

# **The Iraq War**

By Michael M. Phillips

*Who Was There From  
February 5, 2003  
Until  
April 17, 2003*

*And from August 1 Until August 20,  
2003*

*And from May 6 Until June 2  
2004*

February 20, 2003

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**Job for a Marine:  
Taking First Breath  
After a Gas Attack**

**In Kuwait Drills, Someone  
Must Test the 'All Clear';  
Sending In the Chickens**

By Michael M. Phillips

LIVING SUPPORT AREA 7, Kuwait -- It's easy to get Marines to slap on their gas masks when a chemical-attack alarm goes off.

But in battle, it might not be so easy to get Marines to take them off once they've heard the all-clear. That's why the military has a plan for "selective unmasking," or, less euphemistically, sending a canary into the coal mine.

The harsh reality of chemical and biological warfare is that, despite all the sophisticated testing equipment the Pentagon has deployed to defend its troops, the only way to be sure the air is fit to breathe is for some brave -- and possibly unlucky -- soul to take his mask off.

And the harsh reality of military life is that the guy would have to be someone relatively expendable.

"You're basically the Marine who has to unmask first to make sure everyone else lives," says Cpl. Jose Valadez, a 23-year-old rifleman from Albuquerque, N.M. "You're the guinea pig."

Here at the 7th Marine Regiment's desert camp in northern Kuwait, not far from the Iraqi border, field commanders and troops are working on the assumption that Saddam Hussein's forces would unleash a chemical attack to slow any U.S.-led advance. The Marines' plan is to press forward through the poison, taking the attack -- and the contamination -- to their enemies.

German-made chem-bio sensor vehicles will closely trail the attacking forces, sniffing for nerve, blood-infecting, blistering and other agents. Individual Marines are also armed with hand-held testing kits.

If there's a chemical attack, the troops will finish their assault and move to a clean area for decontamination, while fresh reinforcements take their place at the front. The contaminated Marines will scrub their weapons and rucksacks in a bleach solution. They will then pair off and clean their gloves and the gas masks they are still wearing before carefully switching out of their contaminated chem-bio suits into clean ones. Then they'll move into another clean area for the moment of truth -- selective unmasking.

The Marines practice the procedure constantly. In a typical rehearsal a few mornings ago, as about two dozen Marines lined up at the armory tent here to get new rifles, Lance Cpl. John Frawley of Stony Point, N.Y., the Third Battalion's 20-year-old chem-bio chief, sounded a gas-attack alarm with a hand-cranked siren.

Word passed quickly from Marine to Marine: "Gas! Gas! Gas!" The Marines held their breath, closed their eyes, reached into their canvas hip packs for their black masks and donned them, holding their palms over the filter intake and inhaling to test the seal. According to military standards, the troops should be able to get their masks on in less than nine seconds.

Once geared up, the Marines continued to go about their business in the strong late-morning sun, doing their best to ignore the smothering heat inside their masks. Finally, after it was determined that the air was uncontaminated, the all-clear word was passed by radio and the Marines were informed orally.

But it still wasn't time to breathe easy.

Pvt. Philip Bronson, a machine-gunner and chem-bio specialist, picked three Marines outside the armory for selective unmasking: Cpl. Valadez, Cpl. Servando Sotelo and Sgt. John Bobst. "Come over here -- this will be quick," Pvt. Bronson, a 22-year-old from Seattle, told the three men. (In actual combat, a superior officer likely would deliver the order.)

The private also summoned the platoon medic, Navy Hospitalman Aric Lee, "in case," as Pvt. Bronson puts it, "one of these guys spazzes out" in reaction to a chemical agent. Lance Cpl.

Frawley, who was overseeing the procedure, quietly reminded Pvt. Bronson to try to ease the Marines' minds. "Keep them calm," he said.

Pvt. Bronson directed the three Marines through a series of steps exposing them to more and more unfiltered air. First, each had to take a deep breath, close his eyes and break the seal where the mask met his face, allowing air -- and whatever might be in the air -- to seep in. Then the Marine put the mask back in place and exhaled, clearing the air and any contaminants out of the mask.

All the while Doc Lee -- Marines call medics "Doc," even when they aren't physicians -- and the chem-bio team watched for twitching, drooling, pinpoint pupils and other obvious symptoms of poisoning. Had Doc Lee suspected the Marines had been hit by a nerve agent, he would have instantly given them a jab in the thigh -- through their fatigues or chem-bio suits -- with an injection of atropine and another of pralidoxime chloride, the standard antidotes for a nerve-gas attack.

In this practice case, of course, no symptoms appeared, so the Marines moved to the next step. Pvt. Bronson had them lift their masks, take five deep breaths, put the masks back in place and clear them. Finally, they had to remove their masks for five minutes, under close surveillance. Only then, in a real attack, would the rest of the Marines be allowed to take off their masks.

This was just a drill. There was no gas, and everybody knew it. In combat, however, the Marines realize the chosen ones might panic and put up a fight. So just in case, the other Marines always disarm those whose masks are to be removed -- by force if necessary.

Marine officers see selective unmasking as just one more sacrifice that war demands of the brave. "What's the difference between that and being told to be the first man to clear that trench or go through that door?" asks Maj. Anthony Henderson, 36, the battalion's executive officer, who is from Washington, D.C. "If you didn't do it, no one would unmask. You'd sound the all-clear and everyone would stand there staring at each other."

The Marines don't pick men to be unmasked randomly. They look for a variety of sizes and ethnic groups, because the agents might affect different people differently. Sgt. Bobst, 22, is a white six-footer from Roswell, N.M.; Cpls. Valadez and Sotelo are both 5-foot-5 Latinos. "They only think of me as being the short guy," says Cpl. Sotelo, 22, of Comanche, Texas. "And me being Hispanic, it's kind of two for one."

In a real attack, probably none of those three would have been selected because all have leadership positions in their platoons. The most likely choices would be further down the chain of command, privates or lance corporals without specialized skills.

Pvt. Bronson so trusts the detection equipment that he says he would volunteer for unmasking "as a responsibility to my company -- I honestly don't see how you can get four guys with automatic weapons to do it otherwise."

But 2nd Lt. Dave Fleming, the chem-bio officer in Pvt. Bronson's company, says he has no intention of risking his specialist. "What if he cracked a seal and keeled over? It would be a big loss to the company," says Lt. Fleming, a 28-year-old from Lansdowne, Pa.

Meanwhile, the military has come up with an additional chemical-detection plan, this one more akin to the canaries miners once took into shafts to detect toxic air. Yesterday, division headquarters delivered to the regiment 43 chickens and a supply of feed. The chickens will be in cages in armored and other military vehicles. If any should drop dead crossing into Iraq, the Marines will know there might be something foul in the air. The division has even come up with a military designation for them: Poultry Chemical Confirmation Detectors, or PCCDs.

The 7th Marine Regiment's chem-bio specialists prefer Kuwaiti Field Chickens: KFC.

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### **Near the Iraqi Border, Wearing Smelly Socks**

By Michael M. Phillips

*Living Support Area 7, Kuwait*

DON'T EAT CHARMS hard candies. Don't look through a sniper's scope. And whatever you do, don't mention apricots near a tank.

Wartime brings out the superstitious side of the troops, whose very survival is often at the whim of forces well beyond their control. And as they wait in the desert for G-Day -- ground-attack day -- the Marines of the 3rd Battalion, 7th Regiment, have a lot of time to ponder the uncertainties ahead. "Everybody's got their superstitions," says First Sgt. Vic Martin, 40 years old, from Hemet, Calif. "The more dangerous the job, the more superstitious."

In a Marine camp where every job carries risks, few face more danger than the scout snipers, who have elaborate superstitions to protect them. Snipers sneak behind enemy lines camouflaged in ghillie suits, handcrafted from individual strands of burlap and foliage picked up as they collect intelligence and stalk enemy commanders. It is a very personal way to kill, and so snipers consider the suits, weapons and even bullets to be almost sacred.

Snipers won't let anyone wear their ghillie suits or look through the scopes of their 7.62 mm rifles. Each sniper wears a special amulet on a cord around his neck: a smooth 7.62 mm slug. "This is the bullet that's going to take you out," says Sgt. Zach Hansen, a 21-year-old sniper from Salt Lake City. "As long as it's around your neck, you'll be kept safe." In fact, any sniper caught without his bullet has to do 25 pushups, the last five while chanting, "Scout sniper."

Several tents down the row, Navy Lt. Darren Stennett, the battalion chaplain, isn't surprised to see Marines looking beyond the physical world for comfort, although he'd prefer to see their spirituality directed to more traditional religious outlets. "For the first time in their lives," he says, "these young men are getting in touch with their mortality."

LSA-7 is the U.S. military base closest to the Iraqi border, and the war feels imminent here. The Marines last week packed everything but their combat gear in their olive-drab sea bags, sending their personal belongings to be stored in the rear.

A few things they will hang onto, however. Lance Cpl. Peter Milinkovic, 19, of Belvedere, Ill., carries the rabies and ID tags worn by his childhood pet, Bear the Rottweiler, who died the day he started boot camp. Lance Cpl. Anthony Gonzalez, 22, a mortar man from San Jacinto, Calif., tucks in his flak vest the Bronze Star his uncle won for bravery in Vietnam. "You need all the protection you can get once you get out here," he says.

Others are more interested in avoiding bad luck. It is widely known here that eating Charms candies is just asking for a rainstorm, even in the desert. Some Marines are rumored to bury the candies when they get them in their military Meals Ready-to-Eat. Lance Cpl. Justin Whaley, 21, of Lebanon, Mo., throws his away, and he is equally dubious about the MRE's green candy-coated gum, rumored to contain a laxative. Meanwhile, Sgt. Tony Palzkill, 27, of Belmont, Wis., has heard that if you get green gum it means your wife is having an affair in your absence. That belief, though, doesn't seem very widespread, which is just as well as there are only two colors of MRE gum -- green and white.

But no food is less welcome here than the apricot. When Second Lt. David Fleming, 28, of Lansdowne, Pa., goes into battle, he will be riding a tracked amphibious-assault vehicle driven by Delta Co. Staff Sgt. Nick Mendoza, 27, from Plano, Texas. "Can I eat apricots on your track, staff sergeant?" Lt. Fleming asks impishly.

"It depends on how much you value your life, sir," Staff Sgt. Mendoza answers.

Rumors abound as to why the apricot is so hated among those who wage war in heavily armored fighting machines. One theory holds that during World War II, a flotilla of landing craft carrying apricots for the troops sank off the coast of France, with all hands lost. True or not, apricots still get blamed for many things that go wrong.

Cpl. Larry Weis, of the Third Amphibious Assault Battalion, drank a small carton of fruit punch upon arrival in Kuwait in late January, failing to notice that its ingredients included apricots. The next day, Cpl. Weis, 22, of Albany, Ore., arrived at LSA-7 and met the armored vehicle he would be commanding, complete with oil leaks, exhaust leaks and a turbocharger so defective that it overheated and burned the flak jacket of a Marine unlucky enough to lean against it. Coincidence? Maybe. But Cpl. Weis isn't taking any more chances with apricots. "Never again," he says.

And the amphibious-assault crews are apricot heretics compared with the Abrams tankers. They refer to the apricot as the A-word or the Forbidden Fruit, and they grow ornery if someone utters the name aloud. They are also superstitious about their clothes: During gunnery practice -- sometimes lasting a week -- they don't change their socks, T-shirts or anything else.

First Lt. Matt Ufford, a 24-year-old tank platoon commander from O'Fallon, Ill., did change his once, during gunnery week at Twentynine Palms, Calif., several months ago. "I was just getting tired of how disgusting I smelled," he recalls. Big mistake. The next day his tank's gunnery scores dropped precipitously. Afterward he confessed his error to his crew. "They were incredulous," he says. So he pulled his clothes out of the laundry and put them back on. His tank's score rebounded the next day.

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## Getting Battle Ready

### **U.S. Marines in Kuwait Drill To Find Flaws in War Plans, Reduce Risk of Friendly Fire**

By Michael M. Phillips in northern Kuwait and Greg Jaffe in Washington

ON A RECENT moon-bright night near Kuwait's Iraqi border, a U.S. Marine patrol stalked silently out of the desert back toward camp. As the 12 Marines approached, they heard the distinct sound of automatic rifles being cocked.

"Halt! Who goes there?" an agitated sentry asked them.

"Third Platoon, Kilo Company, three-seven," Staff Sgt. Enrique Hernandez yelled back, only to be greeted by silence. He announced the patrol's identity twice more. Finally, the sentries relaxed and allowed their fellow Marines to approach.

"We were in Condition One," one of the sentries later told Staff Sgt. Hernandez, meaning they had loaded live rounds into their rifles' firing chambers. The incident could easily have become the first friendly-fire incident of what is expected to be Gulf War II, and it happened because of a lapse in standard "deconfliction" practices: The platoon leader asked for clearance in advance, but word never reached the sentries.

In war, little things can spoil big plans. So while generals run computerized war games to rehearse command-and-control methods for the entire Iraqi theater, Marines already deployed in Kuwait are racing to work out basic kinks. "We're just putting the finishing touches on, honing the edge of the blade," says Marine Lt. Col. Michael Belcher, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 7th Regiment, which likely would be among the first into Iraq.

Communication breakdowns are a major concern, especially those that could result in friendly fire, which claimed 35 lives and wounded 72 during the first Gulf War.

"The effort we have put into preventing friendly fire since the Gulf War has been immense," says Army Brig. Gen. Ken W. Hunzeker. "When we have a friendly-fire incident at one of our training centers [where lasers substitute for live ordnance] it is a significant emotional event." He says each such incident prompts a major review to "figure out the root cause . . . so we don't repeat it."

Loren B. Thompson, an analyst with the Lexington Institute, a defense think tank, agrees that the services have poured loads of money into new technology "designed to lift the fog and confusion that permeates war and prevent these incidents." Yet significant gaps remain in both equipment and training. In the mid-1990s the Army sank millions of dollars into its "Battle Command Identification System," which relied on devices that transmitted signals between U.S. vehicles. But the program was canceled in 2001 because it proved too expensive to shoehorn the gizmos into the vehicles and because they couldn't communicate with warplanes.

The cancellation left a hole that the military now is scrambling to fill. The Army is rushing tens of thousands of so-called thermal-identification panels to forces in Kuwait. Soldiers affix the panels, which glow when viewed through infrared scopes, to their tanks, armored personnel carriers and even uniforms to identify them as friendly. The Army says it soon will have enough panels in place to outfit all Army and Marine Corps vehicles and critical infantry soldiers in the Persian Gulf. The British are purchasing identical combat identification panels for their forces.

"The panels are not a perfect solution," says a senior Army official. But they are better than painting upside-down black V's on tanks, as U.S. troops did during the first Gulf War. "By the time you got close enough to see the V, you were so close that you could tell whether it was friendly or enemy," says one Gulf War veteran.

In northern Kuwait, the 1,100-plus Marines of the 3rd Battalion are training furiously -- sometimes through the night -- to make sure they can work with other units abutting their positions, interact with the Army and identify friendly forces quickly and accurately. Some British troops are already attached to the 3rd Battalion, and they would fight alongside the Marines should hostilities start; moreover, each major U.S. unit will have a United Kingdom liaison officer, and vice versa -- moves that military officials say will help prevent friendly-fire incidents between allied forces.

"You can never replicate it well enough in training," says Lt. Col. Belcher. "You can just get so good, and then there will be a friction that will arise when all the pieces come together at one time. Even now, in the final days or weeks before the president authorizes operations, we haven't thought of them all."

Indeed, after its near miss the other night, the Kilo night patrol surprised another set of sentries -- this one from the 11th Artillery Regiment -- who were unaware of the planned patrol and went racing for their fighting positions when they spotted figures approaching in the desert. Staff Sgt. Hernandez again cooled the situation, loudly calling out to the guards as "Devil Dogs" -- a nickname for Marines -- and repeating orders for his men in clear English so the guards wouldn't mistake him for anything other than a Texan.

Military units hit their peak preparedness as they ready for an overseas deployment, and the 3rd Battalion is now supposed to be at its best. They are heavily trained in the dangerous art of urban warfare. They hone hand-to-hand combat skills with Marine-on-Marine fights. And they work seamlessly with the amphibious-assault vehicles that would deliver them to any fight, even far from water.

But Kilo's officers have discovered that the company's infantry-maneuvering skills are rusty in places, and poor communications -- even among those who are face to face -- is one reason. During a recent eight-mile desert march with packs and weapons -- known as a "hump" -- the Marines weren't sure whether they were supposed to walk 3 feet to 5 feet apart or 3 meters to 5 meters apart, because sergeants and corporals issued contradictory orders. So the columns expanded and contracted like a Slinky, with members of the tail platoon occasionally running to catch up, some sagging under the weight of their loads.

The grunts also were unclear about whether they were just getting exercise or practicing moving through hostile territory. So some were on constant lookout, weapons turned toward their flanks, while others looked down as they marched. Afterward, Capt. Innes Quiroz, the company commander, encouraged his officers to be frank about problems. "When some lance corporal sees that land mine out there and assumes everyone knows it's there, he's going to get five or 10 Marines killed," 1st Lt. Brian Curtis, the company's No. 2, warned his platoon leaders. Capt. Quiroz's solution: "The only way to get in shape for a hump is to do more humping."

March 7, 2003

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**Waiting for War,  
Marines in Kuwait  
Are Fighting for Real**

**Hand-to-Hand Combat Drills,  
Always Rough, Get Nasty;  
'Bury My Face in the Sand'**

By Michael M. Phillips

LIVING SUPPORT AREA 7, Kuwait -- To prepare to fight Iraqis, the Marines fight each other.

Despite their laser-equipped rifles and top-of-the-line antitank missiles, Marines still think of war as a charge into the enemy trenches -- fists, feet and bayonets flying. So as they wait for hostilities to begin, they regularly get down in the desert sand and beat each other up.

It's unclear whether the Marines will go hand-to-hand with Iraqi soldiers. But the training "prepares them to employ violence as required to kill the enemy," says Lt. Col. Michael Belcher, the 41-year-old commander of the 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines, which is camped not far from the Iraqi border. "Removed from here, you don't think about killing people on a daily basis. Soon the Marines may have to."

The result looks like what professional wrestling would be if it were for real: Marines choking, kicking and gouging each other to get into a killing frame of mind.

It's a specialized type of martial art that all Marines have been required to study starting about two years ago. It meshes perfectly with the Marines' image of themselves as living rougher and fighting meaner than the armed forces' other branches. "A lot of Marines coming to the fleet have never had the experience of fighting another human being hand-to-hand," says Lt. Chris McManus, a 28-year-old Kilo Company platoon leader from Manhasset, N.Y. "This affords them an opportunity."

Here's how one workout went: At the end of a four-mile march into the desert, 172 Kilo Company Marines paired off, sat down back-to-back, and, at the signal, turned around and really tried to hurt each other. They pulled ears and jaws, twisted arms and shoulders, grabbed throats and fingers, and ground each other's faces into the rock-strewn desert floor of northern Kuwait. Sergeants fought privates, officers fought enlisted men, everybody fought everybody.

"Get him in the trachea or the carotid artery!" 2nd Lt. David Fleming urged one of his platoon members. Lt. Fleming, a 28-year-old from Lansdowne, Pa., who has a Bugs Bunny tattoo below his fresh smallpox-vaccine scab, is usually a genial man. Not this day: "Pull his nose back so you can get your arm around his throat," he told another Marine. The fighting stops in these drills only when the two-minute round expires or when one Marine "taps out" -- signaling that he can take no more.

The 165-pound lieutenant's trash-talk continued even when he found himself pinned to the ground by his 206-pound platoon sergeant, John G. Ferguson. "Bury my face in the sand and try to smother me," Lt. Fleming gasped, reprimanding the staff sergeant for being too easy on him. "Get out of that mind-set."

"I don't want to hurt my lieutenant," Staff Sgt. Ferguson, 29, of Aurora, Colo., responded quietly. But next time he complied, grabbing his superior's throat.

There are a few rules. No standing, for instance. All fighting must take place down in the dirt. No eye gouges. Or biting. But inevitably somebody gets hurt. In fact, that's the plan. "There's a difference between being hurt and being injured," explained Gunnery Sgt. Brian Davis, 32, a battalion martial-arts instructor from San Diego. "Hurting is good."

Across the sand from the Fleming-Ferguson match, the gung-ho commander of Kilo's weapons platoon, 1st Lt. Rudy Salcido, 28, from Tucson, Ariz., battled the company's executive officer, 1st Lt. Brian Curtis, an intense 26-year-old, from Lander, Wyo.

Each grabbed the other's ankle, straining for leverage until both heard an ominous pop. Lt. Salcido was carried off to a nearby Humvee. Everyone thought he had a broken bone. He was still smiling, though, determined not to miss the war. "Sir," he told his captain, "just give me a walking cast. Don't leave me behind." It turned out to be just a bad sprain. He was back on the job in a day and running again in a week.

Another Marine hyperextended his knee and ended up in the Humvee, too. Cpl. John Trummer, 22, of Saranac Lake, N.Y., dislocated a finger while yanking on his opponent's bloody nose and turned to the medic, Navy Hospitalman Aric Lee, for a quick fix. "Go ahead, Doc," the injured Marine said grimly, using the nickname all medics get, even the ones who aren't physicians. "If we're going to do it, let's do it."

Cpl. Trummer braced himself against Doc Lee's shoulder, and the medic pulled on the finger until it popped back into place. Doc Lee, 22, from Rochester, Ind., taped the damaged finger to its neighbor, and the corporal went back to the fight.

The hands and legs take a particularly rough beating. Staff Sgt. Adam Walker, a slender man with a garden of tattoos on his arms, wrestled one of his squad leaders. "I almost broke his finger," Sgt. Walker, 26, from Hendersonville, N.C., reported during postmatch chatter. "I had to do something -- he had it wrapped around my throat."

The martial-arts training "scares me," the company commander, Capt. Innes Quiroz, 39, from Martinez, Calif., admitted afterward to his surviving lieutenants. "I have a bad feeling about losing two guys, including a lieutenant," he said.

He suspended further fighting for the day. But he sees the value of the training, and the next day the melees resumed. The following week, the Marines got a different kind of training -- hand-to-hand combat drills aimed at perfecting kicks, punches and escape rolls.

One of the best fighters in the 2nd Platoon is Cpl. Adam Sanchez, a 6-foot-3, 205-pound Marine from Grass Valley, Calif. He wears a green martial-arts instructor's belt over his fatigues, and specializes in kicking. A small group of Marines gathered around him, in olive-drab T-shirts and fatigues. A few carried thick black training pads, while others had to use their sleeping bags and stuff sacks as protection from what was to come.

The vertical knee strike, Cpl. Sanchez intoned, is "very powerful, very deadly. You all know it's my favorite strike to use on the enemy. One powerful knee should do the job, and then you can finish him off with whatever other martial-arts moves you may know."

With that, he faced off with Lance Cpl. Joseph Allen, a 5-foot-4, 155-pound Marine from Duluth, Minn., placing his hands on the back of Cpl. Allen's head and driving his right knee into his stomach pad. Cpl. Allen staggered back about six feet, shook it off, and returned to take another kick.

Next the entire group paired off to practice.

"Kill," Lance Cpl. Michael Dressler, a 20-year-old from Olathe, Kan., growled as he absorbed blow after blow.

"Come on, girl," a corporal goaded Lance Cpl. Allen, for not kicking forcefully enough.

They practiced uppercuts to the jaw, hammer-fist punches to the neck and horizontal kicks to the stomach, after Cpl. Sanchez explained what horizontal means: "like the sun goes up and down on the horizon."

"We're Marines -- it's what we do," reflected Lance Cpl. Mark Fowler, 22, from Lincoln, Calif. "When we get bored, we either fight or drink. We can't drink here, so we may as well fight."

Then he turned to the next lesson: How to kill someone by punching him in the carotid artery.

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**Opening Scenes:  
Marines Roll North;  
'No John Waynes'**

**Moving at Last, Soldiers  
Don Gas Masks, Eat Pringles;  
Darth Vader and Henry V**

A handful of Marines spent the first day of the war locked in a windowless steel box that was stuffed with ammunition and stinking of diesel as it roared toward the enemy.

"Let's go get shot at," said Lance Cpl. Jeremy Rogers, a 22-year-old grenadier from Coon Rapids, Minn.

With youthful bravado, black humor and a cold dash of fear, these Marines had crammed into their amphibious-assault vehicle and left their temporary staging area in the northern Kuwaiti desert for a position closer to the border. They all knew now the only way home for them was through Iraq.

The opening day of the war against Iraq unfolded in countless telling scenes -- some scary, some mundane, some inspiring. An Army sergeant prepared his troops for the advance north with a sharp warning against "John Wayne" behavior. A Navy admiral inspired his underlings with a clip from a film of Shakespeare's "Henry V." Warnings of incoming missiles broke up a dinner of chicken and rice. A helicopter pilot known as "Grimace" struggled back to base after destroying an Iraqi border post.

Sitting in the assault vehicle, one seat down the hard bench from Lance Cpl. Rogers, Cpl. Abraham Jaruchik, 21, from Rockford, Ill., wore a chest full of grenades and thick-framed glasses beneath his Kevlar helmet. "You're like a walking bomb," said Cpl. Chris Gibson, 22, from Simi Valley, Calif.

Perched up in the troop commander's seat, Staff Sgt. Matthew Pierre, 28, Vallejo, Calif., took some ribbing for his snuff habit. "Why should I worry about my teeth when I don't even know if I'll be alive?" he replied.

These men are from the Third Squad of the second platoon of Lima Company, Third Battalion, Seventh Regiment. They knew that they were likely to be one of the lead elements of a Marine attack. Their 27-ton vehicle, with room for 25 Marines, carried so much ammunition and weaponry piled on the floor in the rear that some of the grunts couldn't even put their feet on the floor. Their company commander warned them in his final address that they could be in the fight sooner than they think.

So while bumping over berms and dunes as they traversed the desert, they passed around photos of girlfriends and fiancées. Two have pregnant wives due next month, two others are about to get married. "I've been in love with the same girl for 14 years," said Hospitalman Charles Smith, 24, from Houston. He hasn't proposed yet, but said he couldn't wait to do so. The Marines talked about long marches they have known, the price of watches at the base store back in California, and the chances of catching malaria, or a bullet.

Their journey ended hours later, on another barren stretch of desert, where they dug skirmishing holes into the night around the tanks they would rely on once they crossed the border. The night was cold, and they were ordered to dig their holes chest deep. They wondered if they would be staying there very long when they noticed the heavy thud of artillery or mortars in the distance.

It was sobering to hear from their lieutenant that the thuds weren't from outbound shots -- they were from Iraqis practicing their aim. The armored vehicle's commander, Cpl. Brandon Briggs, 23, Wooster, Ohio, reassured his crewmen and promised that their last prebattle meal wouldn't be from a brown plastic military-issue bag.

"Don't worry -- none of us is going to die," he said.

They didn't know if they were going to cross the border immediately or not. But word came that they should load up on food and water just to be safe. They got last-minute medications. They shaved one more time to assure a tight gas-mask seal.

"We are at war, correct?" a corporal asked his platoon commander.

"Yes we are," responded 2nd Lt. Isaac Moore, 26, from Anchorage.

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At Attack Area Gordon on the western end of the Kuwait-Iraq border, Master Sgt. Anthony Dobyne called out to his 26 combat engineers, all from the Army's Third Infantry Division.

"Everybody!" he yelled at around 4:45 p.m. local time. "We got to talk." Behind him, the sun fell slowly from the sky. To his left was the Iraqi border. His soldiers gathered around.

"We are going in tonight," he announced.

There was a murmur. The soldiers looked at each other. Some of them had been in Kuwait for nine months and were eager to go home. For weeks, they had been talking tough. Now they were quiet. Sgt. Omar Pedroza, who had been wisecracking about being ready to invade Iraq all day, stood beside Sgt. Dobyne and sang a soulful tune softly: "It's real . . . it's real."

Sgt. Dobyne opened his green notebook and read:

"At 1500 Zulu, everybody needs to be in Mopp Level 1." That's Army-speak for put on your chem-bio suit and make sure your gas mask is strapped to your leg by 6 p.m. local time. "At 1900 Zulu, artillery's gonna start firing. At 0100 Zulu, we will be breaching the border."

Sgt. Dobyne paused, then closed his notebook. "Get your ammo, but do not chamber your round until after we breach the berm tonight. Once we breach the border, lock and load."

Then he offered some advice. "Let's not get no John Waynes out there, where the first fire you see you start shooting each other. Be careful. You are carrying live ammo. It's a long drive ahead of us -- about seven hours. Everyone needs to stay alert, so we can stay alive. We are going to go in together, and we are all going to come out together. We've got to take care of each other."

He paused again.

"That's all I have to say."

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When Vice Adm. Timothy Keating, the senior U.S. naval officer in the Persian Gulf, walked into his war room in Bahrain, his senior staff greeted him in loud, jocular unison: "Good morning beloved fleet commander."

Adm. Keating took his seat at a large conference table facing two large video screens as the others sat in four rows of theater seats behind him and the lights dimmed. For the next hour, beginning with an Iraq weather briefing, slides flashed onto the screens as aide after aide described elements of the naval air and sea campaign that had just begun to unfold.

"Got it," Adm. Keating would respond to most of the slides, occasionally asking for more information or urging more effort to resolve a problem. After nearly an hour, he motioned to the technicians working the screens.

"Run it," he said.

A video appeared of knights in armor speaking in perfect verse -- footage from the 1989 film of "Henry V," starring Kenneth Branagh. The scene was the king's St. Crispin's Day speech, delivered to his men before the battle of Agincourt.

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;

For he today that sheds his blood with me

Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,

This day shall gentle his condition:

And gentlemen in England, now a-bed

Shall think themselves accursed they were not here

The admiral's audience was rapt. "We're under way," he told them. "It has seemed like a long time to get here. But we've been baptized. Now we're in it."

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In northern Kuwait's Camp New York, Sgt. First Class Chris Gunn, 33, and Spc. Anthony Atteberry, 36, were grabbing plastic dinner plates at the start of the chow line.

"Listen up," another soldier shouted, "We got multiple Scud attacks coming."

The 5:45 p.m. warning was one of several here yesterday that interrupted the Army's 101st Airborne Division's mundane wait for orders to make their way toward Baghdad.

Inside the large dining tent, Sgt. Gunn and Spc. Atteberry quickly looked at the soldiers jamming up the front door. "Sarge, let's go through the kitchen," said Spc. Atteberry of Miami, Okla.

The two ran through the kitchen, yelling "Scud" to clear the kitchen of workers, mostly Middle Easterners. Other soldiers followed them. Outside, soldiers and civilians crowded toward protective bunkers. Sgt. Gunn didn't want to be far from his platoon, which was in tents about one-third of a mile away.

"Let's get back to the boys," he told Spc. Atteberry.

So they ran back to their tent, away from the closest bunker.

Crammed into that bunker -- a long concrete structure surrounded by sandbags -- soldiers passed the time making jokes. A few exaggerated their breathing inside their gas masks to do Darth Vader imitations.

Sgt. John Coolman leaned back, out of the bunker entrance, to try to get a good shot with his camera. "Don't give me those damn fingers," he said. "My wife and kids are going to see this."

Eventually, all was clear. Nothing landed anywhere close.

Sgt. Gunn and Spc. Atteberry decided to eat in their tents, but Staff Sgt. Ed Hawk wanted to give the chow line another try. He'd been awfully close to eating when the warning went off, waiting only to have some gravy ladled over his chicken and rice. As he approached the dining tent, though, another warning siren went off.

The sergeant hustled back to the bunkers near his platoon. Later, he dined in, too: One beef stew Meal Ready-to-Eat and Pringles.

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When the order went out at 5 p.m. yesterday, all the Marine helicopter pilot nicknamed "Grimace" could think about was what his retired Marine father told him at the start of the New Year: "Son, the most dangerous portions of any war are the very beginning and the very end."

Grimace -- only pilots' nicknames are allowed in print under military rules -- was the leader of several Cobra helicopters that went on one of the war's first air-attack missions.

The sun was an incongruous white in the hazy sky as several Cobras took off. Ascending, they leaned forward, their slender jet-style cockpits tipped down, making them look more than ever like their namesakes.

As the pilots recounted later, they flew over American troops. "You could see them, right outside the border, poised," said Barefoot, pilot of the Cobra behind Grimace's.

"I saw the border and I said, 'Well, we're in Iraq,'" said Flowbee, a captain and pilot of a Huey helicopter that accompanied the Cobras.

By the time they reached their target -- an Iraqi border-guard station, including two trailers and two vehicles -- there was too much dust in the air to use their Hellfire missiles' laser-targeting system. So they fell back on their wire-guided missiles. When the missiles hit their targets, a bloom of black appeared on the small infrared screen in the cockpit. The vehicles "disintegrated, blew up in the air probably about 20 feet," recalled Grimace. He could tell there were people inside. "It's kind of cliché, but I think 'kill or be killed' is true," said the 31-year-old pilot.

As they left the outpost, "all I could see was just flames, the building burning up," said Alf, a Gunnery Sergeant on the Huey.

Getting back was the hard part. There were essentially no visible terrain markings to prevent them from crashing into the desert, so they flew using the crafts' instruments. "Flying on instruments, we can't see the horizon. We can't see the ground," said Grimace. "It's like flying over the ocean."

"I got vertigo and I'd never gotten vertigo before," said Flowbee. "Every mile was painful." But they landed safely. "It's never over till the rotor stops turning," Grimace said.

*Contributing to this report were: Michael M. Phillips with the First Marine Division and Helene Cooper with the Army Third Infantry Division, both in northern Kuwait; David S. Cloud with the Navy in Bahrain; Dan Morse with the Army 101st Airborne Assault Division in northern Kuwait and Nicholas Kulish with the First Marine Expeditionary Force, 30 miles from the Iraqi border.*

March 21, 2003  
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### **Lightweight Marine Went AWOL, Then Took Heavy Journey to Iraq**

By Michael M. Phillips

LIVING SUPPORT AREA 7, Kuwait -- It was only when he passed Las Vegas that Lance Cpl. Leo Kendall understood he wasn't on a short drive in the California desert to clear his mind; he was running away from the Marine Corps.

It is only here, months later and less than 30 miles from the Iraqi border, that Lance Cpl. Kendall understood he had truly returned to the Marines.

This is the story of a Marine who tried, failed and went AWOL. It is also the story of a young man who faced his mistakes, struggled and succeeded in time to be thrust into the forefront of a war.

Being a Marine rifleman was never going to be easy for Leo Kendall. At 5-foot-7, the 21-year-old weighs just 120 pounds. His endurance isn't great, and he isn't a natural fighter, unlike the 200-pound warriors who surround him. But his father was a Marine in Vietnam, and his oldest brother is a Marine at Camp Pendleton, Calif., and ever since he was an 11-year-old growing up in Enfield, Conn., Lance Cpl. Kendall wanted to be one, too.

"I had a lot of people back in high school who didn't think I could make it in the Marine Corps," he says now, sitting in a sliver of shade at the 7th Marine Regiment's desert encampment. "I wanted to prove them wrong."

At 18, he ended up at boot camp at Parris Island, S.C. "The first two weeks were hell," he recalls, with screaming sergeants and endless head games designed to break the recruits of their non-Marine ways. Make the bed. Unmake the bed. Make the bed. He lasted through boot camp, where the marching loads weighed 60 to 65 pounds, and infantry school as well, where combat loads reached some 90 pounds.

Because he signed up well before his high-school graduation, he was offered a choice of assignments, and became a base security guard at a Navy facility in London. The British tattoo artist who drew the grinning blue skull on his right biceps said that arm was the skinniest he had ever worked on.

Lance Cpl. Kendall, however, had neglected to read the fine print in his enlistment contract. After two years in the security force, Marines have to serve two years in the infantry. So last July, he was sent to the scorching desert at Twentynine Palms, Calif., from a relatively easy job to the demanding life of a combat grunt in Second Platoon, Kilo Company, Third Battalion, Seventh Marines.

That is when things started to go wrong. He was out of shape, not having gone on a march since infantry school. He missed his London girlfriend. And he grew depressed.

He survived the first long desert march, or "hump" as the Marines call them. But soon he started to fall behind, drawing the ire of his hard-driving fire-team leader, Cpl. Dennis Osborne, 21, of Cincinnati, who issued the usual expletive-laced Marine encouragement to stragglers. Halfway through the second hump -- around five miles in the August heat with a 60-plus pound load -- Lance Cpl. Kendall keeled over face first in the sand, and ended up on an intravenous drip. A week later, he had to carry his own weight -- a 120-pound pack -- on a three-miler, uphill. No more than 200 yards out, he was again flat on his face, and ended up in the battalion aid station.

