

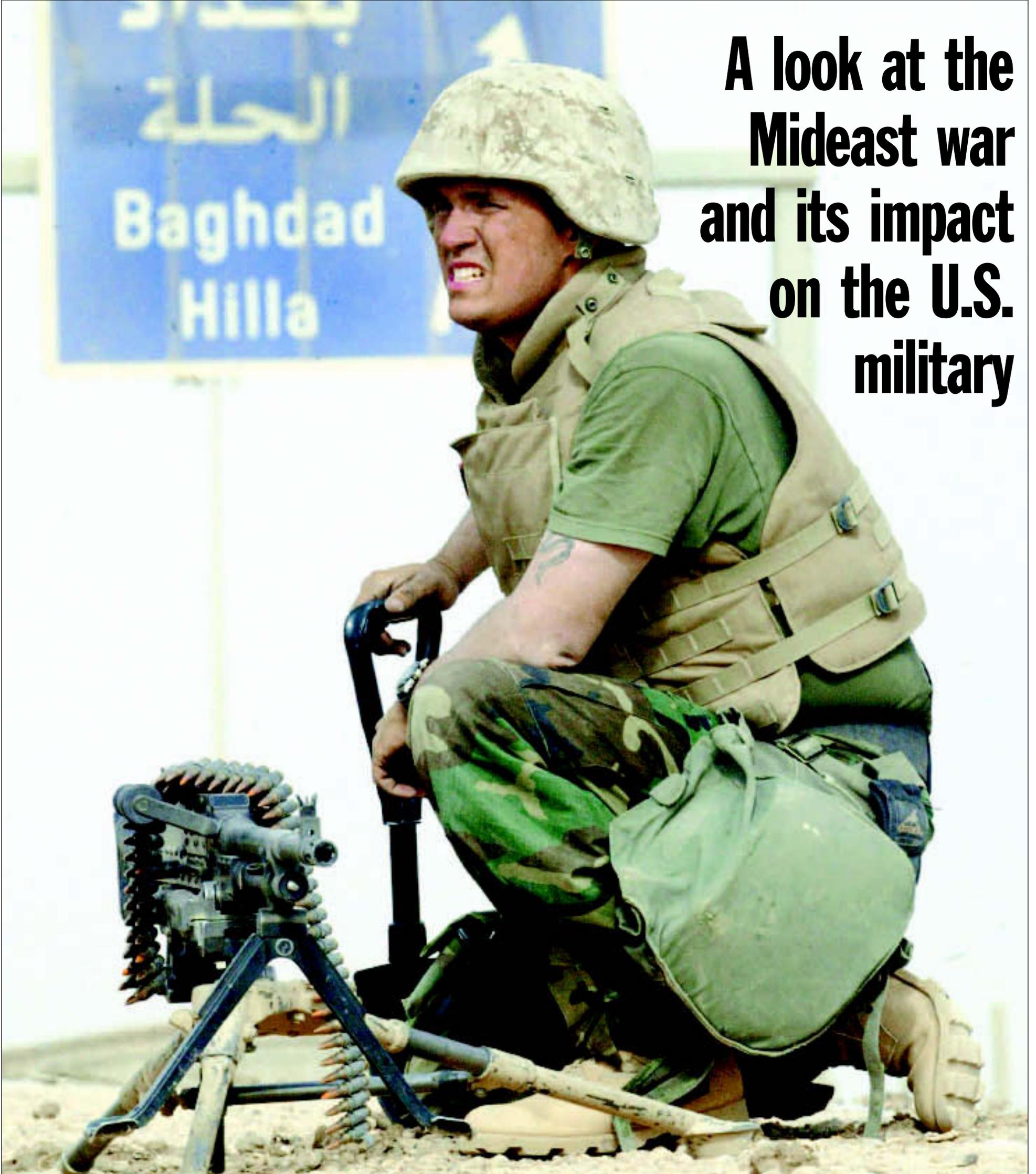
# Freedom in Iraq

STARS AND STRIPES

STARS AND STRIPES, JUNE, 2003

FREEDOM IN IRAQ

**A look at the  
Mideast war  
and its impact  
on the U.S.  
military**



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PHOTOS BY MARK OLIVA/Stars and Stripes

A Marine mans an M-240G machine gun on April 8 on the outskirts of Baghdad, Iraq, as smoke from a burning building billows past. As the Marines entered the city, they witnessed the destruction by U.S. air power. Iraqi tanks, armored vehicles and artillery were destroyed along the routes into the city.

# Regime changed

It began in President George W. Bush's State of the Union speech Jan. 29, 2002. He singled out Iraq, Iran and North Korea as nations that support international terrorism.

"States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world," Bush said. "By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. ... The price of indifference would be catastrophic."

The focus turned to Iraq. For months the United States lobbied the United Nations and sought to build a coalition. Allies such as Great Britain and Australia immediately offered support. Others,

such as France and Germany, balked, and were labeled "old Europe" by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld.

At 10:16 p.m. EST on March 19, President Bush again addressed the nation.

"My fellow citizens, at this hour, American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger."

An F-117A dropped a bomb in Baghdad, and rumors flew that intelligence had placed Saddam Hussein there.

And before the vaunted "shock and awe" bombing campaign could have any measurable effect, ground forces punched through



Marines stand at the gate of a suspected terrorist training camp outside of Baghdad on April 7. The mural of Saddam Hussein portrays him as protector of the Rock of the Dome, a sacred religious site in Jerusalem for Muslims.

sand berms on the Iraq-Kuwait border. The war was under way.

The cities began to fall: Umm Qasr, Nasiriyah, Karbala. The British slugged it out in Basra. Sandstorms choked progress. There were fierce battles and tragic encounters with Saddam's Fedayeen, his black-hooded fighters.

In three weeks, U.S. forces took Baghdad. Though looting and dis-

order continue, the Saddam regime has been removed, and rebuilding is under way.

For three weeks, gripping tales of triumph and horror emerged from reporters on the scene. These are their stories and a look at how the events they described might change the nature of warfare.

— PAT DICKSON  
Stars and Stripes

**On the cover:**

Lance Cpl. Ronald Miller of the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, digs a machine gun trench while securing the main highway to Baghdad, near Diwanayah in south-central Iraq, on March 31.

AP

Editors: Pat Dickson, Brian Bowers, Melissa Murdza and Priscilla Rowe

AFTER WEEKS OF WAR A REGIME CHANGE IN IRAQ

# The fall of Saddam

**A**fter years of ignoring U.N. resolutions demanding full disclosure of his weapons programs, a defiant Saddam Hussein dismissed President Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair's final ultimatum to disarm. Hours after the imposed 48-hour deadline for Saddam to leave Iraq, coalition forces began a war they referred to as "Operation Iraqi Freedom."

## 'A target of opportunity'

**March 19**

A salvo of missiles and laser-guided bombs hits targets where coalition forces believe Saddam, his sons and other leaders are gathered.



A government building burns in Baghdad on March 21 during the U.S. bombardment of Iraq, dubbed "shock and awe" by the Bush administration.

## The ground war begins

**March 20**

The ground war begins as the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division starts shelling Iraqi troops near the Kuwaiti border.

**March 21**

► Airstrikes level Baghdad government buildings and a presidential compound as American warplanes begin what military officials would label a "shock and awe" campaign.

► U.S. and British commanders accept the surrender of the 51st Iraqi Infantry Division near the southern city of Basra.

**March 22**

During a 24-hour period, 500 cruise missiles and several hundred precision weapons are fired on Iraq.

**March 23**

► A dozen U.S. soldiers are captured in a fake surrender near Nasiriyah.

► Six soldiers are captured and nine killed by Iraqi forces after a U.S.

## Coalition casualties

 **U.S. losses**, 156 dead identified by Pentagon through May 15

 **British losses**, 31 dead



Sandstorms turn the desert red near Karbala, slowing the advance of U.S. ground troops on March 25.

convoy takes a wrong turn.

► In Kuwait City, American soldier Sgt. Asan Akbar throws grenades into tents, ultimately killing two soldiers.

**March 24**

Heavy sandstorms slow the U.S. advance, but troops still get within 50 miles of Baghdad.

**March 25**

British troops continue battling Iraqi militiamen in the strategic city of Basra, control of which is key to delivering humanitarian aid.

**March 26**

Iraq's northern front is opened when U.S. Army paratroops land in a Kurdish-controlled enclave and seize an airfield.

**March 28**

With the harbor cleared of mines, a British supply ship arrives at the port of Umm Qasr.

**March 29**

Suicide attacks become a weapon north of the sacred city of Najaf, when a taxi driver pretending to need help blows himself up, killing four U.S. soldiers as they approach.

**March 30**

Missile attacks hit military facilities in Baghdad, including a presidential palace, telephone exchanges, a military intelligence complex and paramilitary training barracks.

**April 1**

U.S. Special Forces rescue Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch from a hospital in Nasiriyah; 11 bodies are also found, eight of which are later identified as members of her ambushed convoy.

**April 2**

► The Baghdad and Medina divisions of Iraq's Republican Guard are defeated by U.S. troops.

► Bridges over the Tigris and Euphrates rivers are seized by U.S. forces who then advance to within 35 miles of Baghdad.

**April 3**

U.S. Army units attack Saddam International Airport, 10 miles southwest of the capital.

## Into Baghdad

**April 5**

American armored vehicles drive briefly through Baghdad after smashing through Republican Guard units.

**April 7**

► U.S. tanks rumble through downtown Baghdad and a B-1B bomber attack hits buildings where

Saddam and other leaders again are said to be meeting.

► British forces take Basra.

**April 9**

American commanders declare Saddam's regime no longer in control of Baghdad. Before the city falls, jubilant crowds topple a 40-foot statue of Saddam.

**April 10**

Northern city of Kirkuk falls.

**April 11**

U.S. forces and Kurdish allies take the northern city of Mosul.

**April 12**

► Looters ransack government buildings, embassies, hospitals, businesses and even the National Museum.

► Iraq's science adviser surrenders to U.S. forces, the first of the 55 most-wanted leaders list issued by the coalition.

**April 13**

Following 22 days of imprisonment, seven U.S. prisoners of war are released and flown to Kuwait.

**April 14**

► Meeting light resistance, U.S. forces take Tikrit.

► Looting in Baghdad finally slows down and discussions begin to restore the capital with power, water, security and other vital services.

NOTE: All dates Eastern time



A statue of Saddam Hussein topples on April 9 with the help of U.S. Marines in Baghdad.

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MARK OLIVA/Stars and Stripes

Marines from Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines line a bridge embankment along a main supply route on the way to Baghdad.

# War waged with new ideas

## Swift, lethal battle shoots down many Cold War theories

BY LISA BURGESS

*Stars and Stripes*

Wars teach lessons to both the victor and the vanquished, and Iraq will be no exception.

