

Marine forces involved in the attack on the As-Zabr police post suffered seven fatalities when a Maverick missile struck a Marine Corps light armored vehicle (LAV) (a wheeled armored fighting vehicle). According to a story published in the military history magazine, *Command*, from a first person account, the Marines lost a second LAV (with four more fatalities) to friendly ground fire. The highly publicized press account of fratricide was not lost on ARCENT decision makers and heightened concern about measures that would help lessen the possibility of repetition.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, as a footnote, the war's first U.S. female prisoner of war (POW) was captured at Khafji. Specialist Melissa Rathbun-Nealy, a truckdriver, and her male companion, Specialist David Lockett, missed their turn, drove north from the MSR into the fight at Khafji, and were captured by the occupying Iraqis.

After the battle of Khafji, while the air operations in the KTO approached their point of diminishing return politically and militarily, ARCENT planning polished off the remaining issues about the structure of the ground effort against the Republican Guard. Among the matters that had been deferred were the timing (sequence) of attack by Third Army units, the commitment of the theater reserve, and the preferred contingency plan for destruction of the Republican Guard. Two additional issues were threaded through the operational discussion of the closing weeks of preparation. The first was a proposal to shift the XVIII Corps' heavy force attack east to include the mission to capture the Al Busayyah base area (called Objective Purple), along with the derivative question of then transferring command of XVIII Corps' heavy forces to VII Corps for the final phase of the Third Army attack. The second matter involved a continued discussion of the necessity or desirability of an operational pause.

As mentioned earlier, the issue of the timing of the attack was driven by two considerations. The first was the desirability of initially fixing the Iraqi tactical reserves in Kuwait by attacking in the east, then following the second day with the main attack in the west. The driving issue within ARCENT, however, seems to have been the XVIII Corps' insistence that it was necessary to attack toward As Salman at least twenty-four hours prior to attacking with the 24th Infantry Division and 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment. This was argued in order to synchronize the flow of logistics through As Salman, to MSR Virginia, and then eastward to the armored forces on the corps' right flank. This would remain necessary until the engineers could create a direct supply route from south to north. Ultimately, a compromise was arrived at: the XVIII Corps' light forces—the 6th French Light

Armored Division, 82d Airborne Division, and 101st Airborne Division—would attack with Joint Forces Command East and MARCENT on G-day; and the XVIII Corps' heavy forces, VII Corps, and Joint Forces Command North would attack on G+1. This timing scheme also allowed Schwarzkopf to focus air support on MARCENT for G-day and then shift it to the heavy force attack on G+1.<sup>58</sup>

The value of this timing seems somewhat contradictory from the standpoint of deception. The attack in the east certainly supported the deception plan and reinforced particularly the idea of a main attack that sought to re-create an Inchon-like landing and double envelopment. On the other hand, the simultaneous attack in the far west would seem to have exerted a sort of counterforce on the Iraqi theater commander, at least with regard to the commitment of operational reserves. That would appear to support the thesis that the major consideration in timing the attack of the XVIII Corps was logistical necessity rather than operational cleverness, although the benefit with regard to employment of close air support should not be underestimated.

At the same time, the timing of the attack of XVIII Corps' heavy forces to coincide with VII Corps' and JFC North's offensive reflects the extent to which the logic of the situation had made the XVIII Corps' right wing a part of the ARCENT main effort as well as constituting a separate secondary attack blocking the Highway 8 avenue of escape. This same logic led to the discussion of alternatives to bring the 24th and 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment more closely into the main attack. The discussion turned on assigning the task of capturing the Iraqi logistics base at Al Busayyah to the 24th Division.<sup>59</sup> From the standpoint of XVIII Corps, this would open up maneuver room to its east (at the expense of VII Corps) and provide a line of communications behind the 24th Division once it turned down Highway 8. Because of the impact on VII Corps' maneuver room, the question that logically followed was whether it did not make equal sense, then, to attach the 24th to the VII Corps from that point forward in the attack—that is, give VII Corps responsibility for the entire wheel to the east from the Saudi border north to the Euphrates River and east to Basrah.<sup>60</sup>

Discussion of that question seems always to have run aground on the corps packaging that existed as a matter of the history of the deployment. The XVIII Corps had lived in the desert for some seven months already. It was certainly politically impossible to rotate them home just when the war looked like it was reaching its climax, so there was some need to find them something useful to do. Had the 24th

Division been attached to VII Corps, the XVIII Corps commander would have retained only the attack helicopters of the 101st Airborne Division capable of participation in the theater main effort. That would have been galling indeed for the XVIII Corps commander and his staff. Moreover, the VII Corps span of control was already large, four divisions, with the possibility of a fifth if the CINC released his theater reserve to ARCENT in time to get in the battle. So XVIII Corps continued to fight for more of the action, and the left flank unit of the great wheel remained in XVIII Corps, with its orientation principally to the north. Meanwhile, the bulk of the heavy forces and the mission of destroying the heart of the Republican Guard Forces Command went to VII Corps. Both General Yeosock and General Waller declined proposals to attach the 24th to the heavy corps (VII Corps), and XVIII Corps retained a sector of attack on the northern edge of the theater of operations, from the Euphrates southeast toward Basrah, in the final phase of the ground offensive.<sup>61</sup> Responsibility for coordinating the advance of XVIII Corps' heavy forces down the corridor, with the eastward movement of VII Corps, remained implicitly with the common higher headquarters—Third Army.