What worried him most, he says, was that he would let his platoon down. "I didn't want to go to war -- like we are now -- and fall out on a hump and have to be carried," he says. "I didn't want to put anyone else's life in danger."

The unit had a three-day liberty, so Lance Cpl. Kendall got into his Ford Escort and went for a drive to clear his mind. Two-and-a-half days later, he was back in Enfield. Afraid to tell his father, he drove to a friend's house and was spotted by his mother, Sharon Kendall, on her way home from the grocery store.

"I'm not going back," he told her.

She called her husband, John Kendall, who works nights driving a truck. Mr. Kendall says he and his son spent the morning calmly discussing options: the right way to leave the all-volunteer service, the possibility of jail time if he remained Absent Without Leave.

"It was clear Leo didn't want to disappoint me, and wanted to fulfill his goal of being a Marine," says Mr. Kendall, who himself weighed just 120 pounds when he enlisted. "I made my mistakes when I was in the Marines, too," he says softly.

The son recalls his father's advice: "All I expect from you is to do the right thing." The words -- and a promise that Mr. Kendall would place the dreaded call to Kilo Company -- had the desired effect. The young man says he realized he had made the worst mistake of his life, and had given up on himself too easily.

Within hours, Lance Cpl. Kendall was in his car, heading back to Twentynine Palms. He surrendered to First Sgt. Stephen Francois, Kilo Company's senior noncommissioned officer, explaining that he had been worried he would let his comrades down. The First Sergeant was surprisingly calm -- and lenient, punishing Lance Cpl. Kendall with 14 days of restriction to his barracks room.

Cpl. Osborne was disappointed that Lance Cpl. Kendall had run rather than trusting his fire-team to help. "You have to be there and support him in times of trouble," Cpl. Osborne says now, a wad of snuff in his lip. "That's what being brothers is all about."

For a while his superiors assigned him the inglorious task of guarding gear, unarmed, while the platoon was exercising. He also drew mess-hall duty. But instead of growing sullen, as some Marines do, he threw himself into whatever work they gave him. His leaders noticed the change. "Kendall has come around so much that he's not seen as a guy we have to worry about all the time," says his platoon commander, Lt. Chris McManus, 28, from Manhasset, N.Y.

Before he knew it he was back doing infantry work, and the battalion was shipped to Kuwait, where it likely would be in the first wave of U.S. military units to cross the border into Iraq, in the case of war.

"They could tell us tonight that we're leaving tomorrow morning" for Iraq, Lance Cpl. Kendall says. "If I'm not ready now . . ." He lets the thought hang.

His transgression will hurt him; he might never make corporal. Yet the platoon has accepted him back into its embrace. "I wouldn't hesitate to go out there with him and have him as security on my right flank," says the platoon's senior noncommissioned officer, Staff Sgt. Adam Walker, 26, from Hendersonville, N.C.

Here, on the edge of war, Lance Cpl. Kendall has made it back from one precipice -- and is staring into another.

24 March 2003

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### **Rough Going**

#### **U.S. Meets Some Resistance in South**

##### **American Troops Push For Baghdad; Iraqis Inflict First Casualties**

##### **Steering Clear of Basra**

By Greg Jaffe and Carla Anne Robbins in Washington and Christopher Cooper in Doha, Qatar

Even as U.S. forces pushed north toward Baghdad, some Iraqi troops in the southern part of the country struck back and inflicted the first significant American combat casualties of the war.

Twelve U.S. Army soldiers were missing or killed after their supply convoy made a wrong turn in the southern Iraqi city of Nasiriyah, U.S. officials said. Earlier in the day, Iraqi state television broadcast graphic video of five prisoners and four corpses, apparently Americans. Up to nine Marines were also believed to have been killed in a separate firefight as they attempted to take control of a bridge near the city.

U.S. officials also said they were examining a potential production site for chemical weapons near the city of Najaf, south of Baghdad, but they warned that it was too early to say anything definitive.

The tough resistance in the south has come as a surprise to U.S. military planners, many of whom expected the regular Iraqi Army forces guarding the area to surrender immediately or be easily defeated. Instead, U.S. forces have often confronted guerrilla militia forces and possibly small elements of Mr. Hussein's Special Republican Guard, the group of soldiers believed to be most loyal to the regime.

The fighting occurred in places through which key elements of the U.S. military had already passed in recent days. That raised the question of whether Iraqi military leaders had initially lost communications links to the field and had now regained them. Another possibility is that Iraqi forces, knowing they would be slaughtered in a head-on fight with a far-more-powerful foe, hid in the cities, waiting to ambush more-vulnerable U.S. support troops following behind.

The fighting in the south has deprived the U.S., so far, of a key psychological weapon. Going into the war, U.S. planners had hoped American troops would be greeted by joyous civilians in the southern city of Basra. U.S. officials expected to use the resulting pictures to help persuade Iraqi troops and civilians elsewhere to abandon Mr. Hussein and his regime. Encountering Iraqi military resistance, at least in the early going, the Pentagon has decided to keep its troops outside Basra, while taking the nearby airport and a key bridge, and to drive around other cities on the way to Baghdad.

By late Sunday, military officials said that U.S. Marines had won control of two strategically important bridges crossing the Euphrates River at Nasiriyah.

U.S. forces are advancing rapidly northward and yesterday were only about 100 miles from the capital. They could be at the city's outskirts within days. There is no sign that any of the resistance in the south presents a serious military problem or has thrown the campaign substantially off schedule. But if the fighting there continues, it could force U.S. commanders to keep more troops behind in the south to guard supply lines, making fewer forces available for the push to Baghdad.

The complications may stem mostly from the decision by U.S. war planners to drive quickly north toward Baghdad without attempting to pacify either the cities or the countryside along the way.

U.S. Marines destroyed Iraqi armor and artillery outside of urban areas and collected scattered groups of surrendering Iraqis as they swept north out of Kuwait. The Marines turned over captured positions to British troops, whose job was to keep remaining Iraqi soldiers and tanks locked into cities such as Nasiriyah and Basra.

The British suffered casualties of their own when a U.S. Patriot missile battery accidentally downed a British fighter-bomber. The plane was returning to Kuwait from bombing a suspected Republican Guard garrison. The two-man crew is missing and presumed dead.

Responding to questions about fighting in the south yesterday, Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, said, "In Basra, it was never the intent early on to take on all the forces there. So we have what we think are pockets of resistance that will continue to resist. We've also had great desertions from the [Iraqi] regular Army divisions that are in that area."

U.S. commanders said that many of the clashes in southern Iraq involved what appeared to be irregular forces in civilian clothing, including members of the Fedayeen, the paramilitary group headed by Saddam Hussein's eldest son, Uday. Like the Special Republican Guard, these groups are believed to be far more committed to the regime than common conscripts -- and far more likely to suffer if Saddam Hussein is deposed.

Lying directly ahead for U.S. forces approaching Baghdad are two Republican Guard divisions. While the Iraqis are putting up a harder fight than expected, Pentagon officials said there hasn't been any evidence yet of them using biological or chemical weapons. However, Lt. Gen. John Abizaid of U.S. Central Command suggested to reporters that at least one Republican Guard unit stationed in Al Kut, about 100 miles southeast of Baghdad along the Tigris River, may have such weapons.

There were also signs that at least some Iraqi fighters in the south were prepared for an order to use chemical weapons that never came. At one military building near Basra, U.S. troops with the First Marine Division found a supply of Iraqi-made gas masks, as well as nerve-agent antidote made in Turkey. Reporters who examined the antidote learned that it was manufactured just last year and doesn't expire until 2005. One Marine chemical-and-biological warfare expert said the find suggested senior Iraqi officers feared they might be exposed to their own chemical weapons and had taken precautions.

Another senior U.S. military officer predicted that the dangers of chemical attacks would rise the closer U.S. troops get to Baghdad. According to this officer, Mr. Hussein might also use his limited stock of Scud missiles against Israel or Kuwait at that time. Officials believe that Mr. Hussein has held off so far on using his Scuds or chemical or biological weapons in an attempt to rally international public opinion to his side -- a factor he may still be counting on to halt the U.S. advance.

By Sunday night, U.S. troops heading for Baghdad were coming for the first time into the range of the Republican Guard, which is better trained and equipped than the regular army. One guard division is stationed between Najaf and Karbala, to the southwest of the capital. The other is to the southeast at Al Kut.

The division near Karbala has begun responding with artillery fire aimed at advancing U.S. troops from the Army's Third Infantry Division. U.S. warplanes hammered guard divisions yesterday with 2,000 pound satellite-guided bombs. The planes also hit two other Republican Guard units on the immediate southern outskirts of Baghdad. CNN reported last night that U.S. Army Apache helicopters had been dispatched to attack a Republican Guard division.

The push to take Baghdad has other elements as well. Special-operations soldiers were moving toward the capital from the west. And yesterday, the U.S. fired more cruise missiles into the city, although only about 70 of them, a sharp drop from the previous two nights. One large explosion shook a Ministry of Planning building within the presidential compound, the so-called Old Palace, a site hit in earlier attacks.

But more than half of the targets struck by missiles and bombs in the last 24 hours were Iraqi forces in areas outside Baghdad and in the south, where most of the ground fighting took place. One senior U.S. defense official said that probably starting today, there would be an "intense" bombing campaign directed against Republican Guard units ringing Baghdad. "That will enable us to make a more rapid and easier move on Baghdad," the senior official said.

While most of the attention has focused on the southern region of the country, important work lies ahead for U.S. forces in the north, where a large oil field isn't yet fully under U.S. control. In that region, U.S. warplanes hit a Republican Guard division outside of Kirkuk.

The U.S. hopes to use lighter forces, special-operations troops and some U.S. Army infantry units to secure the oil fields there. Defense officials said that the U.S. plans to begin airlifting large numbers of U.S. troops into Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq over the next few days.

U.S. bombs also hit a potentially important terrorist target in the north: a camp believed to be run by the Ansar al-Islam radical Muslim group, which is thought to have ties to al Qaeda. U.S. special-operations forces, believed to be working with the Central Intelligence Agency, are active on the ground in the area controlled by Ansar al-Islam, U.S. officials said.

As American troops moved north toward the capital, irregular Iraqi forces were inflicting their greatest damage by resorting to subterfuge, the Central Command's Gen. Abizaid said. In one case, he said, a group of Army troops and irregulars waved a white flag at American soldiers then unleashed artillery fire at them. In another instance, Gen. Abizaid said, a group of people in civilian dress waved at troops, then ambushed them. "We will be much more cautious in the way we treat the battlefield as a result of these incidents," Gen. Abizaid said. As far as regular Iraqi soldiers go, he added, "we have not on the battlefield seen a single coherent move."

Crew members from a Marine Corps Huey helicopter squadron involved in the battle at Nasiriyah described a chaotic scene, with Iraqi soldiers firing out of ramshackle one-story houses at Marines positioned in the street. Two American tanks were stuck in the street, and at least one armored personnel carrier was destroyed, according to a witness. The Marines destroyed eight tanks and some antiaircraft artillery pieces in the battle.

One member of the Huey crew described the battle zone as "urban terrain, a lot of people, a lot of fire. They couldn't get into the buildings." Gunners firing from the Huey blasted machine-gun rounds in the direction of muzzle flashes from Iraqi guns.

"The ground guy was saying, 'good hits,' " said one of the Huey crew members whose military nickname is Salt Lick. Pentagon policies prohibit the use of helicopter crew names. "We rolled back in and just started putting more suppressive fire in," Salt Lick said. The Huey returned to a forward refueling point in Iraq with a bullet hole through one door.

By late last night, Iraq time, the situation in Nasiriyah seemed to be more quiet, one helicopter crew member said. Some reports indicated that Iraqi forces in the town had moved north.

Marines driving past Basra said there was still much chaos there. "There's a lot of looting going on," said First Sgt. Stephen Francois, as Marines with Kilo Company guarded the roadway from the city. His men seized surface-to-air missiles, rifles, grenades, mortars and other weapons from looters, along with instruction manuals and other documents.

Marines in tanks straddling the highway said they were attacked Saturday morning by "suicide vehicles" from the direction of Basra. The highway ahead of the U.S. tanks contained scattered wrecks, including one burned-out truck with a machine gun mounted in its open bed.

There were indications that civilians may have been hit by the Marines' fire. One pickup truck marked "TV" had been riddled with bullets. It wasn't clear whether the vehicle had been carrying journalists or out-of-uniform Iraqi fighters.

At the U.S. Central Command headquarters in Qatar, from which top officers are running the war effort, the tone was muted. "Today was a tough day of fighting for our coalition," said Brig. Gen. Vince Brooks.

Iraq's decision to broadcast pictures of American prisoners of war was the most aggressive sign of defiance since the war began. The broadcast was picked up by the pan-Arab satellite network al Jazeera for a time, until the Pentagon asked it to desist. No other networks carried the broadcast, and the Central Command's Gen. Abizaid rebuked an al Jazeera reporter at a briefing, calling the airing of the film clip "absolutely unacceptable."

*Michael Phillips, with the First Marine Division in Iraq, and Nicholas Kulish, at a U.S. Marine air base near the Iraq border, contributed to this article.*

March 24, 2003  
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## **First Friendly-Fire Deaths Reported**

### **U.K. Plane, Two Airmen Believed Hit by U.S. Missile; Tank Crew Has Close Call**

By Michael M. Phillips

NORTHERN KUWAIT -- To Marine tank crews on the ground, the thump-thump-thump of Cobra attack helicopters flying through the darkness toward Iraq was supposed to be a comforting reminder of American air superiority.

Instead, in a matter of seconds, friends became foes, as a Marine pilot launched Hellfire missiles at two Marine tanks, setting one aflame in what may have been the first serious friendly-fire incident of the war. Only luck and hard armor allowed the four-man tank crew to survive mostly unscathed.

Similar incidents over the weekend led to the conflict's first friendly-fire deaths. A U.S. missile battery appeared to have shot down a British attack jet returning from a mission over Iraq. And a British television reporter was feared dead and two colleagues traveling with him were missing after coming under fire near U.S. forces driving toward Basra.

Officials said there is "clear evidence" that the British Tornado, a supersonic attack plane with a two-member crew, was shot down yesterday by a U.S. Patriot missile as the plane returned to its base. The plane "was engaged" as it neared the Kuwaiti border and the crew are confirmed to have been killed, the U.S. Central Command in Qatar said.

"It is an accident that is both tragic and under investigation," said Lt. Gen. John Abizaid. Air Force Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, told ABC's "This Week" that "procedures and electronic means to identify friendly aircraft and to identify adversary aircraft . . . broke down somewhere." Any probe would look at whether the identification systems of the Patriot and of the British jet were working properly. The systems work by reading electromagnetic pulses that are automatically emitted from transponders carried by friendly aircraft. The Patriot's system can be put on autopilot, but an operator can override it.

London's ITN television news had said journalist Terry Lloyd and two colleagues traveling with him were missing Saturday, but said in a statement it had "received sufficient evidence" to conclude he had died. "We believe his body to be in Basra hospital," carried there by Iraqi troops who still control the city, the network said. ITN said it didn't have any information on the whereabouts of his two missing colleagues, cameraman Fred Nerac of Belgium and translator Hussein Osman of Lebanon.

Other reporters said there were "irregular" Iraqi soldiers in the area near the crew, and U.S. Marines may have mistaken the journalists for armed enemy combatants.

The four-wheel-drive cars in which the ITN reporters were traveling were marked with the letters "TV," but it was unclear whether the markings were visible to soldiers, ITN said. Journalists, even print journalists, often mark their car "TV" to make it easy to identify them as noncombatants; several journalists in Kuwait did so in preparation to follow behind the troops to Iraq.

Details of those incidents were still to be gathered. But the close call with the Marine tank, which took place Thursday night before the troops rolled north Friday into Iraq, showed how a near-tragedy developed too quickly for anyone to react to prevent it.

Tanks from Alpha Company, First Tank Battalion, were providing security for military engineers excavating the sand berm on the border to prepare for the ground assault. The tankers, led by Capt. David Banning, began receiving sporadic Iraqi mortar fire. One airburst round exploded bright orange 100 yards or so off the ground, a technique used to kill anyone hiding in fighting holes to elude artillery and mortars.

The enemy fire started wide of the mark, narrowed in, then moved away again. Not far off, infantrymen from Lima Company, Third Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment, listened to the bursts and felt the concussions, wondering when U.S. aircraft would arrive to attack the Iraqi gunners. Dug into chest-deep fighting holes and wearing gas masks and chem-bio warfare suits, they were expecting imminent orders to invade and were keenly interested in a forceful air campaign to ease the way.

For the grunts, the arrival of two Cobras was a welcome sight, shadows against the hazy dusk as they headed toward the tanks' position. "I feel better," Sgt. Christopher Morlock told his foxhole-mates. The tanks, however, never saw them coming.

The Cobras swept in and fired two missiles at one Abrams tank on the far left, but missed. Then one of the aircraft turned on Capt. Banning's tank on the far right, hitting it in the rear right side. Lt. Rob Iverson, the tank's forward artillery observer, had his head halfway out of the hatch on the left side of the turret, and he caught sight of the incoming missile -- a view he said later he won't soon forget. When it hit, the explosion sent small metal fragments into his eye, but he wasn't seriously injured. Capt. Banning saw "flames on the deck" and instantly ordered his crew to evacuate. The four men scrambled out of the burning tank and boarded a nearby Humvee.

A captain named John, a forward air controller who asked that his surname not be published, was riding in the nearby tank of 1st Lt. Mark Smith, Alpha Co.'s executive officer. It was his job to call in Harrier jets and attack helicopters to support the tanks, but he had made no such request.

"We've got to get out of here, or we've got to talk to somebody," Capt. John later recalled thinking. Frantic, he clambered down into the turret and started radioing Seventh Marines headquarters to call off the air attack. Then he put out an urgent message audible to any U.S. aircraft. He got no response. "Get that air off station," came another desperate call over the radio from somebody else. "You just hit" an American tank.

News of the event sent chills through the infantrymen and remaining tankers back at Alpha Company's staging area. When the aircraft circled back around, directly over the grunts' fighting positions, the Marines wondered aloud whether the helicopters would be able to tell that they weren't Iraqis.

But mostly the Marines feared for the tank crews. "Throw some prayers their way," Second Lt. Isaac Moore, platoon leader of the Lima Company infantrymen assigned to fight alongside the tanks, told his Marines over the radio, hoping no one had yet been killed in action. "We don't know if there are any KIAs or not." There weren't. Lt. Iverson was quickly up and working again.

Perhaps most shaken was Capt. John, the forward air controller. "I had no control over it," he murmured as the rescued crew returned to the staging area after dark. He thought obsessively about whether it could somehow have been his fault. Other tankers and infantrymen milled around in the dark, cursing the screw-up that nearly took the lives of four Marines, and shaking their heads at the good fortune of their survival.

Capt. Banning himself was almost blasé. "That's a shock to the system," he said jovially as he got off the Humvee and grabbed a mug of coffee. Quickly talk turned to what had caused the mishap.

"Did you know we had Cobras in the air?" Capt. Banning asked Capt. John. "No, sir," Capt. John responded.

Shortly afterward, the two went to Third Battalion headquarters to regroup. The officers wanted to salvage the tank as quickly as possible, not just to recover the equipment, but to deny the Iraqis a possible propaganda victory. Word went out over the radio: "Get a dedicated vehicle on that tank, so no Iraqis climb on it."

Hours later, Capt. Banning returned to the staging area to organize a recovery effort. Battle tanks accompanied a specialized tank-towing vehicle back to the border. At 1 a.m. Friday, they returned empty-handed. The captain's tank was too badly damaged to tow back to safety, so the crew stripped all important equipment and documents from the hulk and left it there.

Lt. Col. Michael Belcher, commander of the Third Battalion, said the Marines would investigate the incident, to determine what happened and who, if anyone, was to blame.

*Chris Cooper in Qatar contributed to this article.*

March 25, 2003

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**'Crucial Moment'**

**U.S. Targets Troops Near Baghdad**

**Crushing Medina Division  
Of Republican Guard  
Could Be Key to Victory**

**Tough Task: Avoiding Civilians**

By Carla Anne Robbins and Greg Jaffe in Washington and Michael M. Phillips with U.S. Marines in Iraq

The next big milestone of the war in Iraq will be a fierce assault on the Iraqi Republican Guard's Medina division, which guards the gates of Baghdad.

Shattering the Medina division is now a central goal of the U.S. war plan for psychological as much as tactical reasons. U.S. officials hope that destroying the division with an overwhelming display of American firepower -- a ground version of the "shock and awe" air campaign -- will break the spirit of four other Republican Guard divisions surrounding the capital, and perhaps tip the political balance decisively against Saddam Hussein and his regime.

Made up of some 10,000 troops, the Medina division is deployed about 50 miles south of Baghdad. It straddles one of two key highways into the capital, in a heavily defended area that Pentagon officials call the "Red Zone." Rumbling toward it, or already there, are 20,000 American troops, tanks and armored fighting vehicles from the U.S. Army's Third Infantry Division.

U.S. ground forces could begin attacking the Medina division as soon as American commanders decide that air attacks have sufficiently weakened the Iraqi forces surrounding Karbala.

Still yesterday's fighting made clear that some optimistic early predictions of a swift and overpowering U.S. victory over Iraqi forces may not come to fruition. Apache pilots attacking the Medina division, one of Mr. Hussein's best units, last night reported encountering a torrent of fire that frequently forced them to abandon targets. In other cases pilots said they had to abandon planned strikes because Iraqi tanks were too close to homes or holy sites.

In the south, U.S. Marines were still reporting hit-and-run attacks on U.S. supply lines. Pentagon officials described those attacks by Iraqi guerrilla forces as a nuisance. The real battle lies ahead in Baghdad.

While U.S. forces have been allowing many regular Iraqi Army troops in southern Iraq to lay down their arms and walk away, planners say they need to break the Medina division, or turn its leaders against the regime, to prevent the elite troops from falling back to the capital and reinforcing Iraqi soldiers there. U.S. officials say they have been in regular contact with commanders of key Republican Guard units, trying to persuade them not to fight. So far there is no sign that they have succeeded.

As U.S. troops advance toward Baghdad, U.S. military planners still hope to avoid an intense urban battle. Instead, they are relying on a variety of targeted blows intended to bring about the collapse of the regime without causing large numbers of civilian casualties or doing vast damage to Iraqi infrastructure. Those highly targeted strikes continued yesterday, as U.S. ships and submarines lobbed cruise missiles at Iraqi leadership facilities in the capital city, accompanied by sorties from B-2 bombers. But as fighting moves closer to the capital, the Pentagon may find it hard to stick to that plan, especially if the Republican Guard, which is better-armed than other Iraqi military units, puts up a tough fight.

To make the task harder for the Americans, U.S. planners say, troops and tanks from the Medina division appear to have dispersed widely in and around Karbala, placing themselves close to homes, schools, mosques and the region's many ancient Shia shrines. U.S. officials believe the Republican Guard units near Al Kut have been authorized to use chemical weapons. To hurt the Medina division from the air, U.S. commanders may have to risk far more civilian casualties and wider damage than they have to date.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair heralded the coming battle with the Medina division yesterday as "a crucial moment" of the war. The division's troops "are those closest to Saddam that are resisting and will resist strongly," he told Parliament yesterday. "The vital goal is to reach

Baghdad as swiftly as possible, thus bringing the end of the regime closer." Mr. Blair will meet with President Bush at Camp David on Wednesday or Thursday to discuss the campaign's progress.

By yesterday afternoon, soldiers from the U.S. Third Infantry Division had reached the outskirts of Karbala and were about 50 miles from Baghdad, Pentagon officials said.

The vast Army convoy was slowed by sandstorms and by resistance from irregular Iraqi forces armed with rockets and grenade launchers near Najaf. Gusts were expected to reach up to 70 mph, stirring enough sand to make flying helicopters and driving trucks treacherous, said Col. Joe Anderson, commander of the 101st's second brigade at Camp New York, Kuwait.

But Pentagon officials insisted that the troops are still ahead of the schedule set by Gen. Tommy Franks, commander of U.S. forces in the region.

The 101st is expected to advance rapidly in trucks and helicopters, which both transport infantrymen and shoot at the enemy. The division's third brigade, which also was deployed in Afghanistan, has set up refueling facilities in Iraq. The 101st's two other main infantry units -- the first and second brigades -- are still in Kuwait. Commanders wouldn't say when they'll move, but suggested that the winds probably will delay them.

The 101st could be used either to defend vulnerable U.S. supply lines in the south or to provide added punch to attacks on the Republican Guard.

For a second day, U.S. Apache helicopters pounded the Medina troops and tanks from the air, preparing for the coming ground battle. Army Maj. Gen. Stanley McChrystal said the attacks had "significantly degraded" the division's combat punch.

The U.S. Central Command said yesterday that the two-man crew of an Apache helicopter involved in early attacks on the Medina division was missing after the helicopter made an emergency landing. A few hours later, Iraqi television showed two men said to have been the helicopter's crew. Army helicopter pilots, returning from the region, reported heavy resistance.

Separately, an American A-10 mistakenly destroyed a Syrian passenger bus traveling in Iraq about 100 miles from the country's border with Syria. Pentagon officials said the plane was dropping a bomb that had been intended for a bridge. "A bus came into the pilot's view too late to recall the bomb aimed at the bridge," Gen. McChrystal said. Syria's official news agency said five Syrians were killed and 10 wounded. U.S. officials couldn't confirm that.

The Pentagon has been preparing for the battle with the Republican Guard at Karbala since the opening night of the war. Air Force and Navy attack planes spent the first two days of the war striking at the Medina division's air defenses.

Starting Sunday night, lower- and slower-flying A-10 tank killers and Apache helicopters began blasting the division's tanks and artillery pieces. The Army fired dozens of surface-to-surface rockets at the dug-in division.

One senior military official said it appeared that Gen. Franks "wanted to make an example of the Medina division."

While the Army's Third Infantry prepares for the fight around Karbala, the U.S. First Marine Division is racing toward Baghdad, preparing for its own fight with a second Republican Guard Division stationed near Al Kut, 70 miles southeast of Baghdad and blocking the second major highway into the capital.

Marines yesterday crossed the Euphrates River unopposed, apparently on the way to Al Kut. One contingent of Marines traveled for 26 hours straight, making slow stop-and-go progress, almost completely without Iraqi opposition. At 2 a.m. local time today they were awaiting orders in a convoy shrouded in total darkness.

So far the Republican Guard unit there has been spared attacks from Marine helicopters, which have been operating farther south where Marines were facing resistance from irregular forces. That means that the Marine battle at Al Kut could be two or more days away as the helicopters are brought northward to destroy tanks and prepare the battlefield.

U.S. officials have warned that enemy troops at Al Kut may be armed with chemical weapons. American officials are hoping that a stunning defeat of the Medina forces outside Karbala might be enough to persuade the forces at Al Kut to surrender faster and without using their chemical arsenal.

How the Medina forces will fight isn't known. For now, it seems unlikely that they will rumble out of their defensive positions to try to attack U.S. armor. "The Iraqis simply can't maneuver in large formations without exposing themselves to attack from the air. To move in formation for any of these units is to die," says retired Col. Rick Sinnreich, who takes the role of the enemy commander in Army war games.

Instead, the Army's biggest concern is that Republican Guard divisions will dig in until U.S. tanks get within striking distance, and then abandon their tanks and speed toward the

urban sanctuary of Baghdad. To prevent that, the U.S. is unleashing a torrent of air power to kill as many of the enemy as possible. Once the battle begins, U.S. troops will seek to kill or capture Iraqi fighters before they have a chance to flee and regroup in the capital. The Third Infantry Division is likely to pursue fleeing Republican Guard units to the edge of Baghdad.

Once there, U.S. forces could face an inner ring of defense around Baghdad that consists of two Republican Guard divisions as well as Mr. Hussein's 15,000-man Special Republican Guard unit. U.S. Navy and Air Force planes also have been hitting those forces hard in recent days.

Gen. Franks, the U.S. commander, said yesterday that the Iraqi leader's ability to communicate with and direct his forces is damaged but still working.

In Baghdad the Iraqi government continued to demonstrate its political control. Iraqi state television broadcast a speech by Mr. Hussein, which included references to the battle for Umm Qasr that began Saturday. The references seemed intended to confirm that Mr. Hussein had survived two separate cruise-missile attacks on his residences Thursday morning and again on Friday night. U.S. officials said they couldn't tell when the speech was recorded.

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz told reporters at a news conference that Mr. Hussein is "in full control of the army and the country."

U.S. planners are hoping to have most of the major cities in the south under control by the time they fully engage the Republican Guard outside Baghdad and move on toward the capital, so they don't have to divert much needed firepower southward.

In the south yesterday, U.S. and British troops continued to battle small but dangerous groups of Iraqi militia and regular forces around several towns and the key city of Basra.

One British soldier was killed near the town of Az Zubayr south of Basra, the BBC reported. Fighting continued around the port city of Umm Qasr, which U.S. and British forces are eager to control so they can begin shipping in large amounts of humanitarian aid to help win the support of local residents.

*Dan Morse at Camp New York in Kuwait contributed to this article.*

March 25, 2003

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### **Street Fighting**

#### **A Volatile Enemy: 'Irregular' Forces Loyal to Hussein Relying on Subterfuge,**

#### **Militia Is Giving Coalition Units Strong Dose of Resistance White Flags -- Then Gunfire**

By Yaroslav Trofimov in Kuwait City, Kuwait, Nicholas Kulish at a U.S. Marine base near the Iraqi border and Christopher Cooper in Doha, Qatar

Returning to a Marine base near the Iraqi border from combat missions over the southern city of Nasiriyah, several U.S. Marine helicopter pilots said Iraqis had come out waving white flags, apparently to signal surrender to American ground troops.

Then, the pilots said, the Iraqis opened fire on American forces.

The irregular Iraqi forces said to be responsible for these deceptive -- and lethal -- tactics in the south are shaping up as one of the most difficult surprises of the war. Various paramilitary and security groups were expected to surrender or desert on a scale similar to that of Iraq's regular troops, many of whom have given up. But now there are signs that the irregulars are desperately resisting, owing their livelihoods, and often their lives, to Saddam Hussein's regime.

U.S. troops are swiftly shifting their tactics and mentality as word of irregular Iraqi ambushes and subterfuge spreads. Many of the paramilitary fighters wear civilian clothes, rather than uniforms. "When we came here, we were told everybody wants to surrender, nobody wants to fight," said Marine Cpl. James Lis, 21 years old. "Now [Iraqi civilians] wave at me, and I wave back through my rifle sight."

What changed Cpl. Lis's view were reports from Sunday's intense battle in Nasiriyah, on the Euphrates River. Marine officers say several Americans were killed and scores were wounded in a fight with men in civilian garb who grabbed weapons dropped by surrendering Iraqi troops and attacked.

The Iraqis "are sending forces out carrying white surrender flags or dressing them as liberated civilians to draw coalition forces into ambushes," Victoria Clarke, assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, told reporters yesterday. "Both of these actions are among the most serious violations of the laws of war."

"We will be much more cautious in the way we treat the battlefield as a result of these incidents," U.S. Army Lt. Gen. John Abizaid said at a briefing in Qatar on Sunday. Beyond the dangers to American and British troops, the irregulars' resistance near populated areas creates a serious risk of drawing allied firepower in the direction of innocent bystanders.

Mr. Hussein's motley assemblage of irregular forces includes rank-and-file members of his Baath political party, Iraq's multiple secret-police services and the ruling family's own guerrilla unit, the Fedayeen Saddam, which means "those who will sacrifice themselves for Saddam." Like latter-day janissaries -- the elite fighting corps of the Ottoman Empire -- many of the Fedayeen fighters were orphans brought up from a young age to be fiercely loyal only to their leader.

As long as Mr. Hussein is alive -- and he appeared on Iraqi state television on Monday -- his irregulars are now thought likely to keep resisting. The dictator has a long history of savage reprisals against those who betray him. And the paramilitaries would be the people most likely to face harsh punishment or death in a post-Hussein Iraq because, unlike ordinary military draftees, they are most closely identified with the regime's violent excesses. The Fedayeen, for example, have been known to cut out people's tongues for criticizing the government, Iraqis say.

Much of the resistance could melt away if the Iraqi ruler were deposed, said Dilshad Ahmed, an Iraqi-Kurdish fighter on the front lines in the country's north. "America must smash the Iraqis, bomb them hard, without stopping! You can't let them think for a moment that Saddam Hussein is going to live," he said. "Until America goes all out, the Iraqis will fear Saddam more than the Americans."

Founded by Mr. Hussein's oldest son Uday in 1995, the Fedayeen are believed to have more than 20,000 men, scattered throughout Iraq's major cities, U.S. military officials said. They

carry light arms and reside among ordinary civilians. The Fedayeen serve as both informants and enforcers for the Baghdad regime.

U.S. soldiers complain the Fedayeen are difficult to deal with because they don't follow commonly accepted rules of warfare. The false-surrender tactic, for example, is a war crime under the Geneva Convention.

Several American prisoners of war were apparently executed -- also a war crime -- after Iraqi forces thought to be Fedayeen ambushed 12 members of a lightly armed supply unit on Sunday near Nasiriyah.

Poorly trained and drawn from the lower classes of Iraqi society, the Fedayeen were considered insignificant riff-raff by some war planners in Washington, other U.S. officials now say. One Pentagon official said last fall, "The Fedayeen will run with their tails between their legs" at the first sign of trouble.

If the war evolves into a guerrilla campaign, that could nullify many of the advantages of superior U.S. firepower. Another fear is that stiff Iraqi resistance will heighten surging anti-Americanism across the Arab world. Already, some important Islamic clerics are calling for "jihad," or holy war, to defend the Iraqi people.

Referring to Iraq, Mohammed Sayed Tantawi, grand sheikh of Egypt's prominent Al-Azhar Mosque, told worshippers at last Friday's prayers in Cairo, "Jihad in Islam is meant to defend religion, money, soul and freedom, and to support those who are subject to injustice." His call to take up arms against the American invaders was particularly significant, not just because of Sheik Tantawi's prestige in the Arab world but also because, as someone who condemned the Sept. 11 attacks, he has traditionally been viewed as a relative moderate. Nearly 10,000 protestors took to the streets in Cairo in a violent demonstration following the cleric's remarks.

The irregulars' persistence in the south could complicate the U.S. military's desire to be seen as a friendly liberator, rather than hostile invader. Az Zubayr, a small town near the southern city of Basra, was supposed to be one of the earliest American prizes, a showcase of cheering Shiite Muslims -- long victims of Mr. Hussein's cruelty -- welcoming Western troops.

That could still come to pass. But five days into the war, its alleyways and side streets are firmly in the grip of irregular Iraqi fighters, who roam the area with impunity, just hundreds of yards from coalition outposts. They appear to remain under the command of superiors in Basra, just up the road, who successfully repelled British forces from the city yesterday after a fierce gun battle, a U.K. spokesman said.

Coalition forces may also have misread how effective lightly armed Iraqi street fighters could be, attacking and then blending into civilian populations. This tactic -- employed by Palestinian militants against the Israeli military in the West Bank and Gaza Strip -- beckons allied troops and pilots to retaliate in crowded areas, increasing the chances innocent bystanders will be killed.

In a clash last Friday, U.S. Marine Cpl. Lis and his comrades came under fire as they entered a small village near Az Zubayr. From inside the cramped troop compartment of an American assault vehicle, bullets could be heard hitting the truck, which was left pockmarked.

The Marines piled out of the back hatch to return fire with grenades, machine guns, rifles and rockets. The shooting lasted 40 minutes, but the Americans, who suffered no injuries, never located their adversaries with certainty. The Marines said they suspect the people who fired on them were the same Iraqis who greeted them warmly as they entered the village.

Attacking an enemy hiding among civilians, coalition forces inevitably are causing the sort of civilian casualties they hoped to avoid. On Sunday, at a British medical tent on the outskirts of Az Zubayr, an Iraqi woman pulled up in a car, screaming that a U.S. helicopter rocket had killed her entire family, except for a seven-year-old son. The boy was taken in by some foreign medics, she said, and was missing.

The British medics told her they had seen no such boy. A friend of the woman gently eased her back into the car.

"We don't want to hurt the civilian population," said Maj. Andy Churchill, who commands a British army outpost nearby. "We have no quarrel with the Iraqi people. They're very friendly." Yesterday, one British soldier was killed near Az Zubayr as he tried to calm rioting Iraqi civilians.