Operation Iraqi Freedom, however, may prove to be a more critical crucible for the Pentagon than most American campaigns, simply because it occurred at a turning point for the U.S. military.

Since the end of the Cold War, defense officials have been adjusting their sights to envision a joint force that is lighter and faster, more tech-savvy and more lethal.

From the moment the Bush administration took office, its national security team has taken the concept of transformation and squared it, putting billions of dollars behind high-tech weaponry and slashing programs and forces that don't fit the new model.

Then came the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, ushering in the concept of pre-emptive strikes and giving transformation a real-world kick in the pants.

Afghanistan was the U.S. military's first transformational war, proving that cooperation between special operations forces and air power could produce a swift victory against an unconventional foe, with relatively little collateral damage.

With Afghanistan's lessons fresh in mind, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and his military commanders planned the Iraq campaign to look like nothing the U.S. military had ever seen.

Fewer than half the U.S. forces that faced Saddam's army in the 1991 Persian Gulf War were sent to do the job this time.



KENDRA HELMER/Stars and Stripes

Seaman Moses Pleitez loads a precision-guided bomb on an F/A-18 Hornet on March 20 on the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk.

But those who made the trip were armed with a new generation of weapons, undreamed of by their counterparts a dozen years ago. And special operators percolated beneath it all, on a scale never before employed.

Determining how well the Iraq campaign worked, and lessons to be drawn from the effort, is a job that has fallen to Adm. Edmund Giambastiani, head of the U.S. Joint Forces Command.

In a May 8 breakfast with Washington reporters, Giambastiani said that about 30 members of his staff have been in Qatar and other key military headquarters in the



AP

A U.S. soldier stands guard as oil workers put out an oil-well fire at Rumaila oil field, southern Iraq, on April 1. Kuwaiti and American firefighters were putting out the blazes at six oil wells that were sabotaged by retreating Iraqi forces.



AP

The "Spirit of Oklahoma," one of the first B-2 Spirit bombers to deploy from Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., taxis to the runway to begin its journey to a forward operation location March 13. The planes were flying to RAF Fairford, England, and the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia.

Middle East since February. They have had free rein to attend staff meetings, listen to briefs and otherwise enjoy a ringside seat for the action.

The "lessons learned" report Giambastiani's staff produces will cover every aspect of combat in Iraq, from cooperation between U.S. and British forces to air, land and sea operations, and — perhaps most important of all — how well the services interacted on a "joint" basis.

Giambastiani said he plans to brief Rumsfeld and Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with "some insights prior to 16 June." However, the full report won't be completed until September or later.

Meanwhile, U.S. commanders have offered reporters some preliminary glimpses of lessons that can be drawn from Iraq's ground, air and sea cam-

**SEE LESSONS ON PAGE 8**

# *KBR Salutes the Uniformed Men and Women of America's Armed Forces Deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom*

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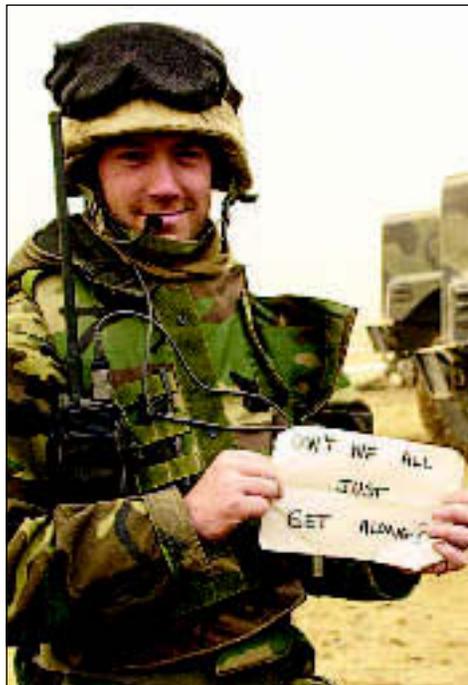
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MARK OLIVA/Stars and Stripes

**Marine Maj. Ian Stone shows that even in combat, there is time for a lighthearted moment.**

#### LESSONS, FROM PAGE 6

paings. And on the civilian side, hundreds of reports, editorials, commentaries and articles already have been published on the subject.

The most comprehensive unofficial lessons-learned report released to date is by Anthony H. Cordesman, a former high-level defense and State Department official who is now the Arleigh Burke Chair for Strategy at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The 280-page Cordesman report, "The 'Instant Lessons' of the Iraq War," covers the combat portion of the campaign on a day-by-day basis, as well as offering analysis of everything from fratricide — commonly called "friendly fire" — to the roles of individual weapons and weapons platforms. (Full text is available at [www.csis.org](http://www.csis.org).)

And along with his details, Cordesman offers a caution: "It is almost as arrogant to rush to judgment on the lessons of war before all the data on military operations become available as it was to rush out and judge the war plan before the success of coalition operations became apparent," he writes in his introduction. "... 'Instant history' is an oxymoron."

Moreover, a small but vocal group of analysts is suggesting that U.S. officials should be wary of "extrapolating global conclusions from a three-week war between the world's pre-eminent military power and what turned out to be something less than a world-class adversary," as Richard Hart Sinnreich wrote in an April 24 Washington Post editorial.

Incomplete data and ineffective foe notwithstanding, Rumsfeld has made it clear he wants to pick up the pace on defense transformation.

The lessons of Iraq are likely to play a role in everything that happens in the Pentagon from this time forward — from the fate of weapons programs such as the F-22 fighter to the way U.S. forces are stationed around the world. Certainly, billions of dollars in 2005 defense budget decisions are at stake.

What follows are a few of the "big picture" Iraq lessons identified by the commanders who fought the war.

### Lessons from Iraq

#### ■ The services work better together than apart.

One theme all of the generals associated with the war have sounded is "jointness."



Paratroopers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade from Vicenza, Italy, walk at the Harir airfield, 45 miles northeast of the Kurdish city of Irbil, on March 27. Denied rights to invade by land from Turkey, the Army instead parachuted about 1,000 troops into Kurdish-held northern Iraq in a dramatic nighttime operation that opened another front against Saddam Hussein's regime.

AP



STEVE LIEWER/Stars and Stripes

**Spec. Brandon Gullen learned some Arabic reading the Quran for fun and by studying the Internet. Now he is using his skills to translate between U.S. soldiers and the Iraqi farmers and shepherds who live near the U.S. Army aviation base camp in central Iraq.**

"Jointness has been huge in this campaign," Lt. Gen. David McKiernan, commander of land forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom under the Coalition Forces Land Component Command, told Pentagon reporters April 23.

Army Lt. Gen. William Wallace, commander of V Corps and leader of the "Battle of Baghdad," agreed.

"Something that I've known most of my career was revalidated for me, and that was the extraordinary power of the combined-arms team," Wallace told Pentagon reporters May 7. "The Army, the Marines, the Air Force, our Special Operations forces, the Navy, the Marine Corps all played a vital and unique role. ... I know there's probably debates going on in the Pentagon, even as we speak, about who won the war. And my answer is, the U.S. military won the war."

#### ■ Preserving an element of surprise pays off.

There's no way to hide the movement of two Army divisions, five carrier battle groups, and Marine Expeditionary Units. Yet, although the buildup for Iraq was open and obvious, the initial missile attack

on Saddam's suspected bunker on March 19 caught even some senior military officials by surprise.

"Everybody knew approximately when we were going to war," Air Force Maj. Gen. Dan Leaf, the senior air officer at the ground headquarters in Kuwait, told Inside the Pentagon, a defense trade publication, on April 12. "The surprise came from how it started."

#### ■ Speed kills.

Several U.S. general officers said they believe a major reason the Iraqis never released chemical or biological weapons was the Iraqi commanders simply couldn't react fast enough.

"One theory is that we moved so fast that they couldn't get their hands on it to employ it," Wallace said.

#### ■ Risk is more than a board game.

During Iraq's opening days, U.S. commanders decided to keep moving combat forces as quickly as possible toward Baghdad, even though combat support specialists warned that the troops might outrun their own food, fuel and communications lines.

"My intent for this ground portion of the



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE/AP

**U.S. special operations troops carry Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch from the Saddam Hospital in Nasiriyah on April 1. Lynch was among six Americans captured and nine killed when their convoy took a wrong turn on March 23.**

campaign was basically to put continuous pressure on the regime of Saddam Hussein," McKiernan said. In order to accomplish that task, "I accepted some risk in the length of our lines of communication and our logistical reach."

Yet, while supplies got tight for many units, the decision ultimately paid off. Baghdad fell quickly, with relatively few U.S. casualties.

"Sixteen days to Baghdad ain't a bad record," Wallace said.

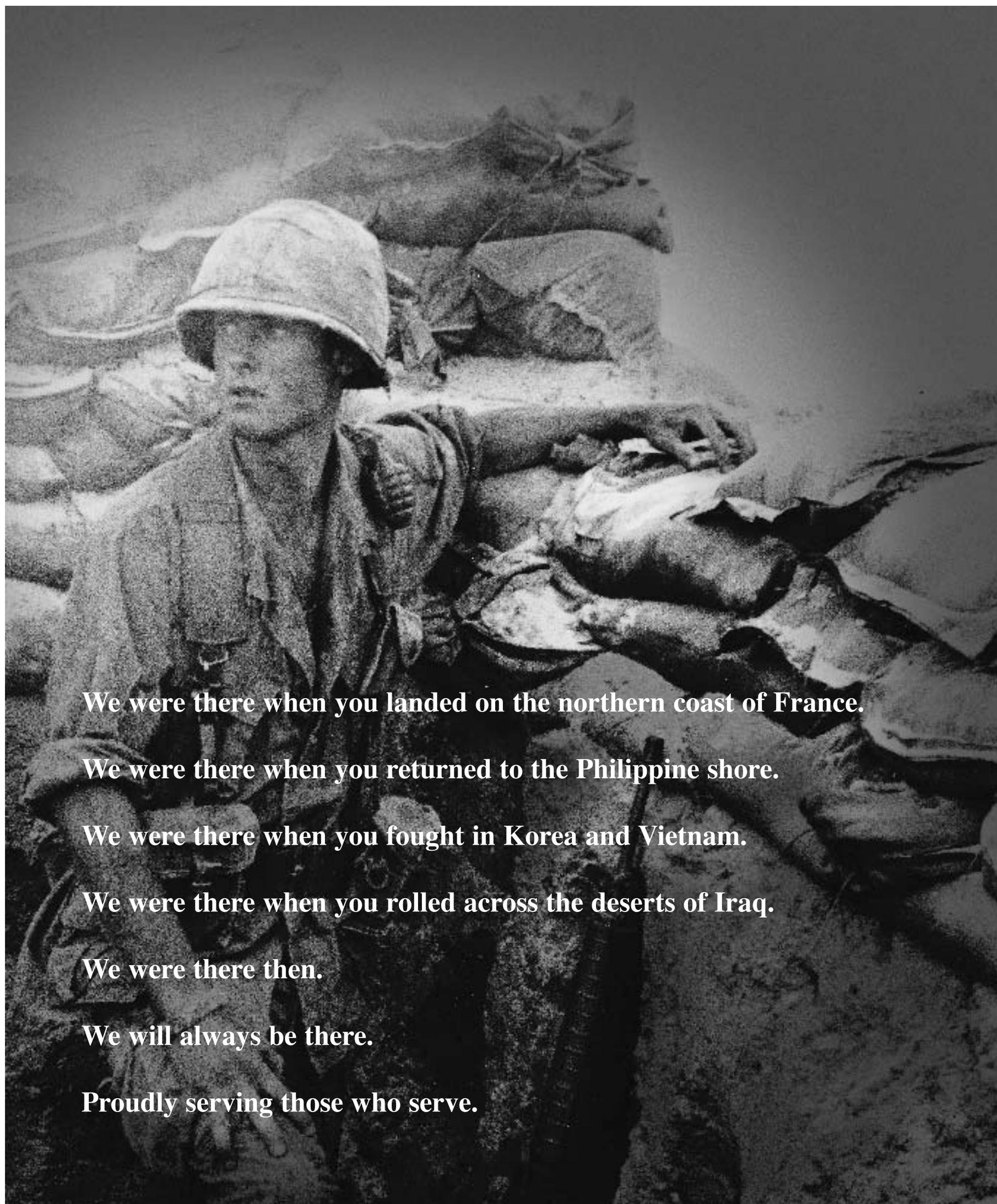
#### ■ Even large forces can, and should, be flexible.

