

DESERT STORM

Iron Troop's Trial By Fire

Story and Photos by
SSgt. William H. McMichael

SADDAM Hussein would have done well to heed a well-known Arab proverb: "He who chooses too large a stone cannot strike with it."

The English equivalent: "Don't bite off more than you can chew."

"SHAMAL" is Arabic for the north-westerly winds in Iraq that sometimes produce blinding sandstorms. Time and again, American soldiers heard it spoken by their incredulous Iraqi prisoners, as in: "You attack shamal, no."

The sandstorms raged during the first days of the land battle. And while the Iraqis hunkered down, the Allied forces attacked. After a month of continuous air raids, psychological warfare, food and water shortages and desertions, it was the final straw in the Persian Gulf War.

"They were just overwhelmed," said SSgt. Robert Micklich, an M-1A1 tank commander. "They couldn't see us, and we could see them."

On the right flank of the VII Corps thrust into Iraq, the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment was one of the "screens" for the huge armored divisions that would eventually corner Iraq's forces south of the Euphrates River. The regiment was ordered to locate and bypass enemy infantry and to engage and destroy all mechanized and armored forces.

Feb. 23, a day before the land war's official start, the 3rd Squadron's I Troop rumbled across the Iraqi border along with the rest of the regiment.

"That's the one time I was really scared," said "Iron" Troop tank gunner Sgt. Rod Warner. "when we crossed the berm. That was a really intense moment."

His was the first tank through, but fear of the unknown turned out to be fear of nothing. "We shot out 600 meters and stopped," he said, laughing.

Some chose the "Apocalypse Now" method of going to war. Tank

driver Spec. Scott Mangino was tuned in to the The Doors' rock song "Break On Through to the Other Side" as he breached the berm.

Moving 10 kilometers north, the tankers halted and prepared for a 90-kilometer march to the northeast to a spot on the map called Objective May.

Late on the 25th, Iron Troop got its trial by fire. The opponent, it was later learned, was a battalion-sized mechanized infantry unit from the Iraqi 12th Armored Division.

"The scouts found them first," said I Troop's commander, Capt. Dan Miller. "They started engaging at about 2,000 meters." The primary targets were tracked, Soviet-built armored personnel carriers called MTLBs.

"We just kept creeping closer and closer, as we discovered they didn't have any effective anti-armor fire." Miller said. "They apparently didn't have any artillery to call for either, 'cause we never took any during the battle."

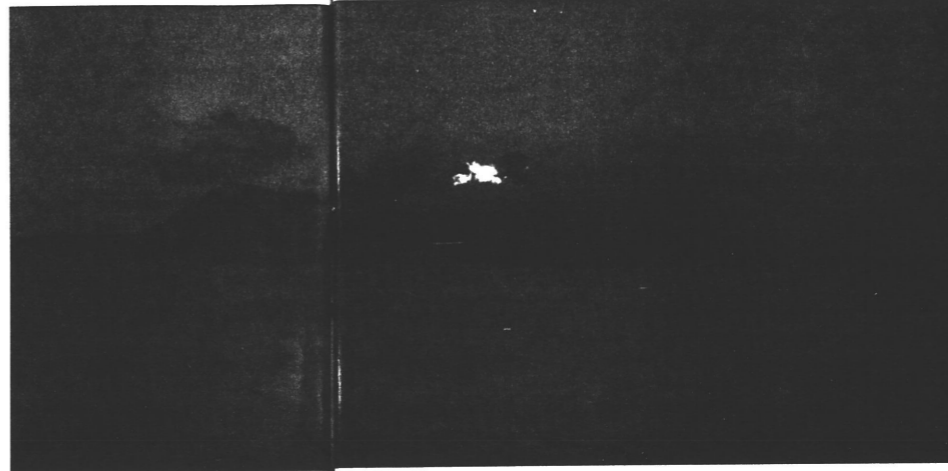
The attack was on. "I was sweatin' pretty good, got a little salt water in my eyes," said Miller's gunner, Warner. "It burned a little bit, but it didn't keep me from lookin'. I can guarantee you."

"They heard us comin', but they figured that we were far off," said Sgt. Ernest Boring, a Bradley gunner. "But because of the wind blowin', and the storm, they couldn't see us. We had our night vision, and we could see them before they could see us."

The troop was taking some RPG anti-tank rockets, potentially deadly for the Bradleys. "But once the tanks rolled up and started shooting, that's when you started seeing a lot of hands raised and a lot of white flags come out," Miller said.

"They were kind of willing to fight the Bradleys, but once they saw the big tanks, that's when they decided. 'Hey, maybe we can find something else to do with our time.'" The battle had lasted just an hour and a half.

Once they saw enough hands



raised, Iron Troop came forward and began taking prisoners, "about 200," Miller said. "We were in no way equipped to handle that many prisoners." Later that night, the squadron had to empty its supply trucks to collect them all.

After "setting in" their defense, much of the troop's effort was spent in getting medical treatment for the enemy wounded. "We saved one guy's life," said Miller. "His leg was nearly amputated, and his right arm was crushed."

"It was a different experience to see someone's leg cut off," said medical Spec. Gary James of Headquarters Troop. "It's something school can't teach."

"The protocol was to treat them the same as us," said Sgt. Marvin Evans. Aside from the section's personal commitment to do so, he said, "We found out that when we did that, they would tell you some things that might be pertinent to the operation."

That night, said Warner, "we were on the back deck of the tank, makin' a cup of coffee, talking real quietly. The more I thought about it, I realized we were right in the area we just came through and waxed 'em. And you knew there were guys that were still out there, but the feeling was, 'they can't even hurt us.'"

The next day began with a bang:



one kilometer away, an MTLB and a BTR-50 that had belonged to the unit they'd hit the day before began shooting off flares as Iron Troop prepared to continue the attack.

"They died," said Miller. "I thought it was brave, but it was really kind of stupid. Sergeant Stewart's tank took care of those two with HEAT (high explosive anti-tank) rounds."

The original plan was to keep going in the same direction, but a fragmentary order preceded the movement. "They captured an Iraqi captain," said

Spec. Thomas Young. "I heard over squadron net that he destroyed his equipment and gave them a map of everything there was. We shot across to the east and flanked 'em, and that was it."

The troop, spread across a zone four kilometers across, began moving east through a sandstorm. "We didn't know it at the time," said Miller, "but the intent was to get contact with Republican Guards." After moving to what was termed the 60 Easting (a longitudinal map reading) they halted for two and a half hours in a defensive screen. Then came

Clockwise, from left: An Iraqi armored vehicle burns as an I Troop M-1A1 tank rolls past. • Regimental commander Col. L. D. Holder listens to comments during an after-action review. • The remains of an Iraqi Republican Guard truck lie abandoned in the desert.



the terse radio message: "Move in five minutes. Continue to the east."

Visibility was less than 400 meters, but the troop had to assume an offensive formation while on the move. "The tanks could not see the scouts," said Miller. "Basically, everybody behind the scouts just kind of blindly moved as fast as they could to get a visual on the scouts."

The formation didn't come together for five kilometers and was a lot closer than Miller would have liked. But they were fortunate. "Luck of war," as Miller termed it. "We didn't make contact until after my formation was set."

Luck can run badly, too: Miller's tank threw a track. While the rest of the crew got out to break down the track, he jumped on his executive officer's Bradley and kept moving forward.

Three kilometers later, the 3rd Platoon scouts spotted an observation post with an armored vehicle and dismounted infantrymen. The mortar section lobbed in 10 rounds of high explosive, and that, along with direct fire from 1st Platoon, took them out. Whatever awaited I Troop now had no idea they were coming. "Be sharp," Miller warned his scouts.

They continued to the east. Within two kilometers, the scouts found what they were looking for.

From: Duncan Miller <Miller@BBN.COM>
Subject: [RING@A.ISI.EDU: VCSA 73 Easting Battle Article]
To: bbn-asd@BBN.COM
Date: Wed, 20 Mar 91 22:24:02 EST

From: "Duncan Miller" <Miller@BBN.COM>
Subject: [RING@A.ISI.EDU: VCSA 73 Easting Battle Article]
To: bbn-asd
Date: Wed, 20 Mar 91 22:15:37 EST
Mail-System-Version: <MacEMail_1.2.2@BBN.COM>

Folks,

We will probably soon be asked to recreate a key battle of the Gulf war, using SAF to play both sides, and recording the events via data logger. The concept is that students will be asked to step in and take command of the unit at key points in the battle, using the SAF console. They can then experience the combat and see how their decisions might have affected the outcome.

The leading candidate for the battle to be recreated is described in the following article from Stars and Stripes. I suspect that you will find it both fascinating and sobering.

Duke

P.S.: The "General Sullivan" mentioned at the beginning of the message is Gordon Sullivan, now Vice Chief of Staff of the Army. You old-time SIMNETters may remember him as the deputy commandant of the Armor School, under General Brown, at the time we began SIMNET. Jack Thorpe met with him last Thursday to discuss the future.

----- Beginning of Forwarded Message(s) -----
Received: from A.ISI.EDU by BBN.COM id ab26121; 20 Mar 91 17:16 EST
Mail-From: RING created at 15-Mar-91 15:11:11
Date: Fri 15 Mar 91 15:11:11-EST
From: TAFT RING <RING@A.ISI.EDU>
Subject: VCSA 73 Easting Battle Article
To: Ncosby@A.ISI.EDU
cc: Gorman@A.ISI.EDU, Clover@A.ISI.EDU, Ring@A.ISI.EDU
Message-ID: <12669640009.25.RING@A.ISI.EDU>
ReSent-Date: Wed 20 Mar 91 17:10:40-EST
ReSent-From: Robert L. Clover <CLOVER@A.ISI.EDU>
ReSent-To: Miller@bbn.com
ReSent-Message-ID: <12670972480.27.CLOVER@A.ISI.EDU>

This is the article mentioned by Gen Sullivan in our meeting yesterday concerning the battle of "73 Easting".

Source: Stars and Stripes, March 9, 1991

Story and photos by Vince Crawley, Middle East bureau

"MINUTE BY MINUTE, DEATH BY DEATH"

One unit's battle against the Republican Guard

Spec. Patrick Bledsoe heard an explosion echoing through the distance,

and he was afraid. This was two days after the cease-fire, four days after Ghost Troop's big battle, so probably there were soldiers blowing up another dead Iraqi tank somewhere nearby.

Still, Bledsoe went off to sit in the desert by himself for a while, and when he came back nobody asked him why he'd gone. They didn't have to.

"A certain part of you just dies," said 1st Lt. Keith Garwick. "Somebody trying to kill you so desperately for so many hours, and coming so close. We just couldn't understand it. I still don't understand it. Those guys were insane. They wouldn't stop," Garwick said of the Iraqi army's Republican Guard, which hurled wave after wave of tanks at him. Ghost Troop's gunners would blow up the oncoming vehicles, only to watch enemy soldiers jump out and start firing automatic rifles uselessly at the American armored vehicles.