A second and related issue concerned the availability of the 1st Cavalry Division for the decisive battle with the Republican Guard. General Schwarzkopf had determined to retain a division reserve early on, and pressures from the members of the Joint Forces Command North for some assurance of support, if need be, tied the theater reserve division between the ARCENT effort and the ability to support the Egyptian Corps in Joint Forces Command North, should it run into difficulties. This had profound implications.

Yeosock's planners calculated that, if the 1st Cavalry Division was to arrive in time to take part in the anticipated battle, Schwarzkopf would have to release it by H-hour plus thirty-seven hours, given estimations of the flow of the attack and fixed factors of time and space.<sup>62</sup> Schwarzkopf brutally refused suggestions, which General Arnold persisted in making long after it would seem to have been politically wise, that he commit to such an action in advance.

Without this assurance and convinced of the need for three heavy divisions at the decisive point, General Franks fell back on counting on General Rhame's 1st Infantry Division to be the third.<sup>63</sup> That meant that General Rhame would have to conduct the breach, pass the 1st U.K. Armored Division through, disentangle his unit from the breach site, and catch up with the 1st and 3d Armored Divisions and 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment before the armored "fist" closed on the RGFC. To do that, the 1st Infantry Division's breach operation would

have to be conducted quickly and the 1st U.K. passed through rapidly; otherwise, ensuring the arrival of the third division would be the principal brake on VII Corps' attack.

Attachment of the 24th Infantry Division to VII Corps, at some point, might have solved this problem but, first, the division had to link up with the 101st Airborne Division and ensure the security of the Highway 8 roadblock. There were significant Republican Guard forces already located along Highway 8, particularly the three Republican Guard infantry divisions (Nebuchadnessar, Al Faw, and Adnan). These might be reinforced by various heavy divisions, either from the north (outside the KTO) or east. Two active airfields, Tallil and Jalibah, also had to be dealt with. To have transferred the 24th a priori to VII Corps would have left the 101st Airborne Division alone on Highway 8 (or perhaps the 101st joined at some point by the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment). General J. H. Binford Peay III, the commander of the 101st Airborne Division, was confident in his division's ability to execute this mission, but Schwarzkopf's initial objections to the As Samawah operations, as well as limits the distance of the initial air assault insertion placed on the operations, would seem to indicate that, elsewhere, such confidence in the division's abilities to sustain itself without heavy force reinforcement was lacking.<sup>64</sup>

For reasons addressed in earlier chapters, the Desert Storm order had not included a plan for the actual destruction of the Republican Guard Forces Command, perhaps because of the difficulty of predicting in advance where the RGFC might be located on the day of battle. Now, in conjunction with VII Corps, Third Army developed a set of contingency plans for destruction of the RGFC—plans that were contingent on the Iraqi reaction to the Third Army attack.<sup>65</sup> It is doubtful that Yeosock would have been inclined to select one plan over the other before he was able to observe how well the initial phase of the operation actually succeeded, as well as how the Iraqis behaved. General Waller, however, was not so disinclined. When he stepped in for Yeosock the week before the ground offensive, Waller selected a contingency plan that called for a coordinated attack on the Republican Guard and associated Iraqi heavy divisions by VII Corps and XVIII Corps, with XVIII Corps responsible for the destruction of the Hammurabi Armored Division, the RGFC unit closest to Basrah.<sup>66</sup>

When Yeosock returned on 23 February, he picked up just where he had been when he departed. He deferred the final decision on a destruction plan, making his decision contingent upon future battlefield conditions. On the 24th, he approved a revised contingency plan that provided for the VII Corps to destroy all Republican Guard

heavy divisions (an entirely force-oriented mission), with XVIII Corps limited to conducting a supporting attack to cut Highway 8, fixing reinforcing divisions outside the KTO, and destroying the RGFC infantry divisions. The XVIII Corps was to be ready to continue the attack, on order, to seize Objective Anvil south of Basrah in order to block the retreat of the Hammurabi Division and to attack and destroy it.<sup>67</sup> At that time, the Hammurabi Division was still located in the VII Corps zone. The order to execute the revised contingency plan would not be issued until late afternoon on the 26th.<sup>68</sup>

This difference in view between Yeosock and Waller, again, reflects a difference between a Moltkean approach to operational command and the idea that the commander decides what he is going to do and forces the enemy to comply with his every intention. The more positivist view represented by Waller is perhaps more congenial to American Army officers, but Yeosock's Moltkean approach allows for the active independence of the enemy. The negative side of this style of leadership is that it often makes it difficult to resume positive control when immediate exploitation of an opportunity is called for.

The immediate cost of the Yeosock approach was that it left a certain ambiguity concerning the subdivision of the principal ARCENT mission—destruction of the Republican Guard Forces Command. Destruction of the RGFC was General Franks' explicit mission, *but only within an assigned zone of attack*,<sup>69</sup> a significant fact overlooked in postwar criticism of VII Corps by General Schwarzkopf.<sup>70</sup> Retention of the Highway 8 corridor as part of the XVIII Corps zone left responsibility for ensuring destruction of the RGFC with Third Army. Yeosock assigned the Hammurabi Division to XVIII Corps should that be required by the Hammurabi's withdrawal on Basrah. This is precisely what would happen.