Best-case war plans called for coalition ground troops to blast straight from Kuwait to Baghdad, ignoring small towns en route and coming back later to mop up any resistance.

"We expected capitulation in the south," the Air Force's Leaf told Inside the Pentagon. "I didn't expect paramilitary forces — with the kind of tactics they showed — to be a major factor. And that caught some of us by surprise."

But after a good, hard blink, the coalition

**SEE LESSONS ON PAGE 10**



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**LESSONS, FROM PAGE 8**

tion troops switched tactics and ultimately defeated paramilitary units.

**■ Battlefield preparation still counts in modern war.**

Most of Iraq's air defenses were destroyed before U.S. ground troops set foot in the country, thanks to more than 10 years of United Nations-sanctioned Operation Northern and Southern Watch patrols of the no-fly zone.

"We've certainly had more preparation pre-hostilities than perhaps some people realize," Air Force Lt. Gen. Michael Moseley, the air campaign commander, told Pentagon reporters April 5.

The U.S. military also focused on dropping millions of leaflets into Iraq before the war, warning military officers not to order the use of weapons of mass destruction. Military and civilian Pentagon officials have repeatedly credited the effectiveness of those leaflets.

**■ For better or worse, the media can be a tool.**

Pentagon officials took an enormous risk when they decided to embed almost 600 civilian journalists in with U.S. air, sea and land units. The process wasn't perfect. But for the most part, the officials agreed, the gamble paid off: Americans now have a better sense of who the U.S. military is and what it does.

But Arab media, in particular the television satellite news channel Al-Jazeera, were report-



AP

**Army Staff Sgt. Gregory Coleman examines two heads of Saddam Hussein from broken sculptures, found in a badly damaged presidential palace in Baghdad on April 9.**

ing on the war from an entirely different perspective, focusing on civilian casualties and perceived U.S. mistakes. Some U.S. officials tried to counter that view, but many were hostile to Arab reporters in briefings and in person. And only rarely were high-level U.S. officials offered as interview subjects.

As a result, news stories in the

mainstream media made it apparent that the average Arab's view of the Iraq war is 180 degrees different than that of the average American.

"We should have reached out more to [the Arab] outlets," a Pentagon public affairs officer, who asked not to be named, told Stripes.

**■ In the end, it's still people**



MARK OLIVA/Stars and Stripes

**Marines walk among the ruins of the Special Republican Guard Headquarters buildings in Baghdad.**

**who count.**

The Iraqis were poorly led, supplied and motivated. U.S. servicemembers had the best equipment and training of any military force in history.

"The coalition had highly effective leadership, and Iraq was led by a military jackass,"

Cordeman said in his report.

"I will tell you that why the coalition was so decisive in this campaign to date," McKiernan said, "was because we have the military capability, training, leadership and equipment that makes us decisive."

E-mail Lisa Burgess at: [burgessl@stripes.osd.mil](mailto:burgessl@stripes.osd.mil)

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# Life, death on road to Baghdad

## Soldiers changed by grim realities, huge challenges

BY JOSEPH GIORDONO

*Stars and Stripes*

*The soldier is not a photographic machine. He is not a camera. After a battle each soldier will have different stories to tell, vastly different stories, and that when a war is ended it is as if there have been a million wars, or as many wars as there were soldiers.*

— Tim O'Brien,  
"Going After Cacciato"

These are the stories they tell:

Williams managed three short screams after getting shot in the stomach, said he couldn't feel his legs and then just closed his eyes and let his head fall back to the ground.

Gonzalez — who talked so much about going home and playing soccer — jumped out of a Humvee in the middle of the night to relieve himself, got hit by a sniper and later lost the lower half of his leg. When the sun finally rose, it revealed a pack of wild dogs licking the pool of blood he'd left behind.

There were the pitch-black first hours of the war, when night-vision goggles revealed a green nightmare of overmatched Iraqi soldiers vaporized in the turrets of exploding tanks.

In the morning, the roads were littered with burned-out vehicles and charred bodies, mouths agape, some posed forever in a desperate crawl out of a shattered window.

There was the Friday field Mass after the first week of war, in which the Army chaplain gave absolution to American soldiers by comparing killing in war to "accidentally running over a little girl who runs into the street, chasing her ball."

Soldiers exchanged puzzled glances.

But when the chaplain passed around bags of plastic rosaries and Virgin Mary medallions, every hand closed around yet another icon to get through the war.

A few days later, Bradley crews would be running over Iraqi soldiers jumping out of the tall grass near Karbala, in some bizarre perversion of the famous video image of the Chinese man defiantly blocking a column of tanks at Tiananmen Square.

They are images, moments in time that the soldiers would relate to one another over and over. Most times they'd laugh, not knowing what else to do.

Sgt. Blount stood tall in the middle of a road, firing his machine gun at a pair of Saddam Fedayeen fighters who were charging at him with RPGs mounted on motorbikes.

"Like something out of a goddamn movie," he later chuckled.



PHOTOS BY JOSEPH GIORDONO/Stars and Stripes

Troops from Company B, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry assemble during the march north to Baghdad on March 23.



Capt. Scott Brannon provides cover fire while medics rush to aid Spc. Shawn Williams, who was shot through the abdomen during an assault on a southern Iraq airfield March 21.

For every soldier in the war, there was a different perspective, a different nugget that meant something larger.

For three fascinating, terrifying and unforgettable weeks, the Army's 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment led the assault on Baghdad.

I'd been in Kuwait since January, covering the buildup to war. As a *Stripes* reporter, I'd been deployed to war zones before — Uzbekistan, the Philippines and Afghanistan. I was not naive

about the realities of conflict. But none of that prepared me for what was to come.

The 1-15th was among the lead elements of the invasion force, pushing through formerly anonymous towns that would soon become famous from headlines: Najaf, Nasiriyah, As Samawah, Karbala.

Before the war began, senior Army commanders briefed the media on the war plan. They expected little resistance from Iraqi defenders in the south,

going so far as to say they might get a welcome parade or two along the way.

Soon, it would become obvious how ludicrous those assumptions were, at least for the 1st Battalion.

While many regular Iraqi army units evaporated in a rush to surrender, the soldiers quickly came to recognize the paramilitaries as the biggest threat: black-hooded fanatics, armed with shoulder-mounted rockets and the conviction that giving



A Catholic chaplain from the 3rd Infantry Division performs Mass in the desert outside Karbala, Iraq, on March 28.

one's life in battle was the highest honor.

The mad dash north had unintended consequences — some support convoys got bogged down in the sand, left behind by the combat vehicles; some took wrong turns and blundered into ambushes of armored Iraqi forces.

How many people will remember that the most celebrated story of the war — the rescue of Pfc. Jessica Lynch — began as a lapse in logistics and planning?

It could have happened to the 1st Battalion.

On the first day of the war, the 1-15th raced across the desert toward its initial objective, an airfield in southern Iraq. While

SEE ARMY ON PAGE 12

An Iraqi man tries to convince troops from the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment to let him pass through a checkpoint near the city of As Samawah on March 26.



JOSEPH GIORDONO/Stars and Stripes



JOSEPH GIORDONO/Stars and Stripes

On March 19, the eve of the ground war in Iraq, an M1A1 Abrams from the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment sits poised on the Iraq-Kuwait border, ready for the invasion.

#### ARMY, FROM PAGE 11

the combat tracks had no problem tearing across the sand, many of the smaller, wheeled vehicles floundered. The combat power left the crews behind to dig themselves out and get back on the road.

One guy named Hughes spent four days sitting on the hood of his broken-down truck about 20 miles north of the Kuwait border. He passed the time making sketches, watching convoys drive by and trying to hitch a ride north, he said.

Then one day, he just showed up near Najaf, rejoining the 1st Battalion. Everyone was shocked — they assumed he was dead.

"I wondered why everyone was so happy to see me," Hughes said, once the other soldiers told him how they thought he was a goner.

The soldiers can describe what it is like to be caught in an ambush, shot at by snipers, shelled by artillery and have an RPG miss a Humvee by a few feet.

They can tell you how they fought through those moments, wavering between a strange sense of calm and an absolute fear never felt before.

The older soldiers can tell you how odd it is to watch an 18-year-old kid go from high school graduate to grizzled combat veteran in the span of a few days.

The kid who cowered at the sound of every explosion becomes the guy who barely looks up from his MRE to pronounce, with a preternatural calm, whether the current barrage is incoming or outgoing.



STEVE LIEWER/Stars and Stripes

Spc. Stacy Miller of the Illesheim, Germany-based 2nd Squadron, 6th Cavalry Regiment grabs a few winks as the convoy of 11th Aviation Regiment stops near Nasiriyah in southern Iraq.

The first time I remember meeting Brian Bollan, a moon-faced private from Detroit, he was just another guy scarfing down the hamburger patty and baked beans that served as the final hot meal before the war.

The first time I looked at him — really looked at him — it was from a slightly different angle: I was sitting in the back left seat of a Humvee, swatting at my legs to brush off hot shell casings that cascaded from the .50-caliber machine gun Bollan was unleashing from the gun mount above.