U.S. Marines say they are taking a harder line with locals in response to attacks on American troops by fighters in civilian clothes. "You've got no friends in this country," Second Lt. Isaac Moore, a platoon leader with the Seventh Marines, told his men. "The only friends you have here are wearing green next to you."

Marine pilots at the base near the Iraqi border recounted that some Iraqi ground troops in the south had attempted to surrender to helicopters overhead. The pilots said they greeted such offers warily. "For all we know, these people who are always surrendering can just jump

back in the vehicles and start firing," one pilot said. Several pilots reported accepting surrender pleas, then making multiple passes over the same Iraqi troops to ensure they wouldn't resume fighting.

By now, coalition planners had hoped to be distributing boatloads of humanitarian supplies to hungry Iraqis through the southern port of Umm Qasr. But because of irregular resistance, allied forces have been unable to clear a safe corridor for bringing in the goods.

"At least Saddam Hussein gave us food," said Ali Ibrahim, a local government employee. "We had no food from the Americans. I'm worried that the Americans won't go away, just like in Afghanistan. We want water, electricity, and a guarantee from the United Nations that the Americans will leave."

*Hugh Pope in Dohuk, Iraq, Michael M. Phillips with the U.S. Marines in Iraq and Karby Leggett in Jerusalem contributed to this article.*

March 27, 2003

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**U.S. Is Opening  
A Second Front  
In the Iraq War**

**Troops Are Airlifted to North  
As Baghdad Fight Looms;  
Supply Lines Show Strain**

By Greg Jaffe and Michael M. Phillips

The U.S. airlifted 1,000 soldiers into northern Iraq, opening a second front in its drive to topple Saddam Hussein, as American and Iraqi troops were moving into position south of Baghdad last night for the first major battle of the war.

In a widening of the war effort, the U.S. airlifted the light-infantry troops to protect the region's oil fields and perhaps tie down Mr. Hussein's troops north of the capital.

Meanwhile, U.S. forces are edging closer to attacking Mr. Hussein's dug-in Republican Guard troops, posted at the southwestern approach to Baghdad, once blinding sandstorms cease. At the same time, some Iraqi troops appeared to be on the move nearby.

It is clear that both sides are girding for a major battle near the city of Karbala, between the U.S. Army's Third Infantry Division and the Medina division of the Iraqi Republican Guard. As a result, the next few days will be crucial to the seven-day-old campaign to oust Mr. Hussein.

As the fight approached, there were some signs yesterday that the swift U.S. move toward Baghdad and continued attacks by Iraqi irregular forces in the south were putting stresses on some supply lines.

In one Marine unit moving toward Baghdad, ammunition and water were in good supply but food stocks were being pinched. "You can only get two meals a day from now on," First Sgt. Martin Berns announced yesterday morning as Marines cleaned mud out of their vehicles and prepared to depart. "Don't worry about it -- just cut off your arm; meat is meat," he joked. Pentagon officials, however, said the supply lines were in good shape.

Amid the activity, American officers were puzzling over conflicting reports that a column of as many as 1,000 Iraqi military vehicles was moving south, into the range of U.S. Army and Marine Corps fighters, using the wind and sand to cover their advance.

The movement of the column was noted in some intelligence reports, raising the question of whether the Iraqis were preparing to challenge American forces in a head-on fight before they could reach Baghdad or moving to reinforce the Iraqi Republican Guard divisions -- or simply feinting an advance to slow the Americans.

By last night, defense officials said the movement of the convoy may have been a feint by the Iraqis -- or the reports of its existence an intelligence mistake.

Normally, the movement of the Iraqi troops away from the capital would make them easier targets for U.S. air strikes. For the last two days, however, U.S. helicopters have been mostly grounded because of high winds and swirling sands, which makes it possible the Iraqis could be moving under cover of the storm.

Speaking to some troops and civilian personnel at U.S. Central Command Headquarters in Florida, President Bush warned that "the path we are taking is not easy, and it may be long." He said U.S. forces closing in on Baghdad "are facing the most desperate elements of a doomed regime." Mr. Bush's words marked the second day in a row that he has attempted to lower expectations of a speedy and easy end to the war. Last night, the president began two days of meetings with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, his main ally, to discuss the war and efforts to provide immediate humanitarian relief for southern Iraq.

Before the blinding sandstorms slowed the U.S. advance, the U.S. had been pounding the Republican Guard's Medina division from the air to weaken it before U.S. ground troops move in. But that effort has been complicated because many units have dug themselves in close to homes, hospital and holy sites, raising the risk of collateral damage.

Even as the Army's Third Infantry Division gets ready for the battle around Karbala, about 60 miles southwest of Baghdad, the First Marine Division, a formidable column of infantry and armored troops, is miles east and only slightly behind in its advance toward the capital. Directly in its way stands a second Republican Guard division near the city of Al Kut, southeast of Baghdad.

Even as the drive for Baghdad from the south draws near, the U.S. is moving out, belatedly, to establish a bigger presence to the north. Pentagon officials say they have been able to push several hundred special-forces troops into a portion of Iraq controlled by Kurds. The troops have secured an airfield that can be used to fly in light-infantry soldiers.

Last night, about 1,000 soldiers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade based in Italy began landing there. From that position, they most likely will secure oil fields in the north, and perhaps help in the invasion of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk and, possibly, Tikrit, Mr. Hussein's hometown and a city expected to offer fierce resistance.

To take any cities, though, the 173rd Airborne probably will need help from more heavily armed troops. The Army's Fourth Infantry Division was supposed to be on hand to do that, but it was denied access to bases in Turkey. Now about 20,000 soldiers with the Fourth are about to begin arriving instead in Kuwait today, and should be ready to fight in about two weeks. One possibility is that some soldiers from that division, one of the Army's most potent, could race to the north of Iraq to link up with the airborne troops now landing there to open a second front.

At the opposite end of the country, trouble continued to brew at the southern port city of Basra. There were reports that a convoy of Iraqi tanks and armored vehicles were pushing out of Basra, which British officials have been shelling for the past few days. British military officials told the Associated Press that about 120 vehicles were heading southeast out of the city, apparently using the sandstorm as cover. Coalition air power was called in to hit the convoy.

U.S. and British officials have been hesitant to move into southern Iraqi cities that are controlled by guerrilla forces loyal to Mr. Hussein out of fear that they would get caught in bloody street battles with high civilian casualties. U.S. officials say that they believe that once the demise of Mr. Hussein's regime in Baghdad is clear, these guerrilla units will cease to be a problem.

The U.S. strategy might change if the guerrilla units, known as the Fedayeen, continue to control Basra, where they are battling British forces, for an extended period of time and people inside Iraq's second-largest city can't get critical supplies such as food and water.

Those irregular Iraqi forces have slowed a drive toward Baghdad by the Marines, launching hit-and-run attacks seemingly designed to hit supply vehicles bringing fuel and ammunition, rather than taking on the combat troops themselves.

At sunset Wednesday, unidentified attackers launched mortars and sprayed small-arms fire at a Marine unit, prompting a brief but fruitless chase by the Americans. U.S. tanks fired back and armored vehicles maneuvered through the muddy landscape, but the attackers disappeared into the sandy-yellow haze. "We're not going to be chasing snipers out here all night long," Capt. George Schreffler told his platoon.

U.S. commanders also are keenly aware that the Iraqis could be attempting to lure them into a trap, drawing armor and men off the main route, into areas already targeted by Iraqi artillery or mortar fire.

March 31, 2003

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**As Marines Search  
Door to Door, Tears  
And Tense Moments**

**Second Lt. Moore's Men Find  
Scared Civilians, Old Gun;  
How Do You Say 'Where'?**

By Michael M. Phillips

WITH THE U.S. MARINES IN CENTRAL IRAQ -- Second Lt. Isaac Moore and his 60-man platoon were ordered to search villages for Saddam Hussein sympathizers who had been lobbing mortars and otherwise taking potshots at a key Marine supply route heading toward Baghdad.

That meant frisking farmers and ordering them to lay prone on the hot desert ground. It also meant breaking into mud huts and rifling through dresser drawers in search of weapons to the din of a screaming baby and a sobbing woman -- all without knowing a single comforting Arabic phrase to calm the innocents.

"All I know is 'Get down on the ground' and 'Stop or I'll shoot,'" Cpl. Jeff Giesko, a 22-year-old team leader from Crestview Hills, Ky., told Lt. Moore as they prepared to drive their armored-assault vehicles into a village. None of the lieutenant's Marines had memorized the more friendly greetings in their military-issue Arabic phrase cards.

For the moment, these Marines represent the most important front in the war against Iraq. U.S. troops in the south are confronting stiffer-than-expected resistance from the Fedayeen Saddam, Baath Party enforcers and other militants outside the regular army who have slowed the planned breakneck advance on Baghdad to a crawl and hindered the flow of fuel, ammunition, food and equipment along a thin supply line to the front.

American troops were unprepared for the irregulars' fanatical loyalty to Mr. Hussein and their tactics -- feigning surrender, donning civilian garb and coercing regular Iraqi soldiers into fighting hopeless battles. The Fedayeen Saddam alone -- a militia of "those who will sacrifice themselves for Saddam" founded by Mr. Hussein's eldest son, Uday -- number in the tens of thousands, with chapters charged with enforcing loyalty in every Iraqi province.

So now, the Americans have decided they can't simply swat away harassers as they move north but must stop and root them out. Most of the 1,200 Marines in the Third Battalion of the Seventh Regiment -- operating north of the Euphrates River in central Iraq -- have been detailed to the task for hours at a time in recent days, and the troops were told to be prepared for more before they attempt any further advance on Baghdad. Marine commanders here said the battalion's exact location can't be reported.

Coalition detachments elsewhere in southern Iraq are undertaking similar missions. Yesterday, dozens of ground troops from the Army's 101st Airborne Division flew from Kuwait to Najaf on Black Hawk helicopters to help Apache helicopter pilots hunt mortar-firing irregulars in that area, where nerves were also rattled by Saturday's suicide car-bombing which killed four Americans.

Sometimes, the search hits a mother lode, as it did Friday when the Fifth Marine Regiment, a short way north of Lt. Moore's platoon, found a large cache of Fedayeen armor and equipment in a stadium.

But often, the task requires Marines to go from farm to farm and village to village, in search of guerrillas, much as Marines did a generation ago in Vietnam. Aside from putting the Marines at risk, the tactic also complicates President Bush's strategy of winning the hearts and minds of Iraqi citizens. The hunt creates tense encounters between young, gun-toting Marines and peaceful Iraqi citizens -- the very people the White House portrays as an oppressed populace that it is trying to liberate.

American officials said their hearts-and-minds strategy is working. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said yesterday on ABC that Basra residents are giving "a lot of cooperation" to British forces now in the city. General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said on NBC that the military is "seeing more and more indications" of a shift in Iraqi opinion against Mr. Hussein.

Lt. Moore's combat-ready Marine infantrymen have the delicate task of trying to weed out foes without alienating potential friends.

"There shouldn't be a single round fired today -- that's my intent," Lt. Moore, 26, from Wasilla, Alaska, warned his men as they prepared to search a series of farms scattered across a stretch of mud flats and bright green wheat fields. "These guys could either really help us or really hurt us."

The mission of Lt. Moore's platoon, part of the Third Battalion's Lima Company, started when a rusty white sedan approached on a narrow dirt lane running between wheat fields and stretches of drained swampland. One of the platoon's squads flagged the car down and ordered two middle-age men out at gunpoint. One was in a black robe, black-and-white checked khafiyah headdress, blue socks and black dress shoes. The other sported a gray robe and Saddam-style moustache.

Lance Cpl. Jeremy Rogers, 22, from Coon Rapids, Minn., used broken Arabic and hand gestures to order them to the ground, face-down and spread-eagle.

Cpl. James Lis, the squad's 21-year-old leader from Shreveport, La., was suspicious of a large sack of what appeared to be flour in the back seat. "Can I stick my bayonet in the sack to make sure there's no AK in it?" he asked Lt. Moore, meaning AK-47 assault rifles. He bayoneted the top, then rolled the sack over and stabbed it some more. White powder leaked out onto the blue seat covers.

Lt. Moore, an M16 slung from his shoulder, approached the prone man in gray and took out a military-issue folding card with cartoon pictures of soldiers, weapons, livestock and food. Communicating with the locals is a constant problem. Of the 1,200 troops in the Third Battalion, there are only two Arabic speakers, and they're in high demand all over the battlefield. Neither was here at the moment, so Lt. Moore tried to make do.

"How do you say 'Where is?'" he asked Lance Cpl. Rogers, the platoon's best linguist.

"I got one for 'Show me' but not 'Where is?' sir," the lance corporal responded, apologetically.

Just then, the lieutenant recalled his military phrase card's translation for "Where is?"

"Waen?" he asked the prone man several times, pointing to pictures of tanks, artillery and troops. Sitting up, the man wiped his hands and shrugged. Lt. Moore walked the man to his sedan and pointed to the sack. Using the picture card, the man managed to declare that it contained feed for his sheep, not food for hidden troops.

"We could bake some cookies on the spot and test it," joked the platoon radioman, Lance Cpl. Steven Baca, 22, from Littleton, Colo.

The lieutenant tried his interrogation technique on the other man, who attempted to explain his business in the area by sketching what could have been a sheep in the mud-caked ground. Cpl. Lis wasn't satisfied. He was suspicious of the man's dress socks and his glistening wristwatch. "He's no farmer," the corporal said.

Lt. Moore looked at the first man's brushed-back hair and wondered if it might have been a military-standard cut a few weeks earlier. Unable to question the men about such subtleties, he decided to call in the Marines' "human exploitation team" -- specialists in interrogating prisoners and civilians.

"I said, 'Waen?' and they didn't understand," Lt. Moore shrugged, leaving the two men face down in the hot midmorning sun, under guard.

A bit later, a small pickup truck came down the same narrow lane. Five Marines popped out of a roadside ditch, and soon five more Iraqi men were sprawled on the ground at gunpoint. Inside the truck, the Marines found, along with patties of camel dung fertilizer, bedding and clothes. "These guys look like they were getting the hell out of here," Lt. Moore concluded, suspicious that they were deserters or irregulars.

About an hour after the first two Iraqis were detained, the interrogation team arrived with an Iraqi-American civilian contractor from Detroit, who acts as a translator and cultural guide. The seven Iraqis now on the ground were relieved to find someone who speaks Arabic. They explained that they were Bedouin farmers heading from a nearby market town, across the Marines' supply route, to wheat farms on the other side. The encounter, they said, persuaded them that it might be better to stay on the farm for a while. The interrogation team explained that many of the area's residents are Shiites or marsh Arabs long abused by Mr. Hussein's regime. The Americans let all seven men go.

Before leaving, the translator wrote phrases in Arabic script on two slips of paper for Lt. Moore so he could communicate at least a bit better. One advised the reader to stay off the main road. The other: "We're not here to cause trouble. We're just here to look for large weapons. Stay in your home after dark."

The lieutenant had a chance to try that note out an hour later. His three armored vehicles cut across wheat fields and took up positions outside a farm composed of two

compounds with low buildings made of mud, straw and dung, their woven roofs held up by palm beams.

The platoon's five-dozen Marines were on edge. After stopping the two cars, they searched an abandoned village and were spooked to find two pictures of Mr. Hussein on display in a mud house. But the lieutenant sensed the residents here would be even more on edge when they saw his platoon of heavily armed Marines in camouflage, chem-bio suits.

The rear ramps of the platoon's armored vehicles dropped, the Marines poured out and the lieutenant's fears were quickly realized. Dogs barked and two camels, tied up to the nearest building, snorted. Two men -- one middle-age, the other elderly with thick glasses and a cane -- gesticulated as the Marines headed for the buildings. Had the two Iraqis been able to read English, they would have known the nickname of Lt. Moore's vehicle, written on the turret: Carnage.

The lieutenant, a hulking former wrestler and graduate of Virginia Military Institute, held the nearest Marines back so he could approach the two men himself. He fumbled for an Arabic greeting and handed them the note asking for large weapons, prompting puzzled looks from the men. At that point, Lt. Moore's radioman, Lance Cpl. Baca, was becoming agitated because he thought he saw another figure moving around in the main compound behind the men. Thirty yards to the left, a Marine with an M16 escorted a parade of other locals out of an adjacent compound -- a couple of men, several women in black headaddresses, one holding a screeching infant and some small children dressed in blue and pink, one crying. A young woman was sobbing loudly, too, prompting an Iraqi man to slap her.

"They're a little nervous," Lt. Moore said.

"I'm a little nervous, sir," Lance Cpl. Baca responded. "I don't know where that other guy went."

The 16 residents were rounded up and held under guard across an irrigation ditch, while Marines searched their homes. They rummaged through dressers, looked under mattresses, tipped over stacks of supplies and rifled through papers. In one, they found a couple of certificates decorated with Mr. Hussein's picture that seemed to indicate to the Marines that the men had done military service. In the elderly man's room, along with several pairs of thick glasses and a medical prescription, Cpl. Derrick Huff, 23, found a British-made, wooden Enfield bolt-action rifle. The corporal has an identical one at home in Bowling Green, Ky., and he figured this one was at least 50 years old. Nearby were some aging leather ammunition belts and about 100 rounds of ammunition.

The corporal also found a plastic bag packed with soap, a flashlight and more ammunition. He was suspicious: "This is like a camping trip," Cpl. Huff told Lt. Moore. "This is ready to go."

The translator was long gone, so the lieutenant called company headquarters for instructions. The intelligence teams have said that many farmers own guns for hunting, and that it's not unusual for Iraqi men to keep certificates to show they've served their time in the military. But Lt. Moore didn't like the idea of leaving behind any weapon that could be turned on his men. "It's not going to break my heart if a farmer loses his rifle and 100 rounds of ammo," he said.

The lieutenant brought the middle-age man in from the field and showed him the rifle, ammunition and military certificates. Using the picture cards, the man indicated that he used the rifle to hunt.

Lt. Moore hoisted up the Enfield and said in English: "Don't you point this at us." The man seemed to catch on and laughed off the idea of shooting Marines. Lt. Moore decided to leave the gun and everything else behind. "Try to tidy it up so they don't hate our guts," he instructed his men, as they went through a few final stacks of rugs and pillows in the main bedroom.

As they left, their six-hour mission complete, many of the Marines were pensive.

Lt. Moore said he couldn't shake the filmed images he has seen of U.S. soldiers raiding villages in Vietnam, looking for Viet Cong guerrillas. The enlisted Marines wondered how it would feel to have foreign soldiers, however polite and well-intentioned, raid their own homes.

"I sort of feel like a jerk," said Lance Cpl. Jeremiah McDonnell, 22, a team leader from Chicago.

The following morning, as they awaited their next mission, Lt. Moore's men found out that another Marine company had searched the same farm the day before they did.

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## Craving Nicotine, Skittles Deep Inside Iraq

By Michael M. Phillips

*Patrol Base Two, Central Iraq*

THE WAR IS into its second week. American supply lines are stretched thin. And the price of cigarettes is going through the roof.

On an isolated dirt citadel here in the middle of Iraq, Marines who smoke cigarettes or use snuff are getting desperate. Parked at one of many temporary stopping points along the main military supply route, the five dozen men of second platoon of Lima Company are running dangerously low on tobacco, and soon, they say, on razors, shaving cream, soap and hand-sanitizer.

Even food is in short supply, sometimes limited to two meals a day. The grunts have been told they won't get any letters or resupply packages from home until they are in Baghdad.

Marines who still have Kools or Skoal in their assault packs aren't in a giving mood. This week, a pack of generic cigarettes was fetching up to \$50, and a can of Copenhagen as much as \$40. "It's like crack out here," says smoker Lance Cpl. Bart Kirchner, a 20-year-old Chicagoan and driver of an amphibious assault vehicle.

"Crack would be cheaper," counters snuff fan Cpl. Brandon Briggs, 22, from Wooster, Ohio, the vehicle's crew chief.

The second platoon arrived in Kuwait in late January. At their main camp, they had limited access to a small post-exchange shop. But two weeks ago, they headed to the border and crossed into Iraq shortly afterward. Now, signs of the desperation fueling the tobacco-market bubble are everywhere. The other day, a single cigarette fell into the hinge crack of the tail ramp on an armored assault vehicle. When the vehicle moved two hours later, a Marine was waiting to snatch it up.

The Marine Corps officially frowns upon such predatory pricing. Before the Marines even arrived in Iraq, Sgt. Maj. Rick Lamelin lectured the entire 1,200-man Third Battalion, Seventh Marines, about the evils of profiteering off their comrades. But the men are far from anywhere now, and willing buyers are finding willing sellers.

Aware of the risk of punishment, the sellers uniformly asked that their names not be published. "I don't consider it exploiting," one said. "Exploiting is nasty. I consider it supply and demand." They have to be careful not to exhaust their own market. "People are going to start running out of money," says Cpl. Chris Gibson, 22, from Simi Valley, Calif., bumming a free cigarette from the platoon corpsman, Navy Hospitalman Charles Smith, 24, from Houston. "They'll be selling them by the drag soon."

It's not entirely a cash economy. Food, candy and sundries are the currency of daily life for infantrymen. The patrol base is constantly abuzz with the sound of barter. Cpl. Clarence Baysinger, 22, from Fort Wayne, Ind., gladly parted with a GameBoy set that cost him \$60 in Kuwait, in exchange for two packs of Kools.

Barter has the virtue of being more acceptable to the Marines hierarchy. Doc Smith (all corpsmen are called "Doc" even though they aren't doctors) refuses on principle to sell his remaining cigarettes. But he traded one for instant coffee and cocoa mix to make his own mocha.

Much of the swapping involves the snacks and dishes that come in military rations, a.k.a. Meals Ready-to-Eat. Chocolate dairy shake powder -- just add water -- is a hot item. So is beef jerky, part of the beef-heavy grilled-beefsteak meal. Most Marines like M&Ms. Even the moist towelettes have a value.

"I'll give you 10 bags of Skittles for one cigarette," Lance Cpl. Ryan Rose, 20, of Baltimore, offers Lance Cpl. Kirchner. "I need a cigarette now." They cut a deal, although a day later Lance Cpl. Rose still hadn't come across enough MREs containing Skittles to pay off.

Sometimes the price is set in open-air auctions. Late one afternoon, platoon leader Second Lt. Isaac Moore, a 26-year-old from Wasilla, Alaska, held up a vacuum-packed pouch and announced, "Gentlemen, I have spiced pound cake."

The shouted bids rolled in instantly:

"Beef jerky!" "Skittles!" "Fruit and grain cereal bar!" "AT-4 bazooka!"

In the end, the lieutenant agreed to swap his dessert for an additional main course -- chicken with salsa.

Users of snuff -- or "dip" -- have turned to recycling. Lance Cpl. Jeremy Rogers, a 22-year-old grenadier from Coon Rapids, Minn., worked over the same can of Copenhagen for five days. He'd take out a wad, suck on it for half an hour or 45 minutes, put it back in the can and shake it up. If necessary, he'd add a little water to moisten it. Then he'd put it back between his lip and gum. "It kind of feels like you're getting nicotine still," explains Lance Cpl. Rogers, who also smokes when he can get cigarettes. "You are not as cranky. It calms you down."

He finally finds someone willing to sell him a can of Skoal snuff for \$26.05 -- all of his remaining cash. He expected the purchase would last him another week or so before he'd have to start re-dipping again.

Sgt. Timothy Wolkow, a 26-year-old squad leader from Huntington Beach, Calif., secured a pack of Newports for \$30 -- 50% more than it might have cost him just a few days earlier. One lance corporal spent 10 minutes haggling before paying the asking price of \$30 for a pack of Kools. "I usually only smoke when I'm upset," he says. He smoked three before sunset.

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## **Troops Find Little Resistance**

### **Forces South of Baghdad Hardly See Iraq Soldiers; A Warm Welcome in Najaf**

By Dan Morse in Najaf, Iraq, and Michael M. Phillips in Numaniyah, Iraq  
As American forces prepared a final assault on Baghdad, they appeared to have little success searching for Iraq troops south of there, occasionally finding arms caches and discarded uniforms but few live enemies.

The Americans don't know for sure whether the elusive Iraqis are giving up and going home or regrouping to continue rear-guard harassment of supply lines. "I think they blended into the population," said Army Lt. Col. William Hickman, who helped command a search operation yesterday in Najaf.

Accompanied by tanks, Col. Hickman's several hundred troops marched through a four-mile swath in the city's northern sector, where paramilitary outfits had been operating. The Americans searched nine schoolhouses and found weapon stockpiles -- one apparently booby-trapped -- in two of them. But they killed just two fighters and captured none. Two civilians were shot, most likely by the Americans. Five U.S. soldiers succumbed to heat exhaustion, but there were no casualties.

At noon, U.S. troops fired smoke bombs into the area as a distraction and moved in. Shots came from inside a building, and the Americans returned fire. In the process, a 20-year-old woman was shot in the shoulder. Family members wheeled the victim on a donkey-drawn cart to an American medic, Staff Sgt. Timothy Frazee, who treated the golf-ball-sized wound and sent her to a field hospital, where she was expected to recover.

On a roof, the Americans spotted a man wearing black pants and a black shirt -- the Fedayeen Saddam's uniform. The man was shot and killed trying to flee, Col. Hickman said. Americans fired at someone else shooting from another building, but they missed, so they killed him with a rocket-propelled grenade. A man in a red pickup truck shot at U.S. soldiers with an AK-47, but got away.

Many townspeople greeted the Americans warmly in Najaf, a holy city for Muslim Shiites long oppressed by Saddam Hussein's regime. Elsewhere in the city, Iraqi forces fired on U.S. troops from inside a revered Shiite Muslim shrine, American officials said.

In Numaniyah on the Tigris River, loud speakers atop a Humvee announced the Marines' arrival: "Attention! Attention! Attention!" the recorded voice said in Arabic. "We are here to liberate the Iraqi people. Our coalition will not leave until Saddam and his militias are gone. We are not going to leave until it's safe."

The Marines figured there were at least 400 militants there, but American troops who earlier had taken a key nearby Tigris bridge met little resistance, and the Republican Guard protecting nearby Al Kut was soundly routed. Numaniyah residents said Republican Guard troops had reinforced regular army troops there in recent days, but most fled before the Americans came. On the road into town, there was a handful of Iraqi dead, a smattering of abandoned weapons, some discarded uniforms and an empty military barracks.

Capt. George Schreffler's company was ordered to secure Numaniyah after the bridge was taken. In Humvees, tanks and armored assault vehicles, the Marines formed a blockade on the outskirts to keep militants from escaping. On orders from Second Lt. Isaac Moore, troops emerged from assault vehicles and dropped to their stomachs. Then they formed a circle around the rear of the vehicle and -- after some confusion -- gelled into a line facing across a mud-caked field. Attack helicopters circled above.

Though the recording advised civilians to stay inside, locals poured out of their houses to watch. A bus dropped off a few passengers. "Should I leave my house or stay?" asked a 52-year-old laborer who identified himself as Majid. He is Shia, a Muslim sect oppressed by Mr. Hussein's regime.

Lt. Moore's platoon was ordered to destroy an abandoned anti-aircraft truck parked alongside the wall of a cannery. "We've got five minutes left of Cobra cover," he yelled to his men as they passed a row of houses on the way to the truck. "Gentlemen -- keep your eyes peeled now."

The troops searched several homes for snipers, but found none. At one, the Marines repeatedly told a couple to stay inside, but the pair kept opening the door to give thumbs-up signs. As they left another, a woman fruitlessly beseeched them to repair a gate they had kicked down.

In the field was an Iveco truck with twin anti-aircraft cannons mounted in the rear, a long ammunition belt nearby. Lt. Paul Gillikin collected enemy documents from inside. Cpl. Luigi Fioravanti placed explosives around the cannons. After making sure no civilians were within 200 yards, he lit the fuse and ran. Ninety seconds later, a thunderous explosion engulfed the vehicle in orange flames.

"God, I love that bang," the corporal said. "It's awesome."

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### **U.S. Armed Forces Advance Quickly Toward Baghdad**

*Compiled by Matt Murray with contributions from Christopher Cooper in Doha, Qatar, Michael M. Phillips in Numaniyah, Iraq, and Helene Cooper near Karbala, Iraq*

U.S. forces were racing toward Baghdad from two directions last night after meeting less resistance than expected in major ground attacks on Republican Guard divisions.

But excitement over the rapid advances was tempered by concerns that some Republican Guard troops might be merely repositioning themselves to draw U.S. soldiers into more dangerous urban guerrilla fighting, as Iraqi soldiers have in Basra and across the south.

A reminder of the continuing danger came last night when a U.S. Army Blackhawk helicopter was brought down by small-arms fire near Karbala, southwest of Baghdad. The Pentagon initially reported seven soldiers on board were killed and the other four were rescued, but U.S. Central Command headquarters in Qatar said six were believed aboard, and it couldn't confirm casualty figures. It was the second helicopter to go down in combat since the war started.

The military also was on alert for the use of chemical weapons, which intelligence sources believe might be used once invading forces get within 50 miles of Baghdad, an area the U.S. calls the "red zone."

The U.S. Army's Third Infantry drew within 20 miles of the capital after seizing a key Euphrates River bridge near Karbala, southwest of Baghdad. They encountered elements of the Republican Guard's Medina Division near Karbala, but not the fierce fight they had anticipated. Parts of the Medina Division remained stubbornly located in hard-to-hit areas near religious shrines and ancient ruins, however, and Karbala wasn't occupied by coalition forces -- leaving concerns about more stragglers launching attacks on supply lines.

To the southeast, U.S. Marines swept past the town of Al Kut, hit the Republican Guard's Baghdad Division head-on and routed it, U.S. officials said. Gen. Vince Brooks, speaking at U.S. Central Command in Doha, said a substantial number of the Baghdad Republican Guard division had been killed or captured.

Both divisions, which had been pounded by air strikes for days before the ground advance, were considered "no longer credible forces," said Maj. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, vice director of joint operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a Pentagon briefing.

As they neared the capital, it was unclear how far U.S. forces intended to continue, or whether they would stop short to await supplies or reinforcements. While the U.S. thrusts could permit a pincers movement on Baghdad, military officers said the worry was that Republican Guards could try to ambush U.S. forces in urban areas or even re-form to their rear. Iraqi leaders have said they hoped to lure coalition forces into just such settings. Already, U.S. forces have several times raced past cities like Nasiriyah and Najaf on their march north only to be drawn back into nasty street-by-street combat.

Yesterday in Najaf, American and British forces found themselves in a standoff with Iraqi forces who were regularly firing at them from inside the gold-domed shrine of Ali, one of the holiest sites for Shiite Muslims. Gen. Brooks said coalition forces had chosen not to fire back.

Late yesterday, U.S. officials said Iraqi forces were resisting the American advance in another, previously undisclosed location, as well. American special operations forces were attempting to seize an airfield in Western Iraq near the Syrian border, but had encountered Iraqi forces determined to hold it. U.S. troops have taken two other airfields in that area. Officials aren't sure why Iraqi forces are seeking to hold this one.

With the fight for Baghdad looming, Gen. McChrystal cautioned that the military now threatens "the core of the regime" and is in "for a very difficult fight ahead in Baghdad. We are not expecting to drive into Baghdad suddenly and seize it."

Said Maj. Gen. Peter Walls, Britain's highest ranking soldier in the region: "It wouldn't be surprising to me if some of the behavior we've seen so far is repeated. On the other hand, maybe people are starting to realize the game is up."

On Iraqi television, Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf described the reports of U.S. advances near Baghdad as "illusions."

To Marines crossing the Tigris River at Numaniyah, west of Al Kut, yesterday's advance meant the end of a weeklong hiatus in the drive toward Baghdad. "We've been begging for a mission other than sitting in the desert for a long time," said Capt. George Schreffler, Lima Company's commander.

The push began early in the morning with the Second Tank Battalion and Fifth Marine Regiment driving through the small mud-colored town of Numaniyah. Locals said Republican Guard troops had reinforced regular Iraqi army troops in recent days, but that most of them fled the night before the U.S. attack began.

Along the road into town were a handful of Iraqi dead and a smattering of abandoned anti-aircraft guns, mortars, rifles and discarded uniforms. A military barracks on the outskirts of town that appeared able to house hundreds of Iraqi troops was empty. "Someone either got real messed up here or left in a hurry," said Staff Sgt. Matthew St. Pierre, of Lima Company, Third Battalion, Seventh Marines, which followed the other American troops into the city to secure it.

The seizure of the town represented an effort by U.S. commanders to persuade the Iraqi citizenry that they won't be abandoned and left to the mercies of pro-regime militias. The troops received a generally indifferent welcome, with residents going about their daily business or simply watching from doorways. Many locals apparently left town when Republican Guard forces arrived to avoid the expected fight.

But U.S. commanders were pleasantly surprised by the light resistance they faced. They had feared that pro-Hussein militia and Baath Party militants would greet them with snipers or rocket-propelled grenades.

Once across the Tigris, though, Marines were ordered to don their rubber protective boots, adding to the chem-bio warfare suits they have been wearing since entering Iraq two weeks ago. Putting on the boots in the second stage of the four-step process for protecting troops against such an attack: suit, then boots, then mask and hood and then gloves.

Marine helicopter pilots supporting the attack near Al Kut were also surprised by the limited resistance.

"We had a lot of aircraft that weren't being used in the early morning," said the commanding officer of a light-attack helicopter squadron. "There were a lot less people there than . . . down south last week."

The regiment they assisted on the ground faced only small-arms fire, according to the commanding officer, though helicopter pilots and crews could see anti-aircraft firing in the distance. The squadron operated mostly over the town of Muwaffaqiyah. The commanding officer said that town was nearly empty. As the day wore on and the Marine presence in the town of 20 square blocks or so was established, inhabitants began returning. "They were all walking back in," the commanding officer said.

*Nicholas Kulish with the U.S. Marines in Iraq and David Rogers in Washington contributed to this article.*

## **U.S. Troops Meet Friendlier Faces in Iraq**

### **Residents of Two Towns Lead American Soldiers To Huge Weapons Caches**

By Michael M. Phillips in Numaniyah, Nicholas Kulish at a Marine air base 30 miles from the Iraq border and Dan Morse in Najaf

It could have been a tragedy: American soldiers marching down a neighborhood street in Al Najaf yesterday saw a car approaching. They leveled rifles at the startled driver, who promptly slammed the vehicle into reverse.

A crowd laughed uproariously at the spectacle -- just a day after Americans killed two suspected paramilitary members and wounded two civilians in the same neighborhood.

"Today, they aren't scared of us," said Capt. John Peters of the Army's 101st Airborne Division. "We didn't fire any shots."

Day by day, American troops are finding towns south of Baghdad friendlier and friendlier. Initial annoyance at the invaders' heavy-handed tactics and lingering fear of Saddam Hussein loyalists appear to be giving way to warmer relations and tangible dividends: Residents in two key locales yesterday pointed Americans to huge weapons caches.

The weapons discoveries seemed to signal that the Iraqis had decided it was fruitless to fight or to try to move armaments north for the expected battle for Baghdad. Americans promptly destroyed the weapons, minimizing threats posed by fighters hiding in civilian garb among noncombatants. Though until now the search for soldiers and paramilitary irregulars in central Iraq has proceeded with little apparent success, Marines in Numaniyah early today began rounding up Baath Party loyalists, apparently working from information provided by locals.

In the northern end of Al Najaf, a Euphrates River city of 550,000 residents, citizens lined the streets as 101st Airborne soldiers marched and drove by. There was a smile on the face of almost every child. Most kids and many adults waved friendly greetings. The constant refrain heard by the soldiers was one of the few English words most people here know: "Good." Some joked with soldiers, at one point teaching a few how to say, "get back" in Arabic.

The locals helped the Americans locate two stockpiles of heavy weapons stored in dusty schoolhouses that appeared not to have been used for teaching recently. The armaments included 50 hand grenades, 43 rocket-propelled grenades, 100 mortar rounds and 17 launching systems. Next to each stockpile was fresh bread or cheese, suggesting a recent departure. The Americans said they also found documents that included information about Baath Party spies working in the area.

In one classroom, soldiers discovered several small containers of chemicals and immediately began speculating excitedly that they had found a chemical-weapons stash. "All right guys, don't get carried away," said Capt. Paul Stanton, pointing to nearby Bunsen burners. It likely was a science classroom where harmless chemical reactions were studied.

The weapons probably belonged to paramilitary forces who had been bedeviling nearby U.S. supply routes, Capt. Peters said. Soldiers blew the weapons up, causing some alarm. "Not the school -- it's for children," an Iraqi man told the American troops after witnessing an explosion 10 yards from the building.