At the same time, Franks, who was assigned the force-oriented mission of destruction of the RGFC *in zone*, was left with the assurance that he would have the three heavy divisions he believed he required for this task only if he succeeded in pulling the 1st Infantry Division out of the breach and getting it into the fight. He could count on neither the 1st Cavalry Division, which Schwarzkopf held, nor the 24th Infantry Division, which belonged to the other corps. He would behave accordingly. That would take time. Although ARCENT maintained no formal reserve, the XVIII Corps' heavy and airmobile forces were, by the nature of the operation, the reserve of last resort for the Third Army commander.

Yeosock's decentralized view of operational execution reflected his belief that large units, like corps, were not likely to be as responsive to rapid changes in direction or focus as were smaller tactical formations, divisions and below. This belief implied a more decentralized execution at the operational level, based upon seeking harmony in the long term. The more centralized approach anticipated by Waller demanded a closer and more active coordination of the actions of subordinate formations, which the more forceful and dynamic Waller clearly intended.

Yeosock outlined his vision of the battle the day before he was hospitalized. According to his executive officer's notes, the commander saw four stages for the offensive. These were to

Cross the LD [line of departure] as fast as we can with as much as we can carry.

Take on the RGFC a bn [battalion] or a bde [brigade] at a time; a war of attrition to deliberately destroy it.

*Operational pause* to determine what is where and ignore that which does not matter.

If he offers surrender, increase OPTEMPO and let NCA [national command authorities] decide.<sup>71</sup>

On 13 February, Yeosock directed that ARCENT units begin moving to their forward assembly areas the following day. General Arnold's daily memorandum reflected the start of cross-border operations.<sup>72</sup> These, however, were not the first hostile actions west of the wadi.

Most deliberate attacks are preceded by what is known as a reconnaissance-counterreconnaissance battle. This is a struggle carried on by the two opponents' reconnaissance elements for dominance of the intermediate zone between the main lines. Its purpose is to gain information for one's own side and to deny it to the enemy without bringing on a major engagement. Throughout February, at the level of tactical units (corps and below), there was such a contest between ARCENT and Iraqi forces in the area west of Wadi al Batin.

On 1 February, following the Iraqi attack at Khafji, XVIII Corps was building up its forces in the west of the ARCENT zone with its left flank in the vicinity of Rafah. VII Corps was forming around Hafar al Batin, with two armored divisions south of the Tapline Road and the 2d Armored Cavalry, 1st U.K. Armored Division, 1st Infantry Division, and 1st Cavalry Division(-) to the north of the MSR. As a

further deception, a gap had been left between the two U.S. corps beyond the Iraqi western flank unit (the 48th Infantry Division), where Franks would send his enveloping attack. This area was patrolled only by aviation units. The "Tiger Brigade" was located in the east with MARCENT.

As units closed, they honed the specific skills they would need for their part of the attack. The 1st Infantry Division and 1st U.K. Armored Division practiced the critical breaching and passage of lines portion of the attack plan on which the VII Corps attack increasingly depended. Although there had been various small actions involving minor collisions (on 1 February, the ARCENT Provost Marshal Office (PMO) reported handling 154 prisoners of war to date), the Battle of Khafji changed the level of violence, and the two sides began to contest the no man's land between them. U.S. commanders feared an Iraqi spoiling attack, similar to Khafji, down Wadi al Batin. Such an attack would have threatened the most vulnerable and critical nodes of the U.S. concentration. Elsewhere in the Third Army sector, however, intelligence continued to report that most of the barren desert area in front of ARCENT, particularly that in front of XVIII Corps, was held only by scattered forces.

On 3 February, the 1st Infantry Division reported destroying an Iraqi armored bulldozer cutting a gap in the border berm that marked the boundary between Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Further reconnaissance revealed two more gaps. As a consequence, General Rhame reinforced the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, which was his security force on the border, with a balanced (armor and mechanized infantry) task force and an artillery battalion, all under the command of Brigadier General Bill Carter, the assistant division commander. That same day, the French 6th Light Armored Division within XVIII Corps exchanged fire with an Iraqi patrol.<sup>73</sup>

On the 4th, VII Corps took responsibility for the Saudi border posts in its sector. The 1st Infantry Division destroyed an Iraqi radar on a transporter, and the U.S. Air Force destroyed a 1st Cavalry Division AN/TPS 25 radar with a Harm missile ten kilometers behind the fire support coordination line. Two U.S. soldiers were wounded.<sup>74</sup> Four Iraqis surrendered to the 1st Cavalry in what would become something of a daily farce—miserable enemy soldiers giving up to reporters, helicopter crews, or anyone else they could find.

On 8 February, with the final closure of XVIII Corps in their assembly areas in the west and 3d Armored Division in the port, Yeosock told his staff he considered his army now closed.<sup>75</sup> XVIII

Corps indicated it was ready to begin cross-border operations and reconnaissance in depth on order.

On the 10th, the 1st Infantry Division reported the Iraqis were infiltrating reconnaissance elements into the division's sector during darkness and conducting limited indirect fire—to no particular effect, it might be added. By the 11th, VII Corps reported taking a total of 113 prisoners.<sup>76</sup> On the 14th, cross-border operations were authorized by ARCENT Fragmentary Order (FRAGO) 036.<sup>77</sup> Instructions were generally permissive, requiring that ARCENT be notified twenty-four hours before operations were executed.