Before the war, guys like Bollan answered the most obvious

question with a startling unanimity: "The fastest way home is through Baghdad. If killing Iraqi soldiers is the fastest way home, then let's start the war."

Whatever their opinion of why the war was going to happen, they all focused on the most basic reality: If they did not kill the enemy, the enemy would kill them.

A week before the war began, I wrote a story about the 1st Battalion's Scout Platoon, with whom I would ride for the next several weeks.

As a favor, I e-mailed a digital picture I'd taken of platoon lead-



JOSEPH GIORDONO/Stars and Stripes

As an American soldier inspects Iraqi civilians fleeing As Samawah on March 24, an Apache gunship flies overhead.

er Capt. Scott Brannon to his wife and daughter back home in Fort Benning, Ga.

He was thrilled by the response that showed up in my e-mail a few days later. His daughter, his wife reported, was jumping at the excitement of having "seen Daddy on the computer."

Just days later, I took another picture of Capt. Brannon. This time, he was crouched in front of Williams — the soldier shot in the stomach — providing the only cover to his comrade's prone body as bullets flew from all around and a team of medics rushed to his aid.

"Um, you might not want to e-mail that one to my wife," Brannon said later.

There were other changes — gray had sprouted in his close-cropped, brown hair. At 31, Brannon was dealing with the ultimate responsibility. His war was not about regime change or

chemical weapons or liberating a dominated people. His war was about getting every man in his platoon home.

Williams was lucky — the shot that passed through his flak jacket, into his gut, out his back and through the back of the flak jacket did not kill him.

Every day now, I check half a dozen Web sites listing the casualties in Iraq, hoping not to recognize any of the names. A few days, I have.

I think of what I carried into the war, and I think of what became the most important thing I carried out: a plastic bag stuffed with letters the soldiers had been unable to mail.

One of them was simply addressed to "Mom and Dad." Another had a return address of "Hell."

Nothing can tell the soldiers' stories better than what was inside those envelopes.

E-mail Joseph Giordono at: giordonoj@mail.pstripes.osd.mil



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JOSEPH GIORDONO/Stars and Stripes  
A gunner fires mortar rounds at counterattacking Iraqi forces March 22. One American soldier was wounded during the fighting.

# Clear path to freedom

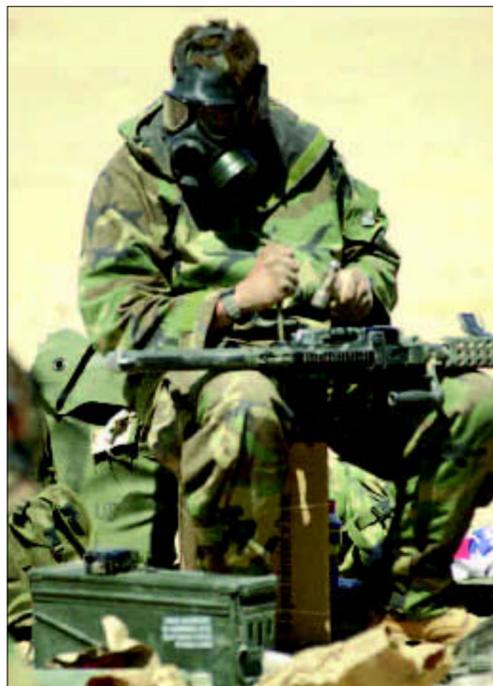
From the USS Kitty Hawk's deck to Baghdad's streets, troops knew job



MARK OLIVA/Stars and Stripes  
A Marine from 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines, watches for enemy movement from the cab of a seven-ton truck while convoying north through southern Iraq on March 25.



MARK OLIVA/Stars and Stripes  
Movement through a building in Al Fahr, Iraq, is fast and furious. These Marines recovered an AK-47 from a schoolhouse March 29.



JOSEPH GIORDONO/Stars and Stripes  
Spc. Brent Hutchins of the Scout Platoon, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, works on his weapon March 29. Gas masks were ordered on for a short period of time when American engineers destroyed a pair of enemy fuel tankers that contained suspicious substances.



MARK OLIVA/Stars and Stripes  
A Marine sniper team trudges through sliding dirt to move into a shooting position during a security halt along the route to Baghdad.



KENDRA HELMER/Stars and Stripes  
Sailors work on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk during sunset as a jet flies overhead.



MARK OLIVA/Stars and Stripes  
An Iraqi major, right, and private sit flex-cuffed, waiting for transportation to interrogation along a highway south of Nasiriyah on March 23. The major claimed to be a chemist with the Iraqi 11th Infantry Division, which capitulated at the beginning of the war.

THANK YOU FOR THE TRUE AMERICAN SPIRIT!  
*[Signature]*

Be SAFE!  
Come home soon  
Mile

God bless you all & come home safely!  
*[Signature]*

Thank you for your bravery in keeping America FREE! God Bless!  
Mike Sylvester

You are all my heroes, thank you for your bravery!  
God bless!  
*[Signature]*

Be safe  
Be well!!  
God speed!  
Ken Field

ALL OF YOU ARE #1 IN MY BOOK!  
Rich

God Bless & Be safe  
thank you  
Jennifer

Thank You For Keeping America A Safe Place!  
Mike "Emmitt"

THE EMPLOYEES AT



You Guys!  
Rock!  
*[Signature]*

Thank you all for your efforts - Be Safe!  
Lni

THANK YOU AND PLEASE COME HOME SAFE! We support you all. FOR ANY FORMER VFA-136 KNIGHTS OUT THERE WE ARE THINKING OF YOU!  
The Pavlock Family

To All you Guys & Gals your doing A Great Job Be Safe - Come Home soon  
Thanks Roy Hanner



Thank You for all you do. Come home soon!!  
*[Signature]*

Thank you!  
Come home soon!  
Annie

thank you!  
you're in our thoughts!  
God Bless  
Julia

Be safe  
God bless  
Marcus

MAY GOD CONTINUE TO PROTECT YOU ALL AS YOU CONTINUE TO PROTECT OUR FREEDOM!  
Tom Clancy

God Bless  
Come Back safe & alive  
Jeff

Hope all our boys come home soon to your family. thanks for your bravery!  
[MOM]

YOU ALL ARE VERY APPRECIATED BE SAFE, COME BACK WE'LL THANKS SOON

TO ALL OF THE MEN AND WOMEN OF OUR ARMED FORCES, THANK YOU! OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS ARE WITH YOU.  
DAN, AMY, SAMANTHA AND DANIEL MENDOS

Thanks for what you do for us  
Keep up the great work!  
Sharon Wilson

THANK YOU!

AND YOUR FAMILIES FOR YOUR DEDICATION & SERVICE TO OUR COUNTRY.

God Bless you All... Hope you All come home soon safely!!  
Adrian Curd

Your country holds you in the highest regards, we miss you come home soon.  
SEMPER PAR  
*[Signature]*

YOU ARE ALL HEROES. Come home safe & thank you for all you do to protect our way of life.  
God Bless  
Tommy Moore

You make us proud to be an American!  
Thank You!  
John Burt

To all the troops out there saving our all. You are the best and we are very proud!!!  
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PHOTOS BY MARK OLIVA/Stars and Stripes

Marines of Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines, run through a Special Republican Guard headquarters in Baghdad. They descended upon the area, only to find the enemy had fled.

# Making history, making Marines

## Battle forges fighting men

BY MARK OLIVA  
*Stars and Stripes*

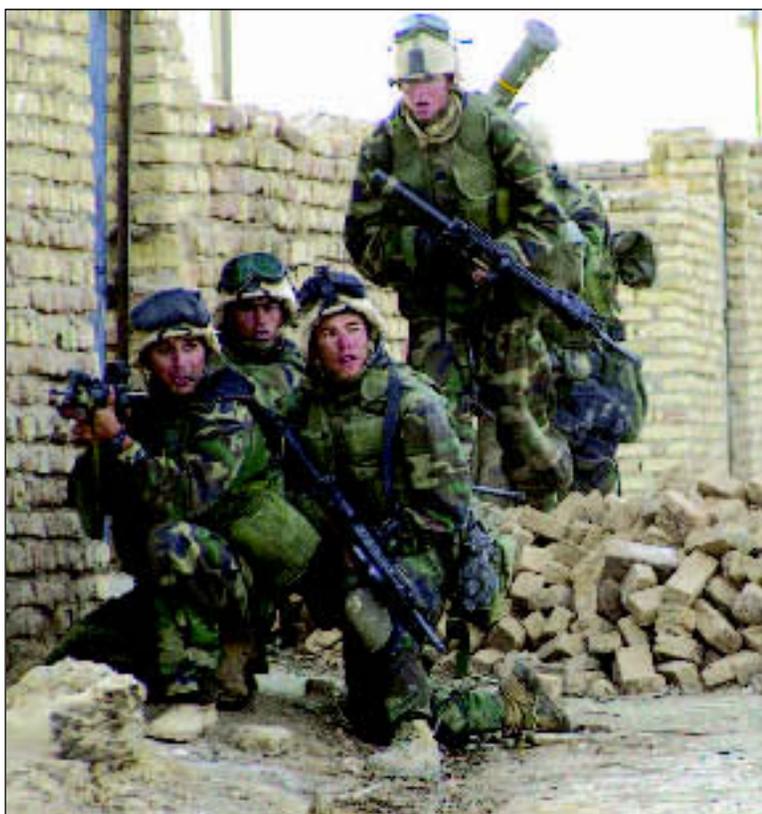
It's unnerving, realizing the staccato machine-gun fire across the street no longer startles you.

I looked up from my perch in the shade at a military hospital next to the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad and saw that none of the Marines around me were too concerned, either.

After a while, you just learn to tell whether rounds are coming in, going out, or are far enough away that there's no need to worry. That's what war does to a man. It sharpens the senses and dulls the nerves at the same time.

It wasn't always this way. Three weeks before, I hunkered behind Humvees in the Kuwaiti desert, sweat pouring down my face as I breathed through the filter of my gas mask. Iraqi forces were launching Scuds, and each time one went up, we went to the ground.

I first met the Marines of Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines at Camp Coyote, Kuwait. They were Spartans living in Spartan conditions. Looking back though, it seemed like the



Marines from Golf Company stack along a wall to provide cover fire during a March 29 raid on a local Baath Party headquarters building in Al Fahr, Iraq. The raid turned up a cache of weapons and intelligence documents; several Baath Party leaders were taken prisoner.

lap of luxury. Large tan tents, electricity, two meals a day and water-bottle showers at the camp became sweet memories after we crossed the border into Iraq.

That was March 20, the day

the battalion drove through the "breach" and into history. We packed like sardines into the back of 7-ton trucks, sweltered in the desert heat and choked on the dust kicked up by never-end-

ing convoys. This was the last time I actually knew what the date was until we arrived in Baghdad. Keeping track of actual dates became futile, if not impossible.

