the summer of 2004, the network was in fact the first to air video of AL FAJR combat operations; Spitzer's footage of the 36th Commandos seizing the hospital aired on US national news channels on 8 November.

The fact that Al Jazeera, an Arabic news outlet unfriendly to the Coalition and Iraqi Government, was the first to air the event made the news even more compelling and credible.

## Segments 12–13: Continuing the Fight

These segments describe the continued fighting on the peninsula, the use of close air support, and the insurgents' actions (see Figure F-16). One of the critical areas addressed during the preparation for AL FAJR was air support. With the multitude of different systems, such as fixed-wing, rotary-wing, and UAVs, how could the Coalition most effectively control air support into the Fallujah-Ramadi corridor and remain clear of Baghdad, a high density air traffic control area, and also control other air operations?

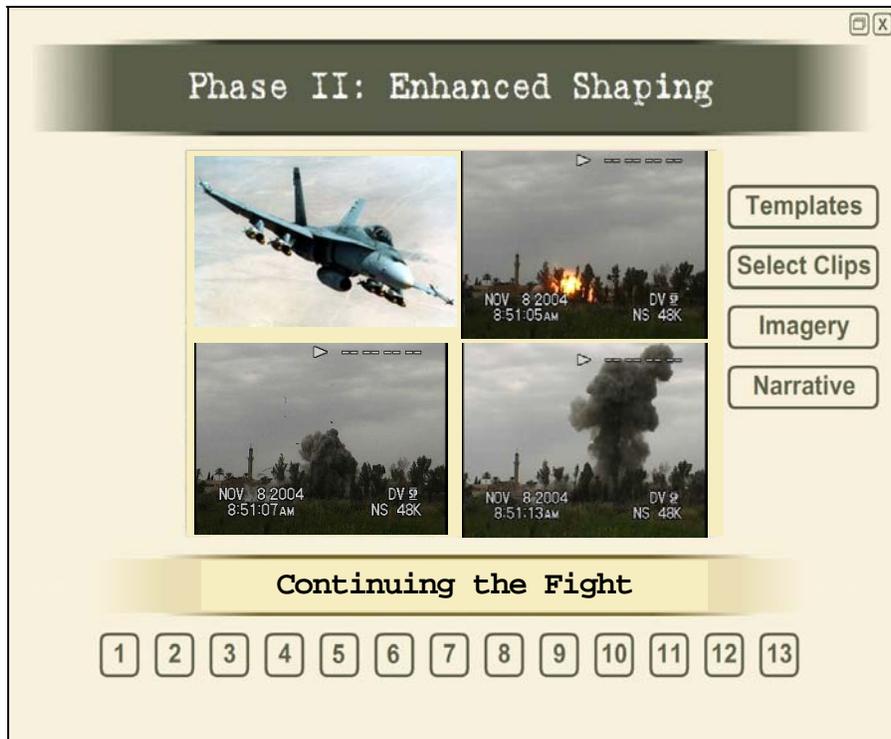


Figure F-16. Reconstruction: Continuing the Fight

### 3. Templates

Accessed via its labeled button on the right of the screen, this section provides templates and maps used to develop the storyline that are not reflected in the various segments. An example would be the Company Team B Flow Diagram in Figure F-11 above.

### 4. Select Clips

This section provides the additional perspectives of those involved in AL FAJR, from Prime Minister Allawi and the MNF-I to the 36th Commandos and the 5th SFG. Figure F-17 shows one example for Enhanced Shaping. GEN Casey discusses Allawi's role in taking the lead on "selling" the upcoming operation in Fallujah to "the countries of the

region. In addition, BrigGen Lessel discusses the Strategic Communications Campaign, specifically, the importance of the hospital and of using the 36th Commandos to seize it. LTC Kelley discusses the use of helmet cams and the need for strategic dissemination of information. LtCol Dinauer states the unit's mission and objectives.



Figure F-17. Reconstruction: Select Clips

## 5. Imagery

This section holds imagery from during and after the campaign. One example is the overhead imagery taken before and after AL FAJR to compare the waterfront area from one period to the next as shown in Figure F-7 above.

## C. The Game: Reconstructing Company Team B's Assault

CASCOM saw the above event as a vehicle for training Soldiers to consider the cultural implications of their actions and decisions when working with Iraqis. The idea was to enable users to role-play mission participants in an immersive operational environment using gaming technology and techniques. Using the information and resources available to those who were there, users would learn the importance of culture to their work with Iraqis to accomplish the tactical and strategic objectives of the real event. What follows is a summary of Kuma's development process.

## 1. The operational area: Initial development

Kuma modeled the interior and exterior of the operating area from diagrams, videos, photographs, and interviews. They then developed an “environmental fly-through” as a precursor to populating the facility and developing the scenario to make sure it replicated the AO enough to serve as a foundation for further development (Figure F-18).