"They kept dying and dying and dying," said 25-year old Garwick, a West Point graduate and cavalry platoon leader from Fresno, Calif. "They never quit...they never quit."

The Americans who fought there are calling it the Battle of the 73 Easting, a line on a map in a nameless part of Iraq.

The 150-man troop comes from Bamberg, Germany, and is part of the 2nd Armd Cav Regt, whose job was to sneak into southern Iraq and spearhead the VII Corps in its search-and-destroy mission against the Republican Guard. Upon finding them, the cavalry regiment was supposed to pull aside and let the heavy armored divisions roll in and annihilate the elite Iraqi forces.

And that's pretty much the way it happened, except for the six hours that Ghost Troop spent fighting the Guard's Tawakalna Div on the 73 Easting.

"If the rest of their army had fought as hard as the Tawakalna fought," Garwick said, "we would have been in trouble."

Pfc Jason E. Kick was driving a Bradley fighting vehicle on Tuesday morning, Feb. 26. The sky was still dark from an overnight rainstorm.

Kick, 18, from Pembroke, Ga., had dropped out of high school and joined the Army not long after turning 17. The "young buck" of the troop, he kept quiet and was making rank fast. He'd gotten a GED diploma in basic training and was talking about going to college.

He carried a small tape recorder and was narrating his impressions of the war into it. He wanted to send the tape home to his mom afterwards. Although he doesn't smoke, he was also carrying his lucky cigarette lighter, the one he had with him when the Bradley shot 1,000 in Grafenwoehr last year.

Ghost Troop had crept into Iraq from Saudi Arabia more than 12 hours before the ground war officially began. The cavalry soldiers drove due north for a couple of days, then began swinging to the right. By Tuesday, they were driving due east.

"We expect contact at anytime," Kick told his mother in a slow drawl. It was a little after 8 a.m. "The units that were in Kuwait, that the Marines had driven out, are headed directly our way. And reinforcements, instead of going back into Kuwait, are also headed our way. So, uh, we've gonna hit a LOT of shooting."

At around 8:30 a.m., the sun broke out for a moment. Ghost Troop scouts

spotted an Iraqi vehicle in the distance.

There were 20 enemy soldiers packed into the personnel carrier. They all got out as if to surrender, but three suddenly ran back to the vehicle and others fired rifles.

GIs said later there might have been some overkill when they blew apart the vehicle, but they wanted to make sure that the three Iraqis couldn't get a chance to send any radio messages to their officers. They apparently didn't. There was a lot of blood.

"All I can say," Kick told his tape recorder, "is better them than me. That sounds cruel, but it's true."

It had been Ghost Troop's first kill of the war.

The debris turned out to be from the Tawakaina Div. and intelligence people said that the regiment would probably meet up with the front line of the Iraqi division near the 73 grid line, about 13 miles to the east.

By 1 p.m. the fog and clouds had gone. Instead, a ferocious wind raged in from the south, creating a blizzard of sand. Iraqi vehicles and infantry were scattered here and there. Ghost killed several more personnel carriers and at around 3.30 p.m. three enemy tanks.

An hour later, they reached the 73 Easting. Off on the right hand side, Eagle, Iron, and Killer Troops already were fighting against dug-in Iraqi soldiers.

"I had a feeling," said Ghost Troop's commander, Capt. Joseph Sartiano, 29 from San Francisco, "Everybody else was making contact so I kicked all my scouts back and put my tanks up front."

A cavalry troop is half tanks and half Bradleys. Normally the Bradleys drive up front and the tanks hang back a little, ready to defend them. Instead, Sartiano lined up the whole troop along the 73 Easting.

Garwick, the Bradley platoon leader, was in position at 4:42 p.m. Most of the troop, he said, was behind a small hill and ridge, overlooking a wide shallow valley that the Arabs call a wadi. Enemy vehicles and infantrymen were all over the place, dug in on the other side of the wadi.

"We've pulled up on the line right now," Kick said into his tape recorder. "We're engaged in a pretty decent firefight right now...we're shooting again. I can see where we're shooting at, but I can't see a victor." Victor is an Army term for a vehicle, just as Ghost means G Troop.

"This is chaos here," Kick shouted. "This is total chaos." Battle commands flooded the radios, adding to the confusion. "I see smoke on the horizon," Kick said into his tape recorder. "That means we killed something. What it is, I don't know." White One, he's the platoon leader. You can hear it in his voice, He's all shook up. Time 4:54...this is the co-ax(machine gun) firing. Time 5:10 p.m. We're still in contact...there's a few pc's (personnel carriers) here and there, mostly infantry. I just spotted the biggest damned explosion at about 12 o'clock. I don't know what the hell it was..."

Garwick's platoon had already killed nine personnel carriers alone. The enemy had started shooting back at them at around 5 p.m. Artillery began falling around the Bradleys.

"A tremendous volume of small arms fire and shrapnel hit the berm to my front,"

peppering his Bradley and another, Garwick said.

Iraqi infantrymen ran forward and were mowed down. The enemy gunfire increased, and air-burst artillery began exploding over their heads.

Two Bradleys in Garwick's platoon were positioned over his right shoulder. At 5:40 p.m. he saw three tank rounds hit the ridge in front of him, each shot closer to the Bradleys on his right. The last shot hit. "One just got one our our guys," Klick shouted.

Spec Patrick Bledsoe, 20, from Oxnard Calif, was driving Bradley number G-16. All he saw was shooting. "We were in a little wadi," he said, but the top of the vehicle looked out over the valley. "We were kind of skylined," thus easily visible to the enemy. The Bradley's gunner was Sgt. Lars Moller. The coaxial machine gun was jammed, and the track commander, another sergeant, was trying to fit it when he looked up and saw Iraqi infantrymen running toward them.

He asked Moller, "You got the troops to the front?" Suddenly there was an explosion.

From his seat at the gunsights, down inside the Bradley turret, Moller couldn't see the area right outside of the fighting vehicle.

"What was that?" Moller asked, hearing the explosion. That according to Bledsoe, was the last thing Moller said.

There was another explosion, showering sparks across the front of the Bradley. "It was just like somebody hit us with a sledgehammer" Bledsoe said. He jumped out and ran around behind the Bradley, Moller was dead. The other sergeant was slightly wounded.

Friendly tanks were shooting over Bledsoe's head and enemy fire was hitting the berm in front of him. He jumped down just as there was yet another explosion.

Pfc Jeff Pike, 21 of Binghamton, N.Y., was driving Sartiano's, the commander's, tank. It was never confirmed, but he believes this last explosion was Sartiano's gunner shooting a Soviet-build T-55 tank that killed Moller. Bledsoe tried to get away. "I low-crawled up to the track," he said. "Knocked on the back door but they didn't hear me. I went up and knocked on the driver's hatch. The driver opened it. I said, "We got hit. We got hit. I think Moller's dead." His own track, G-16, "was just smoking."

At 5:47, Kick spoke into his tape recorder. "It was one-six that got hit." A few minutes later, he continued, his voice steadier. "The gunner of one-six, who was Sgt. Moller, is dead. The TC (track commander) and observer are on one-five right now. Sgt Moller, Sgt Moller was killed....time about 5:49." he paused a moment, then added, "Can't let this...can't let this affect us or get us down at all or we're gonna die. And he wouldn't want that. He don't want that. But I'm scared."

Garwick, the lieutenant, told his men to keep fighting. Artillery, tanks and machine guns were firing all around them on the hill. More were destroyed. More fired. "This is chaos," Kick reported at 6:04 p.m. "Total chaos...got nine dead victors to our front. Enemy victors. And got more coming."

The sandstorm had worsened. Garwick could see only about 50 yards. But the thermal sights cut through some of the murk. With those, he could see more than half a mile. Two more enemy tanks were coming.

Kick watched them get shot three minutes later. "Boom. Hit. Hit and kill. He

hit it. That's revenge for Sgt. Moller. You sonuvabitching Iraqis. God, I hate them. Sgt Moller was a good guy. We killed them. That's four Iraqi pc's for this track alone."

Garwick's scouts told him that 12 more tanks were coming. Possibly as many as 25. Iraqis down in the valley would just leap from their personnel carriers and run at Garwick's platoon, firing rifles. Getting killed.

All Kick could see was rounds going downrange. It went on like this - total chaos - for nearly four more hours. At one point, Spec Chris Harvey looked out from the back of his personnel carrier. "All I saw were things burning" said the 24-year-old artillery observer from Virginia Beach, Va. "For 360 degrees, nothing but action."

Garwick called for the Air Force, but the planes were diverted to another mission two minutes before they got to Ghost Troop. Instead, he held back the tanks by calling in artillery and rockets, pounding each wave as it appeared on the far ridge. The Bamberg squadron's executive officer watched from a vantage point a short distance away. It looked, he said, like Armageddon.

One of Garwick's biggest problems was that the radios were so frantically busy that he couldn't call through. Several times, he had to jump out of his Bradley and crawl over to the artillery observers to tell them in person where he needed them to shoot.

On one of these occasions, at about 8:30 p.m., he had crawled halfway to the artillery observer's vehicle when a round of airburst went off just on the other side of a nearby Bradley. He and the artilleryman, Sgt. Larry C. Fullz, sought cover under Garwick's Bradley.

Another wave of tanks was coming in. "We just sat there crying, just shaken, until we could get back out from underneath the Bradley," Garwick said. "The air bursts were coming right on top, ricocheting around us. We were in a corner of hell. I don't know how we made it out of there. I don't."

Days later, in a quiet tent in free Kuwait, an officer from the regiment tried to explain what had happened to Ghost Troop.

The Republican Guard's Tawakalna Div had gotten tangled up with the 12th Iraqi Armored Div, and both enemy units were trying to retreat through the same narrow piece of terrain, said Maj. Steven L. Campbell, 35, the regiment's intelligence officer. The Iraqi path of retreat, a shallow valley between two ridgelines, led straight into Ghost Troop.

Campbell theorized that the Republican Guard might have fought so fiercely because they were desperately trying to escape. "Those guys wanted to get out of there, and those guys were supposed to be the best fighters. In my mind, they weren't trying to break the defense (the line Ghost Troop was holding). The way the terrain was, they had to go thru here to get by."

The Soldiers in Ghost weren't the only ones fighting that night. At least half of the regiment's troops and tank companies were on line at one point or another. But most of them were fighting against dug-in soldiers. None of them faced the wave-after-wave onslaught that was aimed at Ghost.

More than once, artillery saved Ghost Troop. Helicopters helped kill tanks. And, near the end, when the troop was desperately short on ammunition, a tank company, Hawk, came in to relieve them.