Instead, things revolved around events. Like the day the company drove through Nasiriyah, the same town where Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch and five other soldiers were captured and Marines were slugging it out with Fedayeen Saddam forces. Nervous fingers on rifle triggers replaced the boredom of bouncing in truck beds.

There was reason to be scared. The city looked like a picture straight out of Hue City, Vietnam, scene of the infamous street battle more than 30 years ago. It wasn't until the convoy was well on the other side of the city that the Marines realized most of the gunfire was outgoing. And it wasn't until then I realized I had never put down the borrowed M-16 to pick up my camera.

### Run-and-gun

The road north was a constant run-and-gun. Mortar fire seemed nonstop. The Marines lived in their chemical suits. Feet rotted because no one dared to sleep without rubber overboots. Gas warnings came at all hours, night and day, and everyone learned to live in the shadow of death.

There are sights, sounds and smells that never disappear after combat. Bodies of dead Iraqis, twisted, torn in half and mangled, littered the roads. The sickening, sweet smell of burned flesh lingers in the nostrils for days. Hands crack and bleed because they're so dry. Skin peels off in thick layers and hair is thick with grit and oil.

T-shirts and underwear are worn for days, long enough that Marines joked they were carrying their own biohazard weapons in the seat of their pants. There are no inhibitions on the battlefield. You take a buddy when you relieve yourself because the last place you want to get shot is in the backside while you squat over a hole in the ground.

But these are the times that make Marines. They learn about each other's dreams, each other's families. Cpl. Van Bayless left behind a wife who is carrying his first child. Capt. Paul Wendler has seen only an e-mail photo of his newborn son, Paul Wendler IV. Letters received before the war are dog-eared and tattered. Mail hasn't come. Even chows are cut to one a day for a while and water is as precious as bullets.

Wedding rings get strapped to watchbands because they no longer stay on the fingers. They've lost too much weight.

They'd kill for a cold beer, and

**SEE MARINES ON PAGE 18**

**MARINES, FROM PAGE 17**

just once they'd love to get their hands on the hamburger Meal Ready to Eat.

**Just one more day**

Expectations dwindle. They just want to wake up in the morning. They just want to make it until the end of the day.

And there are heartbreaking scenes. Civilians killed. News of Marines killed from neighboring units filtered in. Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Tom Wiegmann, a corpsman in the company, knelt on the side of a road to treat an Iraqi baby suffering from respiratory arrest.

There was nothing he could do but wrap the child in damp cloth and send its mother off to the local hospital where he knew there would be no pediatric antibiotics.

"The baby will be dead by the morning," he said with a heavy sigh. Even more heartbreaking for Wiegmann. He and his wife have tried for years to have a child of their own.

But this is combat. This is war. Car horns send terror through the rib cage. It might be a passing Iraqi, but it's also the sound that warns of gas. No one says the "G" word. That sends everyone scrambling for gas masks.

What little Marines do say to each other is a language so peppered with expletives, mothers would cry if they knew. They live in holes scraped out of the parched ground. They can't stand the thought of another day in back of the truck, but would do anything to get out of the scorching sun. Their skin is the shade of a coconut, partly because of the sun, but mostly from dirt. And that's OK, because at least it isn't raining.

Every day is a conflict of morals. The dawn brings another day the Marines might have to kill someone. Or they might be killed themselves. And they're ready for that. They pray for their safety, but beg to get into a fight.

Each Marine carries enough firepower to decimate a small village. They want to get into the mix. They want the enemy to stand and fight. Not shoot and run. Or hide behind children. They're trained to kill, but civilian deaths make them wince.

Mostly, they just want to get it over with. They want to go home, but home is on the other side of Baghdad, so when the convoy creeps to the city limits, there's renewed vigor.

**This is combat**

But this is combat. The night before entering the city, a neighboring company takes heavy fire, and it's up to the Marines of Golf Company to hit the headquarters of the Special Republican Guard in Baghdad the following morning.

Baghdad. Significant enough for me to dig out a calendar and figure it out. It's April 9.

A promise of 15 minutes of artillery fire falls through. Only seven rounds land before tanks start blasting holes in the wall and Marines fire rockets into guard towers. By now, the thunder of gunfire no longer stops Marines in their tracks.

They press on, kicking open



PHOTOS BY MARK OLIVA/Stars and Stripes

Marines line up behind a road barrier as they secure a key bridge along a main supply route during the march to Baghdad.



doors. Beyond the headquarters is the U.N. compound, and Iraqis are looting everything that isn't bolted down. People who can't afford shoes are carrying out flat-screen computer monitors by the armload until Marines flush them out. And do it again at the hospital next door.

One Marine left a note on a desk in the U.N. compound.

"Sorry your offices were trashed," it read. "We did what we could."

This is as far north as I go.

I leave the Marines after gathering up a couple dozen e-mail messages I promise to send out. The staccato machine gun sound, but no one is rattled. I hug the Marines I call brothers before I go. We take a few pictures and within a couple days I'm back with my family.

And that's heartbreaking, too. At the airport, my 3-year-old son, not old enough to understand war, tells me, "I lost you, Daddy."

"But you found me," I tell him. My 10-year-old daughter says nothing. Her tears say it all.

**Leaving them behind**

I'm happy to be home, but feel guilty. Guilty that my wife kept the house spotless in case someone came knocking on the door to tell her something went wrong. Guilty for not being able to tell her not to worry. Guilty that I could finally take a shower. Guilty that I no longer have to

sleep with a gas mask next to my head and guilty that the Marines I called brothers haven't yet had their own welcome home.

I am a Marine. A gunnery sergeant to be exact, and Marines don't leave Marines behind. I miss the sound of the Marines calling me "Gunny." The men with whom I shared the war are my brothers, not because we

**Above, left: Marines stand guard over wounded enemy prisoners during the whipping winds of a sandstorm north of Nasiriyah, Iraq. Above: Ted Handler keeps a tight grip on 'Pierre,' the Golf Company pigeon, used to detect chemical and biological warfare. Left: A towed Iraqi anti-aircraft gun lies in ruins, evidence of the firepower brought by Marines during their march toward Baghdad.**

wear the same uniform, but because I trusted them with my life, and they trusted me with theirs.

They trusted me to tell their story. I ate with them and slept beside them. I hunkered behind trucks in a gas mask praying Scuds wouldn't land on us next and hugged them when I left while machine-gun fire rattled away in the distance.

I noticed, only then, how unnerving it was that gunfire no longer startled me.

E-mail Mark Oliva at: olivam@pstrips.osd.mil



# Welcome Home

You fought bravely for your country while the loved ones you left here behind were united in support. We're glad now that you're home.

**Thank you.**



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# Apaches play supporting role

## Tank-killers find new task after failed attack

BY STEVE LIEWER

*Stars and Stripes*

Up until the first bombs hit Baghdad, the soldiers of the 11th Aviation Regiment dreamed of wartime glory.

They'd fly fast and low far behind enemy lines. Three squadrons of AH-64A Apache and AH-64D Longbow attack helicopters would weave around Iraqi anti-aircraft guns. They would wipe out the tanks and weapons of two army divisions in the war's first three nights.

Then the U.S. Army 3rd Infantry Division troops would race through southern Iraq almost unopposed, silently thanking their airborne brethren for battering the would-be enemy. Friend and foe alike would stand in awe of the world's most advanced attack helicopters.

Things didn't quite work out that way.

Bad weather and unexpectedly fierce Iraqi resistance during the war's first week sidelined the attack squadrons while ground forces gamely bulled into the cities — unfriendly turf for Apaches, which are vulnerable to ground fire.

"The Apache is not traditionally employed against the foot soldier," said Maj. Steve Wilson, the operations and plans officer for the 2nd Squadron, 6th Cavalry Regiment, one of two Illesheim, Germany-based attack units under 11th Aviation's command. "It was built as a Cold War armor killer. Its job is to kill tanks."

After its early setbacks, V Corps planners scrambled to find a new role for the Apache and its modern high-tech cousin, the Longbow, while the units chafed to get back into the fight.

They returned as infantry escorts, flying into battle with tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles, destroying enemy trucks and guns at the call of commanders on the ground. It's important work, but nowhere near as sexy as the battle-shaping deep strikes for which the Apache crews had trained.

Plenty of critics have added the Iraq war to the list of Apache failures. It has been grounded several times for safety reasons, and it was kept out of the Kosovo battle in 1999 for a combination of logistical and political reasons.

While the Apache didn't play the starring role its boosters had hoped for this time, it performed well once it found its niche with the infantry.

"There's always surprises, it's just a matter of what shape and size they'll be," said Maj. John Lindsay, 11th Aviation's operations officer. "We adjusted as required to accomplish the mission."



PHOTOS BY STEVE LIEWER/Stars and Stripes

**Mechanics from the 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment work on the tail of an AH-64D Longbow damaged in Task Force 11th Aviation's attack on the Medina Division.**

V Corps surprised few observers when it sent an attack squadron to the Middle East in October, in the earliest stage of preparation for war with Iraq.

What raised eyebrows was its choice of the 2-6 Cavalry, an Apache unit, over the other Illesheim-based unit, the 6th Squadron, 6th Cavalry Regiment, which features the Longbow.

Although the 6-6 Cavalry returned to Europe with its new aircraft only in July, the two squadrons quickly built up a strong brotherly rivalry. Members of each squadron thought the other to be the favorite of higher-ups at 11th Regiment and V Corps and fought for their share of the limelight.

The two squadrons jockeyed for limelight in the first attack March 20. Regimental planners came up with a Solomonlike solution: The 6-6 Cavalry would make the initial strike against the Iraqi 11th Division near Nasiriyah, but the 2-6 Cavalry would deliver the main blow within an hour.

Dust hung thick over the airfield that night, shrouding the lights in a gloomy fog. The 6-6 Cavalry took to the air along with two Black Hawk command helicopters. Barely half an hour into the flight, the 6-6 Cavalry commander, Lt. Col. Mike Barbee, called off the attack because the Black Hawk pilots couldn't see through the curtain of sand with their night-vision goggles.

Many 2-6 Cavalry pilots complained that they could have



**An AH-64A Apache heads out on a mission against the former stronghold of the Iraqi Republican Guard's Medina Division south of Baghdad.**

completed the mission because of their longer desert training using the forward-looking infrared radar goggles, which work better than night-vision goggles in dust storms.

But Wilson said that most of them didn't know at the time that enemy forces were believed to have moved close to the forward position where their refuelers would have been working that night.

"Two-six [Cavalry pilots] would have wanted to go on that mission, but I totally understand, militarily, why it had to be canceled," Wilson said. "You try to make these calls for the betterment of the unit."