The schoolhouse wasn't damaged by that blast, but the soldiers earlier had used explosives to blow open the front door. The troops reassured the citizens that they were only after weapons and didn't intend to harm the school. In fact, soldiers bedded down in two schools last night, posting guards on the roofs.

Citizens said the paramilitary soldiers who had been operating in the area had fled into the countryside or blended into the populace. "They are spread all over the different neighborhoods," said Mohammed Abdul Kadim, 39 years old, speaking through a translator. "They wore uniforms before, now they don't."

Mr. Kadim welcomed the American invaders. He said he had been tortured for supporting the U.S. during the first Gulf War, and he displayed scars on his back that he asserted were inflicted by whip-wielding regime officials. He said his tormenters also raped his wife as he watched.

In the crucial Tigris River crossing town of An Numaniyah, Marines found several large weapons stashes, thanks to information from some of its 75,000 or so residents, who opened up considerably during their second day under American occupation.

The Marines filled several trucks with the weapons, which included rocket-propelled grenades and launchers, antitank weapons and various automatic and semiautomatic rifles. Troops also loaded weapons onto an Iraqi flatbed military truck, which was then towed, flat tire and all, by an armored bulldozer to a weapons-destruction site.

The weapons were found during a series of raids on schools and private homes. "They are civilian places, so the army thought they wouldn't be hit by air strikes," Mohammed, 30, told the Americans. He asked that his family name not be published.

Marines from Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, also broke into the local police station and seized an armory, including mortars. Military civil-affairs troops raided the mayor's house, but found nobody home and little of intelligence value.

The Marines faced almost no opposition entering An Numaniyah on Wednesday. Regular Iraqi Army soldiers abandoned their positions here before the Americans arrived and paramilitaries followed suit.

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### **Marines Raiding Hussein Palace Make an Incongruous Discovery**

By Michael M. Phillips

SALMAN PAK, Iraq -- In an early-morning raid on one of Saddam Hussein's palaces -- the facilities that allegedly housed torture chambers and laboratories for chemical and biological weapons -- the strangest thing the Marines found was a child's toy.

At first, in the darkness of the palace gardens, the purpose of the 12-foot structure was hard to make out. Only through the green glow of night-vision goggles did it come into focus: The Marines of Lima Company, Third Battalion, Seventh Regiment had liberated a small Ferris wheel.

The U.S. considers Salman Pak, less than 20 miles southeast of Baghdad, to have been a hotbed of pro-regime sentiment. The area is dotted with Republican Guard facilities, Baath Party offices and what the U.S. describes as a terrorist-training camp, complete with the fuselage of a jetliner, three train cars and other suspicious equipment.

So the Third Battalion was assigned two tasks. Infantrymen from India Company would team up with a company from the First Tank Battalion to lead the attack on the headquarters of II Corps of the Republican Guard, along with the alleged terrorist-training facility nearby.

Afterward, the tanks would join Lima Company to raid Mr. Hussein's palace on the banks of the Tigris River, before searching for regime supporters in the city of Salman Pak itself.

Once the facilities were secure, special-operations troops and anonymous government agents -- presumably from the Central Intelligence Agency -- would comb them for critical documents.

The military had received reports that 1,000 to 3,000 Fedayeen fighters and Republican Guard troops were in the area. The Marines, however, were more inclined to believe that 600 to 700 Iraqi troops remained. "It's going to be a hell of a fight, gents," Lt. Col. Michael Belcher, the battalion commander, warned his officer hours before the attack. "You pretty much search and destroy until I pull back the chain."

A half-hour artillery barrage began at 9:30 p.m. Saturday, followed by an hour of air attacks and, for good measure, a storm of mortars.

"Everybody in that place is considered hostile," Cpl. James Lis, a squad leader in Second Platoon, warned his men in a quick briefing as they headed toward the palace gate in their tracked amphibious-assault vehicle.

As the Marines lined up along the 10-foot compound wall, rifles at the ready, a giant Abrams tank backed through the filigreed-metal gate, and crashed into what appeared to be a guard building, wedging itself at an awkward angle under the steel beams of the roof. It took the crew 15 minutes to jerk it free.

The first stop was what appeared to be a guest house, with a large red oriental rug in the living room and a portrait of Mr. Hussein on the wall by the television. The lounge chairs, as well as the dining room set, were covered in sheets.

The Marines started to move on, checking another out-building. "Don't touch anything, because the special-forces guys are right behind us," Lt. Isaac Moore warned his men.

There was a formal garden with a view of the Tigris and a tall white outdoor fireplace and chimney. A circle of roses marked the center of a grassy rectangle. The green-metal, chain-driven Ferris wheel stood at the edge of the lawn, silhouetted against the dim sky.

At the main residence, a modest one-floor structure with green trim and bars on the door and windows, special-ops troops quickly placed charges on the door, which exploded in a series of yellow flashes and loud bangs. They left the Marines outside and searched the house, with its four bedrooms and faded blue-gray carpet. Mr. Hussein's room had a single bed, with a white headboard sporting a clamshell motif. In the kitchen, red linoleum tile covered the floor and plastic covered the gold-rimmed white china and simple flatware.

## **Signs of Chemical-Weapon Disposal Found**

### **Marines Report Discovery Of Mustard-Gas Agents, Cyanide in Euphrates River**

By John J. Fialka

WASHINGTON -- U.S. forces haven't turned up caches of chemical or biological weapons as they have overrun more suspected weapons-making facilities in the drive toward Baghdad. But they say they are finding evidence that Iraqis have destroyed or disposed of them.

Marines raiding a Baath Party headquarters yesterday in Salman Pak, which United Nations inspectors said in 1997 was the scene of experiments with biological weapons, including anthrax, found what an interpreter described as a manual on how to fool U.N. inspectors. Friday, a Marine unit drawing drinking water from the Euphrates River near Nasiriyah said it found concentrations of cyanide and mustard-gas agents in the water, apparently dumped there by Iraqi forces that formerly held the city 200 miles south of the capital.

According to U.S. officials familiar with the search, there are at least three teams of experts with some mobile lab equipment already in the battlefield looking at suspected sites -- but they don't expect to find anything there. The teams include an Army-led task force of specialists, including some from U.S. Department of Energy laboratories; a separate Army Special Forces unit; and a unit headed by the CIA.

More experts, including technicians skilled in how to safely destroy these weapons, will head toward the sites once the shooting stops. But those are described as starting points for a search for what happened to anything cleared out to avoid U.N. inspections. Weapons experts and U.S. officials said the effort will be broader than the U.N. inspections that focused on potential production sites.

Once the Hussein regime is defeated, scientists and technicians who worked there might be able to point to other, unsuspected hiding places, U.S. officials say. Another source of information will be former members of Mr. Hussein's Special Security Organization, which moved and protected weapons-related material.

David Kay, a former U.N. weapons inspector who is closely following the search, estimates there are about "400 priority sites." Some of them have never been inspected, he said, because the U.S. worried that disclosing them to U.N. inspectors might also disclose intelligence sources and methods. "My guess is there are about 3,000 to 5,000 people across all the weapons programs that we want to talk to," he said, adding that "this time the interviews won't be optional." He thinks the U.S. will offer rewards for cooperation, including amnesty or reduced sentences for potential war-crimes charges, to scientists who can point to hidden caches of weapons, documents or production facilities in the California-size country.

Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks, spokesman for the U.S. Central Command, said "we certainly anticipate that there have been deliberate efforts to bury, hide, move or disperse" evidence of weapons of mass destruction. Once the fighting subsides, he said, U.S. specialists will seek Iraqi scientists, technicians and others to aid them in the search. He and other officials didn't have any comment on the finds yesterday and Friday, pending further investigation. Producing credible evidence of Iraq's clandestine weapons program is important for the U.S. because President Bush made them a major premise for the war on Iraq.

The most urgent part of the probe, Mr. Kay said, will be to find any weapons before they can be transferred to outside terrorist groups or groups inside Iraq who might try to use them to seek power in the future. Mr. Kay, a senior analyst for the Potomac Institute, a Washington research group, led some of the earliest U.N. inspections after the 1991 Gulf War.

U.S. units have overrun large caches of Iraqi artillery shells and other weapons. They may already have possession of shells loaded with chemicals or biological agents and don't know it, he said. "They won't be able to identify them until they take time to go through them," because Iraq's military often doesn't designate them with special markings.

Dr. Richard Spertzel, a U.S. microbiologist who helped uncover Iraq's biological-weapons program in 1995, said that after the Gulf War Iraqi technicians dug pits, threw in biological and chemical warheads, and covered them with tarpaulins and sand. "If they've done the same thing it, could take months to find them. "

Ken Alibek, a microbiologist who was formerly deputy chief of the Soviet Union's biological-weapons program, noted that Iraqi records could show what countries may have aided weapons programs. "The U.S. must protect this material from being destroyed," he said.

*Michael Phillips contributed to this article.*

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**In An Numaniyah,  
A Warm Welcome  
For U.S. Cools Fast**

**Mob Ignited by Imam's Arrest  
Shows Delicate Balance  
In Bid for Local Sympathy**

By Michael M. Phillips

AN NUMANIYAH, Iraq -- In an episode that lasted just two hours and 15 minutes, the U.S. nearly ruined a crucial opportunity to win over Iraq's Shiite Muslims. Steered by a tip from a Saddam Hussein loyalist, Marines raided the home of a popular Shiite cleric in this midsize city on the Tigris River. The action briefly ignited a mass demonstration and threats of suicide attacks.

The confrontation carries a sobering message for American troops confidently rolling into Baghdad. Iraqi citizens greet them a bit more warmly each day. But potential disasters remain just one misunderstanding away. The thin line between welcome liberator and hated invader is easy to stumble across.

When the Marines arrived last Wednesday in this predominantly Shiite city of less than 100,000 residents, the Americans seemed to have stayed on the right side of the line. They were counting on Shiites -- the nation's majority, long-oppressed by Mr. Hussein's Sunni-dominated Baath Party -- to welcome them. The Iraqis did at first, and the Americans quickly took control of An Numaniya. Young men and boys flocked to the troops, selling as souvenirs money bearing Mr. Hussein's portrait. Locals reported where the army had hidden weapons and where to find the few Baath Party officials who hadn't fled.

The U.S. handling of Shiites has been complicated. On Thursday, in the city of Najaf west of An Numaniya, U.S. soldiers seeking to talk with a Shiite cleric were forced to retreat when confronted by an angry mob whose members had been told, falsely, that the invaders were coming to arrest the religious leader.

The seeds of a similar confrontation were planted in An Numaniya when Marines Thursday night raided four houses, capturing 14 Baath officials. One detainee told the troops where they could find Said Habib, a 60-year-old Shiite imam known for television appearances backing the regime and for his friendship with one of Mr. Hussein's sons. Mr. Habib, the informant said, was protected by 40 armed guards.

The next day, just before 9 a.m., troops from Lima Company, of the Third Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment, surrounded Mr. Habib's compound. An Army psychological-operations Humvee, a large rotating speaker system on top, blared warnings: Residents had five minutes to surrender. Then four. Three. Two. One.

At zero, a tracked amphibious-assault vehicle, the words "Monster Inc." painted on the turret, plowed through the compound's brick wall. Marines burst through the hole into a lush garden. They broke into the house through the kitchen, where someone had been preparing bread and eggs on a floor mat. A soiled Teddy bear sat in a small purple chair. A phone rang unanswered.

Two women in black robes knelt at gunpoint. The black-covered lump next to them turned out to be a small girl. She sobbed, "Mama."

About 20 Iraqi men left through a rear door -- into the waiting arms of Marines. The troops picked 11, including a white-bearded imam in a black turban and brown robes. "Are you Said Habib?" asked Sgt. Tim Stiffey, an Army psy-ops specialist working with the Marines. "I am Said Habib," the man answered.

The Marines loaded the prisoners into their vehicles. Less than 10 minutes after the garden wall was breached, the convoy was rumbling back to the U.S. staging point at the city's dilapidated soccer stadium. The troops screamed "Shut up!" in English or phrase-book Arabic at any prisoner who spoke.

At the field, the Marines lined up the prisoners by the goalpost, binding each man's wrists behind his back and sticking green duct tape across his mouth.

The Americans were exultant. They felt they had found some of the bad guys who had largely eluded them. Then they heard that a crowd of Iraqis was forming at the main gate. First Lt. Paul Gillikin, Lima Company's executive officer, headed across the field to take control.

Outside the gate, dozens of men and boys sat yelling and gesticulating angrily. One held a photo of Mr. Habib, which many followers keep in their homes. Another, Eskander Mohammed Abbas, a graduate student, spoke in English through the flimsy metal gate. "All of us are against Saddam Hussein." If Mr. Habib spoke in favor of the regime, Mr. Abbas added, it was because refusal invited execution. He begged to see the imam so he could reassure the crowd that he was unharmed.

"When the crowd goes home, I'll let you in alone to see him," 25-year-old Lt. Gillikin told Mr. Abbas. The crowd swelled into the hundreds. People flowed in from side streets. More photos appeared, some taken when Mr. Habib was a young man.

The crowd of Marines grew, too. Troops spread out along the stadium entrance, perched in trees and atop armored vehicles. When something caught their eye -- a man with his hands in his pockets, a duffel bag -- they aimed their guns into the crowd.

At least one of the Marines had been in Somalia, and some began to murmur among themselves about the bloody 1993 street fighting in Mogadishu, when the city turned on American troops. The protesters began to chant, "Allah pray for the prophet Muhammad and his family."

A new crowd spokesman emerged, a young man who gave only the name Hayder, in tight blue jeans and a T-shirt. The Marines allowed him to pass through the gate and searched him for weapons.

"This city was so safe and sound for the last few days," Hayder said in lightly accented English. "People thought you'd come and change the ways of the old regime. Now you're doing the same things." There was talk in the crowd, Hayder warned, of people "sacrificing themselves" to free Mr. Habib.

A Marine intelligence team arrived with its civilian translator, Nasir Albardi, a 23-year-old Iraqi-American cook from Dearborn, Mich. Mr. Albardi's family left Iraq after the Gulf War. Coincidentally, he is a Shiite follower of Mr. Habib, so he knew of the imam's stature.

The intelligence team, who asked that their names not be published, had the Marines pull the tape off the imam's wrists and mouth. They offered water. He refused indignantly. They suspected the arrest had been a mistake -- at least politically. They needed Mr. Habib's help to make peace with the populace. The situation could soon get violent, one intelligence Marine told the imam. Would he speak to the crowd to calm things down?

"Are you going to let me go?" Mr. Habib responded through Mr. Albardi. The chant from the crowd was crescendoing, and he turned his head sharply to look. The intel team told Mr. Habib one of his neighbors -- a Baath Party member -- had said he was a regime supporter. The imam pulled from his robe a plastic wrap containing a bundle of frayed gray pages. "I swear on the Koran this is wrong," he said, kissing the book, touching it to his forehead and kissing it again.

Word came via radio that Capt. George Schreffler, the Lima Company commander, wanted the imam released. The intel team tried to make the best of a bad situation. "We believe the Baath Party is trying to turn us against you, and turn your people against us," one told Mr. Habib.

The Marines escorted Mr. Habib to the gate. He refused to leave until all his men were released, tape marks still on their faces. Mr. Habib took the microphone from the psy-ops Humvee. He thanked the crowd and asked them to calm down. "These people are here to get rid of Saddam Hussein," he said, to the Marines' relief. "They made a mistake, and I have not been harmed."

The crowd surged toward the gate, which the Marines opened just enough to let out the imam and the other prisoners.

At 11:15 a.m., Mr. Habib's followers lifted him to their shoulders and paraded him down the street. One man briefly stayed behind, taking an Iraqi bill out of his pocket and spitting on Saddam Hussein's portrait. He ripped the currency, crumpled the remains and threw them between the bars to the feet of the Marines.

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### **Raid of Iraqi Prison Seeks POWs, But Finds Only Signs of Fast Exit**

By Michael M. Phillips

BAGHDAD -- Marines raided a prison in search of American prisoners of war but found only bloodied uniforms from at least six U.S. troops.

The Marines concluded from evidence on the scene that the facility's guards and perhaps their captives had departed in recent days -- if not hours.

In a hastily arranged raid, hundreds of Marines descended on the military complex on the southeast edge of the capital at about 1 a.m. today local time. Most secured the outside, while 200 troops from Lima Company -- a First Division unit that is part of the Third Battalion, Seventh Regiment -- searched the inside.

They were sent there based on intelligence indicating that American troops were being held there. Though the Marines had encountered occasional pot-shot resistance on the way to the complex, they walked into it unimpeded because it was abandoned.

The uniforms were found inside a 10-foot-by-10-foot cell, its heavy metal door ajar. The clothing consisted of six desert-colored camouflage fatigue pants and jackets from two chemical-protection suits, one with what appeared to be a blood-crusted bullet hole in the arm. One of the jackets was marked with a date indicating it had been taken out of its factory-sealed package on March 11.

Two of the pants had duct-tape labels on the inside bearing their owners' names and ranks, both peculiar to the Army, leading their would-be rescuers to believe at least two of the troops were Army soldiers. Military-intelligence officials took the clothing for forensic analysis. There also were some blankets in the cell, but no other personal effects. The Marines searched for any markings the troops might have left on the walls as clues.

The large, spare multicellblock complex, topped with corrugated metal roofs, included a quadrangle of rows of cells surrounding a courtyard. The American uniforms were found in the last cell in one row. The complex's cell doors each had sliding latches for padlocks and a small circular hole covered by a square hatch at face level.

The Marines blasted some of the complex's buildings open with explosives, and almost all the other cells appeared to have been unoccupied for some time. But the guard barracks appeared to have been fairly recently abandoned, the Marines concluded, because they weren't dusty, and relatively clean helmets, uniforms and blankets were strewn about.

The cells were 18-feet high, with a singled barred window about three feet below the ceiling. They were painted white. The cellblock halls were gray on the bottom and white on the top and decorated with red-stenciled flowers.

In the courtyard outside the facility, several vials of antibiotics were scattered about, along with a single syringe. The exterior walls were 15 feet high and topped with concertina wire, a guard tower on each corner. Outside, there was an image of Saddam Hussein on a billboard. A pair of lion statues flanked the entranceway.

The Marines were dismayed, depressed and angry as they prepared to leave the facility.

**U.S., British Forces Roll  
Into Baghdad and Basra**

**Key Sites in Iraqi Capital  
Are Taken, but Resistance  
Is Fierce in Some Pockets**

*Compiled by Matt Murray with contributions from Christopher Cooper in Doha, Qatar; Michael Schroeder in Washington, Dan Morse in Karbala, Iraq, and Michael M. Phillips outside Baghdad*

Dozens of U.S. tanks and armored vehicles thundered into central Baghdad, seizing a presidential palace and attacking other important sites, while British troops moved closer to taking full control of Iraq's second-largest city, and the U.S. launched another attempt to kill Saddam Hussein and his sons.

Acting on an intelligence tip that U.S. officials considered reliable, U.S. aircraft last night dropped four bunker-busting bombs on a building in Mansour, a residential district of Baghdad, a senior American official said last night. U.S. intelligence agencies had indications the building was the site of a meeting of senior Iraq intelligence officials and possibly the Iraqi leader and his sons, Uday and Qusay. But officials also said they had no way to know whether Mr. Hussein was in the building or whether he survived the attack.

For the first time since the war began, U.S. soldiers from the Army's Third Infantry Division's Second Brigade said they would spend the night inside Baghdad city limits, part of a coordinated show of force designed to persuade Mr. Hussein's loyalists to surrender.

Coalition forces continued to encounter pockets of fierce resistance across the country. In southern Baghdad, Iraqi rockets struck a U.S. tactical-operations center of the Third Infantry's Second Brigade, killing two soldiers and two European journalists and wounding at least 15 others.

Elsewhere on the capital city's southern outskirts, two U.S. Marines were reported killed and two others injured when an artillery shell struck their vehicle at a bridge over a canal in a possible friendly-fire incident. In all, the U.S. has confirmed 85 deaths and 150 injuries among its forces, said Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Eight journalists covering the war have died.

In Basra, the scene of intense fighting for two weeks, the British said they controlled three-fourths of the city, but face house-by-house fighting in the oldest areas, where the last paramilitary fighters retreated.

British soldiers said they believed they had killed Ali Hassan al-Majid, a cousin and close ally of Mr. Hussein's who commands the southern region, in a precision bombing of his house during the weekend. Mr. Majid is known as "Chemical Ali" because he oversaw poison-gas attacks on Kurdish villages in 1988. Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks, a spokesman at Central Command in Doha, Qatar, said early in the day that he couldn't confirm the death. But later U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld hinted at it, saying, "We believe the reign of 'Chemical Ali' has come to an end."

Coalition troops also reported possible evidence of chemical weapons at several sites. Iraq's alleged possession of chemical weapons and other banned agents was a prime justification for the U.S.-led war.

Soldiers from the Army's 101st Airborne Division found barrels of suspected nerve agents at what they said was a paramilitary training facility near the city of Hindiyah, about 60 miles south of Baghdad. Some tests showed evidence of nerve agent, though one indicated the substance was a pesticide, a colonel on the scene said.

Separately, soldiers just north of Karbala found a big warehouse near an airfield with more than 500 artillery shells, many with hollow tips, possibly indicating chemical weapons delivery munitions.

Troops carry portable testing devices that can identify potential chemical agents. But confirmation of such a find is more difficult and may involve testing by larger mobile labs and independent experts.

In the north, U.S. forces were shelling parts of Mosul, where special-operations soldiers have been working closely with Kurdish rebels. U.S. and Kurdish fighters took the town of

Dibagah, near the site of a U.S. friendly-fire incident on Sunday that killed 17 Kurdish fighters and a translator. Gen. Brooks said coalition operations were continuing to isolate Iraqi forces around Mosul and had some success in forcing paramilitaries to leave the area.

U.S. officials mixed hopes that the war will soon end with cautious notes. Mr. Rumsfeld, speaking at a Washington news conference, said he wanted Iraqi citizens to know "life without Saddam Hussein is not a distant dream," but added: "There is dangerous and difficult work ahead."

The military's main focus continued to be Baghdad, where the full strength of the Iraqi regime remained unknown. Gen. Brooks said there were parts of Baghdad the coalition hadn't yet entered that were controlled by the Iraqi regime. They include Saddam City, in the northeast part of town, a low-slung slum of roughly two million residents, most of them Shiite Muslims, that has been heavily fortified by Mr. Hussein's loyalists to clamp down on dissent.

Troops north of the city were trying to cut off traffic between Baghdad and Mr. Hussein's hometown of Tikrit, to prevent leaders of the regime from fleeing and defenders from entering Baghdad.

Yesterday's raid, coming on the third day of incursions into Baghdad, involved about 70 tanks and 60 Bradley armored personnel vehicles. Besides taking over Mr. Hussein's palace, troops set up a prisoners-of-war holding pen inside the elaborate compound on the west bank of the Tigris, a winding river that divides the city. Headquarters of the ruling Baath Party nearby was destroyed.

While ignoring some potential tactical targets, such as electricity plants and military airstrips, troops targeted symbolic ones including the al-Rashid Hotel and the Ministry of Information, which is little more than a cratered hulk at this point. In the center of the city, U.S. forces used explosives to destroy two statues of Mr. Hussein.

Along the way they encountered sporadic sniper fire, including from inside the al-Rashid Hotel. U.S. tanks returned fire with their main guns and .50 caliber machine guns, according to military radio reports.

The drive into Baghdad was intended to send a strong signal about the coalition's ability to enter at will, commanders said. The resistance encountered along the way was "worthy of respect," Gen. Brooks said, though he added that Iraqi fighters "may be dying for a regime that does not have a future." He said Iraq's command structure is so badly damaged that there is only a small amount of communication among Saddam's remaining forces.

"What we don't see is an overarching structure that can order action from north to south and east to west, throughout the country," Gen. Brooks said. "Only the coalition has that capability right now. And as each day passes, there's less and less that the regime can do to order action by their forces."

Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf held a news conference atop Baghdad's Palestine Hotel, again denying the city had been invaded, as he has for several days. Sirens could be heard as he spoke. "They are sick in their minds," Mr. Sahaf said. "They say they brought 65 tanks into center of city. I say to you this talk is not true. There is no presence of American infidels in the city of Baghdad, at all."

It isn't clear how many Iraqis have been hurt or killed in Baghdad. The International Committee of the Red Cross said on Sunday that hospitals in the city have stopped counting the number of people treated.

On the city's southeast, thousands of U.S. Marines faced relatively light opposition as they rolled toward the city, but left a trail of charred Iraqi tanks, armored personnel carriers and buildings in their wake. They constituted half of a pincer formed with the Third Infantry Division.

One Marine contingent crossed the Nahr Diyala waterway toward Rashid Airport, a military facility, over a bridge heavily damaged by Iraqi fire but sufficiently sound to hold the slow-moving military convoy.

Once across, Marines attacked a Fedayeen Saddam paramilitary training facility, a military prison, a nuclear-research center and a secret-police detention center. The Americans launched several long artillery barrages and attacked by helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft, dropping at least two 2,000-pound bombs. After nightfall, flare illumination rounds lit the sky. One Marine column was ambushed by a barrage of small-arms fire that pinged harmlessly off their armored vehicles, and responded by attacking up an adjacent hillside.

Looting was rampant in the capital's industrial outskirts south of the bridge. Some civilians hauled booty by hand, while others piled it into vehicles or donkey-pulled carts, one of which was loaded down with computer equipment.

At Baghdad's airport, seized in an all-night battle late last week, members of the 101st Airborne Division fought Iraqis in military uniform in a prolonged overnight battle, and said they believed they had killed at least 100 fighters.

The attacks came after the coalition landed a C-130 transport plane, the first and so far only coalition aircraft to arrive at the airport, on Sunday night. The airport is expected to become a major supply base for American forces.

In Basra, the British said stubborn Iraqi forces appear to be holed up mostly in the old town section of Basra in the southeast. Air Marshal Brian Burridge described the area as a dense development "with a myriad of prying eyes." He said the area would have to be taken house to house but that the end was near. "The Baathist regime is finished in Basra," Air Marshal Burridge said.

Troops everywhere have been warned of possible suicide attacks, including by bombers in ambulances. There were also reports from the field that Iraqis in civilian vehicles, possibly carrying bombs, had attempted to ram coalition tanks.

Elsewhere in the south, Iraqi opposition leader Ahmad Chalabi, who has lobbied to head a transitional government, said he had arrived in Nasiriyah with 700 supporters. U.S. forces have been airlifting members to the area, and Mr. Rumsfeld confirmed that six to 10 U.S.-trained Iraqi-exiles groups were active in the south, some of them in combat.

### **Fate of Hussein Remains Mystery After Bombing**

By Christopher Cooper in Doha, Qatar, Michael Phillips in Baghdad, Dan Morse near Karbala, Iraq, and Matt Murray in New York

With U.S. commanders unlikely to know for days whether a massive bombardment aimed at Saddam Hussein left him dead, impaired or untouched, coalition forces in Baghdad continued targeting the regime in their effort to end the three-week-old war against Iraq.

A day after four satellite-guided, one-ton bombs were dropped on a building in which the Iraqi leader was believed to be meeting, Baghdad continued to be the scene of sporadic firefights. The U.S. launched air and artillery attacks on government buildings, including the Planning Ministry and the Information Ministry. At least two journalists also were killed in U.S. strikes on buildings in the capital city.

Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks in Doha, Qatar, said Iraqi fighters, though fragmented, present a coherent force in parts of the city and the country. Iraqi troop movements involving 20 to 60 vehicles are common, he said.

An estimated 500 Iraqi soldiers came across the Tigris River in buses and trucks in an unsuccessful attempt to overrun U.S. troops at a strategic intersection. U.S. commanders estimated they killed 50 Iraqis in that battle, while two U.S. soldiers were wounded, one seriously, by rooftop snipers. As in other fights inside Baghdad, commanders said many of the Iraqi soldiers fought to the death, suggesting they were loyalists to the regime.

Iraqis firing surface-to-air missiles knocked down an A-10 attack aircraft that was providing close support to troops fighting in Baghdad, the first U.S. aircraft confirmed to be brought down that way in the war. The pilot ejected after the craft was hit and parachuted to safety. Despite the incident, the Pentagon declared the U.S. has air supremacy over all of Iraq.

Late yesterday, officials said a U.S. Air Force F-15E had gone down in hostile territory near Tikrit Sunday night, and its two crewmen were missing. No cause was given.

In central Baghdad, a U.S. tank fired on the Palestine Hotel where many foreign journalists stay, killing two journalists and wounding three others. Gen. Brooks said a tank fired on the hotel after a sniper inside shot at it, though later other officials said a rocket-propelled grenade had been fired from in front of the hotel. A Ukrainian-born Reuters cameraman and a Spanish television cameraman were killed.

In a separate incident, the Arab TV network al-Jazeera said a U.S. plane attacked its office on the banks of the Tigris River, killing a reporter. Abu Dhabi TV said its office also had been hit in an airstrike. Gen. Brooks said the U.S. wasn't targeting journalists. A Pentagon spokeswoman expressed regret for the deaths but reiterated the U.S. has warned civilians that Iraq is dangerous.

Near Karbala, 60 miles south of Baghdad, testing for chemical weapons continued on steel drums found at an Iraqi government compound. A team of scientists was traveling to the area last night to try to verify field readings of chemical weapons. "This is the smoking gun they want," said a colonel with the 101st Airborne division stationed near Karbala.

But a military officer at Doha said other possible caches of weapons of mass destruction reported to have been discovered elsewhere Monday haven't been confirmed by military officials and might not exist. Finding such weapons was a prime justification for the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, but none has been turned up. An antitank unit of the 101st found the steel drums while on an unrelated mission securing a bridge. According to a report one commander said he sent to Gen. Tommy Franks's office, the barrels were found in a bunker, hidden by leaves, and preliminary tests were positive for nerve and blister agents. But more intensive tests are required.

The question of determining Mr. Hussein's fate appeared to be even thornier. U.S. military officials said they hadn't determined whether Mr. Hussein was in the building in Baghdad's upscale Mansour neighborhood that they bombed late Monday, creating a 60-foot crater filled with rubble. But they said the bombing came after they received what they termed a reliable tip that Mr. Hussein, at least one of his sons and other regime leaders were meeting inside.

Officials cautioned that the neighborhood, an upscale area known as a Baathist stronghold, wasn't under U.S. control, complicating any efforts to determine their success. Iraqi workers at the scene said the strike destroyed at least three houses and damaged 20 more.

Rescuers said they had recovered three bodies, including that of a small boy, and estimated the death toll could reach 14.

Gen. Brooks said the U.S. was working to get people to the scene. They would have to sift through the debris to locate any remains, then test them, he said.

To the southeast, U.S. Marines entering the city captured Rashid Airport, a military facility. The First Marine Expeditionary Force had moved into the city from the southeast, breaching the Diyala River, and met scattered resistance, especially when crossing the river, Gen. Brooks said.

Marines faced a growing number of guerrilla-style assaults by Iraqi forces defending the city. Avoiding concentrated formations in open areas where armored units give U.S. forces the upper hand, pro-regime fighters in civilian clothes were attacking the Marines in small numbers, sometimes drawing U.S. troops into firefights as close as 10 feet away.

"It will get worse," predicted Maj. Bill Dunn, who coordinates airstrikes from the battlefield for the Third Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment. "The further into Baghdad we go, the more organized resistance will be."

Maj. Dunn, 37 years old, of Stafford, Va., was among the Marines caught in a 6 a.m. ambush yesterday while traveling in two armored assault vehicles through Baghdad. The unidentified attackers launched rocket-propelled grenades from a highway overpass and from a position aside the road. A machine gun awaited anyone who fled the vehicles. The grenades missed their targets, however.

"It was a good ambush, but their marksmanship was quite poor," said First Lt. Tom O'Neil, 29 years old, of Lawrenceville, N.J., commander of the weapons platoon of the Third Battalion's Lima Company. "They should have killed us."

An hour later, gunmen driving on an elevated highway in some civilian light trucks and a van opened fire on a line of Marines behind a tall wall from 400 yards away. Bullets and rocket-propelled grenades whizzed by the Americans' heads as they maneuvered to return fire. Some U.S. troops took up defensive positions in a nearby school complex that was later found to contain a mosque, a large display of heavy weapons and a supply of clothing to protect against chemical and biological weapons. The Marines sent at least four Iraqi vehicles up in flames.

In the afternoon, Lima Company's second platoon fought a 45-minute gun battle in a large building abandoned halfway through construction. The Marines fought at extremely close quarters with rifles and grenades. At the end of the firefight, eight Iraqis were dead.

One mission for the Marines was searching for American prisoners of war believed to be held in the Baghdad area. Earlier in the day, they found bloodied U.S. camouflage fatigues and U.S. chemical-biological suits in a military prison. But the follow-up sweep of another military and medical facility yielded no new clues. Instead, the Marines found barracks apparently abandoned in a rush; food lay unfinished on plates or floor mats, mold forming on the bread.

They also uncovered large stashes of weapons in various government buildings, including hundreds of AK-47 assault rifles, and destroyed them, as well as 20 or more bodies, presumably those of Iraqis killed in U.S. attacks.

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**As Saddam Hussein's Regime in Iraq Disintegrates,  
Bush Faces Critical Choices Over U.S. Role in World**

**Joyous Iraqis Mob  
Baghdad's Streets  
As Reign Ceases**

**Scattered Fighting Continues  
Amid Rising Civil Unrest;  
An Aid Crisis Is Looming**

**'Game Is Over,' Envoy Says**

By Christopher Cooper in Doha, Qatar, Michael M. Phillips in Baghdad, Dan Morse in Karbala, Iraq, and Matt Murray in New York

Three weeks into the U.S.-led war to dislodge Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi dictator's 24-year reign disintegrated amid a frenzy of joyous celebration and looting in Baghdad, punctuated by gunbattles between invading U.S. troops and his fast-scattering forces.

Television images beamed around the world showed dancing Iraqis welcoming U.S. soldiers, plundering government offices and gleefully destroying statues and posters of Mr. Hussein. With Baghdad falling, neither Mr. Hussein nor any regime leaders, including his two sons Uday and Qusay, appeared in public.

Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations, Mohammed al-Douri, told reporters outside his New York apartment, "The game is over." Asked about Mr. Hussein, Mr. al-Douri said he had no "relationship" with him and no communication with Iraq.

U.S. officials cautioned that the war wasn't over and that coalition forces would be facing fighting elsewhere in Iraq. Still, they were clearly pleased by pictures they had longed to see, and expressed hope that the end of the Hussein government, and four-decade rule of his oppressive Baath Party, was imminent.

"This is a very good day," Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said at a Pentagon news briefing. "Saddam Hussein is now taking his rightful place alongside Hitler, Stalin, Lenin, Ceausescu in the pantheon of failed brutal dictators and the Iraqi people are well on their way to freedom."

The decaying of the regime in Baghdad, a sprawling city of more than 5 million people, punctuated a swift advance of American and British forces, who avoided much-feared street-to-street battles in the capital. The U.S. Army and Marines set out from the Kuwaiti border 21 days ago, facing a much larger Iraqi force. They also faced doubts, including from some inside the Pentagon, that they could bring down the regime as quickly as planners wanted.

Mr. Rumsfeld, while clearly feeling vindicated by the troops' success, cautioned that "difficult and dangerous fighting lies ahead" and reminded Americans that other cities -- especially in the north -- were still being contested. An urgent and immediate task is to bring some civil order to a capital that is riven by violence in the sudden absence of any governmental control.

The defense chief also said that U.S. forces hoped to find the seven American prisoners of war, avoid any possibly booby-trapped oil wells in the north and find any hidden chemical or biological weapons and locate Mr. Hussein if he had survived an American bombing Monday of a building in Baghdad.

With Baghdad's fall, the military's focus already appeared to be shifting 90 miles north to Tikrit, Mr. Hussein's hometown and a tribal stronghold for his loyalists. Many U.S. commanders have long believed the leadership might attempt a final stand there. The U.S. Army's Fourth Infantry Division -- 20,000 strong and just deployed to Kuwait from Killeen, Texas -- is headed to the city of 200,000. Some elements of the First Marine Division now around Baghdad also are expected to eventually move north to dislodge remaining Special Republican Guards, the units closest to Mr. Hussein, and other Iraqi soldiers.

The Air Force already has reduced the number of strike aircraft over Baghdad and directed heavy bombing on Tikrit last night.

Possible battles also loomed in the contested oil city of Mosul, about 220 miles northwest of Baghdad, where U.S. special-operations troops and Kurdish fighters overran a strategic mountaintop that towers over the city and had been a defensive stronghold for loyalists.