In its 100 hours of combat, the regiment destroyed 100 tanks, about 50 personnel carriers and more than 30 wheeled vehicles, plus some anti-aircraft

artillery systems, Campbell said. He estimated that 85 percent to 90 percent of those vehicles were killed in the battle at the 73 Easting, but no one had yet counted the vehicles in Ghost's sector.

The equivalent of an Iraqi brigade was destroyed that night, the first ground defeat of the Republican Guards, Campbell said. Within 36 hours, most of the others were gone.

The morning after the battle, someone made a wooden cross and stuck it in the sand, and a chaplain came to say a few words about Moller. A colonel spoke too. Everyone from Ghost Troop was there, worn-out men with sunken eyes, their faces covered with dirt and gunpower. It was the first time in two months that they had all been together in one place, instead of spread out over the desert in training or combat formations. Several hugged each other, glad to see their friends alive, then gathered in a semicircle, took off their helmets, and listened to the chaplain and the colonel.

Then they were told to get ready for the next battle. It never came. Instead, a cease-fire was called, and the cavalymen had time to sit among themselves and try to understand what had happened.

They said Sgt. Lars Moller died with his hands on the triggers of the Bradley gun, looking for more enemy to shoot. His TOW missile launcher, the Bradley's main anti-tank defense, wasn't working, and Moller knew it before he entered the battle. Reason enough to stay out, but he didn't. He "died like a soldier," said one of Ghost's artillery officers, 2nd Lt. Joe Deskevich, 23, of Rockville, Md. "He didn't run and he didn't die for nothing." He came from somewhere in Nebraska. Sartiano, the troop commander, decided he will take leave and visit the dead sergeant's parents.

The morning after the battle, Kick and another soldier stood in front of their shrapnel-scarred Bradley and talked about Moller. "He was about the only sergeant," Kick said, still with a bitterness in his voice, "who'd sit down and listen to your problems and treat you like a human being instead of a private."

That night, before the cease-fire was called, the scouts took more prisoners and had to stay up guarding them. Bledsoe, who'd been Moller's driver, said that he and the others had stayed awake by talking about Moller.

"We talked about it for three hours," Bledsoe said. "We decided that when he went up on that hill, he wasn't worried about it. He said, 'If they get me, that's just another bullet that was gonna hit somebody else.'"

In Bamberg, the cavalymen live in a place called Warner Barracks and when they get back they want to give it a new name - Moller Barracks - if the Army will let them.

No one, however, really knew what to call the battle they had just lived through. The officers were all calling it the 73 Easting, because they were the ones looking at the maps. Staff Sgt. Waylan Lundquist, a 29-year-old tanker from Aurora, Mich, suggested the Battle of the Tawakaina. Another man thought it should be Moller Ridge.

And none of them could judge how important it had been. They didn't know how hard anyone else had fought in the 100-hour war. They still don't. It might take months or years before the people who write history books will decide whether Ghost Troop is worth a page or not.

"At the time," said Garwick, the platoon leader, "none of understood what was happening."

All that they knew was that they'd had a tough night, one they found hard to describe in language that can be printed in newspapers. It had snowballed into chaos before anyone really knew what was happening.

The chaos was relative, thought, and all battles are chaotic to the men fighting them. "All I did," Sartiano said, "was manage the violence." At his level on the battlefield, one rung up from Garwick, two up from most of the others, he had felt in control.

It had, after all, been a decisive victory. Captured prisoners confirmed that the Tawakaina had been caught completely by surprise. And Sartiano, like the others, was proud of it.

One morning Garwick gathered his men around to talk to them and admitted that he still wasn't sure what had happened. "All I know is that a squadron's supposed to be able to take out a brigade. A troop's supposed to be able to take a battalion. A fire team, a company. Our fire team took out a brigade."

He paused a moment, and the words seemed to be sinking into him as much as the others, "That really was above and beyond the call of duty."

Garwick, it seemed, had been changed the most. He'd been spoiling for a fight and had got more than he expected.

"That morning I was so excited to have killed a Republican Guard," said the 25-year-old lieutenant. "And at the end of the battle, if I never saw another Republican Guard in my life, I'd be happy."

Or perhaps he's not so changed. He still wants to get married as soon as he gets back - his fiancée is a former classmate from West Point, now a military intelligence officer at Fort Polk, La. And he jokes about how his platoon will fail its next gunnery at Grafenwoehr - the first target will pop up, and Ghost troop will instantly blast 40 rounds into it.

The night after the cease-fire, when his men rolled into free Kuwait, he stood beside his Bradley and watched the eastern sky. Ghost Troop was camped in a quarry that had been turned into a Republican Guard stronghold, a city-sized maze of 20-foot ridges transforming the flat desert into a miniature mountain range.

Orange flames from the burning Kuwaiti oilfields glowed in the east - someone had counted 57 fires - and a little to the south of that, a nearly full moon was rising.

"I couldn't wait to see combat. What a fool I was."

The killing, he said, became almost too easy, and that seemed also to make him uncomfortable. He questioned his future now that he's finished living what he thinks might be the most important night of his life. But what bothered him most was another question that really doesn't have an answer - he wanted to know why.

"Why did they fight?" he asked slowly, and repeated it. "Why did they fight?"

He looked again at the sky.

Sometimes, he said, he spins around the turret of his Bradley and aims it toward the moon. He switches on the thermal sights and target magnifiers and gazes for a time at another desert on another world a quarter of a million miles away."

3 MAY 91
1720

We must play

VIEW THE NOTE

E01

From: SELVITEM--KNO1
To: APPLERD --KNO1

Date and time 03/28/91 17:17:37

FROM: LTC MIKE SELVITELLE
Subject: 73 EASTING
Sir,

Attached is a note from Maj Chaney (runs SIMNET-D for me). This is a hot issue that I need to see you and/or the AD about. There is a meeting at DARPA next Tuesday (5 Apr) to kick this program off, and we need to participate in that meeting if we are going to be a player.

Summary background: Last week DARPA called and said that they were going to put together an effort to capture the essence of the 73 Easting battle in DS. Basic plan is to recreate the battle through on the site interviews with the participants. Battle will be recreated in SIMNET-T (training) in Europe. Will also be provided to Knox. Software changes will be made to allow trainers to stop the simulation during a training exercise using the 73 Easting battle, and see what the leaders would do; simulation would then be started to see what the outcome would be. When we were first asked about this COL Brylia went to CG to get his reaction. CG said that he had recently talked to the VCSA (whc DARPA says is pushing this exercise) and had not received any guidance, tasking, info on this exercise. CG said he perceived this as think piece exercise and

PF1 Alternate PFs PF2 File NOTE PF3 Keep PF4 Erase PF5 Forward Note
PF6 Reply PF7 Resend PF8 Print PF9 Help PF10 Next PF11 Previous PF12 Return

VIEW THE NOTE

E01

info on this exercise. CG said he perceived this as think piece exercise and directed that we stay out until he received some kind of official tasking. We have complied with that guidance, but we are getting calls from DARPA saying (as Mark's note says) that the VCSA is pushing for our involvement. I have been trying to talk with COL Thorse (Dep Dir for DARPA) to get more details but have been unsuccessful today.

COL Brylia indicated today that based on the latest call from DARPA (as outlined in Chaney's attached PROFS) that we probably should reconsider our involvement. As minimum, maybe CG should call VCSA and ask what the heck is going on; if the Army wants us to play why haven't they told us? I will continue to try and run down COL Thorse.

*** Forwarding note from CHANEYM --KNO1 03/28/91 10:18 ***
To: SELVITEM--KNO1

FROM: MARK R CHANEY
Subject: 73 EASTING
SIR,

I HOPE I HAVE THE ADDITIONAL DETAILS YOU REQUESTED.
THE SCHEME OF MANEUVER IS FOR DARPA, PER THE VICE
TASKING, TO PULL TOGETHER A TEAM OF SMEs TO DEVELOP

PF1 Alternate PFs PF2 File NOTE PF3 Keep PF4 Erase PF5 Forward Note
PF6 Reply PF7 Resend PF8 Print PF9 Help PF10 Next PF11 Previous PF12 Return

VIEW THE NOTE

EQ1

TASKING, TO PULL TOGETHER A TEAM OF SMEs TO DEVELOP THE BATTLE OF 73 EASTING INTO A TRAINING PROGRAM. THE VICE SEES THIS AS A CLASSICAL IN THE ANNALS OF MODERN WARFARE.

THEY, BOTH THE VICE AND DARPA, SEE THE ARMOR CENTER AS VITAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM. IT WAS AN ARMOR BATTLE, WITH ARMOR EQUIPMENT, USING ARMOR TACTICS AND ARMOR SOLDIERS.

A TEAM IS BEING FORMED TO GO TO SWA TO INTERVIEW CREWS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE BATTLE, COLLECT OPORDs AND OVER-LAYS AND WALK THE GROUND. TBD THE TEAM WILL RETURN TO USAREUR TO FURTHER INTERVIEW CREWS AND RE-ENACT THE BATTLE IN SIMNET-T. GEN FUNK HAS A CAMERA CREW ON THE GROUND NOW TAPING THE SCENE.

COL RAY DANKEY, XO TO THE VICE, HAS PROMISED LTG YEDSOCK HE WOULD COORDINATE THE TEAM AND REQUEST THEATER CLEARANCE BY NAME ASAP. THERE IS NOT A "DROP DEAD DATE" ESTABLISHED FOR THE MESSAGE BUT THEY WILL NOT WAIT TOO LONG.

THE SUPPORT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR FROM THE ARMOR CENTER IS ONE OR TWO INDIVIDUALS TO BE ON THE TEAM. IF THE CG WANTS, THE ARMOR CENTER REPRESENTATIVE WILL BE THE DIC FOR THE

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PF6 Reply PF7 Resend PF8 Print PF9 Help PF10 Next PF11 Previous PF12 Return

VIEW THE NOTE

EQ1

THE ARMOR CENTER REPRESENTATIVE WILL BE THE DIC FOR THE ENTIRE TEAM. IT IS THE CG'S CALL IF HE WANTS THE SME TO BE FROM C&S (DOCTRINE AND TTPs), DOTD (TRAINING DEVELOPMENT), DCD (COMBAT DEVELOPMENTS) OR WHOMEVER.

TEAM MEMBERS I WAS ABLE TO IDENTIFY SO FAR ARE FROM ETL, DARPA, HEL, US ARMY MILITARY HISTORY OFFICE AND, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, GARY BLEDRN AS AN EXPERT CONSULANT ON ARMOR TACTICS. DARPA WILL FUND AND DEVELOP THE CHANGES TO OUR TECHNOLOGY. BENEFITS TO CCTB AND CATTG ARE IMPROVEMENTS TO TERRAIN DATA BASES, SAF DISMOUNTED INFANTRY, SAF OPFOR, STEALTH PLAY-BACK, FREEZE AND REPLAY CAPABILITY, ET AL.