Three days later, VII Corps began moving into its forward assembly areas. Franks organized the movement of the two armored divisions and his cavalry regiment so these units would rehearse their movement to contact; that is, they would march west in tactical formation, then turn north to their forward assembly areas behind the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR).<sup>78</sup> This movement actually began on the 15th with the forward (western) movement of the 2d Armored Cavalry followed by the 1st Armored Division, which had to cross in front of the 3d Armored to take its place on the outer flank of the corps. (See figure 26.) Both divisions had to cross the Saudi highway that ran from Riyadh to Hafar al Batin, an exercise that tried the diplomatic patience of both American and Saudi drivers. The 1st Infantry Division moved from the east of Hafar al Batin to the northwest toward its breaching zone.

On the 16th, the 3d Armored Division moved on line with the 1st Armored, and the 1st U.K. Armored Division moved to a forward assembly area between Hafar al Batin and the 1st Infantry Division (ID). (See figure 27.) On the 17th, the VII Corps "fist" maneuvered for the first time in formation to forward assembly areas north of the Tapline Road. (See figure 28.) The VII Corps was set. As a matter of reference, the 1st Brigade of the 3d Armored Division (AD) formed an armored oval twenty kilometers long from scouts to trains and ten kilometers wide from Vulcan to Vulcan.<sup>79</sup> Both divisions consisted of three brigades. One division in column (3d AD), one in a wedge—one up, two back (1st AD). Moving units of such size in formation across a barren plain was something no leader present had done, much less seen before. It was by no means as easy to do in the desert as it was to contemplate in the CINC's bunker in the Saudi capital, where individual vehicles, even units of hundreds or more, were subsumed in single counters on a map sheet. There was, in short, a wide gap between what the CINC had only to contemplate and what Franks and his commanders, Colonel Don Holder (2d ACR), Major General Ron

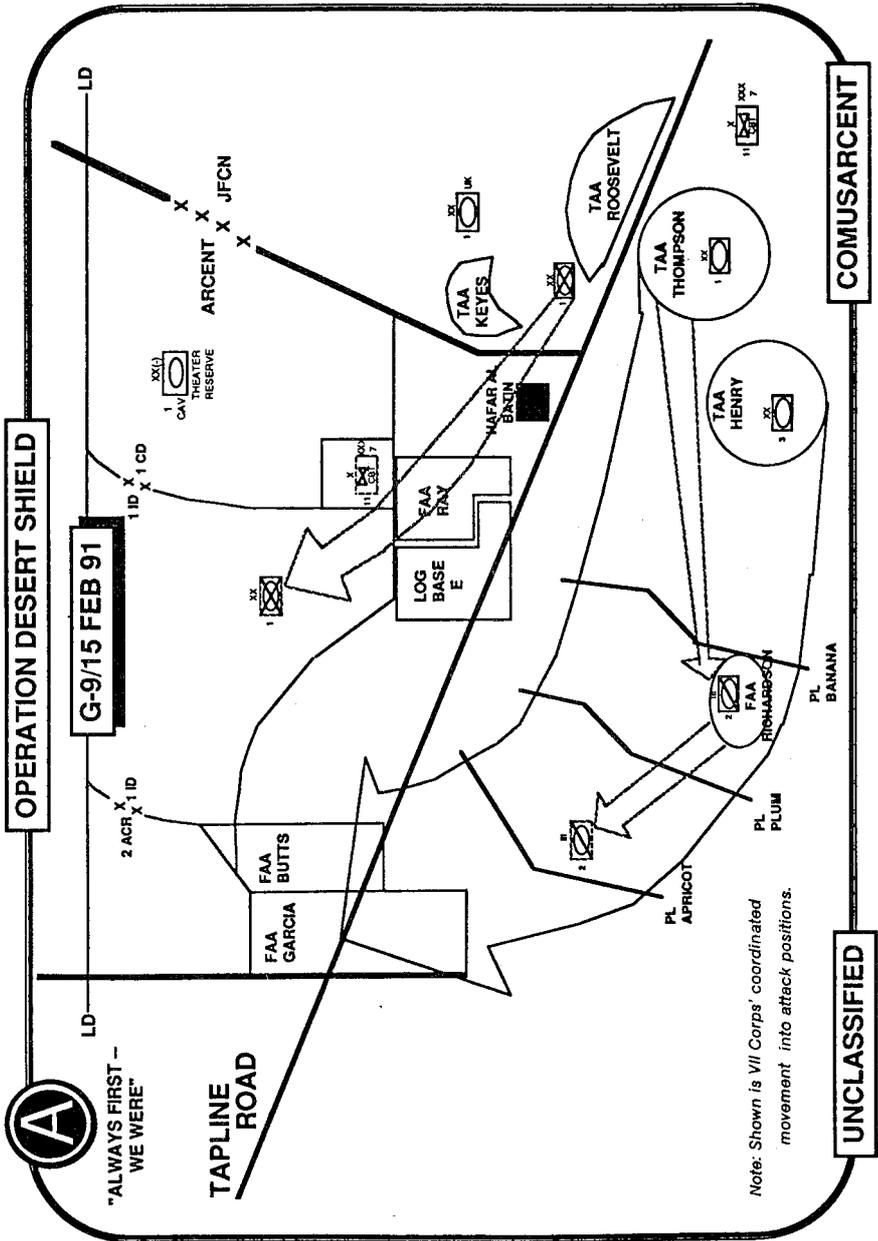


Figure 26.

Griffith (1st AD), and Major General Paul Funk (3d AD) had to do just to get to the Republican Guard.