## 2. Presentation styles

Kuma developed designs for four simulation presentation styles: a) role-playing free-form exploration, b) an informational multimedia-enhanced guided tour, c) an interactive linear branching movie, and d) a trainer-modifiable interactive movie. Although all would address the cultural implications of player actions, each had its own strengths and weaknesses. CASCOM ultimately chose style c. Details of the four proposed design styles and the development of the third for CASCOM follow.

### a. Role-playing free form exploration

This design utilizes a 3D simulation of the hospital and the major events in the raid within a commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) game engine for a free-form simulation based on real events. Users can play the role of a US advisor, an Iraqi soldier or unit leader, a news reporter, or other individual involved in the raid. As that individual, they walk through the 3D environment interacting with characters controlled by other players and computer-controlled non-player characters (NPCs). The re-creation focuses on key mission events, each re-created as precisely as possible so that users can see and interact with the environment as realistically as possible.

The product will include extensive training docu-



**Figure F-18. Game:  
Kuma Fly-Through**

mentation from SMEs, published military doctrine and research papers to augment and explain the simulation experience. While usable as a self-directed learning product, this simulation would optimally be used with a trainer/facilitator who would perform an AAR, and would include briefs for each character and a Trainers Guide, describing how best to use the simulation for training purposes. This style is the most intense of the styles, and also the most free-form: users can cause events to differ significantly from the historical events. This style fits well in the institutional training environment and is similar to other non-historical learning simulations developed by Kuma for CASCOM (e.g., CSS Convoy).

### **b. Multimedia-enhanced guided tour**

This format is a guided walkthrough of the 3D hospital environment and the events of the Fallujah Hospital raid. The player is led as a third-person observer to the events (as if in a movie), and icons pop up on the screen alerting him or her that an informational or educational point exists. For instance, an icon with an “I” to represent Information Operations on the Battlefield could pop up at 3:05 minutes. When the user clicks the icon, the walkthrough will stop and a voiceover will commence, in which an actual participant or an SME will describe the significance of the event and training point; a reference to any pertinent documents will appear on the screen if appropriate. The annotation can also include a variety of media such as video clips, audio clips, maps, diagrams. The intent is to use the simulation as a structure for presenting historical and training information.

The tool to stop and annotate the simulation is a presentation tool which, with minor effort, can be a *trainer* tool used to customize the simulation beforehand, and also pass back to CASCOM for general distribution to all users who need that training material. This could ultimately become a general purpose tool for annotating any movie from any source with information points—a kind of shareable AAR with links to TTPs, expert advice, and other documents. Users can select the specific Domains for which they want to see icons to avoid information overload; trainers can do the same think to focus their instruction.

Finally, this design can be created as a manipulable 3D product so users can stop and look around or can view certain objects or people in frame. Alternatively it can be rendered into a Flash movie for broader distribution.

This is a self-directed, single-player product.

### **c. Interactive linear branching movie**

The third design is an interactive movie. Throughout the simulation, a user will come upon different scenarios and will have to answer multiple choice questions based on the current situation. The “correct” decision continues the storyline, an “incorrect” decision brings up a video showing a negative outcome, then video or audio (an SME or a participant in the original raid) explaining what the implications were before continuing the storyline where it was left off.

This self-directed, single-player product could be provided as a 3D product (enabling simple expansion) or as a Flash video product for broad distribution onto any number of low-end computing platforms or media playback devices.

More about the development of this style for CASCOM is below.

### **d. Trainer-modifiable interactive movie**

The fourth and final design is also a movie product that users watch as mission events unfold, but in this design, questions appear during key “teachable moments.” Users respond and receive feedback from an SME; however, the questions are more concept-focused (not “what do you do,” but rather “what happened here”), and users’ answers affect their scoring but do not impact the outcome of the event.

For example, at 3:14 in the movie, as the team enters the hospital administrator’s office, the movie could stop and present a question: “The hospital administrator’s office was a treasure trove of intelligence. The Team Leader should a) report and secure the room and move on b) do an intensive sweep for information or c) direct a Jundi to check the administrator’s computer for recent emails.” After the user answers, he will hear or read the correct answer, or receive additional information to help him decide. After reading the text and clicking “OK” the story continues.

Authoring tools can be provided to trainers, enabling them to create such learning points and create their own teaching materials. As an example, a trainer seeing the original movie might see a point to teach evidence gathering as part of IO. He or she would create a key learning point, type three questions and the answer, along with “wrong answer” feedback. This would be presented to a user using that trainer’s “infoscript” to watch the movie. Infoscripts could easily be sent to CASCOM for vetting and sharing via any web mechanism. This technique and tool can be used with any movie; however, 3D re-creations are useful for media re-creation because they are cost effective, can be made to focus on key teaching points, and can be re-used to create new video to teach new items or new domains.