THIS COULD OPEN THE DOOR TO A WHOLE NEW WORLD OF TRAINING TECHNIQUES THROUGH TOTAL RECALL IMMERSION SITUATION LEARNING FOR BOTH THE AC AND RC.

MAJ CHANEY

cc: LONGD --KNO1
CHANEYM --KNO1

THURMANJ--KNO1
HARJUC --KNO1

E N D O F N O T E

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DEPUTY COMMANDER
U.S. Army Center of Military History
Washington, D.C. 20314-0200

DATE: 4/29/91

TO: Major Sandridge

Michael -

Attached is report to
VCFA with comment.

Next attached is
Draft "Battle of 73 Easting"

More Than Expected

K

DEPUTY COMMANDER
U.S. Army Center of Military History
Washington, D.C. 20314-0200

DATE: 4/19/91

TO: VCFA

DAS (CF PROVIDED)

Sir,

Attached is my trip report
resultant from your initiative to
capture the historical reality of
the 2ACR action at 73 Easting
and determine SIMNET suitability.

I was helped and assisted at
every level.

Very Respectfully,
Michael D. U.

G.S. - GREAT STUFF - I
WILL BE INTERESTED TO
SEE IT ALL PULLED
TOGETHER -

**Memorandum for General Sullivan
Thru LTG Parker
Subject: Battle of 73 Easting
Date: 19 April 1991**

1. During 8-18 April 1991 a combined team from CMH, DARPA, AVN CTR, Armor CTR, and ETL visited SWA. Purpose of the trip was to establish the historical reality of a 2 ACR engagement at the 73 Easting gridline (and 00 Nording) on 26 February 1991 and determine suitability for SIMNET utilization.

2. Team Composition:

Colonel Michael D. Krause, Center of Military History
Team Chief
Mr. Gary Bloedorn, (Colonel, Retired) IDA, DARPA Consultant
Creator of SIMNET
Major Michael C. Sandridge, Chief of Cavalry Doctrine, C&S, Armor Center
Veteran of 2ACR action and CALL Liaison officer
Captain Richard K. Major, Directorate of Training & Doctrine, Aviation Center
Previous 2ACR aviation company commander
Mr. Michael G. Barwick, Engineer Topographical Labs, Ft. Belvoir
Supporting analyst with in country experience

3. Methodology:

The team engaged in an on site data search. Rich and varied source material was available. After initial briefings at ARCENT history office the team traveled to King Khalid Military City and VII Corps Main to co-ordinate with Chief of Staff, BG Landry. The 2ACR Commander, Colonel Don Holder received the team with a prepared concept of operations brief and a historical documentation book. The documentation includes op orders, frag reports, voice recordings of some command and fire support nets, AAR's by unit commanders and historical data survey of the battlefield site. Positions of enemy positions and equipment was verified by GPS. VII Corps G-2 Battlefield reconstruction includes enemy equipment positions verified by engineer battlefield survey data also done by GPS. All troop commanders from M1 and Bradley commanders, to platoon and troop commanders were interviewed and asked to verify plotted positions on the ground and on a map developed from the data. Supporting artillery and air commanders and soldiers were also data searched.

The team went to the 73 Easting battle site. LTG Franks personally briefed the VII Corps concept of operations plan and his key decisions in execution. He provided his own ground and air transportation so the team could survey the battlefield with three troop commanders. I debriefed LTG Franks upon completion of the ground survey.

Most of our time was spent with 2 ACR (including movement to the port of Al Jubail) and supporting units. Oral recorded interviews were conducted with three troop commanders (Ghost, Eagle, 2/2 ; and Iron 3/2), their respective platoon commanders, tank and Bradley commanders and gunners and supporting commanders and pilots. The results were plotted on a map which was re-verified by the participants.

This composite map was integrated with: the 2ACR historical reports, engineer battlefield survey reports and battlefield reconstruction reports from the Corps G-2.

VII Corps Main and TAC and other organizational elements (supporting aviation came from 2/1 AD) were used to substantiate additional data points.

MG Tait from CALL was informally briefed on the purpose of the team efforts.

4. The Battle:

"A classic cavalry mission: Find, fix and fight the enemy" beamed LTG Franks. "The 2ACR found a seam between the Iraqi 12 Armored Division and the Tawakalna Division of the Republican Guards. This fact determined my decision to pass First Infantry Division through 2ACR at night to 'clench my fist' of combat power for the fight"

On 25/26 February 1991. 2 ACR had the mission of screening eastward in front of 1 ID. 2ACR was on the right (south) flank of 3AD. 1AD(UK) was to the south. 2ACR was deployed with squadrons abreast with 2/2 in the north, 3/2 in the middle and 1/2 in the south. "To find and fix the enemy".

Contact was made on the 60 Easting in the early afternoon on 26 February against elements of the 50th BDE of the 12 AD. Ghost, Eagle and Iron troops were abreast and moving eastward. Visibility was limited at best with ranges of 200-1400 meters. A Shamal was blowing. At about 1530 Eagle was taken under fire from a building at 69 Easting. Fire was returned and movement continued. Enemy artillery was fired. Eagle continued movement. At about 1607 Eagle encountered T-72 tanks in prepared positions at 70 Easting. The troop commander attacked with tank platoons abreast and Bradleys in support. Eagle encountered a mine field pressing the attack. At 1637 the defensive position was taken with numerous T-72 tanks killed. Ghost to the north pressed against the enemy prepared defenses at the 73 Easting at about 1615 with platoon in the north and center. Iron to the south attacked the same fortified building Eagle had encountered and then smashed positioned T-72 tanks and BMP's south of the building complex at the 71 Easting about 1620. Artillery was silenced by Apache missions. In the north 13 BMP's, 3 T-72 (more in 3AD sector, but not surveyed), in the center and south 24 T-72, 2 T-55, 11 BMP, 3 MTLB were killed. Numerous bunker positions and vehicles were destroyed. Eagle captured close to 300 EPW and Iron 237 EPW, with unknown numbers from Ghost troop. Action for all three troops stopped at dusk, about 1700-1715. They consolidated their position at the 73 Easting about where the battle took place and waited the night passage of lines. They fought elements of the Tawakalna Division.

In summary, the battle of 73 Easting involved three troops of cavalry. These troops aggressively attacked prepared positions defended by T-72 tanks supported by dismounted infantry and artillery.

This action was reported to VII Corps TAC. The high number of T-72 tanks encountered fixed the position of the Tawakalna division. LTG Franks believes the mission of the 12AD was to delay and allow the Tawakalna to move south into prepared positions. The positions of the Tawakalna element used terrain advantage. They knew the terrain well. "This was the Tawakalna's Hohenfels training area" comments LTG Franks. They knew the terrain well. The spread between the three troops shows terrain appreciation and skill. Additional Tawakalna elements were fought by 11D after the passage of lines.

5. Preliminary observations:

* There is no historical uncertainty that this was a fight. On site evidence and oral interviews substantiate T-72 tank fire, probable 130MM artillery and other fires. Mines were encountered. Superior training, superb equipment and soldier/commander courage, skill and discipline resulted in a victorious engagement. This engagement and battle had operational consequence.

* Troop commanders (G,E,I) fought co-ordinated, mutually supporting attacks. There was no hesitation in pressing the attack. Ghost fought two separate platoon actions because of the terrain. Echo fought an integrated troop level frontal attack while under artillery fire and passing through a mine field. Iron fought by platoon and encountered some of the same defenses as Echo. This was a short action for all three troops. Echo's main action took less than 30 minutes. It took the team 6-8 hours to walk through the action.

* Visibility varied over time due to the sand storm from 200-1400 plus meters.

* The sand storm contributed to complete tactical surprise. The Iraqi soldier was out of his tank because of previous air attacks. When Echo main attack hit Iraqi soldiers had no idea that M-1 tanks were hitting them. Too late do Iraqi soldiers jump back in to fight their tanks.

* Effective cross troop communication between Echo and Iron and Ghost insured co-ordination. All three commanders did not hesitate to come up on each others command net to co-ordinate. Since Echo was initially in front of Ghost and Iron this avoided potential fire into each other.

* Amazing discipline. Iraqi casualties were minimized. All units killed equipment, but when Iraqi soldiers even showed the intent to surrender fire discipline was total. During the heat of battle our soldiers disarmed and then treated Iraqi wounded. Psychological warfare teams attached to Echo troop were used to coax one bunker complex into surrender. It could easily have been fired.

* Once T-72 were found and engaged ranges up to 3400m were used.

* Bradley 25 mm was effectively used against tanks to explode engine and fuel compartments and cause explosion.

* There were double, even triple kills. Troops used the "if its not burning, it hasn't been killed rule" As a result catastrophic kills were common.

6. Attached is a handwritten account from Echo Troop commander, CPT H.R. McMasters and a 26 Feb 91 overlay.

7. Recommendation:

* That a "living history book" be created with joint CMH /DARPA participation to consist of a written introduction to the battle placed on the simulation for continued training.

Very Respectfully,


Michael D. Krause

Aide
Josh Thorpe, Deputy / 7
3 May 91

Make a
mDTRK

(J)

To: MG Tom Foley

Sir,

- ① Vic Reis Approved FY 91 + FY 92 budget for 73 Easting (my briefing attached) - we are charging ahead!
- ② Gary is supporting Don Holder's talk at Annapolis Conference. Providing materials.
- ③ I must stay in Washington next week because of internal budget determination meetings that will decide our 92-97 future. My heart will be with you + the men of Annapolis at what will most certainly be the "Mother of all Annapolis Conferences".

Hot regards

Josh

P.S. Mike Krause, historian, will be at
conference - enclosed is his program draft. Both



U.S. Army
Center of
Military History

**PROJECT
73 EASTING**

PROJECT 73 EASTING

Interactive Digital Histories Created by Advanced Simulation



Background

- 14 March
- During VCSA/DARPA meeting, VCSA describes information received on a Desert Storm battle in Iraq involving the 2nd ACR and the Iraqi Tawakalna Division.
 - DARPA introduces the possibility of reverse engineering the battle and reconstructing it in simulation.
 - VCSA: "Let's explore this."