On 15 February, Arnold had warned that "As we start cross border operations the greatest danger to our troops may well end up being safety."<sup>80</sup> A day later, two platoons of the 1st Infantry Division engaged each other leaving three soldiers wounded.<sup>81</sup>

On the 17th, the first fatal incident of fratricide among Army forces took place at 0110 when an AH-64 attack helicopter of the 1st Infantry Division, flown by the aviation battalion commander, misidentified two of the division's armored vehicles, killed two soldiers, and wounded six others.

The AH-64s had been responding to requests for fire from a unit on the ground that had been observing what it believed to be enemy vehicles. Earlier that night, a unit of the neighboring 1st Cavalry Division had also observed vehicles to their front, but because they could not positively identify them were denied permission to engage. About 2354 on the 16th, the 1st Cavalry unit (on the right) reported receiving two rounds in their direction about the same time that the 1st Division unit (on the left) reported firing on the vehicles they had observed. The operations officers of these adjacent units attempted to sort out the situation without success. The fatal incident followed shortly afterwards (170110), observed by the 1st Cavalry Division unit, which then withdrew behind the berm to avoid the possibility of further fratricide.<sup>82</sup>

The VII Corps' artillery and the 1st Infantry Division's artillery began heavy programs of artillery raids to attrit the Iraqi artillery in range of the breach site and to destroy enemy observation posts. The XVIII Corps did the same, although the desert in the west did not provide many worthwhile targets for the corps' guns. The heavy-light corps also began an aggressive program of armed aerial reconnaissances by its various aviation units. These proved to be lucrative prisoner hunts. Indeed, the corps would report on the 21st that one lesson learned was that the combination of psychological operations and attack helicopters had a great effect against Iraqi soldiers in sector. The most successful Army pre-G-day prisoner catch occurred on the 20th, when the 101st Aviation Brigade flew out to reconnoiter the site of the division's G-day air assault, engaged enemy bunkers, followed up with a PSYOP loudspeaker team, and took the mass surrender of 406 Iraqis.<sup>83</sup> An infantry battalion had to be brought into Iraq to accommodate all those wishing to surrender.

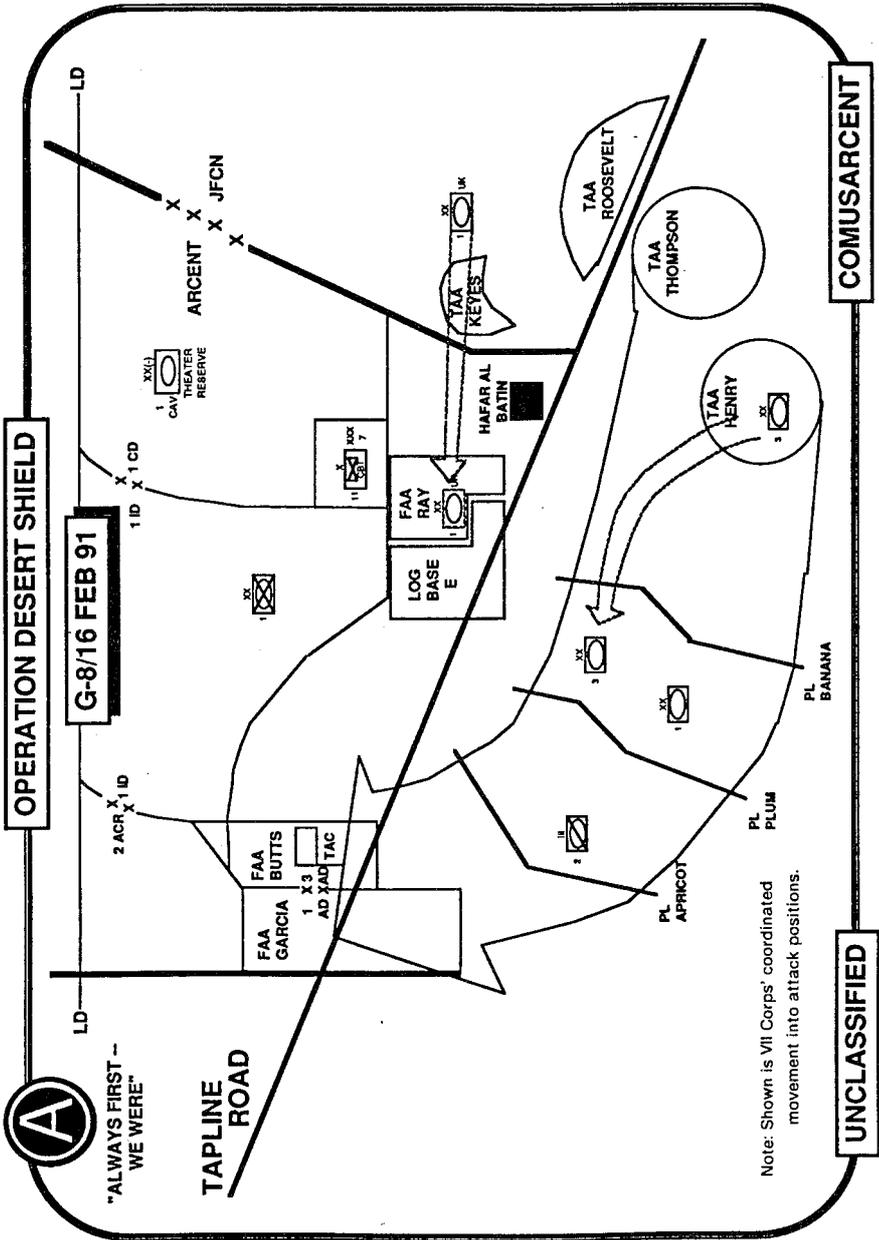


Figure 27.