This is a self-directed, single-player product.

#### **e. “True Line”**

Once CASCOM chose the interactive linear branching movie style, Kuma developed the story structure, called “True Line” to convey the concept that the 3D simulation would follow the real storyline.

The 3D simulation is structured as a series of video scenes, much like a movie or television show; however, at the end of each scene, the trainee must make a decision—how to organize his teams, how to clear a room, what to report, and so on—which determines what scene is shown next. In this way, the story will play out based on the trainee’s decisions. Decisions are laid out to teach the importance of culture when working with Iraqis, primarily by illustrating the positive and negative outcomes of a trainee’s decisions, and by dynamically constructing an AAR that the trainee will watch at the end of the movie.

If a trainee makes only correct decisions, he or she will see the “true line” narrative, that is, the history of the Fallujah Hospital event as it occurred. Nevertheless, to avoid confusion between what really happened and the negative outcomes that occur when trainees make “wrong” decisions, the interactive portion of the simulation is clearly indicated to be fiction and includes fictional Iraqi units.

The structure of the linear branching movie is as follows:

- Introduction
  - Overview of the events leading up to Operation AL FAJR (non-interactive).
  - Introduction of the real-world units: 5th SFG and the 36th Commandos and the goals of the Hospital event.
  - Who are You? The trainee is a member of an Advisory Support Team working with a fictitious Iraqi unit.
- Tutorial
  - How to use this product. What to expect to get out of it.
- Simulation (from here on in, all graphics are 3D and shot in first-person)
  - This is the story of the trainee providing leadership and advisement to a team of Iraqi Soldiers whom the trainee will see and who speak to him or her throughout. It is presented as if the trainee is *in* a movie about the event.
- Conclusion

- Returning to the “narrator” mode, deliver the outcomes of the trainee’s actions and review his or her decisions point by point.
- Review the real events of AL FAJR and have the opportunity to view the “true line” video with no decision points.

### 3. Constructing the operational area

While developing the scenario and training objectives, Kuma began to detail the operational area (first created at the environmental through), which included populating it with materials, clutter, and activities normally found in a hospital, as well as with the various players such as advisors, Iraqi soldiers, medical staff, patients, family visitors, news embeds, and others.

### 4. Filming and assembly

Following the True Line script, Kuma recorded character voices (in both English and Iraqi Arabic), animated the characters, and began filming using the 3D environments and characters as virtual actors and sets. Because for each True Line decision point there are a number of Error paths, the total amount of shooting far exceeded the length of the True Line. Each error was an opportunity to instruct, so these paths were as carefully scripted and filmed as the True Line.

The various videos were then sewn together in a Flash-based shell. Underlying programming switches from path to path, following the user’s decisions, and also keeps track of decisions for complex branching and intelligent AAR commentary. Finally, virtual controls are laid on top of the shell, enabling users to control the simulation’s progress.

### 5. Other elements

As outlined above, the 3D sets and characters created to develop the video paths for style can be used as the basis for future development, but they are also provided within Kuma’s game environment as a “sandbox” that can be used for rudimentary role-playing—for instance in a “red vs. blue” multilayer environment where trainers might play red forces and civilians while trainees play blue forces. The environment includes a realistic 3D environment and a variety of characters, voice communications, tools, and weapons.

The final product can be assembled and delivered on CD-ROM, online, or on a thumb drive.

This section has addressed training at the tactical level, but there are a multitude of lessons to be learned at the operational and strategic levels as well.

## D. Training and Education Resource

When completed, the reconstruction provides a valuable training and education resource for a multitude of forums. The purpose of this section is to offer centers, schools, and organizations an approach for integrating this material into their programs.<sup>14</sup>

A number of approaches can be used:

- Traditional (as threads developed during research)
- Levels of War (tactical, operational, and strategic)
- Principles of War (Mass, objective, offensive, surprise, economy of force, maneuver, unity of command, security, simplicity)
- DOTMLPF (Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities)
- DIME (Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic)
- METT-TC (Mission, Enemy, Terrain and weather, Troops—Time, Civil considerations that include cultural aspects)
- Hypothesis testing
- Case study
- Staff rides

These approaches provide a model or way of thinking about the operation. Many of those approaches, such as DIME, DOTMLPF, Principles of War, and others, provide a way of categorizing those themes, some of which are discussed below.