Potential Applications (Examples)

- Professional Military Education - Living histories resident at the Academies thru War Colleges
- Acquisition - Insert candidate systems in documented battles
- Operations - Technique for real time after action reviews in combat, semi-documentation for "lessons learned" reviews
- Readiness - Applications for active duty and reserve training (real world vignettes)

Potential Modes of Use

- Undergraduate Time Travel - Free roam inspection of the battle, but unable to change outcomes
[This is an existing capability routinely used in SIMNET]
- Graduate Time Travel - Ability to insert commanders & crews into the battle and let them modify interactions [limitations to this approach as yet unknown]



14 March - VSCA/ DARPA exploratory discussions

24 March - Program approach drafted

2 April - Technical meeting to discuss approach & options

Participants:

- **DARPA & contractors**
- **Office of Military History -----Accepted Sponsorship**
- **IDA & consultants**
- **ETL & contractors**
- **Army Intel Community (imagery)**

4 April - VCSA calls CENTCOM, receives approval to send team (team cut from 10 to 5)

8 April - Data collection team departs to Desert Storm

18 April - Data collection team returns to U.S.

19 April - Data collection team reports on findings at DARPA, makes recommendation to proceed



8 April - Depart Norfolk NAS

10 April - Arrive Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

11 April - King Khalid Military City & 2ACR	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prebrief ARCENT Historian, Ops staff• Prebrief BG Landry, VII Corps COS• Evening briefings by Cdr, 2ACR
12 April - VII TAC & 73 Easting Battlefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with the VII Cdr• Survey of 73 Easting Battlefield
13 April - Battlefield Reconstruction Ctr & 2ACR	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Briefed on Iraqi actions• Interview members 2ACR
14 April - 2/1 ACR	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More meetings with troops 2ACR• Data Reduction
15 April - Camp #3 2ACR	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outbrief Cdr 2ACR
16 April - Arrive Riyadh	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outbrief ARCENT staff, others

17 April - Depart for U.S.

18 April - Arrive Washington



-
- 1. In the late afternoon of 26 February, 3 Troops of the 2ACR (Echo, Ghost, & Iron) encountered dug in elements of the 50th BDE of the Iraqi 12th Armored Div as well as a large number of T-72 tanks. Visibility was poor (200 - 1400 meters).**
 - 2. In less than 2 hours the enemy was completely destroyed.**
 - 3. The large number of T-72 tanks indicated that the 2ACR had "fixed" the Iraqi Tawakalna Division, and that there was a seam between the 12 AD and Tawakalna.**
 - 4. The VII Corps commander rapidly exploited this discovery with a nighttime passage of lines of the U.S. 1ID through the 2ACR forces, and later engaged additional elements of the Tawakalna Div.**
 - 5. Each of the battles fought by the 3 Troops had different characteristics.**
 - 6. Considerable data was collected by the forces immediately after the battle, including videocam recordings, narrations, and still photography. This has or will be provided in total to our project team.**
 - 7. Cooperation by everyone from the VII staff to each of the crews was extraordinary. Everyone wants to be included in a living history. Cooperation has been promised by the 2ACR and VII Corps should the project continue.**



**Phase I
Collection of
Raw Data**

- **Development of initial concept, consideration of technical challenges, preparation to go into theater, collection of data, report back to DARPA**

**Phase II
Feasibility Assessment,
Data Preparation**

- **Catalog of raw data, transcription of audio tapes, creation of data base**
- **Add other data sources (national, JSTARS, others)**
- **Cross reference data, creation of accurate time/event history of battle**
- **Determine if quality of data is sufficient for reconstructing battle. Selection of 1 battle as initial proof of principle**
- **Hold "users group" conference, gain agreement on exportable data base of 73 Easting for related uses**

**Phase III
Battle Preparation
1 Troop/60% Solution**

- **Construct the battle at 60% completion level**
- **Modify SAFOR software to construct time/event sequences**
- **Develop new graphics models**
- **Review simulation at 2ACR home station in Germany, replay battle using SIMNET facilities at Grafenwohr, edit and correct using "accident reconstruction/police artist sketch" approach**



**Phase IV
Complete Battle 1
to 100%, Begin 2 & 3**

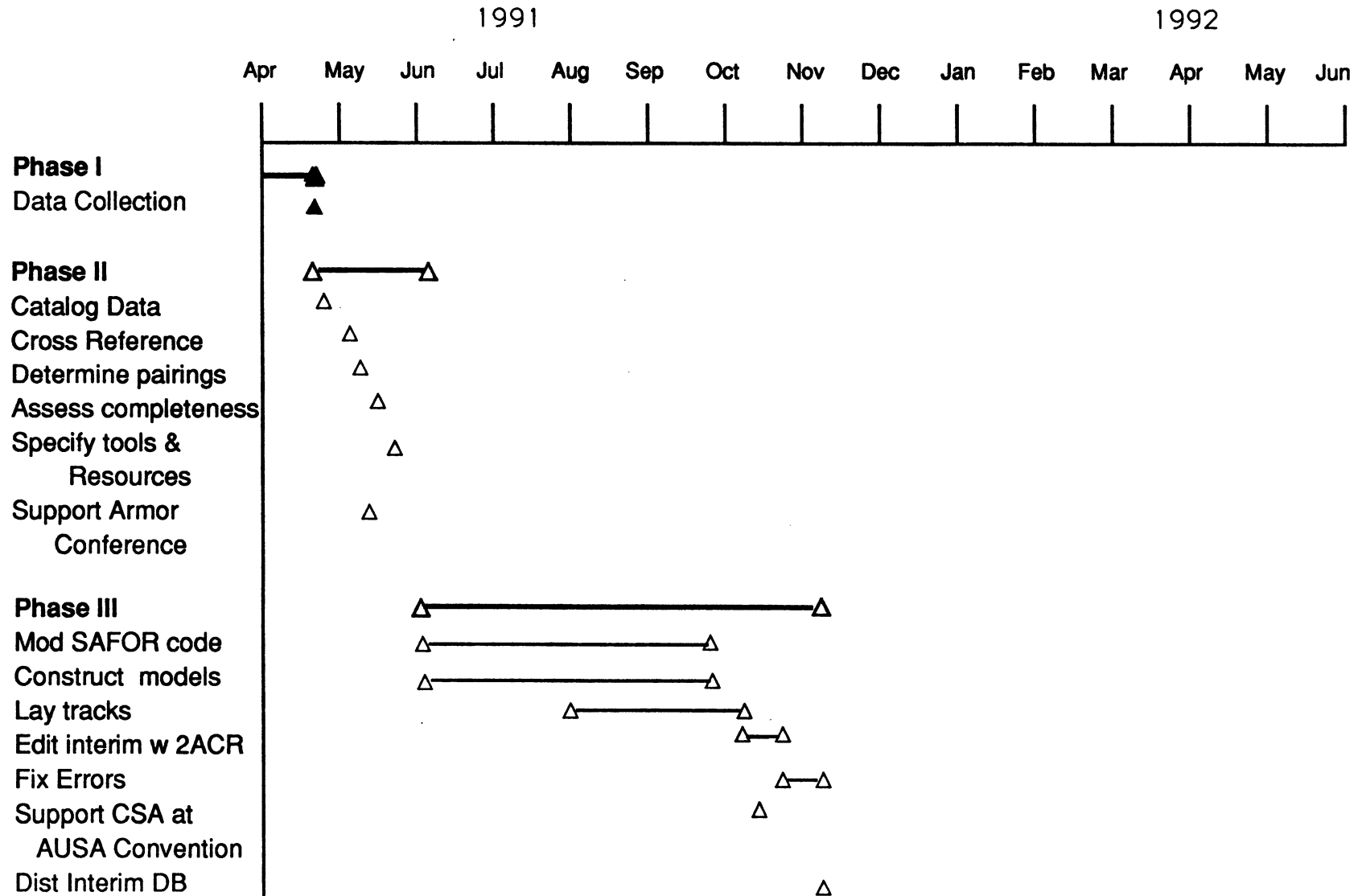
- Integrate corrected data, produce final engagement
- If warranted, initiate battle construction for other 2 engagements, include higher echelon interactions

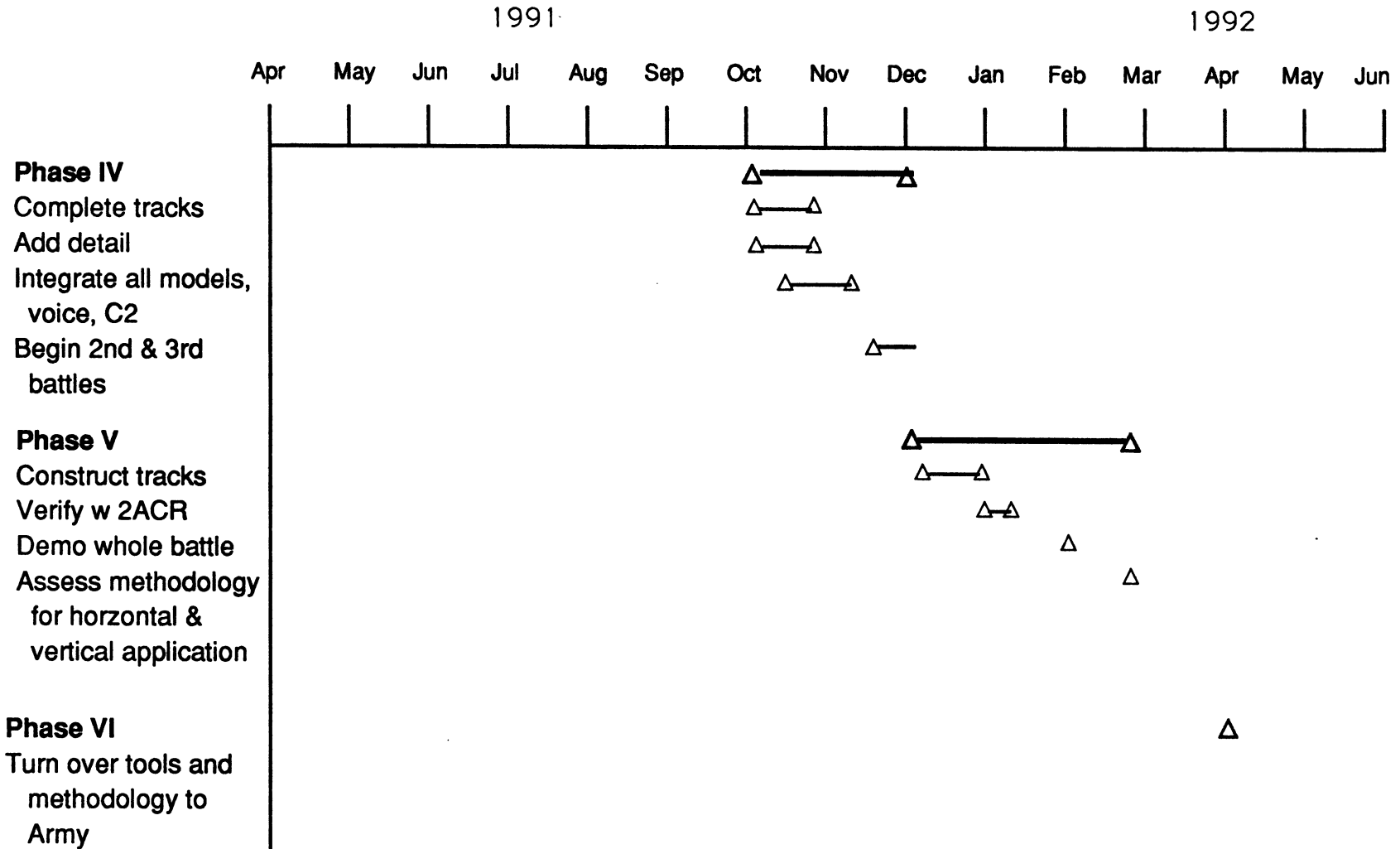
**Phase V
Complete Battle of
73 Easting, Assess
Feasibility for Other
Battles**