It was not always that easy, however. As part of the ARCENT deception effort to lead the enemy to believe the ARCENT main attack would follow the Wadi al Batin approach along Kuwait's western border with Iraq, the 1st Cavalry Division (minus the Tiger Brigade), under the operational control of VII Corps prior to G-day, carried on an aggressive series of feints and demonstrations immediately to the west of the wadi in what the division called "The Battle of the Ruqi Pocket" (after a nearby Saudi border town).<sup>84</sup> On 20 February, during one of its reconnaissances in force, a unit of the 1st Cavalry Division (1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry) found itself under fire from dug-in Iraqis. Two Bradley's and one Vulcan air defense gun were lost, eight men were wounded, and two were killed.<sup>85</sup>

The following day, 21 February, ARCENT issued new, more restrictive guidance on the conduct of cross-border operations, requiring the corps to obtain authority of the ARCENT commander for operations of company size or larger.<sup>86</sup> Units were to be prepared for G-day at any time thereafter.

By the 23d, ARCENT had handled 972 enemy prisoners of war,<sup>87</sup> mostly from Iraqi front-line units whose function in the defensive scheme was to provide warning and die in place while buying time for the riposte of the Iraqi tactical reserves. The intelligence estimate in the ARCENT SITREP for the 20th noted that "Numerous reports indicate a serious morale problem as a direct result of coalition air attacks. . . . inadequate supply, disassociation with the Iraqi regime's policy toward Kuwait, poor training, and war weariness."<sup>88</sup> On the 21st, it reported, "The ability of the RGFC to conduct a theater counterattack is degraded,"<sup>89</sup> and as the ground war began, the ARCENT G2 assessed that "in the ARCENT/NAC sector, Iraq has lost approximately 53 percent of their artillery and 42 percent of their armor."<sup>90</sup>

These final preparations were played out against a political situation that seemed to some to offer the hope of avoiding a ground attack. On 11 February, Soviet envoy Yevgeni M. Primakov undertook a peace initiative to Baghdad that marked the beginning of an intense Soviet effort to broker a solution favorable to their former client.<sup>91</sup> On the 15th, Iraq made a qualified offer to withdraw from Kuwait that President Bush characterized as "a cruel hoax."<sup>92</sup> The Russians did not give up, however, and on the 17th, Iraqi foreign minister Tariq Aziz went to Moscow to meet with President Mikhail Gorbachev. The next day, Bush announced the military campaign would continue on schedule, and on the 20th, he told Gorbachev the Iraqi Army had four days to withdraw and accept UN sanctions.<sup>93</sup> On the 22d, the Soviet

president announced a new peace proposal that Aziz accepted in Moscow. Bush and the coalition rejected the offer and ordered the Iraqis to begin an unconditional withdrawal in twenty-four hours or accept the consequences.<sup>94</sup> On the 23d, Iraq rejected the ultimatum, and the scene was set for the final acts of the war.

None of this diplomatic activity seems to have had any effect on the preparations for the ground attack, though the date for G-day oscilated (at G-3) from the 18th to the 21st, and some care was taken to ensure that prebattle activities were not irreversible. Selection of G-day was a matter of negotiation at echelons above ARCENT.<sup>95</sup>

General Waller commanded Third Army for the final week prior to G-day. At that time, there was no assurance that General Yeosock's health would permit his return to command and, as a result, there was some instability in concept. Waller, deputy theater commander since November, was a large man, as big as Schwarzkopf, with whom he had served in a number of earlier assignments. Waller was also as forceful as Schwarzkopf, but he lacked the hectoring tone or personal edge that so often accompanied the theater commander's impatience with subordinates. Waller was charismatic and firmly self-confident. As a lieutenant general and lately I Corps commander back in the United States, Waller was one of the Army's senior black general officers.

Waller's vision of the coming fight was somewhat different from Yeosock's. On the 18th, Waller shared his vision with his staff (as he did with the two corps commanders at their headquarters). The PERSCOM (Personnel Command) commander had estimated 20,000 casualties in the first five days. Waller observed that he expected a quick move to two key points, called Objective Collins (an area in the desert that served as the VII Corps pivot point east of al Busayyah) and Objective Gold (the Jalibah airfield), a principal 24th Infantry Division objective on Highway 8. Here, Waller expected the corps to rearm and refit while attracting enemy forces, then to turn east with the coordinated attack described earlier. He warned the staff that units should focus on safety and avoidance of fratricide (it was the day after the 1st Infantry Division's AH-64 incident).<sup>96</sup>

On the 19th, General Arnold anticipated a three- to four-week operation with three to four days to reach Orange and Collins, followed by a pause; three days of battle with the RGFC, again followed by another pause; and a deliberate mopping-up operation. The resilient and always pleasant G3 anticipated a commanders' huddle during each pause. That same night, Waller, who had been visiting the corps, directed his staff to caution his subordinate commanders not to

conduct large-unit operations or take any irreversible actions, basically telling commanders: "Don't start a ground war."<sup>97</sup> All the renewed discussion of operational pauses seems to have taken hold. On the 20th, the VII Corps liaison officer informed the ARCENT commander's executive officer that, whereas VII Corps had not been planning a substantial pause, it now appeared they would conduct one (presumably on Objective Collins) to assess the enemy.<sup>98</sup>

In all this discussion of pauses, it is hard not to see the grey hand of the "SAMS Jedi Knights" and their often-scholastic approach to operations. Operational pauses, which are designed to avoid the sin of culmination, are one of the tricks of the trade that have received no small attention in the SAMS education, a sort of unwritten doctrinal construct. In theory, however, such pauses are spaced to follow achievements of major objectives—for much the same reasons infantry squads reorganize and redistribute ammunition after taking a tactical objective to compensate for the disorganizing effect of victory. In this sense, Yeosock's anticipation of a pause *after* the destruction of the Republican Guard would seem most appropriate.