U.S. soldiers also moved into the city of Hilla, 60 miles south of the capital -- where they had faced stiff resistance in recent days -- marking the final stage of the campaign to subdue the Shiite-dominated areas south of Baghdad.

"I cannot predict with certainty how quickly this war will be over," Vice President Dick Cheney said in a speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in New Orleans. "I will caution everybody that we still have a lot to do."

Another issue facing officials is continuing tension with Syria, Iraq's western neighbor, which Mr. Rumsfeld has accused of supplying equipment and soldiers to aid the Iraqis. Yesterday, he said "scraps" of U.S. intelligence suggested that Syria was opening its doors as a refuge for senior Baathists. Mr. Rumsfeld said he also was concerned that the chemical and biological weapons that the U.S. has accused Iraq of hiding, a prime justification for the war, might have been shipped out of Iraq, though he said he had no evidence that had happened.

The rapid evaporation of local government in Baghdad amid humanitarian concerns, civil unrest and sporadic sniper fire left U.S. commanders struggling with how to impose some order and restore some services for citizens. "We always have concern when there's any degree of civil disorder," Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks told a briefing at U.S. Central Command in Doha, Qatar.

"We believe this will settle down in due time," he said, "as it's already begun to settle down in Basra." That southern city, the country's second-largest, was captured by British forces over the weekend after a two-week siege, but the coalition continues to see looting, sporadic shootings and other violence there.

For the most part, soldiers in the capital reported only scattered firefights and tank battles, suggesting that some disorganized resistance remains. U.S. Marines and Army units continued to sweep through the capital, seizing and destroying buildings formerly occupied by security forces and other government offices, including the former headquarters of the secret police.

Iraqi citizens did their share, too, ransacking offices, including police stations, the headquarters of the Iraq Olympic Committee and the local outpost of the United Nations. They carried off furniture, documents, computers and other equipment.

Marines and several hundred Iraqis worked together to tear down a massive Soviet-style statue of Mr. Hussein that stood in the middle of a large roundabout ringed with columns in the city's Firdos Square. When the statue finally toppled to earth after a concerted effort, thanks to a U.S. tank tugging chains wrapped around the figure, many cheered as dozens of men raced to kick and dance atop the iconic image. Some beat it with sticks and hurled shoes at its head. A few waved Iraqi and U.S. flags. Later, a group of Iraqis dragged the statue's head through the streets.

Rolling into the heart of Baghdad from the east, U.S. Marines reported being greeted by mobs of people applauding and waving U.S. flags. "Thank you, thank you, Mr. Bush," some shouted. Television repeatedly showed pictures of an elderly man beating a ripped-down poster of Mr. Hussein with his shoe. They were just the pictures that U.S. officials long had maintained would appear after a U.S. invasion.

But Marines also encountered a pitched battle on the grounds of Baghdad University. A supply and logistics unit on the outskirts of the city was surprised by sniper fire, sending Marines scrambling for helmets and flak jackets. A tank unit reported to their superiors that a 15-story building in the city had caught fire.

U.S. soldiers also clashed yesterday evening with at least two squads of Iraqi fighters in western Baghdad. There were no immediate reports of U.S. casualties.

Superiors issued multiple search-and-clear orders, targeting police stations, a bus station, the information ministry and the interior ministry, a site the Marines were warned should be considered very hostile. A team of troops raided the home of Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz on an urgent "exploitation of sensitive material" mission, according to orders issued over military radio.

Marines also were ordered to clear the Palestine and Babylon hotels of any enemy forces, a day after American forces fired on the Palestine in what they said was a response to hostile fire. Two of the many journalists staying at the hotel were killed in the attack, and three more were injured, prompting a torrent of criticism. As images from Baghdad reached other parts of the country, similar celebrations broke out in cities including Irbil and Sulaimaniyeh in the north.

"I saw it with my own eyes. People in Baghdad were dancing in the streets and burning Saddam's pictures and no one was firing at them. That was proof to me that Saddam is over," said Taher Hassan, a 50-year-old shopkeeper in Sulaimaniyah who joined the throng.

Watching the televised efforts to bring down the statue of Mr. Hussein in Baghdad, Halala Osman, 40, who was with her 20-year-old daughter Befrim, said, "We have just been saved. You know what this day means to me? It means never having to be afraid of another chemical attack. It means never having to fear my children's future."

The Grand Mosque in the center of Sulaimaniyah, base of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, broadcast a special prayer reserved for the Muslim holiday Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan.

As Mr. Hussein's regime toppled, humanitarian agencies expressed concern about the situation facing Iraqi civilians. Some parts of the country remain without clean water and power, and hospitals have been filled with wounded while sometimes running short of supplies. U.S. officials have vowed to provide assistance but admit their first priority remains finishing the military action.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said it had temporarily suspended operations in Baghdad because the situation in the city was "chaotic and unpredictable."

Mr. Cheney said U.S. and Iraqi officials will meet Saturday near Nasariyah in southern Iraq to begin planning for an interim Iraqi government. The U.S. and Europe remain at odds over how to administer the country in the immediate future, how large a role the U.N. should play and when and how to turn over the country to a new Iraqi government.

*Farnaz Fassihi in Sulaimaniyah, Iraq, Yochi J. Dreazen at Camp Pennsylvania, Kuwait, and David S. Cloud in Bahrain contributed to this article.*

*April 10, 2003*

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**A Statue Topples  
And Chief Eby Has  
A Case of Deja-Vu**

**Hope, Happiness, Hostility  
In the Ravaged Capital;  
'Are You Done Here?'**

By Michael M. Phillips

BAGHDAD -- As the monumental statue of Saddam Hussein lay broken in the city he once ruled, Chief Warrant Officer Jeff Eby, a 40-year-old Marine from Springfield, Mo., stood watching the scene.

Fourteen years ago, Chief Eby was a sergeant in the Marine security-guard detachment at the U.S. embassy in Berlin, where he was a witness to the toppling of another totalitarian icon: the Berlin Wall.

"It was the same kind of excitement and relief," Chief Eby said. "I was really proud to be there."

What he saw in Firdos Square yesterday captured the tumult of a historic moment that few anticipated would come so soon. Festive Iraqis stomped on the dethroned colossus, sledgehammered its arms and dragged its head through the streets. Others swarmed the Marines as if they were rock stars, begging for autographs. Chief Eby signed 20 bills imprinted with Mr. Hussein's face. An Iraqi man threw flowers in the driver-side window of Chief Eby's Humvee.

"Is the war over? Are you done here?" an English-speaking Iraqi woman asked him.

"No, ma'am, I'm sorry it's not," Chief Eby replied, as gunfire could be heard in the distance. It apparently came from where the Seventh Marine Regiment was still battling for Baghdad University, located on a peninsula formed by a huge curve in the Tigris River in the south.

Some Iraqis urged Chief Eby to make sure the Americans stayed for a long time to stabilize their country -- perhaps even as long as two years. "I was thinking to myself, 'I was hoping two hours,' " he said. Then he added: "I have the hope that these people might truly be free, although they don't realize the struggle they have ahead of them."

Amid the crowds of Iraqis surging in Firdos Square was a gaggle of antiwar protesters led by an English-speaking woman wearing a T-shirt that read, "Don't Attack Iraq." The woman grabbed one of the U.S. military-issue food packages, known as "Meals Ready to Eat," that the Americans have been distributing to hungry Iraqis -- and threw it at the feet of a Marine corporal. She spat on it and said, "They don't want your MREs!"

"Then why are they picking them up and leaving with them?" the corporal responded.

The same discordant mixture of emotions and action was evident elsewhere in Baghdad as the capital slipped from Mr. Hussein's grip. Looters were everywhere, focusing more on government buildings than commercial enterprises. Despite the pitched battle at Baghdad University on the south end of town, the Americans were greeted warmly in other areas, including Saddam City, a Shiite-dominated slum.

"Ironically, Saddam City is anti-Saddam," said Maj. Andrew Petrucci, assistant operations officer for the Seventh Regiment.

At one point, a pair of Marines joked over their military radios about orders to raid the home of Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, the regime's second most famous figure.

The Marine who received the order offered to bring his comrade a souvenir from the planned operation: "Do you want a house gift?" he asked.

The Marine on the other end of the radio responded: "As long as he's dead when you leave -- that's all I care about."

Later, Maj. Petrucci was asked how the raid of Mr. Aziz's home went. "He wasn't home," Maj. Petrucci said. "We had a couple of questions we wanted to ask him."

For Marines taking control of the city's eastern half, celebratory gunfire was a matter of concern. When a fusillade of bullets were fired into the air from a car, Marines in a nearby Humvee bristling with antitank weaponry fired warning shots in response. The trigger-happy citizen apparently didn't hear the shot and continued, prompting the Marines to open fire on the car. Someone inside the car was injured but not seriously.

"There's a lot of celebrating going on, and a lot of that celebrating involves shooting into the air," Maj. Michael Samarov radioed the Seventh Marine Regiment's headquarters in southeast Baghdad. "I know it's not terribly smart, but we need to be aware that's what people do."

Other Iraqis took a much more cautious approach to U.S. forces. Last night, three men in the cab of a big civilian truck were parked on the shoulder of a main highway that leads to the center of Baghdad from its eastern suburbs. Upon seeing a long Marine convoy approach in darkness, the men in the truck hung a white flag from the rearview mirror, turned on the interior light and clasped their hands behind their heads, surrender-style. The convoy drove by without stopping.

Roadways like this one had teemed with hostility just one day earlier. On Tuesday, a truck full of Iraqis jumped from their cab and fired rifles and rocket-propelled grenades at a contingent of Marines, which promptly killed nearly a dozen assailants. At another point on Tuesday, an Iraqi family of five approached a Marine vehicle too quickly for comfort, prompting a grenade-launch attack that injured all five.

Approaching a building that houses the Oil and Information Ministries yesterday, Marines thought they saw somebody waving a white flag from a window in the 13-story building. It turned out to be window treatments flapping through a broken pane. They called in tow missiles, which slammed the edifice's upper corners, and raided the building without incident until they reached the roof, when somebody started firing machine guns and rockets in their direction. The Marines fled for cover, unsure if the shooters were Americans or Iraqis.

In the center of the city, a 15-story building caught fire, but nobody knew for sure why. "It does appear the enemy is burning the building," a nearby Marine reported to superiors over military radio.

As night fell, it was clear the fighting wasn't over, with orange illumination flares lighting the skyline and mortar rounds booming here and there.

*April 11, 2003*  
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## **Coalition Forces Attempt to Restore Order**

### **Looting, Arson, Fighting Continue in Baghdad; Bush, Blair Address Iraqis**

By Michael M. Phillips in Baghdad, Christopher Cooper in Doha, Qatar, and Matt Murray in New York

Baghdad's streets remained a dangerous mix of looting, arson and sporadic fighting a day after the city was abandoned by Saddam Hussein's government, while in northern Iraq Kurdish soldiers captured the strategic oil city of Kirkuk and U.S. forces prepared to enter Mosul.

U.S. Marines, working to cement control of the capital, fought several nasty battles with Iraqi holdouts on the city's north side, in a mosque, a palace and the home of a Baath Party leader.

One Marine was killed and at least 20 wounded in the action. Later in the day, a suicide bomber blew himself up at a checkpoint near the Palestine Hotel in central Baghdad, where many foreign journalists are staying, injuring four more Marines.

In a troubling sign of the violence threatening other parts of the country, a prominent Shiite Muslim cleric who returned from exile in London last week was killed in Najaf at the shrine of Imam Ali, one of the holiest sites of Shiite Islam.

With the U.S.-led coalition grappling with the challenge of restoring some civic order, President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair delivered nationally televised addresses to Iraqis on the formerly state-owned TV network. The talks kicked off an information program designed to reach the Iraqi people, and by extension the rest of the Arab world.

In a 2 1/2-minute speech, delivered in English with Arabic subtitles, President Bush sought to allay concerns that the U.S. intends to stay in Iraq as a conqueror, saying the U.S. has a few limited goals, including establishing a representative government and a "sovereign nation."

"Our only enemy is Saddam's brutal regime -- and that regime is your enemy as well," he said.

A top priority was stabilizing Baghdad, which Maj. Gen. Gene Renuart, at U.S. Central Command in Doha, Qatar, described as still "an ugly place" for soldiers even though it is encircled by U.S. forces.

Organized gangs of looters, some carrying weapons, roamed the streets targeting buildings and stores. Among the many buildings looted were the Chinese, German and Turkish embassies, the French Cultural Center and the homes of Mr. Hussein's son Uday and other Baath Party leaders. Fires broke out at some of those buildings, at least some the result of arson.

The U.S. began the day with about three-fourths of the sprawling city under military control. Forces were sent into residential neighborhoods to expand their grip on the capital and, in essence, claim victory in the initial combat phase of the operation to dethrone the Baathist regime of Mr. Hussein.

But with the government having fled on Wednesday, it was a confusing scene. "I don't know if there's anyone here to surrender or capitulate," said Col. Steve Hummer, commander of the Seventh Marine Regiment, which occupied the southern portion of Baghdad on the east side of the Tigris River. But, he added, "the conditions are here" to move into the stabilization phase of the U.S. operation.

U.S. priorities include searching for intelligence, making inroads with the local populace, tracking down weapons caches, restoring basic services and rooting out pro-regime militants.

Despite the suicide attack and other fights, the Marines found many residents continuing to welcome them, especially in the Shiite areas of the east side. Patrols through residential neighborhoods attracted crowds of children. During evening patrols, locals came out of their houses to offer the Marines food, cigarettes, whiskey and even showers.

Marine commanders were encouraging the troops to interact with Iraqi civilians more openly. Intelligence officers have been given food and water to encourage locals to turn in recalcitrant pro-Hussein militants. But the military was trying to balance that openness with caution, especially in some predominantly Palestinian neighborhoods. Indeed, the Central Intelligence Agency yesterday said an audio tape that surfaced this week urging suicide attacks

against U.S. and British interests to "avenge the innocent children" of Iraq is likely the voice of Osama bin Laden -- though it couldn't say for sure when the tape was made.

"You're not shaking hands and kissing babies," said Lt. Col. Michael Belcher, commander of the Third Battalion, Seventh Marines. "You're doing security."

At a Republican Guard armory, Marines discovered T-72 tanks, American-made self-propelled howitzers, and about two million rounds of high-velocity rifle ammunition. But instead of destroying the weaponry, as they have along the road to Baghdad, the Marines are thinking about preserving the arms for use by a pro-American Iraqi military.

"It won't be destroyed," Capt. George Schreffler, commanding officer of Lima Co., Third Battalion, Seventh Marines, told his staff in the marble-floored conference room of the U.S.-occupied Oil Ministry.

Marine officers similarly ordered their troops to clean up the Oil Ministry building, which was looted by civilians before being seized Wednesday. "Stop breaking things, because they have got to move back into these offices and get back to work," First Sgt. Martin Berns said.

Across Iraq, officials are struggling with humanitarian problems as civilians in many parts of the country face shortages of food, medicine and clean water.

The British said the southern port of Umm Qasr would receive its first merchant ship carrying humanitarian aid tomorrow. But some humanitarian agencies complained that the situation remains far too unstable for them to enter.

The taking of Kirkuk, a city of 100,000 people, was the most significant gain yet in the north, many areas of which remain under control of Mr. Hussein's regime. A convoy of Kurdish fighters, accompanied by U.S. special forces, streamed into the city after regime forces pulled back, their arrival in the predominantly Kurdish city sparking jubilant scenes reminiscent of those accompanying the withdrawal of Mr. Hussein's government from Baghdad on Wednesday. Hundreds of people spilled into the streets and tore down a bronze statue of Mr. Hussein in one of Kirkuk's main squares.

Kurds also entered the city of Khaneqin, southeast of Kirkuk on the border with Iran, and together with U.S. forces fought Iraqi soldiers at Altun Kupri.

But the situation was diplomatically delicate. Turkey opposes the long-term presence of Kurdish troops in Iraq's major northern cities, fearing that would provide Kurds with enough economic muscle to spark a separatist movement that could incite Turkey's own 12 million Kurds. Despite diplomatic assurance from Turkey, U.S. commanders have worried Turkey might respond by sending soldiers into Iraq.

Yesterday, as Turkey said it would send "observers" to Kirkuk to monitor developments, the U.S. sought to reassure Iraq's northern neighbor. Secretary of State Colin Powell said he had reached an accord with Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul under which Kurdish forces would pull back from Kirkuk to be replaced by U.S. forces, and Turkish monitors would be welcome.

In another potentially significant development in the north, Iraqi commanders in Mosul appeared on the verge of surrender last night. After several media outlets had reported that surrender talks were under way in that city, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said small numbers of U.S. and Kurdish troops were "in the process of entering" Mosul and were being welcomed by the people. Speaking to reporters, Mr. Rumsfeld said there was an "opportunity" for Iraqi forces to turn in their weapons.

The fall of Mosul would further intensify the focus on one of the last cities firmly under the control of Mr. Hussein's loyalists: Tikrit, which is his birthplace and a stronghold for his supporters.

At U.S. Central Command, officials said there were some organized units of Republican Guard and regular Iraqi army forces in northern Iraq and reinforcements converging on Tikrit, which is about 90 miles north of Baghdad. Maj. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, vice director of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said at a Pentagon briefing that Iraqi ground forces in Tikrit and Mosul were the last major Iraqi ground forces still fighting and a major target for airstrikes. The U.S. also has set up roadblocks between Baghdad and Tikrit to try to intercept Iraqi leaders fleeing Baghdad.

Gen. Renuart said U.S. special-operations troops faced another fight with Iraqi forces near a town close to the Syrian border. He said the area, near the tiny outpost of Qaim, was used by Iraqi troops to fire Scud missiles during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

The whereabouts of Mr. Hussein and his sons, who were targeted in a Baghdad bombing Monday, remained a mystery. "I don't know that they're alive and I don't know that they're dead," Gen. Renuart said.

In Basra, where British soldiers who took control of the city this past weekend have been grappling with similar looting and fighting, troops asked residents to turn in their guns. Gen.

Renuart said coalition commanders were encouraged at the cooperation they received from Muslim clerics in Basra in their efforts.

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**For Some Marines,  
The Next Battlefield  
Is an Emotional One**

**Hoping to Fend Off Trauma,  
They Share War Horrors;  
'Life Flowed Right Out'**

By Michael M. Phillips

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- Marine Cpl. James Lis, 21 years old, is worried that for the rest of his life he'll be haunted by the image: A clean-shaven, twentysomething Iraqi in a white shirt, lying wounded in an alleyway and reaching for his rifle -- just as Cpl. Lis pumped two shots into his head.

"Every time I close my eyes I see that guy's brains pop out of that guy's head," Cpl. Lis, from Shreveport, La., told his platoon mates yesterday, as they sat in a circle in the ruins of the Iraqi Oil Ministry's employee cafeteria. "That's a picture in my head that I will never be able to get rid of."

For Marine infantrymen now occupying the eastern half of the Iraqi capital, the worst fighting is probably over. But they're just beginning to cope with the psychological aftershocks of having faced death and inflicted it.

One lesson the military learned from painful experience with post-traumatic stress disorder after Vietnam is that troops may come home more mentally intact if, as soon as possible, they talk to each other about what they've gone through. In infantry school, Marine officers are taught to encourage their troops to talk about their experiences after battles. So, platoon by platoon, many Marines in Iraq are starting to hold informal group-therapy sessions -- "critical incident debriefings" in military parlance -- in which they share their feelings about what they've seen and what they've done.

"The touchy-feely stuff -- that's no joke," Second Lt. Isaac Moore told the platoon he commands in Lima Company of the First Marine Division, Seventh Regiment, Third Battalion. "If you keep picturing this guy and you shot him in the head, you've got to talk about that."

Though a few had been shot at in Somalia, none of the 47 Marines of Lt. Moore's Second Platoon had seen any real combat before arriving in Iraq. Even during the war's first weeks, it seemed unlikely that they'd have to test their mettle. Iraqi forces always ran away before the platoon arrived. The platoon's first scrape was a minor encounter three weeks ago near Zubayr in which somebody took a few shots at the Marines, who returned fire for 40 minutes to no practical effect. No one on either side was hurt.

As they moved into Baghdad, however, the platoon ran into an escalating series of firefights with pro-regime militants armed with rifles and rocket-propelled grenades. The fiercest was a battle Tuesday in the shell of a large building under construction in the city's southeast. The platoon began taking sniper fire, and the Marines soon found themselves shooting at enemy fighters just a few feet away, in a maze of pillars and open staircases.

It's a fight that has left deep marks on the young men. That's what Lt. Moore wanted them to talk about. So as they relaxed on cushions stripped off Oil Ministry sofas and awaited orders to patrol the city for Fedayeen holdouts and foreign suicide squads, the lieutenant invited each Marine to tell the platoon what he experienced, and how he felt about it.

Cpl. Anthony Antista, 29, from Monrovia, Calif., initially celebrated after he shot dead two Iraqi paramilitary men in a corner of the building site. But the exhilaration instantly gave way to guilt, especially for having felt glad that he had taken lives. "Hey, I shot two people," he told his comrades immediately after the fight.

The rest of the platoon brushed him off. He persisted: "I shot two people." They thought he was bragging. What he was really doing, he said, was trying to find someone who might understand how bad he felt.

It's an issue that was still on his mind two days later. "I can't share my pain with you because you don't accept that I killed two guys," Cpl. Antista told his comrades. To emphasize his point, he removed the magazine from his rifle, emptied the round from the firing chamber and acted out the encounter. He showed how he raised his rifle and fired. Then he sat on the ground and demonstrated how the Iraqis slumped when the rounds hit them.

"The life just flowed right out of them," he said in a pained voice. "They were like Jell-O."

Staff Sgt. Matthew St. Pierre, 28, from Vallejo, Calif., faced off with an Iraqi fighter whose eyeglasses and face reminded him of one of his own Marines, Lance Cpl. Lance Carmouche, a 21-year-old machine gunner from Beaumont, Texas. The sergeant, the platoon's senior noncommissioned officer, took two shots as the Iraqi popped up from behind a low wall five feet away. He wasn't sure whether he hit the man, but the sergeant saw his body later.

"Now every time I see Lance Cpl. Carmouche, I think of him," Sgt. St. Pierre told his men. A few minutes later in the fight, Sgt. St. Pierre found four Iraqi men in a small enclosed area. Three were apparently dead, but one, wounded, reached for his weapon. The staff sergeant shot him between the shoulder blades. The man again reached for his rifle, this time more slowly. The staff sergeant shot him in the back of the head.

When the gunfire quieted, the staff sergeant "eye-thumped" the Iraqi's body, to make sure he was really dead. The process involved poking the man in the eye with a rifle muzzle, the theory being that no man alive can avoid scrunching up his face in response to such a provocation.

It was an "eerie feeling," the staff sergeant recalled, "like I just did what the Lord in the Bible says not to do." But he added, "we did nothing wrong. They made no attempt to surrender, and we put them down."

Lt. Moore, 26, tried to comfort his troops by relating his own experience as a hunter, growing up in Wasilla, Alaska. He shot his first caribou at the age of seven or eight, he told them. It was thrilling to see the animal fall. When he got closer, however, he saw the caribou was still alive, convulsing in pain. The boy was unsure whether he was supposed to feel good or bad.

Over years of hunting caribou, bear and other animals, he grew accustomed to eye-thumping and death. So when Lt. Moore looked down from a staircase in the building in Baghdad and saw three Iraqis below, he didn't hesitate. The men had been wounded by a burst of machine-gun fire, but they were still moving. The lieutenant shot one man point-blank in the head and watched the results; the next man was twitching and got the same treatment.

"It's gross, but here's the thing," the lieutenant told his Marines. "That queasy feeling -- I don't get that at all."

Keep in mind, he continued, the kind of die-hards they are fighting. To illustrate his point, Lt. Moore told them about something that had happened earlier in the day: A man who had escaped from one of Saddam Hussein's prisons after 13 years walked back to Baghdad to look for his family and somehow got past Marine guards at the Oil Ministry. The Marines found him curled up asleep in a corner. The man, Lt. Moore recounted, had acid and electric-shock burns on his legs.

The people who did that to the prisoner, the lieutenant said, are the sort of people the Marines were killing. "This is not somebody you need to worry about killing," he assured his troops. "When you stand outside the Pearly Gates or whatever you believe in, you're not going to be looked at any differently for what you did here."

Cpl. Lis, however, couldn't shake it off so easily. A genial jokester with a sand-colored buzz cut, the corporal has had the platoon's closest brushes with death in Iraq. He recounted them, one after another, for his fellow troops. On Wednesday, when the Marines seized the Oil Ministry, Cpl. Lis climbed to the roof to take a look at downtown Baghdad. A bullet heading towards his face missed him only because it hit the narrow metal rail in front of him.

At one point during the gunfight at the construction site, Cpl. Lis threw a hand grenade at an enemy fighter, only to have the Iraqi throw it back at Cpl. Juan Nielsen, a 26-year-old from Los Angeles. The grenade exploded, sending small pieces of metal shrapnel into Cpl. Nielsen's outer left ear -- a painful, but minor wound that turned out to be the only American casualty of the fight.

Later, Cpl. Lis saw a pineapple-shaped Iraqi grenade land less than eight feet in front of him, and two others -- Sgt. Timothy Wolkow, 26, from Huntington Beach, Calif., and Cpl. Dustin Soudan, 21, from Girard, Pa. Cpl. Lis yelled at the others to get down, and they crouched, covering their heads as it exploded. None of them were injured.

Then there was the moment that he worries will always haunt him: He saw the young Iraqi in the white shirt lying on his back, his right arm extended above his head, where a rifle lay. Another rifle was near his left arm. When the man moved his right arm toward the rifle, Sgt. Wolkow shot him. The man started moving again, and this time both Marines shot him in the head, Cpl. Lis firing twice.

Then Cpl. Lis performed the eye-thump ritual on the man. "It's the sickest feeling I've ever had in my life," he said at the therapy session.

Sgt. Wolkow had a more fleeting reaction. "As much as I love the Marine Corps and want to kill people, for a few seconds there was a kind of eerie feeling," after the first time he shot the man, he said. "It went away, and I shot the guy some more."

*Corrections & Amplifications*  
*The Wall Street Journal*

*MARINE SECOND LT. ISAAC MOORE says one of the two Iraqis he fatally shot in a gunfight in Baghdad on April 8 seemed to be maneuvering with his rifle for a better shooting position and might not have been wounded previously. He says he wounded that man with a shot to the torso and then killed him with a shot to the head. Lt. Moore also says he shot both men, the second lying wounded by a rifle, from about 40 yards away. An April 11 page-one article about a debriefing by Lt. Moore and his platoon said that both Iraqis had been wounded previously and that he shot them point-blank.*

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**Over Veggie Omelets,  
GIs, Human Shields  
Talk War and Peace**

**Six Baghdad Engineers  
Kept Water Running as  
They Played Host to Protesters**

By Michael M. Phillips

BAGHDAD -- Bob Dylan was on the boom box. The handwritten sign at the entrance said, "Bombing this site is a war crime." A vegetarian feast simmered on the stove. And the mouths of several Marines were watering as they prepared to enjoy their first home-cooked food in almost three months.

It was an unusual setting for a meal of reconciliation: the Sabanissan Water Treatment Project in north Baghdad. Seven human shields and six Iraqi engineers spent the conflict together at the water-purification plant. The first group was hoping to keep it from being bombed. The latter was hoping to keep water flowing to 3.5 million residents in the eastern half of the city.

Then on Saturday the First Division Marines of Lima Company (Third Battalion, Seventh Regiment) dropped by. About 150 strong, they were on a mission to search a suspected chemical laboratory nearby. The result was a scene from post-regime-change Iraq, where tensions are beginning to wind down and the conquerors are intermingling with the conquered in a myriad of peculiar ways. The immediate aftermath of war in Baghdad -- the jubilant welcome that greeted American invaders, the orgy of looting, and the sporadic resistance of Saddam Hussein's loyal backers -- is starting to give way to a wary, but mostly peaceful, coexistence.

When the Marines arrived at the plant, they figured they would need to persuade somebody to get it working again, given that there was no running water where they were bivouacked at the Oil Ministry building to the southeast.

They quickly discovered that the plant had never stopped functioning. The determined team of Iraqi water engineers braved the American military machine's bombs and bullets to keep the water gushing through its giant filters. On a tour of the facility by the engineers, the Marine commander and four of his troops also found an equally determined team of human-shield protesters who stood against everything the Marines have done in this country.

"This is our country," Safaa Al Kinany, the plant's acting assistant director, told Lima Company's commander, Capt. George Schreffler, shortly after the Marines pulled up to the plant in armored-assault vehicles. "These are our people. This is our duty."

In normal times, as many as 20 technicians worked at the plant. But once the bombing of Baghdad began, most fled to the countryside, and just six usually showed up each day. Mr. Kinany, 44, and Hashim Hassan, 42, the plant's director, alternated nights sleeping on cots at the plant so the other could check on his family. Outside the office where Mr. Kinany sleeps, a sign in Arabic reads: "We are happy our nightmare has ended."

Though the pressure isn't terrific, water does reach some residents. The engineers haven't seen a paycheck since the war started. But they've seen a lot of the war. They watched U.S. Warthog antitank planes machine-gun vehicles. They saw Iraqi army troops and Fedayeen irregulars take cover in one of the pumping stations connected to the plant, firing rocket-propelled grenades at U.S. tanks crossing the Tigris River bridge. The Americans responded by attacking the pumping station, disabling it. Digging through the wreckage later, Mr. Kinany discovered a man's severed legs.

"We saw the whole movie," he said.

Finding the eager-to-work engineers was a lucky stroke. Much of the capital has no basic services, so the Americans are using broadcasts, leaflets and word-of-mouth to persuade the war-shocked populace to get back to life as usual, minus Mr. Hussein. Still, most civil servants remain off the job.

"We took down all of Saddam's pictures and destroyed them -- when we knew he had left," Mr. Kinany told Capt. Schreffler, gesturing at the bare yellow and cream walls in the computerized control room.

"Is he dead or alive?" asked Capt. Schreffler, 31, from Harrisburg, Pa.

"You'd know better than me," replied Mr. Kinany, who said he is glad to be rid of Mr. Hussein and pointed out that the U.S. supported his regime for years.

As they walked the halls, a rattle of gunfire intruded from across the filtration ponds. The Marines crouched at the windows and wondered who was doing the shooting. "Don't you have contact with your people?" Mr. Kinany asked, with some astonishment. Yes, the captain said, but admitted it could take a while.

"There are no hostiles in this area," a staff sergeant warned over the radio. (Later they learned that Marines from another company had opened fire on a car they mistakenly thought was hostile, wounding seven civilians; all survived and were treated by Navy medics.)

The human shields, mostly Western antiwar activists who placed themselves in harm's way to discourage the U.S. from bombing civilian sites, added to Mr. Kinany's wartime headaches. The five men and two women from the U.S., England, Japan, Norway and Australia arrived at the end of February, accompanied by Iraqi intelligence agents, and promptly set up a commune of sorts in the top managers' office suite. It fell to the engineers to provide them with food and water. "To be frank, we hated them in the beginning," Mr. Kinany said.

He got to know the group and grew to like them, especially after the invasion of Baghdad began and looters started prowling around the plant. Thursday night, Marc Eubanks, 41, an American peace activist who spent four years each in the U.S. Army and the Air Force, and another shield agreed to patrol the grounds with an AK-47 assault rifle taken from a stash the engineers kept. On Friday, Mr. Kinany and Mr. Eubanks confronted looters, with the former G.I. speaking English and leaving the impression that perhaps he was an American soldier.

"Go and tell your partners the Americans are here, and they will destroy your houses" if you don't leave, Mr. Kinany yelled at the looters in Arabic.

"It was rather an ironic situation -- first we wanted to protect them from the Americans and then from [Iraqi] looters," said Geir Angell Oygarden, a 35-year-old Norwegian shield and social scientist.

When Mr. Kinany took Capt. Schreffler and his men to see where the shields lived, the four Marines stayed behind. After some initial awkwardness, the peaceniks and the warriors talked about the politics of the war and the downfall of Mr. Hussein.

"Do you think the Iraqis could have done this on their own?" asked Cpl. Jonathan Talbott, 21, from Anchorage, Alaska, who had seen smiling, waving Iraqis as the Marines drove into the capital.

"Who knows?" Mr. Eubanks responded. "They never had the chance. The soft method was never tried."

He told the Marines that U.S.-led economic sanctions had kept sick Iraqi children from getting medicines. And he talked about civilians caught in the deadly crossfire during U.S. attacks.

"There has been a lot of death here, and people aren't going to forget that very easily," said Mr. Eubanks, who lives in Greece.

"We're just trying to help," said Cpl. Bryon Adcox, 21, from Knoxville, Tenn.

Before the invasion, as the Marines had discussed among themselves the rules of engagement dictating whom they could or could not kill, more than one had joked that he wouldn't mind taking out a human shield or two.

That said, the Marines of Lima Company hadn't had anything even resembling a home-cooked meal since January, when they arrived at base camp in Kuwait.

So when Mr. Eubanks offered dinner, three Marines couldn't refuse. Yukiko Muragishi, a 31-year-old Tokyo woman in a tie-dyed t-shirt, whipped up vegetable omelets for the troops. Only Cpl. Talbott, a mortarman, declined, politely explaining that his stomach just wasn't ready for real food. In reality, he wasn't comfortable breaking bread with the shields. "I'm not sure if I want to eat in their house," he said later.

The other three Marines crowded around two plates, loaded with rice, cucumber slices, tomato and omelet. "These people just became my heroes," said Lance Cpl. Thomas Rudkin, 21, from Moberly, Mo., a half-hour from where Mr. Eubanks went to high school in Warrenton, Mo. The Marines didn't know when they'd get another meal like that. The shields began heading home yesterday, via Jordan.

As the Marines left, Lance Cpl. Rudkin turned to Ms. Muragishi and thanked her in Japanese, with a phrase he had picked up while posted at the Marine base in Okinawa: "Domo arigato."

April 14, 2003

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## **Divisions on Rebuilding Iraq May Slow Process**

### **Troops Face Tikrit Skirmish As POWs Are Found Alive; Military Says Threats Linger**

By Michael M. Phillips and Dan Morse in Baghdad, Christopher Cooper in Doha, Qatar, and Matt Murray in New York

Major combat in the 25-day war in Iraq appeared to be winding down, as U.S. forces battled remnants of Saddam Hussein's forces in his ancestral land of Tikrit and found seven U.S. prisoners of war alive and well.

U.S. troops were engaged with Iraqi forces yesterday on the southern outskirts of Tikrit, about 90 miles north of Baghdad, where many had expected Mr. Hussein's loyalists to stage a climactic battle. But U.S. commanders were convinced that most Iraqi ground forces had been either destroyed or given up the fight.

The fall of Tikrit would follow rapidly on the heels of recent surrenders in three major cities, Kirkuk and Mosul in the north and Kut in the south, leaving U.S. and British forces in at least nominal command of virtually the entire country.

Still, military officials warned that the danger for coalition troops remains high. Among other incidents this weekend, six soldiers from the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division were hurt in a grenade attack yesterday while clearing an arms dump south of Baghdad, while four others from the same unit were wounded in the capital in a drive-by shooting. Heavy mortar fire could still be heard in parts of the capital at night.

Many other major challenges, including providing security and humanitarian supplies and rooting out continued resistance, remain. Gen. Tommy Franks, commander of coalition forces in the Persian Gulf, pointed out in a television interview that the military bypassed many towns on their rapid advance north that might still contain nests of fighters.

The U.S. also was planning to search 2,000 to 3,000 sites for chemical and biological weapons, and working to determine the whereabouts of Mr. Hussein and most other regime leaders, including the former Iraqi leader's sons Uday and Qusay. Gen. Franks said the U.S. had obtained DNA samples that might help determine whether Mr. Hussein was killed in either of two U.S. missile strikes targeting him.

"Until we have a sense that we have all of that under control, then we will probably not characterize the initial military phase as having been completed and the regime totally gone," Gen. Franks said on CNN. President Bush has said he won't declare the war over until Gen. Franks does.

Though few regime leaders have been apprehended, yesterday the U.S. said it had arrested a half-brother of Mr. Hussein, Watban Ibrahim Hasan, a day after Mr. Hussein's scientific adviser, Lt. Gen. Amer al-Saadi, surrendered to U.S. officials. But there was "no question" other regime leaders had fled to Syria, some remaining there and others moving elsewhere, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld charged on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Mr. Bush later told reporters: "The Syrian government needs to cooperate with the United States and our coalition partners and not harbor any Baathists, any military officials, any people who need to be held to account for their tenure."