- Complete all of 73 Easting
- Determine suitability of methodology for other battles, higher echelons
- Distribute generic data base of 73 Easting

**Phase VI
Turn Over Products &
Process to Services**

- Export battle simulations to sites having SIMNET/ODIN facilities, industry, labs
- Assist Army to establish a production house for other battles
- Continue to receive battles as they are produced by Services ("Battle of the Month" club)







- 1. This is an extension of Project ODIN.**
- 2. Primary Customer: VCSA (soon CSA) Gen Gordon Sullivan**
- 3. Secondary Customers: Chief of Military History, TRADOC Commander, School Commandants, Lessons Learned Project at Leavenworth**
- 4. Sponsor: Chief of Military History**
- 5. DARPA directly supports Gen Sullivan during his keynote address as new chief at AUSA this October.**
- 6. A conference of interested users of an interim data base of the Battle of 73 Easting will be scheduled in mid-summer to establish a "users group" for such data and agreement on a format for the data base (open to industry, govt labs, academia).**
- 7. The Semi-Automated Forces (SAFOR) will be the mechanism for creating the simulation.**
- 8. SAFOR hooks in the simulation will be developed for Graduate Time Travel capability. Same hooks will now be added to all data logger software.**

DRAFT

THE BATTLE OF 73 EASTING, 26 FEBRUARY 1991

A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO A SIMULATION

BY

MICHAEL D. KRAUSE, PH.D, COLONEL, US ARMY

DEPUTY CHIEF OF MILITARY HISTORY

US ARMY CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

WASHINGTON, DC 20374-5088

1 MAY 1991

A JOINT CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY AND

DEFENSE ADVANCED RESEARCH PROJECTS

AGENCY PROJECT

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Mr. Chris Turrell, (Lieutenant Colonel Retired) IDA ODIN Field Boss
Mr. Jim McDonough, (Major Retired) IDA Contractor
Mr. Ulf Helgesson, HA Contractor
Mr. Michael Gilbert, DIA
MR. Robert Glover, IDA POC
Colonel Michael Krause, Center of Military History

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Liaison Officer
Captain Richard K. Major, Directorate of Training and Doctrine,
US Army, Aviation Center, Previous 2d ACR Aviation Company
Commander
Mr. Michael G. Barwick, Engineer Topographical Laboratory, Fort
Belvoir, Supporting Analyst Within Country Experience

Battle of 73 Easting

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to introduce a battle fought by the Second Armored Cavalry Regiment on the 26th February, 1991 in the Allied War effort to liberate Kuwait. By knowing the reality of this battle the reader will be prepared to use the 73 Easting Battle Simulation (under development). This SIMNET re-creates the historical reality of this battle.

Both, the historical introduction and the simulation itself rely on history. At the VCSA, General Gordon Sullivan's initiative a team of historians, tacticians and SIMNET experts was sent to South West Asia to "capture" the historic reality of this engagement. Every level of command, but especially the VII Corps and the 2ACR, made available all documentation of the event. A series of oral interviews, with commanders from scouts and tanks, to the Corps Commander, and After Action Reviews both written and oral, were used to substantiate the history. Lastly, a series of on-site battle analysis and reconstructions were executed with troop commanders who fought the action. The SIMNET product, using state of the art historical techniques, therefore, recounts as objectively, as possible the battle of 73 Easting.

Background

In early January 1991, General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, described the campaign strategy for the liberation of Kuwait and the defeat of Iraqi ground forces. "We are going to cut it off and kill it" exclaimed the General at a widely publicized and televised news conference. Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi President and Commander-in-Chief of the Iraqi Armed Forces would have done well to head those words.

After the 100 hour ground campaign, General Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of all forces engaged against the Iraqi forces would explain the campaign by use of a football stratagem. "This was basically a Hail Mary play" mused General "Stormin' Norman". "We deceived our opponent into thinking that our main attack would be a frontal one against the Iraqi defenses in occupied Kuwait". We held our forces in place until Saddam Hussein could not see as a result of our blinding him. Then at the right moment, General Schwarzkopf moved two Allied Corps to the west - about 400 kilometers, without being discovered. This movement of the XVIII Airborne Corps consisting of the Sixth Light Armor French Division, 82nd Airborne Division, 101st Air Assault Division (Airmobile), 24th Mechanized Infantry Division and the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment and the armor heavy VII Corps, consisting of the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, 1st Armored, 3rd Armored, 1st Infantry (Mechanized) Divisions, and the 1st Armored (UK) Division. The 1st Cavalry Division operated under the Theater Commanders immediate control and led the westward attack. As General Schwarzkopf explained, the "Horse Soldiers" of the 1st Cavalry Division led the westward attack up the Wadi al Batin. This attack was expected by the enemy. While the Allied forces attacked against the Iraqi forces manning the trench lines in Kuwait to fix the main Iraqi forces, the 1st Cavalry Division's attack was meant to confirm a westward outflanking movement in the enemy's mind. General Schwarzkopf's intent was to force the best armor units of the Iraqi Army, the Republican Guards to commit against this threat to their flanks.

On G-Day - the beginning of the ground war on 23 February at 0400 Hours - Allied forces consisting of Saudi, and other Arab national forces, Marines of the First and Second Marine Expeditionary Forces and the "Tiger Brigade" of the 2nd Armored Division attacked. Shortly thereafter the 1st Cavalry Division launched forward on its daring deception mission. Once these forces engaged in busting the Iraqi trench lines, about 14 hours later, the "Hail Mary" forces crossed the line of departure. XVIII Airborne forces launched simultaneous attacks to the north with the objective of securing the westward flank of VII Corps. The French Light Armored Division axis of advance led to As Salman 80 kilometers inside Iraq. The 82nd Airborne and 101st Air Assault Divisions launched still deeper into Iraq seizing key airfields and establishing logistical bases for their continued drive to the north. The corps main attack was the 24th Infantry Division. The "Victory" Division's mission was to fight to the Euphrates River and establish blocking positions along highway 8 from Basra to Baghdad and used as the Iraqi Army's main supply route. The 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) provided screening on the Corps eastern right flank and established a link to the VII Corps. The XVIII Airborne Corps was to cut any attempt by Iraqi forces to engage from the west and to prevent any enemy forces from retreating out of the theater. (Refer to sketch map A)

The main thrust of General Schwarzkopf's westward outflanking maneuver was the VII Corps. Commanded by LTG Fred Franks, the Corps was plucked out of Europe where it was forward based and redeployed to the theater during the months of November, December (1990) and January 1991. The Corps was re-enforced by the 1st Infantry Division, the "Big Red One" from Fort Riley, Kansas. The 2nd Armored Division (Forward) from Gerlstadt Germany rounded out "The Big Red One". The First Cavalry Division would remain under ARCENT control, that is under the Army Commander LTG Yoesock, for the first phase of the operation.

Deep inside Iraq, LTG Franks stood in a sand terrain "box" outside of his Tactical Area Command (TAC) and explained his Corps campaign plan to a group of historical fact finders. We were sent by the Vice Chief of Staff, General Gordon Sullivan, to establish the historical fact of a series of engagements fought by elements of VII Corps, specifically the 2 ACR. Once the accuracy of the battle was established General Sullivan's intent was to use this historical reality in training simulations using computer driven actions to train future commanders at every level.

Standing in the "sand box" of a giant mock-up map of southern Iraq - labeled with strings and military symbols of the four plus Corps - LTG Franks beamed: "The mission of cavalry is to find, fix and fight the enemy. The action of the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) at the 73 Easting (a grid locator noting a north south grid axis) is a classic". As a result of their finding and fixing elements of the main Republican Guard Tawakalna Division, LTG Franks made the decision to "clench his fist of combat power" by passing the "Big Red One" through the cavalry regiment, massing his combat power and destroying the Republican Guard divisions: The Tawakalna, Medina, Hammurabi and others.

LTG Franks explained his Corps concept of operations. At G-Day beginning on the Saudi-Iraq border and the line between XVIII Airborne and VII Corps in the west, the 1AD and 3AD were abreast with the 2ACR screening to their north. First Infantry breached the berm line to their east to support the First Cavalry attack still further to the east. The 1AD (UK) backed up the 1ID. General Franks' intent was to strike north, then find the Republican Guards, fix them, mass four armored

divisions as a "clenched fist" and punch the Republican Guards so hard as to "cut them off and kill 'em".

As he walked through the "sand box" explaining his concept of operations, LTG Franks spoke in short descriptive sentences. "Our plan to outflank him was working. Elements of his force were deploying to the south to face the 1st Cavalry. Iraqi forces were also deploying against our most westward forces. We were now deep into Iraq. On 25 February at 0841 I ordered the 1AD to shift northward and pass the 2ACR. 3AD was still behind 2ACR at that time. Early in the morning on 26 February at 0216 I gave a frag order to orient the force to the east. This meant the passing of the 3AD to the north between IAD and 2ACR. By 0918 26 February the force was arrayed as follows: IAD in the north, south of them 3AD, 2ACR and 1AD(UK). First Infantry was in reserve behind 2ACR."

Next LTG Franks detailed some of the 2ACR action. During the morning of 26 February, the 2 ACR began to encounter elements of the Iraqi 12 Armored Division. 2ACR reported seeing movement of T-72 tanks, contact between T-72's were reported at 0754 in vicinity of PC5299. The regiment engaged covering force elements of the Republican Guards beginning at 0820. These we now know to be elements of the 12AD and the Tawakalna Divisions. 2ACR still holds the mission to find and fix the enemy so that First ID can punch through. Then he said: "Take my helicopter, my command armored personnel carrier and Colonel Stan Cherri's (G-3 Operations Officer of the Corps) and see the battle as it developed. Just don't get hurt there are still mines , cluster bombs and artillery shells out there".