### 1. Traditional

The traditional approach (as threads developed during research) are themes—successes or problems—that seem to repeat themselves throughout the campaign. Examples include:

- The importance of relationships and team-building

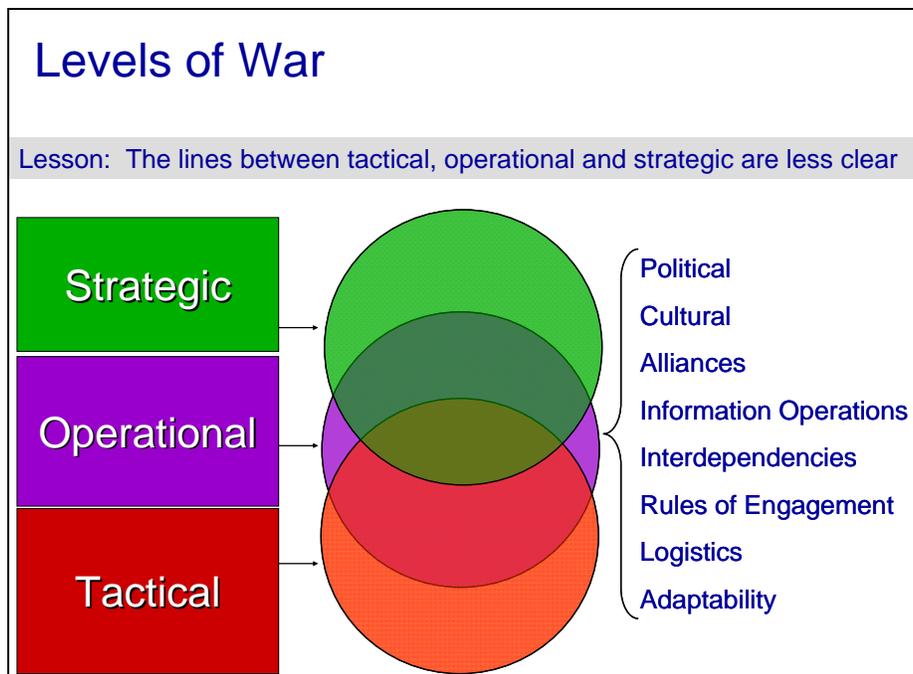
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<sup>14</sup> Since Mazar was used as a template, much of this section was extracted from, “Learning from the First Victory of the 21st Century; Mazar-e Sharif, An Educational/Training Resource Guide,” IDA Document D-3380 (Alexandria, Va.: Institute for Defense Analyses, February 2008).

- Political-military dynamics
- A strategy linked to objectives
- The implications of Operation AL FAJR as the “myth-buster”
- The critical role of the transition teams as the continuing “face” of the US commitment to the Iraqis
- Teaching, coaching, and building the Iraqis is everybody’s responsibility

## 2. Levels of War

Levels of War can be used to analyze various aspects of Fallujah such as political, cultural or alliances. However, the levels of war—strategic, operational, tactical—are not as discrete as generally depicted. As Figure F-19 shows, those lines can become blurred, and tactical events can indeed have strategic implications; hence the phrase, “the strategic corporal.”



**Figure F-19. Levels of War—The Blurring of Lines**

Those subjects on the right side—political, cultural, alliances, IO, etc.—are not mutually exclusive and interact at various times throughout an operation. For example, IO had political and cultural implications and conversely, political and cultural sensitivities helped form IO strategies. Another example, according to GEN Casey, was when Allawi’s emer-

gency decree—a political action—made positive identification of insurgents much easier, thereby effecting ROE at the tactical level.

### 3. Hypothesis testing

Campaign outcomes generated a number of hypotheses to be explored. One of these was the project hypothesis, which claimed that the Iraqis contributed to the success of Operation AL FAJR. Some would phrase that much stronger, that AL FAJR could not have begun without Allawi's setting the political conditions. The hypothesis might read like:

If an Iraqi, such as Allawi, had not set the political conditions, then AL FAJR would not have succeeded.

To discount the hypothesis, all a researcher needs to do is find one plausible course of action that may have led to a successful military operation without an Iraqi setting the political conditions.

### 4. Staff rides

One of the techniques of staff rides is role playing. This allows students of war to see the battle from various perspectives and attempt to understand the issues from different perspectives. As an example, characters would include participants from the strategic to the tactical: Allawi would talk of the importance of using the media to keep the Iraqi people, as well as the region, informed of AL FAJR's purpose as well as the conditions and status in Fallujah. Casey would discuss the political-military dynamics, and Metz would discuss those lessons he learned from VIGILANT RESOLVE and applied to planning for AL FAJR. At the tactical level, Dinauer would speak of the task force organization, how it developed, and its gaps and opportunities in capabilities. COL Fahdil would speak of the development of 36th Commandos, and the benefits and shortfalls of the unit. Kelley and one of the SF Advisors would speak of training the Iraqis: the difference between AST training of Iraqis and that of Special Forces, specifically their development of the intelligence picture to support the operation. They would also speak of the challenges in executing IO. Basset would speak of his experience as a combat cameraman and Spitzer would provide an inside view of his experience as an embedded reporter. There are a many more viewpoints that could be explored.

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