Only a few hours after that mission was scrubbed, all the soldiers from Task Force 11th

Aviation except the pilots and a few officers jammed into their packed Humvees and trucks for a 300-mile convoy to their new base camp at an abandoned desert airstrip 70 miles south of Baghdad.

They joined tens of thousands of other military vehicles for a sleepless three-day ordeal of stopping and starting, waiting and watching as they jostled for position with other convoys. Soldiers watched warily as trucks loaded with young Iraqi men passed by, unaware that similar trucks had fired at other convoys.

The convoy didn't make it to the new camp until dawn on Monday, March 24, hours after 11th Aviation's second scheduled attack on the Medina Division of

the Iraqi Republican Guard northeast of Al-Hillah.

The Medina attack had taken on new importance to the pilots after the scrubbed first mission, but it went badly from the start. Only part of the refueling convoy had arrived from Camp Udairi. In confusion on a moonless night, there was time and fuel to gas up only 30 helicopters, barely half of the number scheduled to fly that night against the Medina.

The 2-6 Cavalry's mission was postponed until the following night, and only 12 of the 6-6 Cavalry's 18 aircraft flew, along with all of the Longbows from the Texas-based 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment.

Takeoff generated heavy clouds of dust that caused one aircraft to crash, and many others barely escaped. Within minutes of leaving the base, the aircraft met sporadic gunfire, which would turn into what pilots described as a "wall of steel" once they got deep into the suburbs south of Baghdad.

All of the aircraft took heavy fire. Only two succeeded in bombing their targets; one was forced down and its two pilots taken prisoner. Luck and pluck helped the rest limp home, with only one pilot slightly wounded. Some of the Longbows had been hit by as many as 15 automatic-rifle rounds.

"We saw a degree of damage that would probably cripple an ordinary aircraft," Lindsay said.

The mauling shook up both pilots and planners. The 11th Aviation helicopters would not fly again for days, and from then on they would fly only on reconnaissance or tied closely to infantry units. The command deep-sixed deep attacks for the rest of the short war, perhaps — Wilson said — for good.

"It changed the face of how they're going to use attack aviation," he said. "We don't really see any big, open fights in the future. We're going to have to adjust our direction."

Used for the final two weeks of the war as infantry support, the Apaches and Longbows nevertheless racked up a respectable record. The 2-6 Cavalry, unscathed in the March 23 battle, knocked out dozens of enemy armored vehicles in the Battle of Baghdad, Wilson said, and killed 64 enemy soldiers. The 6-6 Cavalry and the 1-227th Aviation also repaired many of their aircraft and supported mop-up actions in Al-Hillah and As-Samawah.

"I think we proved our worth," Wilson said. "I heard nothing but accolades from the ground-pounders we were working with."

When the war moved to the cities, it ensured that the infantry would take center stage and push helicopters into the shadows.

"[Apaches] are built for the battlefield, not the urban fight," Wilson said.

"The weapon that won this war," he added, "was the U.S. fighting soldier."

Steve Liewer was embedded with the 2nd Squadron, 6th Cavalry Regiment. E-mail him at: [liewers@mail.estripes.osd.mil](mailto:liewers@mail.estripes.osd.mil)



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An Air Force F-16 pilot gestures as he taxis down the runway for a mission over Iraq on April 2 at a base near the Iraq border.

AP photos

# Unstoppable force from the air

## Attacks helped pave way to quick victory

BY SCOTT SCHONAUER  
*Stars and Stripes*

In the best-covered war in history, sandstorms, suicide attacks and live images of American armored columns racing to Baghdad stole the spotlight.

But what TV viewers did not see was critical to victory in Iraq: a merciless pounding from the sky delivered by U.S. fighters and bombers.

Off-screen, the Air Force led a massive air campaign using precision-guided bombs that made it possible for troops and tanks on the ground to roll into the capital.

During the war, retired generals standing on huge floor maps in television studios remarked that air power was "softening" Iraq's once-elite Republican Guard.

"I find it interesting when folks say we're 'softening them up,'" Air Force Lt. Gen. Michael Moseley, coalition air component commander, told Pentagon reporters by telephone April 5 from his headquarters in Saudi Arabia. "We're not 'softening them up.' We're killing them."

From the moment the first smart bomb hit its Iraqi target, the U.S.-led coalition dominated the air. Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein never really had a formidable air force, certainly not one that could go head-to-head with the United States, but the fact that not one of his planes left the ground surprised some commanders.

The numbers show that the Air Force led the way, flying the most missions, dropping the most bombs and using the most aircraft in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Aerial strikes wiped out entire divisions of Iraqi soldiers or pummeled them to the point that they weren't a factor by the time ground forces arrived.

One method of close-air support got its first true test in Iraq: the 24-hour, seven-day presence used during the battle for Baghdad.



An Air Force F-16 takes off in Kuwait on March 15 past aircraft shelters that were damaged during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

The technique, which kicked off April 5, "racked and stacked" fighters, bombers and reconnaissance aircraft flying in a "racetrack" pattern over Baghdad, ready to respond instantly to air-support requests from ground forces.

Aircraft in the lower layers peeled off and headed back to base once they dropped their bombs or ran low on gas, Moseley said. Aircraft positioned higher in the "stack" then dropped down to the "ready" layer, next in line for a combat mission.

Moseley said the aircraft included a mix of Navy, Marine and Air Force planes, including A-10s, F-15s, F-16s, F-14s and F/A-18s.

Other planes acted as forward air controllers, spotting targets and relaying their locations to the fighters.

They don't know how many Iraqi tanks and armored vehicles they destroyed.

They suspect hundreds. It could be in the thousands.

### 'Shock and awe'

Planning for the air campaign began last summer.

Commanders mapped out a strategy for what was initially dubbed "1003V," or what evolved into Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Turkey would be the linchpin, planners thought. Months before the war, the Air Force began negotiations with the Turks to base 20,000 troops and 300 aircraft in their country.

But a last-minute decision by the Turkish government to prohibit U.S. forces from using Turkey as a "northern front" forced the U.S. military to look at other options.

The 16th Air and Space Expeditionary

Task Force staff, headquartered primarily at Aviano Air Base, Italy, had the challenge of leading the logistics.

The Air Force was eventually left basing only about 4,500 airmen and 100 U.S. warplanes. The Air Force also relied on bases in Sigonella, Sicily, and the United Kingdom, flying B-52s from England.

Air Force F-117s began the first phase of the war by bombing an Iraqi bunker believed to be holding Saddam. The day before, coalition aircraft patrolling no-fly zones in north and south Iraq bombed dozens of Iraqi defense sites.

On the second day of the war, the coalition attempted to deliver a knockout punch with a bombing assault strike planners hoped would convince Iraqi leaders to surrender. They called it the "shock and awe" campaign.

It did not draw the mass surrenders planners had hoped, but the bombing continued. The Air Force flew an average of 300 strike sorties a day the first week.

### The 'real heroes'

To fly that many combat missions, pilots relied on Air Force tanker aircraft to keep their planes juiced.

Air Force strike planner Col. Mace Carpenter said one of the war's "real heroes" were the air tankers that kept fighters and bombers fueled to penetrate deep into Iraq and drop ordnance.

Army units moved so fast that fighters were having problems going from Saudi Arabia, where the tankers were, to south of Baghdad to destroy the Iraqi forces. So commanders made the bold decision to move tankers over Iraq to make sure the fighters could fuel up.

Many of the lumbering tanker aircraft were fired at by both artillery and surface-to-air missiles. Carpenter said that commanders were willing to risk a tanker and its crew to get the fighters to Baghdad and protect the fast-moving ground forces.

Pilots flew vulnerable tanker aircraft with no radar-warning equipment, chaff or flairs to evade missiles.

SEE AIR ON PAGE 24

# Dedicated, strong and brave.

The American spirit remains strong. We salute those at its center. Your hard work and dedication do not go unnoticed. CDW•G thanks you.





KEVIN DOUGHERTY/Stars and Stripes

Armored vehicles—including this M1A1 Abrams tank that arrived just before sunset April 9—were brought into Bashur airfield in northern Iraq.

#### AIR, FROM PAGE 22

"These guys were gutsy," Carpenter said.

Commanders expected to lose at least one tanker, but none of them was hit.

In the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the limiting factor for putting firepower on the battlefield was availability of tanker aircraft, Carpenter said.

"Same thing in this war," he added.

#### Airlift proved critical

The Air Force's airlift capability also proved to be crucial to moving troops, delivering bombs and supplying units on the ground with bullets and Meals, Ready to Eat.

C-5, C-17, C-130 and C-141 aircraft flew more than 18,500 sorties, delivering more than 100,000 tons of cargo and more than 260,000 passengers.

Maj. Bill Arthur, chief of the Air Mobility Operations Control Center, was the lead planner for airlift in and out of Ramstein Air Base, Germany, during the war. C-130s used the base as a launch point to deliver everything from bombs to newspapers.

#### C-17 drop

But the shining moment for Air Force cargo pilots came on March 27, when 15 C-17s dropped about 900 Army paratroopers into Iraq.

In the north, when the option to stage combat operations from Turkey fell by the wayside, the U.S. military turned its focus to Bashur airfield in northern Iraq.

Military planners identified Bashur as a logical and relatively safe place to conduct air operations long before the first bomb was dropped on Baghdad, according to Air Force Lt. Col. Mike Marra, commander of the 86th Air Mobility Squadron.

Located near the city of Harir and about 30 miles south of the Turkish border, the airfield is situated deep inside the Kurdish-run enclave established by the United States after the 1991 Gulf War.

In the early morning hours of March 27, about 900 paratroopers and a score of Air Force personnel parachuted into the Kurdish-controlled area of northern Iraq and secured the airfield.

In the first week, 84 airplanes flew in 6 million pounds of cargo and 3,000 troops, mostly from the 173rd Airborne Brigade out of Vicenza, Italy.

All of the planes during that period landed at night, with aerial porters and mechanics—Marra's men and women—

working in complete darkness with night-vision goggles.

"At the time," Marra said, "we didn't know the Iraqi air force had been beaten."

#### A northern base

Marra's squadron is one of two that make up the 86th Contingency Response Group, a rapid-deployment force based at Ramstein. The other unit is the 786th Security Forces Squadron, which brought in Air Force cops from Germany and England.

The group exists to establish airfield operations in austere conditions.

That involves putting a security force on the ground to protect people and equipment.

Senior Airman Bryan Holland is with the 100th Security Forces Squadron, RAF Mildenhall, England.

"We're in Iraq," Holland said at the time as he stood guard at the front gate.

"I've been in [the Air Force] for almost five years. I never thought I would be in Iraq. It's crazy."

So was the pace.

In the 25 days of airfield operations at Bashur, the unit handled more than 350 cargo flights and more than 21 million pounds of cargo, much of it at night. The busiest day was April 11, when 21 aircraft landed. But the 7,300-foot runway began to deteriorate from the cargo traffic.