Toujours Pret

The Regimental Commander of the Second Armored Cavalry Regiment, Colonel Don Holder, a Brigadier General designate, personified the motto of the Regiment: *Toujours Pret* - Always Ready. A quiet soft-spoken officer, Colonel Holder was well prepared intellectually and physically to lead his regiment into combat. With a solid background in military history, including tours teaching cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point and directorship of mid-level officers at the U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Colonel Holder relived the history and analysis of previous campaigns. As primary author of the U.S. Army's doctrine of Air/Land Battle, field manual FM 100-5 Operations, 1986, Colonel Holder would put doctrine into practice. As he spoke, one could hear the authoritative voice of theory and practice coming together. Known affectionately in Regimental and Corps circles as "E.F." - short for when E.F. Hutton talks everyone listens - Colonel Holder quietly amplified the mission and concept of operations of his Regiment, as his S-3 Major Doug Lutte S-3 Operations officer of the Regiment and the S-2 Intelligence Officer, Major Steve Lambert conducted the operations and intelligence briefing for the history team.

With the desert wind blowing into the operations tent Major Lutte, General Sullivan's former speech writer, presented the mission:

At 160531 Feb 91, 2ACR covers the western flank of VII (US) Corps as it occupies FAA Utah. At 250538C Feb 91, 2ACR attacks through the western Flank of enemy defenses and conducts offensive cover operations in order to develop the situation for VII (US) Corps.

Inherent in the covering force mission was to perform reconnaissance along the Corps' axis, to deny enemy information on the Corps main body. The 2ACR would have to defeat enemy security forces in the zone and develop the situation for the Corps commander so as to set the terms of battle. The Regiment was to orient on the main body so as to facilitate maneuver and pass the heavy divisions into the fight. Lastly the Regiment was to find and fix enemy forces so as to exploit opportunities for the main body when committed.

The Regiment was heavily re-enforced according to pre-war doctrine and plans. Engineer, artillery, aviation, chemical units, military police and military intelligence units - including psychological warfare units were attached or under the operational control of the Regiment. Colonel Holder task organized his force as follows:

1 Squadron/2 ACR

84 ENGINEER COMPANY (Opcon)

2 Squadron/2 ACR

6 - 41 FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION (155mm, Self Propelled)
(Direct Support)

A - 82 ENGINEER BATTALION (Opcon)

3 Squadron/2ACR

3 - 17 FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION (155mm, Self Propelled)
(Direct Support)

C - 82 ENGINEER BATTALION (Opcon)

4 Squadron/2ACR

FORCE ARTILLERY

210 FIELD ARTILLERY BRIGADE (FFA HQ) (Direct Support)

C/4-27 FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION (MLRS) (General Support)

Regimental Support Squadron/2ACR

71 LTF (Logistic Task Force) (Direct Support)

214 MILITARY POLICE COMPANY (Opcon)

Regimental Control

87 CHEMICAL COMPANY

502 MILITARY INTELLIGENCE COMPANY

B/511 MILITARY INTELLIGENCE BATTALION/207 MI BRIGADE

2-1 AVIATION BATTALION (Opcon)

82 ENGINEER BATTALION (Opcon)

172 CHEMICAL COMPANY (SG) (Mechanized)

This task organization held the maximum flexibility for maneuver and fire support. The combat power of the Regiment is reflected in these assets:

Tanks	M1A1 (Abrams)	123	
Infantry Fighting Vehicle	M2A2/M3A2 (Bradley)		116
Attack Helicopter	AH-1 (Apache)		26
Scout Helicopter	OH-58C/D (?)		34/5
Utility Helicopter	AH-64 (Blackhawk)	18	
Self Propelled Artillery	155mm		72

Major Lambert presented the intelligence briefing. He divided the enemy theater of operations into the Kuwait Theater of Operations (KTO) and the Western Iraq Theater of Operations (WTO). The KTO embraced all of occupied Kuwait with up to 31 Divisions in the theater. He identified the Republican Guards as being the operational reserves for the Iraqi Army. In the Western Iraqi Theater of Operations (WTO) intelligence identified two enemy armored divisions, the 12AD and 54AD (?) and 8 to 11 Republican Guards divisions. These divisions were distinguished from the regular force armored division by the best Soviet made for export tank, the formidable T-72. Other forces were equipped with older and less capable T-55 and T-62 tanks. The Republican Guard named their more selected divisions based on home areas or famous historical personages. Thus the Tawakalna Division of the Republican Guard hailed from this town in Iraq. Others, the Medina and the Hammurabi were named after famous religious towns or historical leaders. Best equipped, best trained, best paid of the Iraqi Armed Forces these divisions grew from praetorian guard to effective combat veterans in the eight years of the Iran-Iraq war. The S-2 focused upon these forces as the main stay of the Iraqi Army. He indicated the focus of essential elements of intelligence would be applied to finding this Republican Guard force.

Colonel Holder recounted his concept of operations. Before the beginning of the ground campaign (G+ or -DAY) the regiment was to cover in sector (refer to sketch map B) with two squadrons abreast in front of the two armored divisions, 1AD and 3AD. Because of the overall deception plan inherent in the movement of forces westward, this occupation of sector was to be done "quietly". Essentially this meant little if any radio communications, no fires- including latrine fires - no cooking, smoking or any other hint that a major brigade and larger element was in the area. For soldiers this meant lots of discomfort and lots of Meals Ready to Eat (MRE's). Next Colonel Holder authorized reconnaissance of the line of departure (LD) to identify the enemy security zone in the area.

Before the start of the ground campaign, on G-1, 2ACR was to conduct reconnaissance, use field artillery to destroy high pay-off targets, to defeat any enemy security forces in the zone and attack to seize key terrain so as to facilitate the attack on G+1. On H+26 i.e. on G+1 after heavy fire support by air and artillery the Regiment was to envelop the enemy forward defenses and conduct offensive cover operations forward of the two armored divisions. Regimental aviation assets were to be approximately 20 kilometers forward of the two Squadrons conducting the cover operation abreast. One Squadron and attack helicopters were to be held in reserve. The main effort during this cover operation was aviation. During the covering force operation long-range detection of enemy forces and early attack with close air support (CAS), multiple rocket launch systems (MLRS) and electronic warfare (EW) was emphasized, with hasty attack and defense being the rule.

The Regimental Commander categorized the Regiment's main mission: "The Regiment will set the terms for battle for the Corps and serve as the base of fire and observation. If the enemy is moving, the Regiment destroys the advance guard battalions and develops the situation. If the enemy is stationary, the Regiment fixes the enemy, finds his flanks and assists in getting the divisions into the fight".

The Operations Officer, Major Lutte next recounted the Regiments execution of the concept of operations. For five days before the start of the ground campaign - during the "quiet" period - long range scouts were observing the Saudi-Iraq border

and finding locations to breach the berm. As Major Lambert explained, this berm was no-where near the extensive fortification and obstacle built by the Iraqi Army around Kuwait, but rather it was a high wall of sand which the Saudi Government had previously constructed to keep out desert smugglers. The key obstacle was that tanks and infantry fighting vehicles going over the top of the berm would be dangerously exposed to fire. Hence the breaching operation was conducted by Engineers of the 82nd and 84th Engineer Battalions under the operational control of the Regiment. These breach points were then passed through by the squadrons and subsequently enlarged to enable the armored divisions to pass through.

At 0400 23 February VII Corps announced the start of the ground campaign by radio transmission. That afternoon, at 1330 the Regiment prepared fires and then assaulted the berm. This assault was completed by 1406. Air Scouts were launched to Phase Line Bud. Keeping with Cavalry tradition of thirst in the desert, each of the 2ACR phase lines were code named after brands of beer. Thus the initial observation line was Sharps, the Saudi-Iraqi berm line Becks, the initial post breach line Bud etc. (See sketch map C). For the Regiment, the mission to secure the Corps Line of Departure was important for the future Corps operational conduct. Hence the Regiment moved very quickly and by 1540 two squadrons - 2/2 and 3/2 reported reaching phase line Bud having linked left and right and secured the left flank with the XVIII Airborne Corps flank holder of the 3ACR. No contact with enemy forces was reported at this time. The Air Squadron - 4/2 - reported an all clear to phase line Busch. At 1900 3/2 reported enemy infantry contact. Major Lambert, the Regimental Intelligence Officer, diagnosed this contact as elements of the Iraqi 26th Infantry Division.

By now 60 (?) kilometers deep into Iraq, on 24 February, the Regiment continued its push to cover well forward of the 1AD and 3AD. By 0700 on 24 February it had pushed its reconnaissance to phase line Busch. At 0841 a Regimental fragmentary order indicated to the 4/2 Air Squadron should screen along phase line Colt, with 2/2 and 3/2 Squadrons continuing to cover in zone. 1/2 Squadron was to continue in reserve as the Regimental Support Squadron (RSS) was brought north of the border berm. At 1110 the Regiment processes its first enemy prisoners of war (EPW). At 1304 the Regiment receives a warning order from the Corps. "The attack of VII Corps is moved forward to 241500 Feb 91; MOPP (Mission Oriented Protective Posture) 1 in effect at 1445". This order was meant to expect the movement of the Corps main force through the berm area and the precaution of wearing the highest level of chemical suit protection was judged to be warranted because of the high probability of enemy chemical attack. The Corps attack was moved up to 1430 with another frag order at 1345. Phase line Coors was crossed by the lead squadrons by 1530. By early evening, at 1800 all M1A1 Abrams tanks were refueled. The Regiment used a forced fueling method. Units were periodically topped off with fuel essentially before they reached half a tank. This meant that only rear fuel tanks would be fueled and re-fueling and Log-Pack could go faster. Scouts reached forward to conduct reconnaissance and fires on objectives Merrell and Feucht at about the same time. By 2133 the Regiment was oriented to defend on phase line Dixie while the Corps formed for attack in mass. During the afternoon and evening, from 1430 to 2330 L Troop of 3/2 fought nine engagements over 20 kilometers on the Regiment's eastern flank. This flank was to connect with the 1 ID. (See sketch map D).

The next day, 25 February, 1AD shifted to the north of 2ACR, with the Regiment continuing to provide cover northeast of 3AD. The day was to see the first series of actions. The Regimental operations log held the following entries: " 0152

25 February 2/1 Aviation Battalion attacks into Objective Merrell; Battle Damage Assessment: Building with antennas and Bunkers, 1 BMP and 6 Trucks. 0630- Artillery preparation on Objective Merrell and Feucht; Regiment attacks Northeast. 0841- 1AD begins shift north. 4/2 (Air Squadron) reports Objective Gates clear, contact on Objective May." Major Lambert's assessment was elements of 50th Brigade of the 12th Armored Division in vicinity of Objective May. The Regiment reported engagement of a reinforced mechanized infantry battalion with tanks at 1240. The location was given by 3/2 Squadron with tanks revetted in locations along phase line Blacktop. Nomad (Air) Troop reported a bunker or building complex in the vicinity of 68 Easting and 00 Northing. This was not recorded in the regimental operations log and in turn was not passed to the 2/2 or 3/2 squadrons. However, close air support (CAS) and 4/2 Air Squadron, engaged enemy armor approximately 10 kilometers forward of 2/2 and 3/2. Regimental reports are made to Corps: "The Regiment has found the security zone of the Tawakalna Division". (See sketch map E + F).