Syria has denied harboring any Iraqi fugitives.

The seven U.S. POWs were turned over to members of the U.S. Marine 24th Expeditionary Unit task force by a group of leaderless Iraqi soldiers on the road to Tikrit. The seven were flown to Kuwait City for medical testing and debriefing by U.S. officials. All were later released from the hospital in good condition, though two of them had been shot.

Five of the prisoners, including one woman, belonged to a maintenance detail that was captured on March 23 when their convoy was ambushed, the same unit that Pfc. Jessica Lynch, who was rescued in a raid on an Iraqi hospital on April 1, was from. The other two POWs were pilots whose Apache helicopter went down the same day.

The security situation in Baghdad remained tense, as the military worked to clamp down on the looting and arson that broke out in the city after Mr. Hussein's government withdrew on Wednesday. Residents have been pleading with the Marines for protection from looters, many of whom are said to be poor Iraqis seeking revenge for their mistreatment under Mr. Hussein and

his allies. U.S. Army troops put out a call for the return of civil servants and police, and some officers began trickling in yesterday to set up joint patrols with military officers.

Among the latest buildings hit by looters were an institute of military studies, an extensive Iraqi army barracks and the Iraq National Museum, where artifacts dating back 7,000 years were stolen and destroyed.

Some Baghdad residents who left the city before the war were starting to return. Others held a protest downtown to demand water and electricity. Looters still could be seen pushing stolen furniture and other goods in stolen carts.

With some Marine units sent north to Tikrit and other destinations, U.S. battalions were being forced to spread out, complicating their efforts to establish control. "We just don't have the manpower in a city this size to be a police force," said Capt. David Nettles, assistant intelligence officer for the First Marine Division's Third Battalion, Seventh Regiment.

The Marines said they also were wary about turning their attention away from military issues until their position is entirely secure. While the U.S. controls the city, there are still occasional sniper and other attacks on American forces. Two attackers killed a Marine manning a checkpoint in the city this weekend. Other Marines killed the shooter, while the second man escaped.

Lead elements of the U.S. Army's Fourth Infantry Division were expected to move toward Baghdad in coming days to strike targets in the vicinity of the Iraqi capital that American intelligence believes may contain chemical- and biological-weapons manufacturing and storage sites.

Religious tension, meanwhile, remained high in the south. In Najaf, the scene of friction among Muslim Shiite factions, the home of Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani was besieged by armed men, while another religious leader issued a death order for any Iraqi who helps Americans.

Shiites, who were persecuted for decades by Mr. Hussein's Sunni-dominated Baath Party, make up an estimated 60% of Iraq's population.

Elsewhere in the south, Kuwaiti firefighters snuffed out the last remaining oil-well fire in Iraq's Rumeila oil field. Despite U.S. fears that Mr. Hussein would sabotage his oil fields to keep them from U.S. hands, fewer than 10 wellheads were set afire.

In Kirkuk, U.S. tanks and armored personnel rolled into town as Kurdish forces pulled back somewhat, in an effort to alleviate Turkish fears that the Kurds would take on too large a role in the liberation of Iraq. Turkey fears the Kurds could spark a movement for an independent state that would draw in Turkey's own sizable Kurdish population.

The U.S. also said the large Kirkuk oil field was virtually untouched during the war and could resume production within a few weeks.

With the military effort winding down, both the U.S. Navy and Air Force said they already are planning to scale back their presence in the region. Navy Vice Adm. Timothy Keating, in a teleconference with reporters on Saturday, said he might begin moving aircraft carriers out of the region within several days. The air campaign was shifting its focus away from bombing and toward surveillance and air cover, officials said, with four B-2 bombers moved back to Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri.

*Yochi Dreazen at Camp Pennsylvania, Kuwait, contributed to this article.*

*May 2, 2003*

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**Line of Fire  
How TV Crew, Off On Its Own in Iraq, Fell into Fatal Fight**

## **U.K. Network Presses Military for Word on 2 Men Missing in a Clash Outside Basra SUVs Raced Towards U.S. Tanks**

By Michael M. Phillips

AZ ZUBAYR, Iraq -- On March 22, a four-man television crew roaming the war zone alone drove rented SUVs onto a battlefield near here and into withering machine-gun fire during a confrontation between U.S. tanks and Iraqi soldiers.

One journalist escaped. One was killed. The mystery of what happened to the other two men has consumed their employer, Britain's Independent Television News Ltd., ever since. Other reporters who happened on the scene soon afterward were barred by U.S. Marines from checking for survivors in the wrecked sport-utility vehicles, which had been labeled "TV" in large letters.

ITN employed former British commandos to comb the scene for evidence and witnesses. It is pleading for access to prisoner-of-war camps and searching for anyone who might know if Iraqis captured the men. It arranged for the missing cameraman's wife to get into a news conference by Secretary of State Colin Powell, where she begged him to investigate.

So far, ITN has faced a lot of frustration. The U.S. Central Command at first denied that any American forces had even been in the area at the time. It changed its stance only after ITN showed it photos of Marine tanks near the SUVs and the wreckage of a vehicle the journalists had encountered -- an Iraqi pickup with a machine gun mounted in its bed. On Monday, five weeks after the incident, the Central Command said an investigation was under way.

Though the incident was reported at the time, some details of the chaotic firefight are just now becoming available. The case raises difficult questions: With the military "embedding" reporters in combat units, should journalists risk covering battles independently? And if they do, what responsibility does the military have to protect them -- or, failing that, to investigate firefights they get caught up in and to search for possible survivors?

The Marines say the ITN crew knowingly took excessive risks, and are angry that two Marines were wounded the next day looking into what had happened. Though the 600 embedded reporters in the war zone also faced risks -- two died -- the Pentagon had specifically warned media outlets beforehand that going "unilateral" was even more dangerous.

"Coalition forces strongly encouraged nonembedded media representatives to stay out of the battlefield, for obvious reasons," says Lt. Col. Richard Long, a Marine spokesman. "The Marine Corps regrets the loss of any innocent lives on the battlefield and goes to great extent to ensure every measure possible is taken to avoid such losses."

The ITN reporter killed, 50-year-old Terry Lloyd, had covered conflicts in Kosovo, Bosnia and Kurdish Iraq. Missing French cameraman and editor Fred Nerac, 43, had faced danger in Afghanistan and Kosovo. The other missing man is Hussein Osman, 30, their Lebanese driver and translator.

The one known survivor is Daniel Demoustier, 40, a Belgian cameraman and producer who has covered wars from Albania to Congo. This account is based on information provided by him, military officials, investigators hired by ITN and the observations of this reporter, who came upon the scene shortly after the fatal firefight.

The crew knew they were defying military warnings, says Mr. Demoustier. For days before coalition forces entered Iraq, the TV crew hid on a farm in northern Kuwait. With the invasion under way on March 21, the crew sent some farm workers ahead to make sure there were no checkpoints on the way to the border. Then they raced toward Iraq in two Mitsubishi Pajero SUVs, with "TV" written on the hoods and doors in black tape.

They cut into an invading column of tanks from Britain's Seventh Armored Brigade. Known as the Desert Rats, the brigade was of particular interest to viewers in the U.K.

Mr. Demoustier drove the lead vehicle, with Mr. Lloyd at his side. Mr. Osman drove with Mr. Nerac in the second one. On their first full day in Iraq, they heard an erroneous report that the border port of Umm Qasr had fallen to the coalition. Looking for a better story, they drove toward Basra, farther inland, where they knew the British were headed.

U.S. Marines they encountered on the way warned of danger ahead. The crew disregarded the caution. "That is what they tell you all the time: 'It's dangerous out there.' I haven't heard anything else in my life," Mr. Demoustier says. They were so relaxed they wore neither helmets nor flak jackets.

After passing the town of Az Zubayr, the team headed northeast toward a canal bridge leading to Basra. On the left side of the divided four-lane highway, on a road that joined the highway at an angle, they saw several tanks lined up with their guns aimed toward Basra.

"There's the Seventh Armored Brigade," Mr. Demoustier remembers Mr. Lloyd saying, thinking they had found the British.

He was wrong. They were American Abrams tanks from Red Platoon, Delta Company, First Marine Tank Battalion. The ITN journalists, believing that the war would progress quickly and that Basra must have been safely in British hands by now, continued toward the bridge about three miles ahead.

But as they neared the bridge, they saw a group of uniformed Iraqis with AK-47s walking toward them. Mr. Demoustier made a quick U-turn across the median strip and sped back in the direction of the tanks. In his rearview mirror, he noticed Mr. Osman doing the same.

Then he saw that some Iraqi fighters in a pickup truck, a machine gun mounted in its rear, had stopped the journalists' second SUV. Mr. Demoustier stopped and watched with alarm.

The Iraqi pickup and the second ITN SUV began moving toward him. Mr. Demoustier then accelerated in the direction of the tanks. He turned to his left and saw a vehicle driving alongside, "almost close enough to touch," filled with beret-wearing Iraqi military men. They gave a thumbs-up sign. "These guys want to surrender," he thought.

Just then, as all three vehicles raced in the direction of the tanks, machine-gun rounds started flying, Mr. Demoustier says. He says he saw the Americans fire, but doesn't know if the Iraqis fired. Bullets riddled the front windshield of his SUV. He says he covered his head and "instinctively" stepped hard on the gas as he ducked down.

He glanced to his right and saw that the passenger door was open. Mr. Lloyd was gone. Mr. Demoustier drove off the road and came to a halt, the gas cans on his SUV's roof now in flames. He jumped out and lay flat in the ditch, wiggling his stomach to dig further into the ground as bullets whizzed overhead.

He saw Mr. Osman's SUV still on the highway, perforated by bullets and with its passenger door open. In front of it, the Iraqi pickup was ablaze. He saw an ambulance or van come from the direction of Basra and pick up some wounded people.

Whenever he tried to get up, a machine-gunner -- an American, he thinks -- fired toward him. A rusty van carrying unarmed Iraqis in civilian garb came by. They signaled for him to get in, but then they too came under fire, and joined Mr. Demoustier in the ditch. When the firing stopped, the Iraqi civilians got back in their van and left.

He dashed across the median strip and hid behind a low cement wall. There, he noticed another press vehicle stopped near the tanks. It was an unembedded correspondent for a British newspaper, the Mail on Sunday, and her security man and a translator. Mr. Demoustier, his face bleeding from minor wounds, took a chance and raced to their car.

The group saw no sign of the other ITN crew members and left in search of British troops who might help try to find them. Mr. Demoustier says they reported the incident to a British patrol. Unable to find out anything more from British or American troops in the area, the other journalists dropped Mr. Demoustier off on the Kuwaiti border. He walked across and phoned another ITN crew, who took him to Kuwait City.

An hour or two after the incident, four embedded journalists, including this reporter, came upon the scene, riding in military vehicles escorted by Sgt. Maj. Rick Lamelin of the Third Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment. By that time, a new platoon of U.S. tanks had taken up positions. They were on the highway itself, not the road that came in from an angle, as the first tanks were. These new tanks were aiming their guns toward the destroyed vehicles, no more than 150 feet away. Tank crewmen, known as "tankers," on the scene said they and the earlier tank crew had been fending off "suicide vehicles." In the journalists' presence, they opened fire on a bus that approached from Basra. Other vehicles passed without incident.

Asked about the wrecked vehicles littering the road, a tanker who arrived after the ITN incident said that all had been driven by suicidal attackers. "They tried to drive right into us," said the tanker, Marine Sgt. Travis Horner.

The reporters asked for safe passage through the Marine line to approach the ITN vehicles -- the bullet-pocked one and Mr. Demoustier's, now charred -- to look for casualties. Sgt. Maj. Lamelin vowed to abandon the reporters on the battlefield if they did so. "You can go if you want, but I'm leaving," he said. Besides, he claimed, the vehicles had been driven by armed Iraqis, not journalists.

After the reporters protested this decision, Sgt. Maj. Lamelin radioed his battalion commander, Lt. Col. Michael Belcher, and was told to give the reporters 10 minutes to inspect the vehicles. They asked the platoon leader in charge of the tanks for assurances the tanks wouldn't fire. The platoon leader said the tanks would have to fire on any hostile Iraqis in the area, adding that any shot from a tank's main gun in their general direction could be fatal.

So the reporters asked if the line of tanks could be moved beyond the ITN vehicles. Just then, Sgt. Maj. Lamelin walked up and said the battalion commander, Col. Belcher, had changed his mind and cut short the 10 minutes. Sgt. Maj. Lamelin said he was leaving at once with or without the reporters. So they too left, without inspecting the vehicles.

Shortly afterward, Col. Belcher promised to alert the battalion in whose sector the incident had taken place. The next day, he confirmed that the SUVs belonged to journalists but said he knew nothing of their fate.

Hours after the incident, an ITN reporter in Jordan was watching TV as al-Jazeera, the Arabic-language station, showed images from a morgue in Basra. Mr. Lloyd was visible among the dead. Later, an inquest determined he had been shot in the head and pelvis. At ITN's request, the family has authorized a ballistics expert to try to determine whose shots hit Mr. Lloyd, based on the type of metal in recovered fragments.

The morning after the shooting, a six-man U.S. team led by Lt. Col. John Ewers, a staff judge advocate, headed to the scene on orders from Maj. Gen. James Mattis, commander of the First Marine Division. They never made it. As they drove through Az Zubayr, Iraqi fighters attacked their Humvees. Col. Ewers was hit in both forearms and the left foot, and a lance corporal was wounded in the upper back. An officer on the mission later expressed deep resentment at having to risk U.S. Marines' lives for reporters who had ventured onto a battlefield alone.

Mr. Demoustier stayed in Kuwait for two weeks with ITN colleagues trying to find the missing men. They hired two Kuwaitis to spend a week dialing round-the-clock to reach an al-Jazeera reporter in Basra on his seldom-functioning satellite telephone. The al-Jazeera correspondent checked out a rumor of wounded reporters in a Basra hospital but found no sign of ITN's Messrs. Nerac and Osman.

Later, an ITN reporter in Baghdad located the commander of the U.S. unit whose tanks fired in the incident. He said his men had seen the "TV" markings on the SUVs but concluded they contained Iraqi fighters on a suicide-bombing mission, ITN says, because the SUVs and the Iraqi pickup all were approaching simultaneously at high speed. According to ITN, the officer also said the Iraqis fired first and hit Mr. Lloyd's SUV from behind, before the tanks returned fire. ITN also said he had confirmed that the Marines didn't search the scene for survivors.

Meanwhile, ITN hired a British corporate-security firm called AKE Ltd. to search for the missing men. AKE sent two former members of Britain's elite Special Air Service to Iraq. AKE later told ITN its investigation suggested the Iraqis and ITN team had come under fire from the coalition side from under 220 yards away. The men AKE sent also inspected the charred wreckage of Mr. Demoustier's SUV. AKE told ITN it had determined from the bullet holes that "the car was also hit by Iraqi fire from behind, possibly after it had already crashed."

The commandos located a Baath Party militant who said he had been involved in the attack. They found a minivan driver who said he had picked up Mr. Lloyd -- still alive -- and had driven him to a hospital in Basra, by which time he had died. They interviewed a British officer who said he had seen blood stains on the headrest of Mr. Osman's seat, but no bodies. They couldn't find anyone who knew the fate of the two men.

In its report to ITN, the AKE team said, "The Iraqis no doubt mounted an attack using the ITN crew as cover, or perhaps stumbled into the U.S. forces whilst attempting to detain the ITN crew." The AKE report also speculated that the missing men might not have been in the SUV when it came under fire. It said the Iraqi fighters might have pulled the ITN pair out of their SUV and used it to attack the tanks.

"It seems clear that the answer to that lies with some of the Baath Party members who were there that day," says Andrew Kain, the managing director of AKE.

The investigators have the names of several Baath Party officials who were present, but believe they are in hiding, dead or prisoners of the coalition. Finding them, Mr. Kain says, would require a formal and aggressive military investigation. The British Ministry of Defence has informally asked Iraqi POWs in its custody about the missing men. But the ministry has refused ITN pleas that it open a formal investigation because "they weren't embedded journalists," a ministry spokeswoman says.

ITN also lobbied the American side. It got Mr. Nerac's wife, Fabienne Nerac, into Secretary Powell's NATO press conference in Brussels on April 3, where she pleaded for help finding her husband. "I give you my personal promise we will do everything we can to find out what happened," Mr. Powell responded.

ITN Chairman Mark Wood says the company doesn't blame the Marines for firing on the ITN vehicles. The Iraqi pickup with the machine gun was "clearly threatening," he says. "We haven't seen anything that suggests anyone can actually fault the decision-making process."

But some ITN officials and Mr. Nerac's wife feel that Mr. Powell hasn't kept his promise. A Powell spokesman says the secretary is diligently pursuing the matter.

ITN also accuses the U.S. military of having dragged its feet. The U.S. command initially wrote to ITN and Ms. Nerac that there had been no U.S. forces in the area when the shooting took place.

On Monday, after the U.S. Central Command was shown photos of Marine tanks at the scene, spokesman Col. Ray Shepherd phoned ITN to withdraw the denial. He told Mr. Wood that a formal investigation, including an effort to find the two missing men, was now under way. "We have new information that has led us to believe there may have been U.S. ground forces in the area," Col. Shepherd says in an interview.

ITN executives welcomed the news, though they fear the trail may have gone cold. In retrospect, Mr. Wood says, his crew got too close to the action in a laudable effort to provide the public with an independent view of the war. "It was an error of judgment, but one understands the reasons why," he says.

Mr. Demoustier has no regrets. "You can think about it over and over, but it's absolutely necessary that we keep doing these things," he says. "I don't want to go with the military. I don't want to be controlled by people saying, 'You can't go here or you can't go there.' "

*August 12, 2003*

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**Rough Justice: Maj. Bercik's Day In an Iraqi Court  
Army Lawyer Tries to Make A Balky System Work  
Guns and `Leg Breakers'**

By Michael M. Phillips

KARBALA, Iraq -- Fadhil Abd Al-Khidir's alibi evaporated the instant the prosecution's star witness, a U.S. Marine sniper, took the stand. The Marine held up surveillance photos showing that the round, yellow-orange objects Mr. Khidir was selling outside a local mosque were not, as he claimed, tomatoes. They were hand grenades.

Mr. Khidir, cocky when the arraignment began, shook his head in dismay as the Iraqi investigating magistrate sent him back to his cell to await trial.

For Maj. Bernard Bercik, a U.S. Army Reserve lawyer, Mr. Khidir's indictment was a welcome win. Maj. Bercik and the military governor of the area surrounding Karbala, Marine Lt. Col. Matthew Lopez, have almost complete powers over Karbala's legal system. The 46-year-old Maj. Bercik could simply order prisoners jailed or released. But he prefers to adhere to Iraq's 1969 criminal code in the hopes of setting an example for the local judiciary to follow.

As U.S. forces prepare to turn over control of this southern city to a small contingent of Bulgarian peacekeepers, Maj. Bercik is racing to make sure hundreds of people languishing in Karbala's fetid city jail are either indicted or released.

"I'm going to clean house before I leave," says Maj. Bercik, of the Army's 304th Civil Affairs Brigade. "But I'd prefer they do it themselves."

It's a delicate balance between ensuring justice, and ensuring that the justice system works on its own. Criminal justice is often slow here, and confusing to all involved. Dangerous suspects are sometimes released on bond and harmless ones -- such as the 17-year-old arrested for holding hands with her husband at the mosque -- are held for weeks. Before he leaves next month, Maj. Bercik is trying to right what wrongs he can.

Twice a week Maj. Bercik walks into the bowels of the municipal building, to a central chamber surrounded by padlocked cells. The largest cell houses perhaps 100 men, sprawled on every bit of available floor. The odor is of human waste and sweat, simmering in temperatures that can top 120 degrees. One Marine likens it to a kennel. Guards place large blocks of ice in the center room in the vain hope of cooling things off, and the U.S. has installed fans. During visiting hours, family members press against the welded steel rods that crisscross the cell doors.

A recent hearing day went like this: Maj. Bercik began by politely berating the head prosecutor, Najim Abdullah Hassan, for not clearing more of the cases away, or even keeping a complete ledger of prisoners and their alleged offenses.

An American military policeman handed the major a torn slip of paper, with a handwritten note. Its Iraqi author pleaded for the release of a relative arrested by the religious police and held for 26 days for allegedly drinking alcohol near the mosque. The major waved the paper at Mr. Hassan.

"We have 300 people in the jail," Maj. Bercik pressed. "Why are these people in jail?"

Mr. Hassan consulted his file and told the major that the prisoner wasn't arrested for being drunk -- he was propositioning women at the mosque. Still, he promised to seek the man's release. The major said he was pleased that at least Mr. Hassan was able to find some record of the case.

Soon the arraignments themselves began. One of the first defendants was Nasaar Arudyah, arrested by a Marine patrol after two men on a motorcycle opened fire on several houses with an AK-47 assault rifle. The Marines pulled Mr. Arudyah over because he and his passenger matched the general description of the shooters -- and because they had an AK-47. The patrol arrested Mr. Arudyah, but his passenger, despite being handcuffed, managed to escape.

"The AK wasn't mine," Mr. Arudyah told the magistrate. And his friend, a security guard, was armed but didn't shoot, he said.

Mr. Hassan, the prosecutor, barely uttered a word as the cases proceeded, leaving Maj. Bercik to call his witnesses. Cpl. David Anderson, a tall, close-shaved Marine wearing a radio headset, told the magistrate that the motorcyclists tried to escape at more than 60 miles an hour. "They had thrown the AK-47 in a puddle of water trying to hide it from us," he testified.

Maj. Bercik requested that the court hold Mr. Arudyah for a full trial before a different judge, and the magistrate agreed. "I swear I was just giving him a ride," Mr. Arudyah told the magistrate, beginning to sob.

The two young men who entered the magistrate's office next presented a problem. Neither Maj. Bercik nor his Marines had any idea why the men had been arrested, and the men had no lawyer. To Maj. Bercik's surprise, the defendants announced that Mr. Hassan would defend them. To Maj. Bercik's greater surprise, the prosecutor consented.

"Uh, OK," the major said. Fishing, the major asked the men what happened the night they were arrested. The men said they were detained for having a weapon, but it was only an unloaded pistol.

"That's exactly what happened -- they committed no crime," the prosecutor-cum-defense attorney told the magistrate. Since his men hadn't kept records of the arrest and didn't recognize the faces, Maj. Bercik acquiesced. "I don't buy their story, but I have to prove my case."

The touchiest arraignment of the day involved two men -- "leg breakers" in the words of Maj. Bercik -- who had allegedly burst into the Karbala mayor's office and threatened to kill the mayor, Akram Mouhsen Al-Yasseri, unless he created a seat on the city council for their employer, a reputed crime boss. The mayor immediately complained to Marine officers.

Coalition troops arrested the men, Husein Abd Auda and Abas Miry, but the case soon began to unravel. The mayor withdrew his complaint and lobbied for the men's release. So did the respected chief of police. The Marines were sure they had been intimidated into recanting. At the hearing the men denied making threats and claimed to be dedicated democrats seeking the representation due them as citizens. "I saw on TV once that three people protested in front of the White House demanding their rights," Mr. Auda said. "I didn't threaten him; I asked him."

His best witnesses unwilling to testify, Maj. Bercik reluctantly retreated. The magistrate ordered the men released on bond while he decided whether to prosecute or impose a probation-like penalty.

Meantime, outside the magistrate's door, Mr. Khidir, the alleged grenade seller, roamed his cell and pondered his misfortune. Since his indictment last month, he had shaved his head to fend off lice. And he had placed an improvised American flag on the wall, along with a sign awkwardly praising coalition forces, the United States and the U.S.-appointed administrator of Iraq, L. Paul Bremer III.

It's a curious affinity, since the military went to great lengths to collect evidence against Mr. Khidir. Eight U.S. scout-snipers spent six weeks concealed in a hotel across from the Imam Al-Hussein Shrine, watching the marketplace because it has become a drug and arms exchange. Through a one-way mirrored window, the Marines took clear pictures of Mr. Khidir offering potential customers a handful of tomato-like Iraqi grenades.

His new defense: The grenades were for fishing -- throw one in the water and the fish float easily to the surface. Besides, he asked, why was it a crime to sell weapons at the weapons market? "That's what people do there," he said.

**Civil Service**  
**Marines Do It All In One Iraqi City; Now They're Going**  
**In Karbala, Bulgarians Balk At Many Roles Demanded, As U.S. Calls for More Help**  
**Who Runs the Police Academy?**

By Michael M. Phillips

KARBALA, Iraq -- In the gold-curtained City Council chamber here, Marine Lt. Col. Matthew Lopez gave the lowdown on various Iraqi councilmen to a Bulgarian colonel who's supposed to take over as the area's military commander next week.

The health minister isn't as trustworthy as the Americans once thought, Col. Lopez warned. The media minister had to be fired for censoring the papers. And the sports minister, Col. Lopez suspected, had a hand in the politically motivated dismissal of 400 teachers.

"You have to watch each of these guys very carefully," said Col. Lopez, the Karbala area's military governor.

The Bulgarian, Col. Panayot Panayotov, was dismayed. He had come to Karbala thinking the 455-man Bulgarian battalion's job was just to provide basic security here, not to ride herd on local politicians. So, just a few days after arriving, he told the Americans that he was sticking to the original security plan.

Now it's unclear who will run Karbala after Tuesday, when Col. Lopez, a 40-year-old from Chicago, and his 1,000-man force are supposed to begin heading home. It's a huge job: The U.S. troops were involved in everything from painting schools to training a new local police force. "It's impossible to do everything they have done," Col. Panayotov says.

The confusion in Karbala reflects a problem across Iraq that has suddenly become deeply serious. The U.S. urgently needs other countries to send more troops to Iraq. The demands of providing security and management while rebuilding Iraq have not only strained U.S. troops but also given potential relief troops second thoughts about how big a role they should play. Now, this week's bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, which capped off two weeks of increasingly sophisticated bombings around Iraq, has raised new questions about America's ability to keep order.

The issue of boosting non-U.S. troops in Iraq moved to the center of the international stage yesterday, during a meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan. They pledged an effort to pass a new Security Council resolution that would encourage more international participation, though there almost certainly will be disagreement between the U.S. and its allies over how much U.N. control over affairs in Iraq ought to be included in that resolution.

Mr. Powell made it clear that, in the wake of the bombing of the U.N. headquarters in Iraq, the Bush administration is eager to get more countries to send soldiers. "Perhaps additional language and a new resolution might encourage others," he said.

The Bush administration has lined up 30 countries willing, at least in theory, to contribute. Mr. Powell said 22,000 non-U.S. troops already are in Iraq, and that five nations are "in the process of making their final decisions to send troops."

Poland has already agreed to lead an 8,000-troop division that will comprise 2,300 Poles and the 455 Bulgarians as well as Spaniards, Latvians, Lithuanians, Romanians and others. The troops are in Iraq or Kuwait or on their way. Bulgaria, like most other countries that have agreed to participate, said it isn't wavering in the wake of the U.N. bombing. Elena Poptodorova, Bulgaria's ambassador to the U.S., said Wednesday that the attack would only "reconfirm our commitment. No matter how distressing this act was, there will be no change in our military program regarding Iraq."

But Ambassador Poptodorova also reiterated her country's desire for a broader U.N. role in the reconstruction of Iraq. And the Bulgarians' refusal on the ground here to assume the multiple roles that running a city entails suggests the U.S. will get less help than it hoped even from those still willing to come.

The Bulgarians' decision is especially troubling because, compared with the guerrilla-ridden Baghdad region, reconstruction in cities like Karbala in the fairly peaceful, Shiite-dominated south of Iraq was expected to be easier. Two multinational divisions are supposed to take control of southern Iraq by year's end, letting some of the roughly 140,000 U.S. troops go home. The British will lead one division and the Poles the second one. U.S. defense officials are talking to Pakistan about possibly leading a third multinational division by next March.

The effort in the Karbala region had an early setback when Fiji pulled out of the multinational force. That forced Polish commanders to spread combat troops and their own civil-affairs experts thin, and left few resources to devote to political and economic reconstruction.

As the departure of the Marines from Karbala approached, the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad promised to send a civilian governor, presumably an American, and a complete team of foreign civilian administrators to replace Col. Lopez and his civil-affairs troops by last Friday. The day came and went, however, with no word from Baghdad on when the civilian team might be named, much less be in place.

Its absence, combined with the unwillingness of the Bulgarians to go beyond a police role, could leave a huge political void in Karbala. The idea is that the U.S.-appointed civilian government team would take over from Col. Lopez and his team the power to decide everything from how money is spent to who will be on the City Council. The City Council, whose members were appointed by the U.S., can make many of those decisions itself, but Col. Lopez has had the authority to countermand its actions.

"It's important that a Coalition Provisional Authority government team be in place and act as the lead agent," Col. Lopez said. "If the CPA does what it's supposed to do, then the Poles and Bulgarians will be fine."

Marine officers are convinced, however, that with Baghdad and the Sunni areas of Iraq in such turmoil, coalition authorities in Baghdad are unlikely to address the power vacuum in the south anytime soon. Religious, tribal and political fissures could widen unless there's a strong coalition presence in local affairs for months to come, these officers say, and public corruption, barely contained by U.S. oversight, could well blister to the surface.

A coalition spokeswoman declined to say when the promised city-building team might be appointed, but she said it wouldn't matter because the small Army civil-affairs team will stay on in Karbala for a couple of weeks after the Marines leave.

Col. Panayotov, a 50-year-old career soldier, arrived on Aug. 1. He figured he'd spend a few weeks learning the ropes and then have his troops begin patrolling, checking vehicles, searching for weapons and otherwise keeping the Karbala region's 1.5 million residents safe.

The Bulgarians didn't bring city-management experts. Their battalion contains professional soldiers and a medical unit. The U.S. Marines, by contrast, relied on a detachment of Army civil-affairs reservists whose civilian careers complemented their work in Karbala. The reservists include a Massachusetts police detective, a New York state trooper, a Philadelphia lawyer with financial experience, a public-health nurse and a former suburban school-committee member.

The security situation itself should be manageable for the Bulgarians, unless guerrillas opposed to the occupation decide to test the newcomers' mettle. There have been a few incidents recently -- mortars launched at Marine positions, anti-American protesters pretending to be suicide bombers. But the town, which is home to two of the holiest shrines of Shiite Islam, is generally calm and welcoming. Most gunfire seems to be in celebration of weddings. The Marines don't wear body armor on foot patrols, and children still run out of their homes to wave at passing troops.

"Today it's stable," Col. Panayotov said. "Tomorrow it could be unstable."

The Marines had hoped the Bulgarians would do more than just keep the peace, however. When the Bulgarians arrived, Col. Lopez instructed his civil-affairs staff to remain "joined at the hip" with the Bulgarians to prepare them for the task of city-building. But the detailed U.S. briefings left the Bulgarian advance team often confused. The Americans listed their activities, including monitoring pension payments and helping prosecute criminal cases. An Army captain gave a 15-minute presentation on how the Americans have rebuilt Karbala's 2,000-man police force, including efforts to secure uniforms, weapons, badges, radios and police cruisers.

"Just one question," Col. Panayotov asked. "Who is going to run the police academy?"

"You," answered Col. Lopez, taken aback. Somebody, he said, has to oversee the new Iraqi police instructors. "There are a lot of areas where one or two people will have to do a lot of work."

An Aug. 3 City Council meeting gave the Bulgarians an up-close glimpse of the occupation's many facets. When Col. Lopez's Humvee pulled up at City Hall, an impatient crowd was gathered outside, demanding jobs, among other things. He ordered his staff to bring a small group of protesters inside to talk about positions as security guards at public facilities. "If you need jobs, if you need security, if you have information for us, we'd like to work with you," Col. Lopez told the crowd, through an interpreter.

Moments later, the vendor who supplies food for inmates at the city jail buttonholed the lieutenant colonel to complain about overdue bills. Col. Lopez told his officers to pay up. Then he

climbed the stairs to the red-carpeted City Council chamber, where gold-colored reliefs of grapes and fleurs-de-lis decorate the walls.

"I just hope the City Council supports the Bulgarian contingent as well as they did the coalition forces," Col. Lopez told the council members.

The compliment was somewhat disingenuous. Col. Lopez was furious with the sports minister, in particular, over the teacher firings. He had one of his officers warn the sports minister that the U.S. would oust him from the City Council if he didn't behave.

But it wasn't so simple. The Americans ordered the teachers rehired, but the council instead hired 1,200 other teachers, further angering the occupation commanders. The Americans later discovered they were mistaken about who was behind the firings; it apparently was the education minister, not the sports minister.

Complicating matters for the Bulgarians is the language barrier. Few of their officers speak English well, and even the nearly fluent colonel seemed to miss much of what the Marines told him in their jargon- and obscenity-filled version of the language. The only Arabic speaker in the Bulgarian battalion probably will work at headquarters, not in the streets.

Col. Lopez offered a \$20 bonus to any of his stable of English-Arabic interpreters who brought in an interpreter who could handle Bulgarian. They soon found two, and the colonel said he might raise the bounty to \$50 to flush out some more.

Within days of the Bulgarians' arrival, however, Col. Lopez and his staff noticed their lack of enthusiasm for nation-building tasks, just as the Marines were becoming more convinced that the occupation authorities in Baghdad weren't likely to provide civilian help soon. "The bottom line is the Bulgarians will still have to do all the functions," Col. Lopez told his staff on Aug. 5.

But by then, Col. Panayotov already had reported his unease to his superiors in the Bulgarian capital of Sofia. He delivered the news to the Marines the next day: He wasn't to take on the role of military governor, even on an interim basis. The Bulgarian battalion would provide security and nothing else. "We have to be realistic," Col. Panayotov explained, "and not over-jump our capabilities."

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David Luhnow and Greg Jaffe contributed to this article.

*August 25, 2003*

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### **Politics & Policy**

#### **Pentagon Rethinks Use of Cluster Bombs**

#### **Unexploded Bomblets in Iraq Create 'No Go' Areas That Impede Military Maneuvers**

By Michael M. Phillips in Karbala, Iraq, and Greg Jaffe in Washington

PENTAGON PLANNERS are rethinking how the military uses cluster bombs, because unexploded bomblets littering Iraq significantly impeded American troops' battlefield maneuverability.

Indeed, Marines trying to clean up unexploded ordnance in the Karbala region south of Baghdad say they are finding more deadly cluster bomblets than they expected, which are killing and maiming civilians and complicating U.S. reconstruction efforts.

"It's a big problem, and the military has come to recognize that it's not just a humanitarian problem, it's a military problem," says a senior Pentagon official recently back from Iraq. "You're creating 'no-go' areas on the battlefield. I don't think we appreciated that until this conflict."

At a time of increasingly precise weaponry, cluster bombs are among the most indiscriminate -- and thus controversial -- conventional munitions. Bomblets left over from the first Persian Gulf War killed 1,600 civilians and injured 2,500, according to a Human Rights Watch study. During and after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, they killed or injured at least 129 civilians, the group says.

Though long criticized for civilian cluster-bomb casualties, the Pentagon's current re-evaluation is being driven primarily by a tactical military consideration: Unexploded bomblets render significant swaths of battlefield off limits to advancing U.S. troops.

These bombs also pose a bigger headache for the Pentagon in Iraq because as an occupying power, U.S. troops not only must live amid the danger, but are responsible for the

health and well-being of Iraqi citizens -- which involves clearing the ordnance, a United Nations spokesman says.

Cluster bombs are designed to destroy armor and kill troops over wide areas. The bombs scatter as many as 900 individually armed bomblets in midair, across a wide area. The U.S. showered between 1 million and 1.5 million bomblets on Iraq during the three-week invasion earlier this year.

The military considers this weapon unsurpassed for attacking massed enemy troops. The trouble comes when the bomblets don't explode, which can happen when they land in soft marshes, sandy deserts or thick foliage.

Other countries that use cluster bombs have developed technology that limits the number of unexploded munitions, but Pentagon attempts to do so have encountered technical difficulties.

"The military should definitely have been more proactive, particularly when you see what other countries <...> have been able to do," says Bonnie Docherty, a Human Rights Watch researcher just back from Iraq.

The Defense Department hopes to start producing bomblets with dud rates of 1% or lower by early 2005, an Army official working on the program says. The Army also plans to equip some cluster bombs with precision-guidance kits to give commanders more control over where the bomblets land. And the Pentagon is taking a look at whether to use them as extensively as it has up to now.

The Pentagon said its tests show that between 2% and 6% of its bomblets don't explode on impact, which it considers acceptable at present. The General Accounting Office has found so-called dud rates as high as 16%, but Army officials call such estimates far too high. Precise rates in Iraq aren't available, but U.S. Marine experts in Karbala say they believe dud rates in some places were as much as 40%.