The mission was shifting, too.

U.S. military officials decided to move the airlift mission from Bashur to Kirkuk, where the 173rd had relocated.

#### Air power dominant

The success of air power will—again—renew the debate over the importance of ground forces. Early in the war, critics suggested that the Pentagon did not put enough forces on the ground.

In the end, that didn't turn out to be the case. On April 9, statues of Saddam began to fall.

The Air Force might not have been the media star like it was during the first Persian Gulf War, but it still delivered a powerful punch. And the successes likely will be used to support those who advocate a robust air power.

"When you start analyzing the war, taking a look at what happened, and what was destroyed and the impact and the effect," Carpenter said, "air power is going to be stronger than ever."

Lisa Burgess contributed to this report from the Pentagon. Kevin Dougherty contributed from Kirkuk, Iraq.

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# Special forces: Might out of sight

BY LISA BURGESS

Stars and Stripes

For special operations, the war in Iraq marks a coming of age.

The rebels, who for so long have walked outside the boundaries of the traditional military reservation, now will have an equal place inside the tent.

Special operations is "a very, very powerful tool for the [war commander] and a very, very powerful and very accurate arrow in his quiver when you look across joint and combined operations," Air Force Lt. Gen. Michael Moseley, the air campaign commander in Iraq, told reporters April 5.

The general public will never fully know the role played by the "shadow warriors" in Iraq. The special operators' most daring exploits are destined to become legends only in that small circle of men who share the title.

But a few lessons can be pieced together from comments made by U.S. war commanders and off-the-record discussions with special operators themselves.

First, and most important, special operations in Iraq did not stretch the boundaries of the group's traditional missions, according to a high-ranking special operations officer who asked not to be named. But there were two significant changes.

First, special operations was integrated into the overall planning process right from the beginning, accepted as an equal player by conventional force commanders to a degree that has never been seen before.

"I will tell you that their effects were felt before D-Day and are still felt today, that they have been a huge combat multiplier in this joint campaign to topple this regime," Lt. Gen. David McKiernan, commander of land forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom under the Coalition Forces Land Component Command, told Pentagon reporters April 23.

Second, special operations was involved in Iraq on an unprecedented scale, both in numbers of personnel and in the number of missions conducted.

"Special Forces and Ranger forces played a major role throughout Iraq," military analyst Anthony Cordesman said in his report "The 'Instant Lessons' of the Iraq War."

#### Setting the stage

Analysts agreed that the stage for special operations in Iraq was actually set in Afghanistan, where U.S. Central Command leader Gen. Tommy R. Franks learned just how effective the unconventional fighters could be in conventional operations.

"It is clear that the new interactions between Special Forces, precision air power, and advanced [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance] systems demonstrated during the Afghan conflict are redefining the role of Special Forces," Cordesman said.

In fact, Franks "found Special Forces to be so effective during the fighting in Afghanistan that he deployed some 10,000 personnel in similar roles in Iraq," Cordesman, the Arleigh Burke Chair for Strategy at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, said in his report.

Other reports have put the number of special operations forces in Iraq closer to 12,000.

The size of the operational portion of U.S. Special Operations Command is classified, but most analysts put the number at about 47,000. That would mean one-fourth of the entire force is now in Iraq—at the same time that special operations remain prominent in Afghanistan, not to mention the Philippines, South Korea, Africa, and all their other areas of responsibility.

"We're stretched pretty thin," the special forces officer said. "But we're getting the job done."

#### Low profile

The relative dearth of U.S. ground forces in Afghanistan meant that special operators were often the only game in town for curious media teams. Commandos were interviewed regularly by reporters, and photographed playing soccer with local Afghan children, treating wounded civilians, and even posing with their weapons.

The result was that commandos assumed an unusually high-profile role.

Iraq was very different. With a state leader wielding a conventional army as foe, conventional ground and air forces took much of the media's focus, allowing special operators to follow their more traditional, invisible path.

A handful—or "10 or 15 reporters" out of 600—were embedded with teams performing field missions, according to Maj. Tim Blair, Pentagon spokesman who helped administer the embed program.

But for the most part, the special forces were out of sight. "And that's the way it should be," the special forces officer said.

Many of the commando teams were stationed in sparsely populated western deserts of Iraq, where Saddam Hussein was thought to have deployed Scud missile launchers directed at Israel.

Commanders augmented the western-based special forces with a barrage of air attacks on suspected Scud sites. How many of those attacks were "targets of opportunity" discovered by special forces on foot, and how many were the product of satellite intelligence, is not known, but no Scuds were launched at Israel.

In northern Iraq, special forces worked with Kurdish militias, helping to keep factions from turning against one another and later, assisting in the capture of oil-rich Kirkuk and Mosul.

Elsewhere, operators worked in everything from covert operations (one source suggested that special forces were undercover in Baghdad well before the war began), to the rescue operation that freed Pfc. Jessica Lynch, held prisoner in an Iraqi hospital.

As they did so successfully in Iraq, the special forces used lasers to spot targets for airstrikes. They guarded oil fields. They monitored roads near the border with Syria to ensure that Baath party officials could not slip out of Iraq and into safe haven.

None of the above were new missions for a group of servicemembers who are accustomed to "writing the book as we go along," the special operations officer said.

Instead, lessons learned from special operations in Iraq will focus on how technology can refine and augment the unique skills this group brings to the Pentagon arsenal, the officer said.

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# Still going

## War emphasizes need to keep aircraft carriers

BY SANDRA JONTZ  
AND KENDRA HELMER

*Stars and Stripes*

For two months, sailors on the guided-missile cruiser USS Cowpens sailed around the Persian Gulf without a glimpse of land.

They knew war was near. They knew their ship — chock-full of Tomahawk missiles — was ready to spring into action.

Then, on March 20, their Yokosuka, Japan-based ship got the call to fire upon a target in Baghdad. Most sailors slept through the launch.

The next day, however, they hustled to a small helicopter hangar to witness what would be called a night of “shock and awe.” Navy ships fired 381 Tomahawks from the Red Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Persian Gulf.

Most of the Cowpens crew hadn’t seen a Tomahawk launch. Prior to their Middle East deployment, even the Cowpens’ captain — in the Navy for 24 years — had seen only one test launch.

“There was a stunned silence,” said Petty Officer 3rd Class Amanda Crawford. “There was all this smoke and fire, and then it was just red.”

Throughout the conflict, the Navy launched more than 800 Tomahawks. Of the service’s 12 aircraft carriers, three served in the Gulf and two in the Mediterranean in direct support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

As of late April, Navy strike and surveillance aircraft had flown about 8,000 sorties in the conflict, supporting land and air forces. By comparison, Air Force fighters and bombers flew more than 9,000 combat sorties, while its surveillance aircraft logged 432 flights. The Air Force also dropped about 18,000 munitions — 11,000 guided and 7,100 unguided bombs.

The conflict in Iraq proved there is still a need for aircraft carriers and their accompanying



PHOTOS BY KENDRA HELMER/Stars and Stripes

**Petty Officer 2nd Class Eric Klostermann, an aviation boatswain’s equipment mate, gives the thumbs-up for an aircraft to launch off the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk in the Persian Gulf.**

ships, said Phil Anderson, a senior fellow at Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank in Washington, D.C.

“Enormous air capability was brought to the fight because of the aircraft carrier, and that’s a key point,” said Anderson, who retired as a Marine colonel after 24 years of service. “They served an appropriate role for this opportunity, and I don’t think you will have anyone tell you they didn’t provide an exceptional value to the fight.”

Well, not quite.

Charles Pena, director of defense policy studies at the Cato Institute, another Washington-based think tank, says the Navy’s role was diminished.

“The biggest role the Navy played was providing a platform for launching cruise missiles for precision strikes, and that’s not what the Navy wants to hear,” Pena said. “When you say Navy, you think of aircraft carrier. But carrier-based air power is just becoming less and less significant in terms of modern warfare.”

But Anderson says the carriers’ presence was invaluable given the limited forward-basing opportunities.

“With Saudi Arabia being less than cooperative and the Turkish issue ... when you don’t have access to land capability, what’s the solution? It’s crystal clear that you find it in the Navy’s 12 aircraft carrier battle groups.”

Turkey did not allow elements of the 4th Infantry Division to cross over land to invade Iraq from the north. Instead, smaller, lighter elements from the 173rd Airborne Brigade from Vicenza, Italy, airdropped into the north-



**A sailor in an EA-6B Prowler, left, looks down at a fighter getting close to the aircraft while it’s being parked on the Kitty Hawk flight deck.**

ern territory to establish control so that larger Army and Marine Corps elements could make their way north once Baghdad fell to coalition control April 9.

“The unique thing we [the Navy] bring to the game is assured access to the region,” said Jim Hanna, chief of staff for Naval Forces Central Command and the 5th Fleet.

Hanna also said the Navy brought speed and lethality to the picture.

“We were able to get five aircraft carriers out here in a matter of weeks,” he said in a phone interview from Bahrain. “We were able to move the I Marine Expeditionary Force out here by sea in a matter of weeks ... the biggest thing is the investment we made in readiness paid off.”

No one service won the war, Hanna said.

rescue, extrication and responding to crises, he said.

He stopped short of calling carriers obsolete.

“They’re not irrelevant or unimportant,” he said. “They’re just not as important as they may have been during the Cold War. ... I’d never say we don’t need aircraft carriers, but we don’t need as many as we have. We could make do with half as many aircraft carriers as we have now.”

The Navy has budgeted \$11.7 billion for its next generation of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, called CVN-21, and plans an initial operational capability date of 2014, officials have said.

As the war became more of a ground campaign, several ships, including the Cowpens, headed home. The Yokosuka-based cruiser, part of the USS Kitty Hawk battle group, spent 104 days at sea.

“I’m not sure it dawns on us yet the part we’ve played in history,” commanding officer Capt. Charles Dixon said in a telephone interview from Japan. “The Navy goes to sea all the time — it’s what we do. And really this deployment in some ways wasn’t drastically different than what we did last summer, other than shooting Tomahawk missiles.”

Before allowing his sailors some leave, Dixon talked on the ship’s intercom about their accomplishments, “and how even I wouldn’t completely appreciate what we did right away.”

“We should be proud of what we did and hold our heads high.”

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E-mail Kendra Helmer at: helmerk@mail.estripes.osd.mil

“This is the most integrated I’ve seen the forces,” he said. “... For a war, it was pretty enjoyable to watch ... different services to get along and do business.”

At any one time, there were 150 U.S. and coalition ships taking part in the effort.

“Our ships and aircraft were well maintained and reliable, met all missions assigned,” he said.

But with the Air Force’s B-52s dropping Joint Direct Attack Munitions, or JDAMs, from 20,000 feet, there is less and less of a need for naval air power, which carries considerably fewer and lighter munitions, Pena said.