After the fact, the intermediate halts otherwise proposed seem more like excessive caution, a desire to be safe and balanced at every step, a safety that would have its price in lost momentum. This must be judged, however, in light of the ARCENT commanders' preattack assessment of the enemy that remained highly pessimistic down to the launching of the ground attack—a pessimism encouraged, no doubt, by the various simulations run in the theater and in the United States that forecast heavy losses throughout.<sup>99</sup>

In the same way, the intricate maneuvers that called upon the 1st Infantry Division to breach, pass the 1st U.K. Armored Division to the east (not unlike a blocking back in football), then move into the slot behind the two armored divisions would also seem to bear the hallmark of the SAMS "red stripe"<sup>100</sup> fraternity, particularly when laid against expectations that the 1st ID could take severe losses in its first task. Yet if it took three heavy divisions to succeed in the main effort, as General Franks believed, where else was the third division to come from? There were no easy answers.<sup>101</sup>

On the 22d, the 2d Armored Cavalry reported its long-range surveillance teams in place to support the attack.<sup>102</sup> Waller's executive officer reported that the general had warned: "ARCENT must be able to stop the preparation for G-day for Iraq to demonstrate their good faith to comply with the UN resolutions and start again if they fail to comply. Must be able to still execute G-day of 24 February."<sup>103</sup>

On the night of the 23d, the 2d Armored Cavalry deployed two squadrons fifteen kilometers into Iraq to secure the engineers cutting the border berm. The 1st U.K. Armored Division located its reconnaissance elements with the 1st Infantry Division to mark lanes to the breach-site staging area, and the 101st Airborne Division inserted its long-range surveillance detachments and began final preattack aerial reconnaissance.<sup>104</sup> The preliminaries were over and the ground war was about to begin.

The ground offensive would be conducted more or less in accordance with the mission assigned by CENTCOM to ARCENT in January, as modified in the month following the publication of the Central Command order. Third Army was to conduct two corps attacks, "a supporting attack to block east-west LOCs along Highway 8 to isolate Iraqi forces in the Kuwait Theater of Operation" (with an on order mission to assist the main attack) and "the main attack with one U.S. corps attacking north *in zone* along the western Kuwait border to destroy Republican Guard forces."<sup>105</sup> As discussed above, the plan had been modified progressively, with increasing importance given the continuation of the attack by XVIII Corps beyond its initial rush to the Euphrates. (See map 7.)

The two corps were significantly different in composition, and their missions were fundamentally different in character. VII Corps, a homogeneous (though combined U.S.-U.K.) heavy corps, was assigned a "force oriented" mission, destruction of the RGFC in zone. The primary mission of XVIII Corps, a mixed medium-heavy-light force (U.S.-French), was terrain oriented and designed to block the Iraqi routes of withdrawal or reinforcement, then to fall in with its heavy forces on VII Corps' left and drive east toward Basrah. These tasks were fundamentally different, as were the formations to which they were assigned. The latter would require decentralized execution, the former something quite different indeed.

A force-oriented mission in the Iraqi desert implied battle as a process, a rolling fight, rather than as a discrete event. In light of anticipated force ratios, it demanded that the VII Corps commander conduct a highly controlled, carefully sequenced, and articulated attack by a force, at the outset, of eleven ground maneuver brigades (not counting the 1st Cavalry Division[-]), an armored cavalry regiment, seven attack helicopter battalions, and four supporting artillery brigades—all organized in four divisions with an armored cavalry regiment and aviation brigade under corps control.<sup>106</sup>



The XVIII Corps divisions, with more space in which to maneuver, would not require nearly the same control or coordination. To a great extent, each division would pursue a separate mission. The French 6th Light Armored would take As Salman, free MSR Virginia, and protect the ARCENT left flank. The 101st would launch its forces midway to the Euphrates the first day and form the first of several staging bases for its striking force of AH-64s and then follow up, as soon as possible, with another brigade of TOW (tactically tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided [missiles])-equipped air assault infantry to block Highway 8 until the 24th Infantry could cross the intervening desert and assume that task. Then, the 101st was to concentrate on advancing its AH-64 line to deep interdiction areas across the Euphrates to cut off escaping Iraqi forces that might flee north of the river on improvised or undamaged bridges. The 24th Division was to attack across an empty waste, day and night, to be the second division on the Euphrates, disrupting the enemy rear and, circumstances and time permitting, attacking down the highway to the southeast to assist in closing the KTO south of Basrah. The 82d Airborne Division would support the French and then clean up bypassed pockets of Iraqi soldiers left in the wake of the airborne division's more mobile sister units. The other heavy force, the 3d Armored Cavalry, would begin by maintaining contact with the VII Corps on the east and ultimately falling in as the fourth heavy brigade of the 24th Infantry Division. XVIII Corps' execution would be highly decentralized, and the corps headquarters would be involved primarily in sustaining the respective advances of its disparate forces.