"It's absolutely overwhelming," says Staff Sgt. Steven Mannon, head of a two-man ordnance-disposal team there.

Moreover, they are in places they generally aren't supposed to be. The Pentagon had urged commanders to avoid using them in urban areas to minimize civilian casualties, but some populated areas are littered with unexploded munitions.

Marine explosives specialists in the hard-hit Karbala-Hillah area have destroyed more than 31,000 unexploded bomblets -- some Iraqi, most American -- that landed on fields, homes, factories and roads. Two were on the roof of a downtown hotel, one stuck in its soft tar. Many were in populated areas on Karbala's outskirts.

As the Marines prepare to turn over control of the region and the cleanup to multinational peacekeepers tomorrow, commanders say the job is nowhere near done. "There could be 100,000 of the things out there, for all we know," says Capt. George Schreffler, operations officer for the Third Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment.

It is impossible to say how many people have been killed or injured by leftover bomblets in Iraq. Unicef officials estimate more than 1,000 children have been wounded since the end of heavy combat by unexploded American and Iraqi munitions of all types.

In the two weeks following Saddam Hussein's fall on April 9, unexploded ordnance killed 23 and wounded 29 in Karbala, according to the city's General Hospital. The hospital hasn't kept track of civilian casualties since then, but bomb-disposal Marines say bomblets killed at least two Iraqis in the past two weeks alone. On July 2, a bomblet exploded during disposal, killing one Marine and seriously wounding another.

Many postwar casualties might have been avoided had the Army equipped the bomblets with self-destruct mechanisms like those used by Britain, Israel, France and Germany, say defense-industry officials and human-rights advocates. Developed by Israel in the late 1980s, such devices detonate bomblets that survive impact and reduce failure rates to less than 1%. They cost about \$12 to \$15 each.

The Army began developing what it considered even better self-destruct devices in the late 1990s, but officials say problems making batteries small enough to power them slowed their efforts. The Army plans to test four different self-destruct devices -- made by both foreign and domestic suppliers -- at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico this week.

Given cluster bombs' inherent danger, the Army official says, "there was a conscious effort by commanders not to use these weapons [IN IRAQ] unless necessary because of the hazard to advancing troops and civilians." During an April attack on Salman Pak, near Baghdad, Marine ground commanders requested air support and were told they could only get a cluster-bomb-armed B-52. The Marines declined because they didn't want U.S. troops moving into a maze of unexploded bomblets.

The Army's Third Infantry Division dropped hundreds of thousands of bomblets on Iraqi troops threatening routes to Baghdad. Later, cluster bomblets forced Iraqi soldiers armed with rocket-propelled grenades and shoulder-fired anti-aircraft guns to take cover inside buildings and tanks, allowing helicopters to swoop in and fire precision weapons.

While reluctant to second-guess Army battlefield decisions, many Marines in the Karbala region privately wonder why so many bomblets were dropped near civilians. The Marine ordnance-disposal team has found bomblets in date trees, vegetable gardens and inside homes, including closets. "It's a little horrifying to walk into a house and see a family with children living with all these cluster bombs," Sgt. Mannon says.

Marines searching for bomblets just outside Karbala found indications that two U.S. cluster-packed rockets hit the village of Imam Awn, where Iraqi troops were stationed near civilians. Called to the neighborhood repeatedly by panicked locals, the bomb-disposal team has destroyed about 100 bomblets there.

Despite eliminating a number of threats, the Marines encountered a mixed reception. Mohammed Habib, a 42-year-old farmer, stuffed pomegranates and pears into their fatigue pockets after they blew up 10 bomblets in his orchards. But Fahad Toma Abd, 40, fumed at the U.S. military for wounding four of his five children during the invasion. He found 169 bomblets on his farm and had most of them destroyed by an Iraqi free-lancer, who since has lost too many fingers to continue such work. Mr. Abd told the Marines he doesn't dare work his land, and his savings are running out. "The Army should clean up my farm for me, so I can go back to working as a farmer," he said.

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**Money Trail  
Getting Cash to Karbala Via Ambush Alley  
To Keep Iraq in Business, Dollars From New Jersey  
Bills Stuffed Under Burkas**

By Michael M. Phillips

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- In Iraq's cash-and-carry economy, someone has to carry the cash.

So with Iraq's financial system still little more than a bunch of piggy banks, the U.S. has improvised a money pipeline that runs from a New Jersey warehouse, to a Maryland air base, down Baghdad's Ambush Alley, and even, at times, underneath the black burkas of two middle-age female accountants -- until it ends up in the pockets of ordinary Iraqis.

Since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in April, that pipeline has moved \$1 billion to Iraq, part of a U.S. effort to calm the restive Iraqi public by paying salaries, pensions and stipends.

"I've seen more money here than I've ever seen in my life," said Maj. Anthony Henderson, executive officer of Third Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment. Since April, the battalion has been the main coalition military force -- and the last word on how the money is spent -- in Karbala, 45 miles southwest of Baghdad. The Marines are scheduled to turn over control of the city -- and the money -- to a Polish-led multinational division today.

The funds come from the accounts of the Iraqi government and state companies that the U.S. seized during Mr. Hussein's rule. But the cash itself comes from a Federal Reserve Bank of New York warehouse in East Rutherford, N.J. Under heavy security, private armored cars transport the bank notes to Andrews Air Force Base near Washington, then turn the money over to the military.

The Air Force usually flies the cash straight to Baghdad, where it is stored in vaults until it is needed elsewhere. "We're trying to get out of the security-guard business with payrolls, but right now payroll is a matter of public order," said Army Reserve Maj. Bernard Bercik, who is in charge of getting cash to Karbala. "If, God forbid, the payroll money got stolen, they'd burn the town down."

The first trick is getting the money out of Baghdad without getting mugged. That job fell most recently to Sgt. Adrian Vrolyks, of the 870th Military Police Company. For the convoy leaving Baghdad Aug. 13, the sergeant gathered a 5-ton Marine truck to carry the money itself, a captured SUV to carry the coalition's Iraqi bankers, and a small fleet of Humvees to carry rifles,

light machine guns and automatic grenade launchers capable of spewing out grenades at a rate of up to 400 a minute.

"If we make contact, we'll fight our way through it," said Sgt. Vrolyks, a sheriff's deputy in Monterey County, Calif., when his National Guard unit isn't on active duty.

The handoff had the earmarks of a drug deal. The convoy from Karbala pulled into a gravel parking lot in an isolated corner of the sprawling Baghdad International Airport. Soon, a small caravan of armored cars arrived from downtown Baghdad. One backed up to the rear of the Marine truck, the doors opened, and the crew quickly unloaded 10 plastic-wrapped blocks of American cash -- \$3 million in hundreds, twenties, tens and fives.

Jasim Rekin, deputy manager of the main Karbala branch of state-owned Rafidain bank, signed for the cash because the Americans insist such transfers be Iraqi to Iraqi. This was Mr. Rekin's seventh money run from Baghdad to Karbala.

Marine Lance Cpl. Mario Mottu, a 22-year-old from Gonzalez, Calif., drove the truck with the money in it. Lance Cpl. Jeffrey Garcia, 21, from Cleveland, rode shotgun. Cpl. Garcia locked a round into the chamber of his M-16 as they left the airport grounds and headed onto a highway so infamous that for a time the Army had a sign up officially designating it "Ambush Alley." There, guerrilla fighters fire from passing cars or set off remote-controlled booby traps. They suspend grenades on wires from overpasses, or simply drop them into passing military vehicles. The convoy passed unmolested. But as the group neared Karbala, Cpl. Garcia turned nervously to check on the cargo strapped down behind him. "I hope it doesn't fly out," he joked.

The occupying authority banks at the Rafidain branch in a looted downtown mall in Karbala, where the only other business open is a men's shirt store.

When the convoy arrived, the MPs fanned out to watch the main street, and the Marines backed into an alley. A team of bank employees carried the heavy blue bundles, labeled "Federal Reserve Bank, East Ruth.," into the vault.

The vault is a 20-by-20-foot room, with a speckled stone-tile floor, a barred door and 8-inch-thick walls. Along the walls are heavy beige metal cabinets filled with money. On top are piled the tattered remains of old dinars, the currency that circulated before the Gulf War led Saddam Hussein to create a new bill with his face on it. Old dinars still circulate in the Kurdish north, an area that was outside Mr. Hussein's control for his last dozen years in office, and the design will serve as the model for the new Iraqi dinar bills the Coalition Provisional Authority has ordered for October delivery.

On convoy day the cabinets also contained a blue-hued stack of 250-dinar notes, and a pink wall of 10,000 Saddam-dinar notes, which are so frequently counterfeited that Iraqis will pay only 7,500 dinars for them. There were dozens of clear-wrapped bundles, each containing 1,000 hundred-dollar bills. And there was a box that once contained U.S. military Meals, Ready-to-Eat, but now held bundles of one-dollar and five-dollar bills.

From Rafidain, the banknotes seep into the local economy as cash payments. In Karbala, Maj. Mike Kupchick, a Drug Enforcement Administration investigator from Pittsburgh, and Capt. Mark Baaden, a New York state trooper, oversee salary payments for 1,700 guards the coalition hired to secure the ammo dumps, cement factory, banks and other critical facilities. As a goodwill gesture, the soldiers offered a \$50 signing bonus -- one month's pay for the average guard.

But on bonus day last month, the guards nearly rioted as a rumor spread that there wasn't enough money to go around. And a gang of holdup men lurked just 20 feet away from the payroll office gate, robbing unarmed, off-duty security guards at knifepoint as they emerged with their cash.

This month, the Army was determined to quell any payday uprising. The heavily guarded convoy picked up \$92,900 from Rafidain, and the city accountant stuffed the money into a black plastic bag. But when the convoy arrived at the municipal building, the soldiers found about 200 protesters outside demanding electricity and water from the U.S.-led coalition. The accountant quickly handed the cash to Capt. Baaden, who tucked it under his desert camouflage fatigue shirt as the men weaved to avoid trouble, passing through the city jail courtyard, out the back gate, through another building, around the razor wire and into the payroll office.

To make sure nobody got out of line, security-force commanders, with U.S. support, had given nightsticks to a few guards and instructed them to keep the rest under tight control.

The coalition designed Iraq's new pension program, under which retired government employees and disabled Iraqis are entitled to \$60 every three months. To fill the kitty for the first day of payments, two female accountants from the Karbala pension office went to Rafidain with a government check and walked out with \$888,000 in hundred-dollar bills, stuffed in bags and hidden under their ankle-length burkas.

"It's camouflage," said one of the women. A pension office driver, armed with a pistol, gave them a lift back to work. "I recite verses from the Holy Quran to protect us from burglars," said the other woman.

Army officers and the bank manager were aghast when they learned of the women's derring-do and promised to provide armed escorts for the next pickup. In the meantime, the money filtered out to the white-bearded men, wrinkled women and eager moneychangers who gathered in the pension-office courtyard to receive the bounty of the burkas. Among them recently was Fatima Abd Ali, a 53-year-old widow, holding three crisp twenties. Under Mr. Hussein's regime, her pension was just \$10 every three months. Yet she still has trouble making ends meet. "It's not enough for one month, but, God willing, we'll make it," said Mrs. Ali.

*August 28, 2003*

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**Cpl. Youngs's Duty In Postwar Iraq: Playing Dear Abby  
In Karbala, Troops Lend Ear To Citizens' Gripes, Fears  
The CIA Wired My Foot**

By Michael M. Phillips

KARBALA, Iraq -- At 9:30 a.m., U.S. Army Cpl. Tyler Youngs gave the signal to open the doors and let Iraq's frustrations in off the street. Lined up outside the U.S.-run Civil-Military Information Center were: Farmers with clogged irrigation canals. Would-be inventors looking for a backer. Former military men yearning for respect. Elderly women with ungrateful children. Frantic delusionals seeking relief from their own imaginations.

They all wanted American troops to solve their problems -- or at least lend a sympathetic ear.

Conceived as an outlet for locals who have complaints about the military occupation, the center has instead turned into a forum for airing complaints about anything at all. It's a sort of government-run Dear Abby. "We want people to take personal responsibility and do things for themselves," says Sgt. Timothy Michael Hoffman, a 30-year-old Army reservist. But "they've been told what to do for so long they don't know how to do it for themselves."

Back home in Green Bay, Wis., Sgt. Hoffman spent his workdays fielding customer complaints at the local Chrysler dealership. In Karbala, a city of 750,000 residents 45 miles south of Baghdad, his workday starts when he straps on a bulletproof vest, shoulders his rifle and convoys with four Army colleagues from their base to the one-room center. It sits alongside the local municipal building, where the U.S.-appointed city council meets under coalition supervision. There is a sandbagged defensive emplacement on the roof, and a spiral of razor wire on the sidewalk.

First through the floodgates on an August Tuesday morning were four former Iraqi military men who claimed to represent a nebulous political group called the Free Officer and Civilian Movement. "We want a meeting with the colonel," said their leader, Koder Muhsen Abed Ali.

"No," Cpl. Youngs responded. The corporal, a 28-year-old who shoes horses for a living in Reed City, Mich., figured out with the help of a translator that what the men wanted most was to present themselves as allies of the coalition forces. They also wanted to set up offices in two floors of a government building that had housed Saddam Hussein's feared secret police, and they wouldn't mind getting jobs.

The discussion attracted the attention of Army Maj. Frank Curtis, who was concerned that the Iraqis might use a perceived coalition endorsement to take up arms against other Iraqis.

He warned the men repeatedly that their party ID cards don't authorize them to carry weapons on the streets: "I want to be clear we're not authorizing any additional security forces," he told them.

The 43-year-old major, a senior marketing representative in Philadelphia for Anheuser-Busch Cos., advised the men to contact the Iraqi city council and mayor -- called the governor here -- if they wanted to rent a city-owned building. Mr. Ali then asked for a letter of introduction to strengthen his hand with the governor.

"You're living in a new era," Maj. Curtis told them before they left. "In the new era, you're a free person and have the right to go and talk to the governor. I want you to think like a free, independent person. Coalition forces are not going to be here forever writing letters on your behalf."

Down the counter, Amer Jabr, a man with graying hair, approached Sgt. Hoffman to ask for a job as a journalist. The sergeant turned him down but suggested Mr. Jabr start his own news outlet and voice his opinions directly to the public. Mr. Jabr was disappointed. "I'll try to establish a paper or magazine, but it will be against the Baath Party and the Americans at the same time," he said, smiling.

Amar Odah Obed, 29, was making his second visit to the center in two days. The day before, he had asked the soldiers to pressure his boss at the cement factory to renew his contract; they declined. Now he wanted \$500 to pay for an operation for his disabled brother. "I can't get this money because I don't have a job," Mr. Obed said.

Sgt. Hoffman wrote the man's name in the daily case log for referral to international aid organizations -- whenever they start working in Karbala.

Medical issues are common at the center. There was the woman recovering from breast cancer who needed follow-up treatment in Jordan but wasn't sure where to get a passport. There was the herbalist who claimed to have discovered that a compound made from a common local plant clears up cancer in five to seven days. One man walked into the center not long ago and lifted his robe above his waist, to expose his cancerous genitals to the shocked soldiers.

Famous among the troops was the woman who claimed that the Central Intelligence Agency had implanted a video camera in her stomach and a recording device in her foot. She said she had spied for the Americans and was now worried that she might be forced to spy on them. Sgt. Hoffman knew of no mental-health facility in Karbala, so he improvised. He told the woman that the U.S. was jamming her video implant via satellite to keep it from bothering her, and that once the American troops leave Karbala, the camera and recording device would dissolve harmlessly. "She left feeling somewhat better," Sgt. Hoffman said.

Other complaints are more firmly grounded in reality. A taxi driver brought in photos of his cab crushed by a 7-ton Marine truck. He sought \$6,000 in damages, a sum the Marines planned to pay. Another man's red Volkswagen Golf was erroneously seized by Marines and then plundered by thieves while it was in U.S. custody. The Marines expected to pay \$2,000 for new seats, radiator, alternator, battery and other parts.

The Marines were eager to clear up their financial obligations before they turned Karbala over to a battalion of Bulgarian peacekeepers on Tuesday. The change of command now leaves the complaint desk in limbo. An Army civil-affairs team is staying for at least a week, and maybe a month. But it isn't clear whether the Poles, who command the multinational division that includes the Bulgarians, will step in to run the complaint center, or whether the city council will take over its operation.

Meanwhile, the complaints kept rolling in. Khathema Mahdy, a leathery 78-year-old whose black burka has faded to gray, came seeking food and money. In exchange, she offered to go to the city's two holy Shiite Muslim shrines and pray for whoever might be kind enough to help her. The soldiers sent her to the Ministry of Benefits and Social Security, but she returned minutes later to report that the ministry bureaucrats had already told her that her two sons should take responsibility for her. "My sons just take care of their wives, and not me," she complained. The soldiers suggested she contact the local Islamic charities, and then the Red Crescent.

At one point Cpl. Youngs looked up and saw Sabah Ahmed, a farmer in a white robe and red-checked kaffiyeh who looked far older than his 42 years. The corporal recognized the face; Mr. Sabah had been at the counter 10 minutes earlier complaining that the city council had done nothing to clear out his irrigation canals. Cpl. Youngs opened his logbook and pointed to the earlier complaint.

"That is problem No. 1," Mr. Ahmed explained. Problem No. 2 was that his farmers' organization wants access to an office building now inhabited -- illegally, he said -- by a dozen members of the Communist Party.

The police "need to get a little rough and have them move," said Cpl. Youngs, promising to ask the Army's agricultural liaison whether the military could intervene to speed the eviction. Mr. Ahmed watched as the corporal added the latest complaint to his logbook.

"Tomorrow," Mr. Ahmed said, "I'll come with a third problem."

*May 10, 2004*

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### **The Abu Ghraib Fallout: Marines in Iraq See Prison Photos Creating Enemies**

By Michael M. Phillips

QA'IM, Iraq -- Watching a computer screen in a U.S. Marines command post here this weekend, Sgt. Maj. Philip Freed stared in disbelief at a photo of Army Pfc. Lynndie England holding a leash attached to a naked Iraqi prisoner.

"Ooh -- not good," Sgt. Maj. Freed said, wincing. "Not good."

In the U.S., the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by American soldiers at Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison is causing both strategic and political problems for Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. But on the battlefield, the revelations are stirring anger, dismay and deep concern that the scandal is creating more enemies for U.S. troops. The Abu Ghraib situation also has put the U.S. military on the defensive on the public-relations front.

"A lot of Marines may get killed because of these idiots [the Army prison guards]," said 1st Lt. Justin Engelhardt, 28 years old, of Denison, Iowa.

The Third Battalion of the Seventh Marine Regiment is about as isolated a military unit as there is in Iraq. Its positions are spread among a series of towns along the Euphrates River and the Syrian border. Only now are these troops seeing -- via military Internet hookups and military newspapers -- the incriminating photos of abuse at Abu Ghraib.

"What's bad is this is undermining everything guys are putting their lives on the line for on a daily basis," said the Sgt. Maj. Freed, 41, of Colusa, Calif.

With the Baghdad photos in mind, U.S. commanders have barred the use of empty sandbags to hood detainees. American troops had used this technique to prevent captives from seeing the layout of the U.S. bases where they are held. Now military interrogators are looking over their shoulders, worried that hitherto accepted tactics, even if within the rules, will be seen as excessively harsh.

Maj. Anthony Henderson, the battalion executive officer, fears such disturbing images of U.S. forces will weaken public support for the war and the troops. The Marines insist they have strictly adhered to military and international guidelines for humane treatment of prisoners. Marine officials are investigating the death of a detainee in their custody last month. Initial Marine reports suggest the Iraqi died when, during the middle of a firefight, he tried to escape through a window, landed on his head and then refused medical attention, officials said.

The Qa'im facility houses some 50 prisoners, under the charge of First Lt. Jesse Larca, 31, from Jordan, Minn. Military rules allow the Marines to keep detainees in Qa'im for a limited period of time before they must be released or sent up to the regimental facility. A doctor or corpsman examines the prisoners each morning, and again immediately after any interrogation, officials said.

"I run my facility the way it's supposed to be run -- no doubt in my mind," said Lt. Larca. He says he has no interest in seeing the Abu Ghraib photos. But over a dinner of processed turkey and canned peaches this weekend, Maj. Henderson encouraged his officers to take a good look to see exactly how they don't want to behave.

"That was dehumanization for the point of . . .," he said, pausing to search for the right word.

"Entertainment," finished Maj. George Schreffler, 32, of Harrisburg, Pa.

*May 24, 2004*

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### **U.S. Marines, Counterparts at Syrian Border Maintain Civility**

By Michael M. Phillips

HUSAYBAH, Iraq -- From his small rooftop guard post, U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Ken Barclay saw a muzzle flash in a nearby field and heard rounds zip over his head. Peering through his scope in the failing light of dusk, he picked out three black-robed men with a machine gun and barked to his superior: "I'm taking the shot." Then he squeezed the trigger.

Amid the surge in violence across Iraq, the May 16th incident was minor. The attackers fired perhaps a dozen shots, the Marines just two. The shooters fled, and neither side suffered any apparent casualties. What made the event unusual was that the attackers weren't in Iraq; they were firing at the Marine base from across the Syrian border. Even more significant was the way the Marines and Syrians dealt with the aftermath.

Relations between Washington and Damascus have taken a sharp turn for the worse lately, with President Bush imposing economic sanctions on Syria this month for its alleged failure to stop fighters from crossing into Iraq to fuel the insurgency. The latest U.S. attempt to counter the infiltration -- an airstrike Wednesday near the border that killed more than 40 people -- may have backfired badly. Iraqis said the military had hit a wedding party, while the U.S. said the target was a safehouse for fighters entering from Syria.

But here -- the only place in the world where U.S. combat troops and armed Syrian border officials regularly stand just yards apart -- both sides find pragmatic ways to keep things civil. From quelling cross-border violence to easing the flow of traffic between Iraq and Syria, U.S. Marines from the Third Battalion, Seventh Regiment, and their Syrian counterparts handle most of their problems by meeting at the frontier and talking them over.

Husaybah is the last U.S. outpost in a string of Sunni Muslim towns running from Fallujah to Ramadi and westward along the Euphrates River. The city of 100,000 people has been relatively quiet since a spasm of fighting a month ago that left five Marines and dozens of Iraqi fighters dead. Still, the anti-U.S. hostility shows itself in cold glares, roadside bombings and, recently, a large protest outside the sandbagged compound where several hundred Marines and sailors live.

The base abuts the disputed, 50-yard no-man's land separating Iraq and Syria, and the border crossing itself is just a two-minute walk away. Last week, Capt. Dominique Neal took eight Marines and a translator and strode casually to the Syrian line. A soft-spoken 29-year-old from San Francisco, the captain assumed command of Lima Company after his predecessor was killed in last month's fighting. Taking care not to step past the red-and-white border gate -- even though it was open -- Capt. Neal shook hands with the mustachioed Syrian immigration official, a Maj. Muhammad, who wore a crisp tan uniform and gold-rimmed aviator sunglasses. "My concern is that security measures in Syria did not prevent this from happening," Capt. Neal told the major.

Maj. Muhammad assured Capt. Neal that no Syrian immigration official had been involved in the firefight. His men, he said, have no machine guns, just assault rifles, and even those he takes away from them at closing time to avoid mishaps. Besides, he said, Syrian border police -- not the immigration office -- are responsible beyond the actual crossing area. Maj. Muhammad nevertheless promised to report the incident to his superiors. "We don't want anybody to do anything stupid," he told the captain. "Trust me -- we're trying really hard to keep things safe."

The Marines at Husaybah aren't certain whether the shooters were Syrians or Iraqis who had crossed the border to take a shot from a position of relative safety -- the theory the Syrians

put forth. "They've got pure immunity over there, so you're going to get a few people trying to test us from the far side of the wire," said Sgt. Jason Delgado, a 23-year-old sniper from New York City.

Many day-to-day issues facing the Americans and Syrians on the border have to do with controlling movements of cargo and people. Marines and Iraqi customs officials in Husaybah examine every vehicle that enters or leaves Iraq.

A few hours before the cross-border shooting, Staff Sgt. Matthew St. Pierre, 29, of Vallejo, Calif., walked up to the Syrian gate to raise a logistical concern with Maj. Muhammad. When the border closes at 5 p.m. daily, many cars get stuck in the no-man's land -- outside Syria but not yet inside Iraq -- where they are vulnerable to insurgent mortar and rocket attacks.

The major readily agreed to allow just one car at a time into no-man's land in the late afternoon, but he also had a request of his own: "Could you guys please speed it up?" One pickup driver with a load of furniture stacked 10-feet high had gotten in line at 4:30 a.m. and finally crossed at 2:30 p.m.

"We'll go as fast as we can," Staff Sgt. St. Pierre said. "But we're not going to endanger our security." A couple of days later, the Marines closed off Syria-bound traffic for two hours and doubled the Iraq-bound customs lanes to allow the Syrians to clear some of their own backlog.

*May 25, 2004*

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**Act of Valor:  
In Combat, Marine Put Theory to Test, Comrades Believe  
Cpl. Dunham's Quick Action In Face of a Grenade Saved 2 Lives, They Say  
'No, No -- Watch His Hand!'**

By Michael M. Phillips

AL QA'IM, Iraq -- Early this spring, Cpl. Jason Dunham and two other Marines sat in an outpost in Iraq and traded theories on surviving a hand-grenade attack.

Second Lt. Brian "Bull" Robinson suggested that if a Marine lay face down on the grenade and held it between his forearms, the ceramic bulletproof plate in his flak vest might be strong enough to protect his vital organs. His arms would shatter, but he might live.

Cpl. Dunham had another idea: A Marine's Kevlar helmet held over the grenade might contain the blast. "I'll bet a Kevlar would stop it," he said, according to Second Lt. Robinson.

"No, it'll still mess you up," Staff Sgt. John Ferguson recalls saying.

It was a conversation the men would remember vividly a few weeks later, when they saw the shredded remains of Cpl. Dunham's helmet, apparently blown apart from the inside by a grenade. Fellow Marines believe Cpl. Dunham's actions saved the lives of two men and have recommended him for the Medal of Honor, an award that no act of heroism since 1993 has garnered.

A 6-foot-1 star high-school athlete from Scio, N.Y., Cpl. Dunham was chosen to become a squad leader shortly after he was assigned to Kilo Company, Third Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment in September 2003. Just 22 years old, he showed "the kind of leadership where you're confident in your abilities and don't have to yell about it," says Staff Sgt. Ferguson, 30, of Aurora, Colo. Cpl. Dunham's reputation grew when he extended his enlistment, due to end in July, so he could stay with his squad throughout its tour in the war zone.

During the invasion of Iraq last year, the Third Battalion didn't suffer any combat casualties. But since March, 10 of its 900 Marines have died from hostile fire, and 89 have been wounded.

April 14 was an especially bad day. Cpl. Dunham was in the town of Karabilah, leading a 14-man foot patrol to scout sites for a new base, when radio reports came pouring in about a roadside bomb hitting another group of Marines not far away.

Insurgents, the reports said, had ambushed a convoy that included the battalion commander, 40-year-old Lt. Col. Matthew Lopez, of Chicago. One rifle shot penetrated the rear of the commander's Humvee, hitting him in the back, Lt. Col. Lopez says. His translator and bodyguard, Lance Cpl. Akram Falah, 23, of Anaheim, Calif., had taken a bullet to the bicep, severing an artery, according to medical reports filed later.

Cpl. Dunham's patrol jumped aboard some Humvees and raced toward the convoy. Near the double-arched gateway of the town of Husaybah, they heard the distinctive whizzing sound of a rocket-propelled grenade overhead. They left their vehicles and split into two teams to hunt for the shooters, according to interviews with two men who were there and written reports from two others.

Around 12:15 p.m., Cpl. Dunham's team came to an intersection and saw a line of seven Iraqi vehicles along a dirt alleyway, according to Staff Sgt. Ferguson and others there. At Staff Sgt. Ferguson's instruction, they started checking the vehicles for weapons.

Cpl. Dunham approached a run-down white Toyota Land Cruiser. The driver, an Iraqi in a black track suit and loafers, immediately lunged out and grabbed the corporal by the throat, according to men at the scene. Cpl. Dunham kned the man in the chest, and the two tumbled to the ground.

Two other Marines rushed to the scene. Private First Class Kelly Miller, 21, of Eureka, Calif., ran from the passenger side of the vehicle and put a choke hold around the man's neck. But the Iraqi continued to struggle, according to a military report Pfc. Miller gave later. Lance Cpl. William B. Hampton, 22, of Woodinville, Wash., also ran to help.

A few yards away, Lance Cpl. Jason Sanders, 21, a radio operator from McAlester, Okla., says he heard Cpl. Dunham yell a warning: "No, no, no -- watch his hand!"

What was in the Iraqi's hand appears to have been a British-made "Mills Bomb" hand grenade. The Marines later found an unexploded Mills Bomb in the Toyota, along with AK-47 assault rifles and rocket-propelled-grenade launchers.

A Mills Bomb user pulls a ring pin out and squeezes the external lever -- called the spoon -- until he's ready to throw it. Then he releases the spoon, leaving the bomb armed. Typically, three to five seconds elapse between the time the spoon detaches and the grenade explodes. The Marines later found what they believe to have been the grenade's pin on the floor of the Toyota, suggesting that the Iraqi had the grenade in his hand -- on a hair trigger -- even as he wrestled with Cpl. Dunham.

None of the other Marines saw exactly what Cpl. Dunham did, or even saw the grenade. But they believe Cpl. Dunham spotted the grenade -- prompting his warning cry -- and, when it rolled loose, placed his helmet and body on top of it to protect his squadmates.

The scraps of Kevlar found later, scattered across the street, supported their conclusion. The grenade, they think, must have been inside the helmet when it exploded. His fellow Marines believe that Cpl. Dunham made an instantaneous decision to try out his theory that a helmet might blunt the grenade blast.

"I deeply believe that given the facts and evidence presented he clearly understood the situation and attempted to block the blast of the grenade from his squad members," Lt. Col. Lopez wrote in a May 13 letter recommending Cpl. Dunham for the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for military valor. "His personal action was far beyond the call of duty and saved the lives of his fellow Marines."

Recommendations for the Medal of Honor are rare. The Marines say they have no other candidates awaiting approval. Unlike other awards, the Medal of Honor must be approved by the president. The most recent act of heroism to earn the medal came 11 years ago, when two Army Delta Force soldiers gave their lives protecting a downed Blackhawk helicopter pilot in Somalia.

Staff Sgt. Ferguson was crossing the street to help when the grenade exploded. He recalls feeling a hollow punch in his chest that reminded him of being close to the starting line when dragsters gun their engines. Lance Cpl. Sanders, approaching the scene, was temporarily deafened, he says. He assumed all three Marines and the Iraqi must surely be dead.

In fact, the explosion left Cpl. Dunham unconscious and face down in his own blood, according to Lance Cpl. Sanders. He says the Iraqi lay on his back, bleeding from his midsection.

The fight wasn't over, however. To Lance Cpl. Sanders's surprise, the Iraqi got up and ran. Lance Cpl. Sanders says he raised his rifle and fired 25 shots at the man's back, killing him.

The other two Marines were injured, but alive. Lance Cpl. Hampton was spitting up blood and had shrapnel embedded in his left leg, knee, arm and face, according to a military transcript. Pfc. Miller's arms had been perforated by shrapnel. Yet both Marines struggled to their feet and staggered back toward the corner.

"Cpl. Dunham was in the middle of the explosion," Pfc. Miller told a Marine officer weeks later, after he and Lance Cpl. Hampton were evacuated to the U.S. to convalesce. "If it was not for him, none of us would be here. He took the impact of the explosion."

At first, Lance Cpl. Mark Edward Dean, a 22-year-old mortarman, didn't recognize the wounded Marine being loaded into the back of his Humvee. Blood from shrapnel wounds in the Marine's head and neck had covered his face. Then Lance Cpl. Dean spotted the tattoo on his

chest -- an Ace of Spades and a skull -- and realized he was looking at one of his closest friends, Cpl. Dunham. A volunteer firefighter back home in Owasso, Okla., Lance Cpl. Dean says he knew from his experience with car wrecks that his friend had a better chance of surviving if he stayed calm.

"You're going to be all right," Lance Cpl. Dean remembers saying as the Humvee sped back to camp. "We're going to get you home."

When the battalion was at its base in Twentynine Palms, Calif., the two Marines had played pool and hung out with Lance Cpl. Dean's wife, Becky Jo, at the couple's nearby home. Once in a while, Lance Cpl. Dean says they'd round up friends, drive to Las Vegas and lose some money at the roulette tables. Shortly before the battalion left Kuwait for Iraq, Lance Cpl. Dean ran short of cash. He says Cpl. Dunham bought him a 550-minute phone card so he could call Becky Jo. He used every minute.

At battalion headquarters in al Qa'im, Chaplain David Slater was in his makeshift chapel -- in a stripped-down Iraqi train car with red plastic chairs as pews -- when he heard an Army Blackhawk helicopter take off. The 46-year-old Navy chaplain from Lincoln, Neb. knew that meant the shock-trauma platoon would soon receive fresh casualties.

Shortly afterward, the helicopter arrived. Navy corpsmen and Marines carried Cpl. Dunham's stretcher 200 feet to the medical tent, its green floor and white walls emitting a rubbery scent, clumps of stethoscopes hanging like bananas over olive-drab trunks of chest tubes, bandages and emergency airway tubes.

The bearers rested the corporal's stretcher on a pair of black metal sawhorses. A wounded Iraqi fighter was stripped naked on the next stretcher -- standard practice for all patients, according to the medical staff, to ensure no injury goes unnoticed. The Iraqi had plastic cuffs on his ankles and was on morphine to quiet him, according to medical personnel who were there.

When a wounded Marine is conscious, Chaplain Slater makes small talk -- asks his name and hometown -- to help keep the patient calm and alert even in the face of often-horrific wounds. Chaplain Slater says he talked to Cpl. Dunham, held his hand and prayed. But he saw no sign that the corporal heard a word. After five minutes or so, he says, he moved on to another Marine.

At the same time, the medical team worked to stabilize Cpl. Dunham. One grenade fragment had penetrated the left side of his skull not far behind his eye, says Navy Cmdr. Ed Hessel, who treated him. A second entered the brain slightly higher and further toward the back of his head. A third punctured his neck.

Cmdr. Hessel, a 44-year-old emergency-room doctor from Eugene, Ore., quickly concluded that the corporal was "unarousable." A calm, bespectacled man, he says he wanted to relieve the corporal's brain and body of the effort required to breathe. And he wanted to be sure the corporal had no violent physical reactions that might add to the pressure on his already swollen brain.

Navy Lt. Ted Hering, a 27-year-old critical-care nurse from San Diego, inserted an intravenous drip and fed in drugs to sedate the corporal, paralyze his muscles and blunt the gag response in his throat while a breathing tube was inserted and manual ventilator attached. The Marine's heart rate and blood pressure stabilized, according to Cmdr. Hessel. But a field hospital in the desert didn't have the resources to help him any further.

So Cpl. Dunham was put on another Blackhawk to take him to the Seventh Marines' base at Al Asad, a transfer point for casualties heading on to the military surgical hospital in Baghdad. During the flight, the corporal lay on the top stretcher. Beneath him was the Iraqi, with two tubes protruding from his chest to keep his lungs from collapsing. Lt. Hering stood next to the stretchers, squeezing a plastic bag every four to five seconds to press air into Cpl. Dunham's lungs.

The Iraqi, identified in battalion medical records only as POWGBP 1, repeatedly asked for water until six or seven minutes before landing, when Cpl. Dunham's blood-drenched head bandage burst, sending a red cascade through the mesh stretcher and onto the Iraqi's face below. After that, the man remained quiet, and kept his eyes and mouth clenched shut, says the nurse, Lt. Hering.

The Army air crew made the trip in 25 minutes, their fastest run ever, according to the pilot, and skimmed no higher than 50 feet off the ground to avoid changes in air pressure that might put additional strain on Cpl. Dunham's brain.

When the Blackhawk touched down at Al Asad, Cpl. Dunham was turned over to new caretakers. The Blackhawk promptly headed back to al Qa'im. More patients were waiting; 10 Marines from the Third Battalion were wounded on April 14, along with a translator.

At 11:45 p.m. that day, Deb and Dan Dunham were at home in Scio, N.Y., a town of 1,900, when they got the phone call all military parents dread. It was a Marine lieutenant telling them their son had sustained shrapnel wounds to the head, was unconscious and in critical condition.