With technological advances, including precision-guided munitions from the air and sea, naval air power should take a new focus and transition to perfecting missions such as search and

## WAR'S TOLL

The Defense Department provided the following list of the 156 U.S. servicemembers who have died in the war with Iraq. It includes those who died on or before May 15.

### Air Force

- Staff Sgt. Patrick Lee Griffin Jr., 31 — May 13
- Staff Sgt. Scott D. Sather, 29 — April 8
- Capt. Eric B. Das, 30 — April 7
- Maj. Gregory Stone, 40 — March 25

### Army

- Lt. Col. Dominic R. Baragona, 42 — May 19
- Spc. Rasheed Sahib, 22 — May 18
- Master Sgt. Williams L. Payne, 46 — May 16
- Cpl. Richard P. Carl, 26 — May 9
- Chief Warrant Officer Hans N. Gukeisen, 31 — May 9
- Chief Warrant Officer Brian K. Van Dusen, 39 — May 9
- Pfc. Marlin T. Rockhold, 23 — May 8
- Pvt. Jason Deibler, 20 — May 4
- Sgt. Sean C. Reynolds, 25 — May 3
- Pfc. Jesse A. Givens, 34 — May 1
- 1st Sgt. Joe J. Garza, 43 — April 28
- 1st Lt. Osbaldo Orozco, 26 — April 25
- Spc. Narson B. Sullivan, 21 — April 25
- Sgt. Troy David Jenkins, 25 — April 24
- Spc. Roy Russell Buckley, 24 — April 22
- Cpl. John T. Rivero, 23 — April 17
- Pfc. John E. Brown, 21 — April 14
- Spc. Thomas A. Foley III, 23 — April 14
- Spc. Richard A. Goward, 32 — April 14
- Pfc. Joseph P. Mayek, 20 — April 14
- Spc. Gil Mercado, 25 — April 13
- Staff Sgt. Terry W. Hemingway, 39 — April 10
- Cpl. Henry L. Brown, 22, Iraq — April 8
- Sgt. 1st Class John W. Marshall, 50 — April 8
- Pfc. Jason M. Meyer, 23 — April 8
- Staff Sgt. Robert A. Stever, 36 — April 8
- Staff Sgt. Lincoln D. Hollinsaid, 27 — April 7
- 2nd Lt. Jeffrey J. Kaylor, 24 — April 7
- Pfc. Anthony S. Miller, 19 — April 7
- Spc. George A. Mitchell, 35 — April 7
- Pfc. Gregory P. Huxley, 19 — April 6
- Pvt. Kelley S. Prewitt, 24 — April 6
- Staff Sgt. Steven A. Booker, 34 — April 5
- Spc. Larry K. Brown, 22 — April 5
- Capt. Tristan N. Aitken, 31 — April 4
- Pfc. Wilfred D. Bellard, 20 — April 4
- Spc. Daniel Francis J. Cunningham, 33 — April 4
- Pvt. Devon D. Jones, 19 — April 4
- Sgt. 1st Class Paul R. Smith, 33 — April 4
- Staff Sgt. Wilbert Davis, 40 — April 3
- Master Sgt. George A. Fernandez, 36 — April 3
- Capt. Edward J. Korn, 31 — April 3
- Staff Sgt. Nino D. Livaudais, 23 — April 3



KENDRA HELMER/Stars and Stripes

**Sailors salute during an April 10 memorial service for a former Carrier Air Wing 5 member on the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk. Lt. Thomas Mullen Adams was killed in a March 22 helicopter crash.**

- Spc. Ryan P. Long, 21 — April 3
- Spc. Donald S. Oaks Jr., 20 — April 3
- Sgt. 1st Class Randall S. Rehn, 36 — April 3
- Capt. Russell B. Rippetoe, 27 — April 3
- Sgt. Todd J. Robbins, 33 — April 3
- Capt. James F. Adamowski, 29 — April 2
- Spc. Mathew G. Boule, 22 — April 2
- Chief Warrant Officer Erik A. Halvorsen, 40 — April 2
- Chief Warrant Officer Scott Jamar, 32 — April 2
- Sgt. Michael F. Pedersen, 26 — April 2
- Chief Warrant Officer Eric A. Smith, 41 — April 2
- Sgt. Jacob L. Butler, 24 — April 1
- Spc. Brandon J. Rowe, 20 — March 31
- Pfc. Michael Russell Creighton Weldon, 20 — March 29
- Spc. Michael Edward Curtin, 23 — March 29
- Pfc. Diego Fernando Rincon, 19 — March 29
- Sgt. Eugene Williams, 24 — March 29
- Sgt. Roderic A. Solomon, 32 — March 28
- Spc. Gregory P. Sanders, 19 — March 24
- Spc. Jamaal R. Addison, 22 — March 23
- Spc. Edward J. Anguiano, 24 — March 23
- Sgt. George Edward Buggs, 31 — March 23
- Master Sgt. Robert J. Dowdy, 38 — March 23
- Pvt. Ruben Estrella-Soto, 18 — March 23
- Pfc. Howard Johnson II, 21 — March 23
- Spc. James M. Kiehl, 22 — March 23
- Chief Warrant Officer Johnny Villareal Mata, 35 — March 23
- Pfc. Lori Ann Piestewa, 23 — March 23

- Pvt. Brandon Ulysses Sloan, 19 — March 23
- Spc. Brandon S. Tobler, 19 — March 23
- Sgt. Donald Ralph Walters, 33 — March 23
- Capt. Christopher Scott Seifert, 27 — March 22
- Spc. Rodrigo Gonzalez-Garza — Feb. 25
- Chief Warrant Officer 2 Timothy W. Moehling — Feb. 25
- Chief Warrant Officer 2 John D. Smith — Feb. 25
- Spc. William J. Tracy — Feb. 25
- Spc. William A. Jeffries, 39 — March 26

### Navy

- Lt. Nathan D. White, 30 — April 2
- Petty Officer 3rd Class Michael Vann Johnson (HC), 25 — March 25
- Lt. Thomas Mullen Adams, 27 — March 22

### Marine Corps

- Sgt. Kirk Allen Straseskie, 23 — May 19
- Cpl. Douglas Jose Marecoreyes, 28 — May 18
- Lance Cpl. Nicholas Brian Kleiboeker, 19 — May 13
- Lance Cpl. Jakub Henryk Kowalik, 21 — May 12
- Pfc. Jose Franci Gonzalez Rodriguez, 19 — May 12
- Lance Cpl. Matthew R. Smith, 20 — May 10
- Lance Cpl. Cedric E. Bruns, 22 — May 9
- Chief Warrant Officer Andrew Todd Arnold, 30 — April 22
- Chief Warrant Officer Robert William Channell Jr., 36 — April 22
- Lance Cpl. Alan Dinh Lam, 19 — April 22
- Cpl. Armando Ariel Gonzalez, 25 — April 14
- Cpl. Jason David Mileo, 20 — April 14

- Cpl. Jesus A. Gonzalez, 22 — April 12
- Lance Cpl. David Edward Owens Jr., 20 — April 12
- Staff Sgt. Riayan A. Tejada, 26 — April 11
- Gunnery Sgt. Jeffrey E. Bohr Jr., 39 — April 10
- Pfc. Juan Guadalupe Garza Jr., 20 — April 8
- Capt. Travis A. Ford, 30 — April 4
- Cpl. Bernard G. Gooden, 22 — April 4
- 1st Lt. Brian M. McPhillips, 25 — April 4
- Sgt. Duane R. Rios, 25 — April 4
- Capt. Benjamin W. Sammis, 29 — April 4
- Pfc. Chad E. Bales, 20 — April 3
- Cpl. Mark A. Evnin, 21 — April 3
- Cpl. Erik H. Silva, 22 — April 3
- Lance Cpl. Brian E. Anderson, 26 — April 2
- Pfc. Christian D. Gurtner, 19 — April 2
- Lance Cpl. Joseph B. Maglione, 22 — April 1
- Capt. Aaron J. Contreras, 31 — March 30
- Sgt. Michael V. Lalush, 23 — March 30
- Sgt. Brian D. McGinnis, 23 — March 30
- Staff Sgt. James W. Cawley, 41 — March 29
- Lance Cpl. William W. White, 24 — March 29
- Sgt. Fernando Padilla-Ramirez, 26 — March 28
- Gunnery Sgt. Joseph Menusa, 33 — March 27
- Cpl. Robert M. Rodriguez, 21 — March 27
- Lance Cpl. Jesus A. Suarez del Solar, 20 — March 27
- Major Kevin G. Nave, 36 — March 26
- Staff Sgt. Donald C. May Jr., 31 — March 25
- Lance Cpl. Patrick T. O'Day, 20 — March 25
- Pfc. Francisco A. Martinez-Flores, 21 — March 25
- Lance Cpl. Thomas A. Blair, 24 — March 24

- Cpl. Evan T. James, 20 — March 24
- Sgt. Nicolas M. Hodson, 22 — March 24
- Sgt. Bradley S. Korhaus, 28 — March 24
- Lance Cpl. Eric J. Orlowski, 26 — March 24
- Lance Cpl. Brian Rory Buesing, 20 — March 23
- Sgt. Michael E. Bitz, 31 — March 23
- Pfc. Tamario D. Burkett, 21 — March 23
- Cpl. Kemaphoom A. Chanawongse, 22 — March 23
- Lance Cpl. Donald J. Cline, 21 — March 23
- Lance Cpl. David K. Fribley, 26 — March 23
- Cpl. Jose A. Garibay, 21 — March 23
- Pvt. Jonathan L. Gifford, 20 — March 23
- Cpl. Jorge A. Gonzalez, 20 — March 23
- Pvt. Nolen R. Hutchings, 19 — March 23
- Staff Sgt. Phillip A. Jordan, 42 — March 23
- Lance Cpl. Patrick R. Nixon, 21 — March 23
- 2nd Lt. Frederick E. Pokorney Jr., 31 — March 23
- Sgt. Brendon C. Reiss, 23 — March 23
- Cpl. Randal Kent Rosacker, 21 — March 23
- Lance Cpl. Thomas J. Slocum, 22 — March 23
- Lance Cpl. Michael J. Williams, 31 — March 23
- 2nd Lt. Therrel S. Childers, 30 — March 21
- Lance Cpl. Jose Gutierrez, 22 — March 21
- Maj. Jay Thomas Aubin, 36 — March 20
- Capt. Ryan Anthony Beaupre, 30 — March 20
- Cpl. Brian Matthew Kennedy, 25 — March 20
- Staff Sgt. Kendall Damon Watersbey, 29 — March 20

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men and women of  
America's military forces:  
  
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for protecting our freedom.

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LOCKHEED MARTIN 