Equally important to the corps commanders was the Third Army concept of operation. The order reads:

As VII Corps finds and fixes the RGFC, COMUSARCENT will request from USCINCCENT the release of 1st CAV Division (-) as the theater reserve and attach 1st CAV Division (-) to VII Corps. VII Corps will be prepared to receive OPCON of the 24th Mech Division. VII Corps will then attack to destroy RGFC in zone. XVIII Corps will be prepared to attack RGFC in zone.<sup>107</sup>

The primary operational-level issue was going to be whether the 1st Cavalry Division(-) could be secured from the CINC's control in time to join the main battle, and if not, how the heavy forces of the XVIII Corps, whose first mission was to cut the Highway 8 escape route, would be brought into the decisive battle with the Republican Guard. The key element in attaining the 1st Cavalry's release was to gauge the reaction of the Iraqi tactical reserves, believed at that time to be the 12th Armored Division (later identified as the 52d Armored

Division),<sup>108</sup> to the ARCENT and Joint Forces Command North attacks. Whatever its number, that Iraqi unit's ability to resist the flanking movement of the 1st U.K. Armored Division was of particular concern. The Third Army assessment was that, once the 1st U.K. engaged the tactical reserve, it would, in effect, become the guarantee for the Egyptian Corps, toward which the British attack would converge. Third Army hoped that would trigger release of the 1st Cavalry Division, thus building the necessary "mass of maneuver" to close with and destroy the RGFC.<sup>109</sup> Schwarzkopf assigned CENTAF the responsibility for isolating the KTO by cutting lines of withdrawal across the Euphrates, thus denying the Iraqis exit or reinforcements.<sup>110</sup>

The Third Army's *Schwerpunkt*, its offensive center of gravity, was the VII Corps attack, scheduled for the morning of 25 February (G+1). Initially, the main effort of that attack, which in fact went in on the 24th and 25th, was the breaching operation conducted by the 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized) on the corps' eastern flank. As explained above, the penetration and breakout to be conducted by the 1st Infantry Division and the 1st U.K. Armored Division would set the pace of the entire VII Corps operation. After the British passed out of the breachhead to protect the corps' right flank (and at the same time relieved pressure in front of the Egyptian Corps), the focus and concentration of forces conducting the corps attack would shift west, to the iron fist of 2d ACR, 1st and 3d Armored Divisions, and whatever third heavy division ultimately became available.

General Franks envisioned conducting the phases of his operation using two very different operational styles. Indeed, he was to conduct two main attacks. With regard to the breach, his order said:

The first phases of our operation will be maximum forces moving toward the RGFC with minimum casualties in minimum time. These phases will be deliberate and rehearsed. . . .

The deliberate breach will be done with precision and synchronization resulting from precise targeting and continuous rehearsals.

The VII Corps order recognized explicitly that the second phase of the attack, the advance to defeat the RGFC, would be "METT-T [mission; enemy, terrain and weather and troops and time available] dependent and . . . [include] battles of movement and depth." "Once through the breach," the order continued,

we will defeat forces to the east rapidly with an economy of force, and pass the point of main effort to the west of that action to destroy the Republican Guard Forces Command in a fast moving battle with zones of action and

agile forces attacking by fire, maneuver, and air. Combat service support must keep up because there will be no pause.<sup>111</sup>

Within the initial tactical operations, there were certain pacing events that had to be accomplished by the 1st Infantry Division's soldiers in fairly strict order. These were an advance to the main line of resistance, which included positioning five brigade equivalents of artillery forward to support the breaching operation;<sup>112</sup> the conduct of an artillery preparation; the breaching operation itself conducted by two maneuver brigades abreast; the clearing of an intermediate breachhead area to the range of direct fire systems (to Phase Line Colorado); the passage of the division's third brigade (in this case the 2d Armored Division Forward) while the breaching brigades rolled outward, so the sixty-kilometer final breachhead line (Phase Line New Jersey) would be held by three brigades abreast; then the passage of the British division with its supporting vehicles and its breakout into the Iraqi tactical depths to protect the corps' eastern flank and destroy if possible the enemy's principal tactical reserve, the Iraqi 12th (52d) Armored Division. Within all this, the advance of the gun line (five artillery brigades made up of thirteen field artillery cannon battalions and ten batteries of multiple launch rocket systems [MLRS]) through the breach had to be arranged in order that the artillery could range beyond the final breachhead line for the breakout and so that the general support artillery brigades would be repositioned to assume their new attachments as the corps shifted its center of gravity to the northwest. Speed in such a complex operation is relative, and, no doubt, it looked much easier to do from the confines of the Ministry of Defense basement, perhaps even from the offices of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, than it did in the desert on 24–25 February.

The VII Corps attack had been scheduled for G+1 in the original plan. Under that schedule, the 1st Infantry Division planned to accomplish on the 24th only the first part of its deliberate breach—closing the barrier belt. The 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment would screen forward on the western flank, while the 1st and 3d Armored Divisions positioned themselves to launch their enveloping maneuver the following day, simultaneously and in line with the 1st Infantry Division attack. In the dark desert night, punctuated by driving rain and blowing sand, soldiers awaited the dawn. (See figure 29.)