Mr. Dunham, 43, an Air Force veteran, works in the shipping department of a company that makes industrial heaters, and Mrs. Dunham, 44, teaches home economics. She remembers helping her athletic son, the oldest of four, learn to spell as a young boy by playing "PIG" and "HORSE" -- traditional basketball shooting games -- and expanding the games to include other words. He never left home or hung up the phone without telling his mother, "I love you," she says.

The days that followed were filled with uncertainty, fear and hope. The Dunhams knew their son was in a hospital in Baghdad, then in Germany, where surgeons removed part of his skull to relieve the swelling inside. At one point doctors upgraded his condition from critical to serious.

On April 21, the Marines gave the Dunhams plane tickets from Rochester to Washington, and put them up at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., where their son was going to be transferred. Mrs. Dunham brought along the first Harry Potter novel, so she and her husband could take turns reading to their son, just to let him know they were there.

When Cpl. Dunham arrived that night, the doctors told the couple he had taken a turn for the worse, picking up a fever on the flight from Germany. After an hour by their son's side, Mr. Dunham says he had a "gut feeling" that the outlook was bleak. Mrs. Dunham searched for signs of hope, planning to ask relatives to bring two more Harry Potter books, in case they finished the first one. Doctors urged the Dunhams to get some rest.

They were getting dressed the next morning when the intensive-care unit called to say the hospital was sending a car for them. "Jason's condition is very, very grim," Mrs. Dunham remembers a doctor saying. "I have to tell you the outlook isn't very promising."

She says doctors told her the shrapnel had traveled down the side of his brain, and the damage was irreversible. He would always be on a respirator. He would never hear his parents or know they were by his side. Another operation to relieve pressure on his brain had little chance of succeeding and a significant chance of killing him.

Once he joined the Marines, Cpl. Dunham put his father in charge of medical decisions and asked that he not be kept on life support if there was no hope of recovery, says Mr. Dunham. He says his son told him, "Please don't leave me like that."

The Dunhams went for a walk on the hospital grounds. When they returned to the room, Cpl. Dunham's condition had deteriorated, his mother says. Blood in his urine signaled failing kidneys, and one lung had collapsed as the other was filling with fluid. Mrs. Dunham says they took the worsening symptoms as their son's way of telling them they should follow through on his wishes.

At the base in al Qa'im, Second Lt. Robinson, 24, of Kenosha, Wis., gathered the men of Cpl. Dunham's platoon in the sleeping area, a spread of cots, backpacks, CD players and rifles, its plywood walls papered with magazine shots of scantily clad women. The lieutenant says he told the Marines of the Dunhams' decision to remove their son's life support in two hours' time.

Lance Cpl. Dean wasn't the only Marine who cried. He says he prayed that some miracle would happen in the next 120 minutes. He prayed that God would touch his friend and wake him up so he could live the life he had wanted to lead.

In Bethesda, the Dunhams spent a couple more hours with their son. Marine Corps Commandant Michael Hagee arrived and pinned the Purple Heart, awarded to those wounded in battle, on his pillow. Mrs. Dunham cried on Gen. Hagee's shoulder. The Dunhams stepped out of the room while the doctors removed the ventilator.

At 4:43 p.m. on April 22, 2004, Marine Cpl. Jason L. Dunham died.

Six days later, Third Battalion gathered in the parking lot outside the al Qa'im command post for psalms and ceremony. In a traditional combat memorial, one Marine plunged a rifle, bayonet-first, into a sandbag. Another placed a pair of tan combat boots in front, and a third perched a helmet on the rifle's stock. Lance Cpl. Dean told those assembled about a trip to Las Vegas the two men and Becky Jo Dean had taken in January, not long before the battalion left for the Persian Gulf. Chatting in a hotel room, the corporal told his friends he was planning to extend his enlistment and stay in Iraq for the battalion's entire tour. "You're crazy for extending," Lance Cpl. Dean recalls saying. "Why?"

He says Cpl. Dunham responded: "I want to make sure everyone makes it home alive. I want to be sure you go home to your wife alive."

(See related letters: "Letters to the Editor: 'The Last Full Measure of Devotion'" -- WSJ  
May 28, 2004)

*May 28, 2004*  
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**Letters to the Editor about Cpl. Jason Dunham**  
**'The Last Full Measure of Devotion'**

I wish to express to your reporter Michael M. Phillips my gratitude for bringing forth this heart-wrenching, important story ("Act of Valor: In Combat, Marine Put Theory to Test, Comrades Believe," May 25), which I will share with my family. It was written in a dignified and poignant way. My heart goes out to the family of Cpl. Jason Dunham; my heart is broken for them. Thank you for reporting about the true heroes who put their lives on the line to protect my freedom. Their efforts do not go unnoticed, thanks to reporters like you. My thoughts and prayers go out to their families.

Thomas G. Haupt  
Phoenix, Ariz.

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Your article brought tears to my eyes. I thank Jason Dunham, posthumously, for his valor, bravery and sacrifice, and to all military service personnel for their sacrifice for our country and freedom.

For those who feel this courageous man died in vain, please remember the first World Trade Center bombing, Sept. 11, the Madrid train bombing, embassy bombings, the USS Cole attack, shoe bomber Richard Reid, the Bali nightclub bombing and the many other attempts to terrorize the world. Our soldiers are bravely defending the homeland against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

Christopher J. Fuller  
Former U.S. Air Force Enlisted  
Jacksonville, Fla.

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What a contrast between your two page-one lead stories on May 25. A young Marine who made the ultimate sacrifice, and the New York Stock Exchange executive who gave himself a 13 rating out of a possible 10 and won't sacrifice any of the millions he "earned" ("Spitzer Files Suit Seeking Millions of Grasso Money").

Claire McPherson  
Gualala, Calif.

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I'm sorry. I've been crying. And I can't stop.

After reading your article about Mr. Grasso's compensation (legal or not), his blistering op-ed response, and your editorial -- and whatever all that petty bickering suggests about sums so enormous that few Americans can even imagine them -- I read Mr. Phillips's moving story about Cpl. Dunham's selfless heroism. I lingered on his every word, every moment, every explosion, every turn for the worse, every hope for survival. Then the devastating news: "At 4:43 p.m. on April 22, Marine Cpl. Jason L. Dunham died."

Look, I'm just a businessman. And a Republican too. But I hope and pray that all of us who have basked in the glorious financial excesses of modern-day managers' capitalism will take a brief timeout from all of our getting and our self-important lives, get down on our knees and say a prayer for those who have given -- sadly, on our behalf -- what Lincoln called "the last full measure of devotion."

Maybe then my tears will dry. But I hope not.

John C. Bogle  
Valley Forge, Pa.

(Mr. Bogle is founder and former CEO of The Vanguard Group.)

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Cpl. Dunham's name will be long remembered with honor, while Mr. Grasso's will always be linked with shameful avarice.

Gabriel Alvandian  
West Haven, Conn.

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I wanted to thank Mr. Phillips for the heartfelt and reverent story of Cpl. Dunham. I plan to read it to my two young sons tonight before bed. I must admit I cried when his parents removed the life support. What an incredible soldier! I wish he had survived. Cpl. Dunham and his family will be in our prayers.

Bob Glover  
Princeton, N.J.

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I find very little press worth reading. As an American and former Marine, I thank you for your kind words on one of the many souls who have sacrificed their life and liberty for this country. I had the pleasure of serving with countless Marines who resemble the profile of Cpl. Dunham and can assure you that there are scores of soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who are of similar character. In these trying times it is good to see that some journalists and editors are willing to give old depressed vets, like me, something to be proud of: a common hero.

We need Americans to know that Adm. Nimitz's World War II words -- "uncommon valor was a common virtue" -- are still alive today. Semper Fidelis.

John H. Sawtelle  
San Jose, Calif.

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I read with sadness about Cpl. Dunham's bravery. I am not sure if there was a motive -- make us feel angry about the war, make us feel patriotic in seeing the great sacrifice. For me, I see the nobility of our young men who die for one another, and the members of our incredible medical corps, who save the hero and the enemy with the same compassion. We are not a perfect nation -- yes, we are deeply flawed in some of our actions. But we are unique in the history of mankind for our humanity in the brutality of it all. I grieve for his loss and ache with his parents. Thank you for telling his story.

John Desmond Pitt  
Atlanta

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As a captivated watcher of the History Channel's "Band of Brothers," I have been reflecting on the contrast between the bravery, honor and sense of duty shared by the men who participated in the D-Day Invasion, and the behavior of the soldiers who took part in the Abu Ghraib prison debacle. I had forgotten that most of the soldiers in our volunteer armed forces share the valor of those who came before. I am pleased that the Journal saw fit to point that out. God bless the parents of hero Jason Dunham.

Susan Kramer  
Wilmette, Ill.

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I just read your article while beginning my lunch, and I became overwhelmed by the tragic display of heroism. Indeed, I'm finding it difficult to focus on anything other than your article right now. Maybe that is as it should be. This war has obviously become, maybe it always was, more difficult than I believe the American public ever imagined. The politics of the war can be left for another day. Today, I would just like to say thank you to an American hero, Cpl. Dunham, for trying to make the world a safer place and for succeeding to that end for two of his comrades. I would also like to thank the Dunhams for raising a son to become the type of man he obviously became. My condolences to them for their great sacrifice. And lastly, I would like to thank the Journal for bringing it to the front page. I thought I was going to catch up on the latest financial news during a quick lunch. But I find myself in tears and unable to think about anything other than that very brave, young soldier.

Mark Cavanagh  
Peabody, Mass.

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Cpl. Dunham is a true representative of the honor and valor of the average American. Given the history and track record of our nation's leaders, President Bush and his administration have let Jason Dunham and his family down. And for that I am ashamed.

Lewis Goldberg  
Short Hills, N.J.

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When our son, a Marine Corps corporal, calls home from Iraq, he always asks the same question -- "Dad, do you think the American people are turning their backs on the military?" My

response is always the same. "Some on the left, who hate President Bush more than they love liberty, and many in the mainstream media, perhaps, but not the people."

Ed Johnson  
Lumberton, N.C.

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As the war in Iraq wears on I have started to avoid reading about it. The articles always seem to be more interested in conveying criticism than news, and, to be quite frank, the ones that cover newsworthy items are often grim. When I saw May 25's front page, I figured here is another Iraq story where I will read the first paragraph and then move on. Instead, I found myself reading the entire article. The job that Mr. Phillips did on this piece was phenomenal.

I want to thank Mr. Phillips for writing such a fantastic piece, and I wish to commend his editor and the news staff for keeping politics out of this article and for letting Jason Dunham's courage and sacrifice be known.

I know that few news organizations have been as deeply touched by the events on and since 9/11 as The Wall Street Journal. It seems overly simple to say thank you, but at this moment in time I think the simple things in life are sometimes best.

Michael F. Frate  
Long Beach, Calif.

*May 27, 2004*  
*Page A18*

### **U.S. Scrambles to Police Iraq Police Stage Walkout in Husaybah as Transition Looms**

By Michael M. Phillips

Husaybah, Iraq -- LESS THAN TWO WEEKS after graduating from a U.S.-run police academy, almost the entire police force here walked off the job to protest having to work side-by-side with American troops.

Some patrolmen headed back to work yesterday, but with Iraq's resumption of sovereignty fast approaching, the Marines occupying this city are scrambling to figure out whom - - if anyone -- they can trust to keep the streets safe and the insurgents at bay.

The Marines' predicament here reflects the ad hoc approach American commanders seem to be taking toward the June 30 transition -- which itself is partly a reflection of the Bush administration's ambiguity about how much control Iraqi authorities will have over coalition military operations. President Bush said Monday that the U.S. would accelerate training of a 260,000-strong force of Iraqi soldiers, police and other security personnel, including an army that would grow to 27 battalions from the current five. Yet the U.S. and its coalition partners have sent mixed signals about how an interim Iraqi government might deploy its security forces.

In the meantime, the situation on the ground remains fluid, and improvisation is a constant. Fourteen patrolmen appeared at the Husaybah station house yesterday, the third day of the police walkout. Marine Lt. Col. Matthew Lopez, commander of the Third Battalion, Seventh Regiment, which occupies a string of towns near the Syrian border, gave the rest of the 110-man force until today to return to work or be fired for dereliction of duty. Meanwhile, Capt. Dominique Neal, the officer in charge of the Marine outpost here, turned over the police station -- and the prime security role -- to another U.S. creation, the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps.

"Under no circumstances are you to give the police station back to the police -- they're useless," Capt. Neal told Lt. Col. Ahmad Aziz, the Civil Defense Corps' local chief.

When the U.S. Army occupied the area around Husaybah, it poured financial resources into the Civil Defense Corps, an entity established to defend the country from foreign attack. After the Marines took control in March, they devoted their efforts mostly to bringing the weak Iraqi police forces up to speed.

The first class of 107 recruits graduated from their training academy May 15, and immediately were dispatched to Husaybah, where five Marines died in a daylong battle with insurgents a month earlier.

In Karabilah and other nearby towns, the police have proven reasonably reliable, from the Marines' point of view. But in Husaybah, a city of some 100,000 people, relations quickly soured.

The police and Marines conducted a handful of joint patrols, and a platoon of Marines set up temporary camp at the base. But their rooftop guard posts apparently brought tensions to a head: Neighbors complained they let the Marines and police see into their homes and yards, giving women no privacy. Cops claimed the neighbors threatened them as a result -- and that insurgents threatened them simply for working with the Americans. The patrolmen signed a petition demanding that the Marines leave the police station, leading to a tense meeting Monday night among Capt. Neal, Iraqi Police Col. Hamid Muhammad Mokhlef and Abboud Muhammad Mecheme, an elderly man selected to speak for the neighbors.

After a tour of the roof, Capt. Neal and Mr. Mecheme agreed the Marines would provide residents with materials to build screens in front of their outhouses. In private, Capt. Neal berated the police chief for failing to control his own men. Lt. Col. Lopez later vowed to arrest any senior police officer who organized the walkout, and docked top officers half their \$380 monthly salary.

Tuesday, as rumors spread around town of an imminent insurgent attack on Marines at the police station, Capt. Neal threw his lot in with the Civil Defense Corps. He told Lt. Col. Aziz his men could immediately assume control of the police station; if the police came back to work they would be moved to some other inferior facility. That night, insurgents fired a couple of desultory shots at the station, and defense-corps troops fired hundreds of rounds in return.

It was a remarkable turnaround for Lt. Col. Aziz, who had had rough relations with the Marines. A few weeks earlier, he had accused the Americans of beating his men when they refused to raid a house occupied by four women. Lt. Col. Lopez countered by holding up a photo of the women in front of an array of bomb-making equipment and the next day, Capt. Neal was furious with Lt. Col. Aziz for failing to stop some 1,000 demonstrators from besieging the Marine base to protest the arrests.

"We ebb and flow almost hourly," trying to figure out which Iraqi security force is the best bet," Lt. Col. Lopez acknowledged. Right now, the Marines are betting heavily on the Civil Defense Corps in Husaybah, giving them the police force's assault rifles -- and implicit control over the cops.

But a predawn visit to the station early today suggests that wager may face long odds. In another sign of how fluid -- and tenuous -- the situation is, a Marine patrol that stopped by to see how things were shaping up encountered only some newly minted police officers on duty, most lounging inside the building. No Civil Defense troops were to be found.

*June 7, 2004*

*Page A1*

**Iraq's War of Words: The Handbill Battle For Hearts and Minds  
In Husaybah on Syrian Border, Marines Try Anything;  
Free Soccer Balls Are a Hit**

By Michael M. Phillips

HUSAYBAH, Iraq -- The English was odd, but the meaning of the flier posted on the building just off the busy market street was clear. It warned the U.S. Marines who occupy this city that, from "every house, every street and district," Iraqi insurgents are "coming to end your existence."

Spotting the note during a patrol May 19, Marine First Lt. Isaac Moore tore it down and wrote a message of his own on notebook paper: "U.S. Marines want peace for the innocent

civilians of Husaybah. But to those who wish to attack Marines and hurt innocent civilians, we will not stop until you are all destroyed." He taped his note up on the same wall.

It was another week of handbill-to-handbill combat in the battle for Iraq's hearts and minds. Here on the Syrian border, Iraqi insurgents use fliers, mosque loudspeakers and threats in an effort to convince locals that U.S. occupiers are evil and the occupation doomed. The Marines use handbills, public-works projects and soccer balls to try to convince them otherwise.

The Marines have limited goals for their public-relations effort. They don't expect the locals to embrace the occupation, especially with America's reputation sullied by images of U.S. soldiers abusing Iraqi prisoners. But the Marines would like the Iraqis to stop attacking bases, patrols and convoys, and perhaps even to turn in those who do.

"All you can hope to achieve -- and it's an achievable goal -- is let them know the Marines aren't belligerent and have no ill will towards the Iraqi people," said Lt. Moore, a 27-year-old Alaskan who serves as a platoon leader in Weapons Company, Third Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment.

There are some signs of success. Violence has eased considerably since a day-long battle in April that left five Marines and dozens of Iraqis dead in Husaybah, a city of about 100,000 people that the Marines are trying to stabilize. Locals sometimes tip off Iraqi police and civil-defense officials to the location of hidden bombs. When Marines patrol these days, they see waves as well as the usual frosty stares. But roadside bombs still hit U.S. troops here almost daily.

Marines have even received reports that insurgent propaganda posters may be booby-trapped, so the grunts check for explosives before pulling them down.

The names of collaborators with the occupation appear written on walls in Husaybah, and rumors of beheadings by the insurgents have troubled the area for months. Five unidentified bodies -- apparently tortured -- turned up on May 22 and 23. The Marines are trying to figure out whether they were informants. Lt. Col. Ahmad Aziz, chief of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps in the city, says an unidentified person recently handed his 4-year-old son a note in the street. "If you do business with the Marines and the U.S., I'll kill this son," the note said, according to Col. Aziz. He explained his refusal to quit this way: "I like Iraq, this is my job."

Another notice appearing on the walls of Husaybah shows a photocopied Internet picture of U.S. soldiers holding two camel spiders, each appearing to be about a foot long. The Marines live in mortal dread of the spiders and their venom, the caption reads in Arabic. Under the photo is a quotation from the Quran, implying that camel spiders are God's soldiers in the fight against the Americans. "Oh, Allah, we need your help to command your soldiers to hurt the Americans," the note said.

A flier Lt. Moore found May 19 offered unhappy Marines a way home. "If anyone wants to go out of Iraq and return to his country and to his children," it read, "we'll help him and he will be in security if he wants that, he must to visit any house in this region and he'll find the helping."

The insurgents aren't the only ones who have trouble communicating in a language not their own. During a recent sweep through villages north of the nearby Euphrates River, the Marines distributed handbills that were supposed to tout the coalition's good intentions and to invite tipsters to anonymously call a hotline to report anticoalition plotters. But before printing them, the Marines enlarged the font size of the flowing Arabic script, inadvertently separating all of the letters. Recipients looked at the handbill in confusion and politely tried to hand it back. A translator informed the Marines that it was gibberish.

In the wee hours of the morning May 27, Lt. Moore's men gave it another try. They had a translator write Arabic notices by hand praising the Americans and the occupation. Then Marine Humvees cruised slowly through the city's commercial district, and Pfc. Ernest Phillips, 20, of San Bernardino, Calif., hopped out and surreptitiously glued the notices to buildings. The hope, the Marines said, was that people would think the notices were written by one of their neighbors. That would give the message more credibility than propaganda known to be from U.S. sources. By afternoon the notices had been ripped down.

The Marines also hope that civil-works projects and jobs programs will persuade Iraqis to help them out. The battalion is spending about \$150,000 to hire 600 locals to clean garbage off the streets of Husaybah and neighboring towns. The effort achieves a double goal: It provides employment in a city where there is very little, and it removes potential hiding places for street-side bombs. The Marines promote their reconstruction projects on radio and television.

But countering angry rhetoric emanating from the loudspeakers atop Husaybah's mosques is tough. On May 20, an unidentified mosque speaker called for a holy war on the Americans.

The speaker mentioned separate congressional appropriations of \$87 billion and \$25 billion largely to rebuild and secure Iraq, and protested that little of the money had made its way to Husaybah. Still, "we don't want their money, we don't want their help," the speaker insisted, according to a military translator who heard the broadcast. "We can help ourselves."

The next day, about 20 Marines set out in Humvees armed with machine guns and grenade launchers and parked on a side street near the city's main mosque. They waited for the midday Friday prayers and sermon to finish. "We aren't going to shoot anybody today -- hearts and minds," Pfc. Phillips reminded his platoon mates.

When the minaret fell silent, the vehicles rolled onto the street in front of the mosque, and the Marines began handing out powdered milk, toothbrushes, toothpaste and soccer balls. They smiled and spoke a few simple Arabic words of greeting. But they quit after 15 minutes. Only men were out on the street at that time, and they showed no interest in milk or oral hygiene -- just soccer balls.

Soccer-ball patrols have turned out to be by far the most popular U.S. public-relations program. Marines use them frequently to try to soothe relations and get information. Early Sunday, May 23, three tanks and a squad of Marines rolled north from Husaybah toward the Euphrates, through nectarine and pomegranate orchards, passing surprised farm families along the dirt lane.

As the convoy rumbled slowly from farm to farm, Gunnery Sgt. Sandor Vegh, 35, of Baltimore, Ohio, wrote, "USMC" in black marker on dozens of soccer balls. Then the grunts tossed them to eager children, who held their hands up to pantomime a ball and called out, "Mister, football."

A military translator casually asked the residents whether they had seen anything suspicious -- strangers in the neighborhood, people digging holes for roadside bombs. The farmers chatted amiably but provided no useful information.

*June 14, 2004*

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**Switching Sides:  
Iraqi Teen Turned In His Father, Faces Dangerous Future  
His Intelligence Proved Useful, Says U.S. Military, Which Now Protects Him  
Finding Home in Shambles**

By Michael M. Phillips

HUSAYBAH, Iraq -- One day in December, a smooth-chinned 14-year-old approached American soldiers at a checkpoint here and asked surreptitiously to be arrested. He told the soldiers that his father, an Iraqi Army officer under Saddam Hussein, led a 40-man cell of insurgents, and he agreed to show the troops where to find the men and their weapons.

The soldiers put a sack over the teen's head, loosely cuffed his hands and led him away to a new life as an informant. U.S. officials say he has provided a wealth of military intelligence, allowing them to capture numerous insurgents in Iraq over the past six months.

But the teenager's decision to turn on his father, who he says beat him, has cost him his family and his freedom. Since he began cooperating with the Americans, he has lived among U.S. troops, knowing that losing their protection would mean almost certain death at the hands of those he betrayed.

With the handover of sovereignty to an Iraqi government less than three weeks away, the troops who have used and befriended the teen are desperately seeking a way to get him to the U.S. The soldiers aren't sure how they can legally take the boy -- who isn't an orphan -- out of the country without it looking like Americans are stealing Iraqi children while there is no local government to stop them. It isn't likely he would qualify for entry into the U.S. without special governmental dispensation. And even if soldiers get him to the U.S., they'd still have to find an American family willing to take in an illiterate, street-hardened youngster who speaks little English.

Insurgents in Iraq know the teen's identity and that he has provided information to the Americans, according to the U.S. military. While U.S. commanders asked that his name and tribal affiliation not be disclosed, they are eager for publicity that might help the boy gain entry to the U.S. His story has been pieced together from interviews with him and U.S. military personnel, and from military records. While aspects of his personal history couldn't be verified because

people involved are either dead, in U.S. custody elsewhere in Iraq or have moved, soldiers and Marines who have dealt with the teen say information he has provided about the insurgency has been accurate.

The boy grew up in Husaybah, a border city of some 100,000, known for its smugglers of weapons, gasoline and other goods. His father was a powerful man around town, thanks to his ties to the Hussein regime. Speaking through a military interpreter, the teen says he had completed the equivalent of the third grade when he dropped out of school at age 13. He can't read or write Arabic, except for a few simple words.

Some of his family memories are warm. He remembers his father happily cooking rice and dolma, grape leaves stuffed with mutton, tomatoes, peas and spices. But he also recalls the time his father brought home photos that pictured him beating a bound man with inch-thick cables. He thinks his father was trying to impress his mother with a show of force.

His father appeared to snap, the teen says, after Mr. Hussein's regime fell in April 2003. He says his father spent time and money to build a network of insurgents to fight the Americans, and succumbed to frequent rages, beating his children more severely than ever before. Once, he says, his father tied his left hand to his left foot, and right hand to his right foot, and beat him "with anything that came into his hands."

His body bears witness to the violence around him. His scalp is a roadmap of scars from beatings and an accident. The skin on the back of his left hand is disfigured from the time he says his father accused him of stealing money and used a red-hot spoon to punish him. The teen recalls crying for days, in part because his mother didn't come to his rescue.

He says he joined the resistance at his father's insistence, and never fired a shot. During his first operation, an ambush of an American patrol in November, he wedged himself into a pile of garbage from a local hospital, he says, trying to hide. He pulled his long-sleeved black T-shirt -- the battle dress of the local mujahedeen -- over his nose to mask the stench. Then he says he hid his AK-47 rifle amid the soiled syringes and empty food cans, and ran home to his mother.

After the gunplay died down, the teen says he retrieved his rifle from the trash, emptied bullets from his magazines, and told his father he had fired at the Americans. His father patted him on the shoulder and said, "I'm proud of you," according to the boy. "You did a good job, my son." The Americans are all "Jews and Christians," he recalls his father saying. "They are strangers occupying our country. God will send our souls to paradise for fighting them."

A while later, his father and others placed a bomb some 30 yards from an overpass above a stream and waited until a military convoy passed, he says. The idea was to flush the troops out with the explosion, then gun them down as they left their vehicles. The teen says he was supposed to fire on the soldiers.

Instead, he says he hid under the bridge in shallow water during the attack, hitting his head on a steel bar and opening a long gash on his head. The scar that runs back-to-front down the middle of his head is a result of that, he says. He spent the night concealed under the overpass, narrowly escaping capture, he says, by an American soldier sweeping the area with a flashlight attached to his rifle.

By this time his qualms about fighting were overwhelming, he says. He knew his father to be a cruel man, and his father's description of the Americans didn't match the soldiers he saw in the street, who sometimes handed candy or clothes to children they passed. "The Americans hadn't hit me or tortured me, so I didn't want to shoot them," he says.

The morning after the bridge attack, he told his mother that he had been with his father. She was angry with her son and her husband. "You're still a child," he remembers her saying. "It's not fair to involve you in all of this."

The youngster tried to leave town once to stay with relatives elsewhere. His father's men found him at the train station, he says, and hauled him home. His parents fought over the incident, and his father accused him of cowardice. "I want you to be my backup. I don't want you to fear anyone," he recalls his father saying. "I want you to be a man."

"Do you think I'm a woman?" he says he answered. "I probably killed or wounded a soldier." But the teen suspected his father knew he was lying.

The next day, Dec. 3, he told his family he had decided to go to Syria to find work. Instead, he put on a white robe, beige jacket and blue sandals and sidled up to American soldiers near the border checkpoint. Through a military translator, he convinced them he had information to provide, and asked that the soldiers make a public display of arresting him, so he would not be seen as a collaborator, according to military records.

The soldiers pushed him into a Humvee and drove him to their camp, according to the teen and First Sgt. Daniel Hendrex, of Dragon Company, First Squadron, Third Armored Cavalry Regiment.

The boy's knowledge turned out to be immensely valuable, according to military records and officers who dealt with him. Soldiers immediately raided a yard next to the boy's house and arrested his father along with a second man, according to First Sgt. Hendrex and his company commander at the time, Capt. Chad M. Roehrman. The second man was a Syrian, the boy says. Hidden from view, the youngster pointed to several spots in the yard, and in each one, soldiers dug up a trove of rocket-propelled grenades, rockets and hand grenades.

Under interrogation by Army special forces soldiers, also known as Green Berets, the teen's father and the Syrian man denied any knowledge of the weapons. Then the interrogators, apparently hoping to get the men to confess, showed the prisoners a photo of the teen, revealing him as their informant, according to First Sgt. Hendrex and Capt. Roehrman.

The interrogators "thought that was the best and quickest way" to get information from the men, recalls Capt. Roehrman, who talked to the interrogators afterwards.

The interrogators had no evidence connecting the Syrian to insurgent activities, so they released him, according to Capt. Roehrman, a 29-year-old from Ellsworth, Kan. Inevitably, that meant the teen's actions became known in Husaybah, according to the captain and first sergeant.

"The next day, everyone in Husaybah knew I had betrayed them," the teen says. "I was terrified." Insurgents constantly threaten to assassinate collaborators in the area, and frequently carry out those threats, according to U.S. military officials and the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, a U.S.-created force that polices the area. The teen says he was especially worried about his mother's welfare.

"It was beyond risky" to reveal the boy's role, says First Sgt. Hendrex, 34. "We weren't happy with it when we found out."

Yet even without the release of the second man, the teen's family probably would have guessed that he had turned his father in, says Lt. Col. Gregory Reilly, commander of the First Squadron, Third Armored Cavalry Regiment. "They can connect the dots," he says. The boy "goes away and we show up."

In response to questions about the incident, Col. Jill Morgenthaler, the top coalition public-affairs officer in Iraq, said the military is now investigating whether special forces troops gave away the teen's identity. "We're looking into this," Col. Morgenthaler said in a telephone interview. "This really goes against the principle of keeping one's sources secret for his or her protection."

The boy's father remains in coalition custody in Iraq, according to Col. Morgenthaler.

One day not long after the father's arrest, First Sgt. Hendrex says he was in the squadron's tactical-operations center when the boy pointed to a photo on a computer screen. "Mujahedeen," he said, describing the man pictured as a major financier of insurgent operations. First Sgt. Hendrex checked the files and found the teen's description matched military-intelligence reports. Soon the youngster had identified 30 of the 40 or so pictures the Army had on hand, according to First Sgt. Hendrex and military records.

"My jaw almost hit the floor," First Sgt. Hendrex says. "Here was a kid who knew the inner workings of basically all the people we were fighting against there in Husaybah."

The Army began taking the teen out on raids and patrols, with First Sgt. Hendrex -- who became the boy's closest American friend -- as his escort and protector. Soldiers would dress him in a balaclava, a headwrap that covered his face, and dark sunglasses, and take him in an armored Humvee. At 5-foot-6, he was small enough to fit in the cramped area behind the feet of the turret gunner.

As they drove down the streets of Husaybah, he would identify people and houses. In exchange, he received a total reward of about \$1,000, and the affection of those around him, says First Sgt. Hendrex. He figures the soldiers took the teen on some 25 operations between December and the squadron's departure from Iraq in March. Military records show the youngster had a high rate of success in identifying alleged insurgents, whom he says he knew through his father.

On the day he approached U.S. troops, a soldier kiddingly gave the teen the nickname Steve-O. Another soldier thinks that was a reference to a character in Jackass, a raunchy MTV show. Along the way, the name stuck and became the teen's code name in military reports and on missions.

Before the boy arrived, "we just weren't getting a lot of information" from locals, says Lt. Col. Reilly, 43, from Sacramento, Calif. His tips led to arrests, which led to more intelligence, which led to more arrests. The boy "got the ball rolling," Lt. Col. Reilly says.

The Humvee that Steve-O rode in during his operations came under attack three times. Once, a huge roadside bomb -- made from a buried 155 mm artillery shell -- blew up as they

passed by the hospital. The teen and the first sergeant escaped unscathed, but three others in the Humvee were wounded.

The Army judged the risk worthwhile. The boy's memory for names and faces was keen, First Sgt. Hendrex and Capt. Roehrman say. After a roadside bomb attack near a busy market street, Steve-O spotted the trigger man and led the soldiers first to the man's house and then to the man's grandfather's house. There, soldiers found him wounded and hiding, according to the Army's report on the operation. Steve-O even identified insurgents who were working inside the Army's base, according to military records and First Sgt. Hendrex.

On their last mission together before the Army turned over control of the area to the Marines, the first sergeant agreed to the teen's request to visit his home. "I wanted to see my mom one more time," he says. The Army had earlier given her money and encouraged her to leave the area, First Sgt. Hendrex says. This time, they found the home in shambles, and the family gone.

While the teen remained hidden in a Humvee and out of earshot, First Sgt. Hendrex talked to a relative. The relative told him an Iraqi gunman shot the boy's mother in the stomach in early January. The relative thought she was probably dead, but he wasn't certain.

It took the first sergeant until the next day to get up the nerve to tell the boy the news. He took him aside in front of the squadron's command post, its "Brave Rifles" logo above the door, and told him his mother had been shot by the mujahedeen. The boy sobbed, and the first sergeant wrapped him in his arms, both recall.

"Stay safe while we do everything we can to get you out," First Sgt. Hendrex wrote Steve-O, just before his unit left Iraq in March. The note included a couple pictures of the youngster grinning, his arm clutching the first sergeant at this side. The first sergeant gave him a floppy camouflage hat with "Hendrex" stitched into it in Arabic. "When you get to the States, you have to give it back to me," both the teen and First Sgt. Hendrex recall the soldier saying. The first sergeant is back at home in Fort Carson, Colo., where his regiment is based.

The Marines, who now control the area, have been more reluctant than the Army to use the teen as an intelligence source. He still identifies suspects when they're brought into the base, Marines say. But Lt. Col. Matthew Lopez, commander of Third Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment, refuses to allow him to leave the base. It is just too dangerous for a minor, he says.

"It's hard for me to comprehend how a 14-year-old could have been put through that by his own family," says Lt. Col. Lopez, a 40-year-old Chicagoan who says his own mother had often taken in foster children.

The boy picks up what English he can from the Marines, or speaks Arabic with the military's translators. He quickly became friends with Marine Lance Cpl. Akram Falah, a 23-year-old Jordanian-American from Anaheim, Calif. They ate together and spoke Arabic together. Lance Cpl. Falah urged Steve-O to save his money. The teen teased the Marine by pronouncing his name, "Falalalalalah" -- mimicking the ululating sound Arab women make when celebrating. But Lance Cpl. Falah was shot in the arm during an ambush in April, and evacuated to the U.S.

First Sgt. Hendrex says he and Capt. Roehrman are trying to get the boy to the U.S. They have contacted attorneys, lawmakers and the State Department. For the moment, First Sgt. Hendrex says, U.S. diplomats advise them to wait until there is a sovereign Iraqi government, and they know what Iraqi law will be regarding adoptions.

"What we're doing is looking for a safe, caring place for him to live," says Col. Morgenthaler. "The United States is one option."

Stuart Patt, a spokesman for the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs, says a minor without skills or resources would be unlikely to qualify for a normal immigrant or visitor's visa. U.S. law bars adoptions without the permission of parents, unless a court rules the parents incompetent. "There has to be a court somewhere that has the capacity to remove the parents' parental rights," Mr. Patt says. "But the situation in Iraq is such that that's not likely to be accomplished in the immediate future."

The most promising option, Mr. Patt says, would be "humanitarian parole," a special status that was granted to the Iraqi lawyer who helped free Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch after she was captured last year. Bill Strassberger, a spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security, says that until officials receive a formal application for the youngster, "it would be impossible to say whether he would qualify or not for some form of parole." No one has yet applied on the boy's behalf.

"If we bring him into the States, we want to tie him into a Muslim family," says First Sgt. Hendrex in a telephone interview. "We don't want to pull him completely out of a Muslim context." But the first sergeant, whose wife is pregnant with their first child, says if necessary the couple

will try to find some way to adopt the boy themselves. The teen says he already considers the first sergeant to be like a father.

These days, he spends his time lifting weights, watching war movies or action films on DVDs owned by the troops, and hanging out with the seven Marines with whom he shares a plywood-walled sleeping area. He wears his hair Marine-style, tight on the sides and high on top, and sports a set of fatigues the Marines gave him. His bunk is curtained off by a zebra-patterned blanket, and he has wedged a stuffed bulldog into the metal footboard.

In a wooden ammo box, he keeps his belongings: an American flag folded with military precision into a triangle, deodorant sticks given to him by soldiers, a box of Crayola crayons, fingerless gloves for weightlifting, a digital camera and First Sgt. Hendrex's floppy hat. If all else fails, some Marines say, only half-jokingly, they will hand Steve-O a rifle and march him onto the plane when the battalion leaves Iraq, in late summer or early fall.

At night, the teen says he sometimes wakes up in tears, thinking about his mother. For comfort, he assures himself all that has happened has been God's will. "If they don't take me to the States, I'm definitely going to be killed," he says matter-of-factly. He says he would like to return to school and one day enlist in the Army or Marine Corps. "I just want to be one of the American troops," he says.

END