By the end of the morning, the Corps was arrayed with 1AD to the north, 2ACR and 1AD(UK) in the south. 3AD and 1ID were trailing 2ACR. LTG Franks advised 2 ACR at 1250 to develop the situation but not to become decisively engaged. Major Lambert's intelligence assessment of the situation indicated the Regiment was about to engage the Tawakalna's security zone along the 65 Easting with the main defenses about 8 kilometers to the east along the 73 Easting. The S-2 concluded that the Tawakalna's mission was to cover the withdrawal of the Iraqi Army from Kuwait. Weather precluded air operations due to sand and rain. Squadron scouts are ordered to phase line Miller to defeat enemy observation posts and take prisoners. At 1500 the 2ACR orders its squadrons to establish a hasty defense line along phase line Blacktop so as to interdict the Iraqi line of communications, fix the Tawakalna division with fire and CAS. For three hours the Tawakalna is pounded by CAS. An Apache raid by 2/1 Aviation Battalion led by LTC John Ward is aborted due to weather. Late in the evening, at 2230 MLRS fires begin with unknown effect. (See sketch map F).

In the early morning of 26 February at 0216, the Regiment, now 120 kilometers (?) deep into Iraq, received the Corps frag order to orient to the east. The Regiment's zone of operations was adjusted somewhat to the south to prepare to pass the 3AD through the Regiment's rear. The 3AD would take up position between 1AD to the extreme north and the Regiment. The co-ordination for this movement was accomplished at 0455 with the actual commitment of 3AD to the left and north of the Regiment beginning on 0918. The Corps frag order to the Regiment also gave an "on order" mission: "Be prepared to pass 1ID and assume Corps Reserve role". Colonel Holder, because of the increased cover zone ordered 3 squadrons abreast.

Sporadic fighting continued. Use of MLRS against enemy positions enabled 3/2 Squadron to defeat MRC. First Squadron reported contact at 0400 with artillery impacting. By 0713 L Troop of First Squadron reported engaging T-72 tanks. Confirmed reports came to the Regimental TOC of T-72 tanks moving in the vicinity of PT5299. By 0820 the Regiment reported to Corps it was engaging covering force elements of the Republican Guards. Major Lambert, the S-2, reported these elements as defenses from the 12AD, the 52 AD and the Tawakalna located between 50 and 60 Eastings. Meanwhile visibility due to fog and later blowing sand dropped to below 1000 meters. This fog dissipated to be replaced with a blowing sandstorm - a *Shamal* - which reduced visibility to between 200 to 1400 meters.

For the morning and part of the afternoon helicopters were grounded. By 1147 the GSM (?) reported enemy vehicles moving north. (See sketch map G).

Shortly afternoon, at 1250 LTG Franks came to the Regimental Tactical Operations Center (TOC) to receive a first hand assessment from the Regimental Commander, Colonel Holder. Both agreed the Regiment had found the Tawakalna Division and that it was moving north. The Regimental Commander ordered his squadrons to conduct reconnaissance forward of phase line Blacktop in order to fix the main body of the Tawakalna. The Corps Commander's order to not become decisively engaged and be prepared to pass the IID remained in effect.

Beginning at 1500 26 February 1991 elements of the Regiment, particularly from the Second and Third Squadron would find, and fix elements of the Tawakalna and of the 12th AD. Continuous CAS was arrayed against the Tawakalna and forces in depth along the IPSA pipeline road. This road was a hard asphalt road, inexplicably not shown on 2ACR maps. The history team did not ascertain whether the road showed on other, notably Corps maps. The battle with the Tawakalna was supported by two successive Apache raids against artillery positions along the 75, 80 and 85 Easting. (See sketch map H) After approximately six hours of battle by the Regiment the Corps Commander ordered the passage of IID at 2311 while 210 Field Artillery Brigade passed to IID operational control. On 0012 27 February 2ACR held all weapons fire for the IID passage and prepared to go into Corps reserve at 0235 following IID to the east. This action was confirmed by a Corps frag order on 1255 indicating 2 ACR movement to 85 Easting. At 1830 2ACR was ordered to remain west of 87 Easting. At 2400 hours the Regiment was informed of a possible cease-fire commencing at 0500 28 February. Shortly before the cease-fire implementation the time was changed to 0800. A stand-down was ordered at 0956 with orders to continue to follow IID into Kuwait and Tactical Assembly Area (TAA) Mexico on 1 March 1991. (See sketch map I).

In 82 hours the Regiment covered close to 200 kilometers, fought elements of five enemy divisions, while covering for three divisions of the VII Corps. It integrated CAS with ground maneuver and operational fires to destroy enemy security forces. The Regiment fixed and disabled the Tawakalna Division and developed the situation for the Corps Commander. It fought in some of the worst conditions: 50% of the fight was conducted in limited visibility and no-fly weather. The battle effects speak for themselves: Over 300 Iraqi armored vehicles were destroyed, over 2000 EPW's captured. The losses to the Regiment were: 6 killed in action and 17 wounded; with 4 M2 Bradley's and 2 M113 armored personnel carriers destroyed. The operational readiness rates exceeded 95% during the course of the battle. The 2 ACR had indeed executed a classic cavalry action: "Find, fix and fight". The Regimental Commander, Colonel Holder concluded the recounting of the 2ACR fight: "The Regiment is *Always Ready* -all of its brothers are brave".

"Action Front"

It was close to two months since Ghost, Eagle and Iron troops had fought the battle. Now they were standing with historians recording the detail of the battle at 73 Easting. It was dark in the tent and a bit confining. Captain Hebert R. "H.R." McMaster, from Philadelphia Pennsylvania, moved his platoon commanders and tank and scout commanders outside the tent, put up a map, shined jeep lights on the blow-up of the battle area and started to recount the battle. "We were anxious to see action" he began slowly and deliberately, ever since we crossed the berm.

Spirits were high." Movement into Iraq was fast and furious. Eagle troop encountered "countless groups of enemy soldiers surrendering. Scout quickly searched them, gave them food and water, and reported their location for the trains to collect them." Part of the first sergeants and cooks duties was to police up these EPW's. At the end of the day Eagle troop halted and formed a hasty defense position and re-fueled. They had covered another fifty kilometers in less than four hours.

The during the night of 25 February, the weather turned sour again and the skies opened up with a deluge. The Troop had seen some of the most gruesome sights of war: enemy dead. In the morning Eagle was shifted south somewhat so that Iron troop commanded by Captain Daniel B. Miller from Maumee, Ohio, who was "HR's" plebe roommate at West Point was on Eagle's right flank. Iron troop was from 3/2 Squadron so co-ordination would need to be tight. "The night rain had yielded to heavy fog" in the morning of 26 February. Eagle troop encountered three enemy MTLB's. Ghost Troop, commanded by Captain Joseph Sartiano from San Francisco, California, was oriented to Eagle's north. Captain Sartiano's scout saw the MTLB's and took them under Bradley 25mm fire destroying two. The third took evasive action. Eagle troop commander shot the third.

"About 1000 hours on 26 February, the troops mission changed slightly. We were to move forward having tied in with Iron to the south and Ghost to the north." Captain McMaster continued in almost a familial way. The excited chatter of other commanders now giving way to a respectful silence. *"At noon, the fog cleared only to be replaced by high winds and blowing sand."* Captain Dan Miller called this a real Shamal - visibility down to 200 meters. Eagle troop refueled and waited.

"At 1500 hours the long awaited order came". Captain McMaster told his men *"We attack in five minutes to the 70 Easting. (An 'easting' is a north to south running grid line on a military map) This is the moment we have all awaited."* Captain McMaster reflected that he had not received detailed intelligence forward in his zone. Lieutenant Tim Gauthier, the Third Platoon Leader, chewing tobacco, dead panned, *"What kind of contact can we expect?"* "H.R." shot back the reply: *"enemy contact"*. Even the radio communications disciplined *"Roger"* as a reply could not hide the laughter of the Troop as it rolled forward. This laughter was spontaneously rekindled for the historians recording the event.

"As the troop crested a slight rise, at about 1530 hours air burst artillery fell on SSG Lawrence's scout section. " Without breaking stride the troop closed their hatches, diverted south and drove around the impact area. After re-orienting to the east, the third platoon scouts under LT Tim Gauthier reported taking small arms fire from a building complex just north of the troops southern boundary at the 00 Northing (A northing is an east west grid line on a military map). LT Gauthier's scouts attacked the building complex with 25mm high explosive fire. There was also a berm which concealed enemy fighting positions adjacent to the buildings. Captain McMaster order edboth tank platoons to come on line and suppress the building complex. He decided to fire the building and by-pass to the north. Near simultaneous fire from nine tanks "impacted into the buildings and blew gaping holes in them. Subsequently, fires started and the blowing smoke obscured the Troop from the enemy. The Troop would take no more enemy fire from that position." Later scout reports indicated the site was an enemy logistics compound consisting of ammunition, fuel, food and water supplies."

"The Troop resumed eastward movement at about 1600 hours. LT Mike Petschek's scout platoon moved deliberately when it sighted an enemy armored vehicle to the east. Before this was reported, Captain McMaster leading in front had ordered his tank platoons to follow. "I took the point and the tanks passed through the scouts in a nine tank wedge. The scouts now moved to secure the flanks and rear of the tanks." Because of the greater height of the Bradley scout vehicle over the Abrams tank it could see and acquire the target earlier. Captains Sartiano, McMaster and Miller would comment on the imperceptible rise in terrain when we returned with them to the battle site. They confirmed the expert terrain utilization by the Iraqi forces. Ten feet rise in ground over 500 meters did make the difference between being seen and unseen. When Eagle troop commander came up on one of these imperceptible "crests" his gunner, Staff Sergeant Koch yelled in the intercom "Tanks, direct front". Immediately finding the range through the laser-range finder at 1420 meters Koch was ready for the Captain's fire command "Fire SABOT". Emptying the HE round in the chamber, SSG Koch quickly responded with a trigger pull. Still moving, but with the tank's stabilization system working, the gun kept its target and the enemy tank "exploded in a huge fire ball". As SSG Koch swung the turret to another T-72 Soviet built tank, "two enemy tank rounds impacted next to my tank" recorded McMaster. As the Captain continued to give engagement instructions to the rest of the platoons, his gunner laid on another round and fired. It too found its mark: "The enemy tank's turret separated from its hull in a hail of sparks. It burst into flames as the round penetrated the fuel and ammunition compartments. The next shot from SSG Koch got equal results. What seemed like an eternity for this solo performance was less than a minute. The time was 1607 hours. LT Mike Hamilton, a Norwich University, Northfield, Vermont graduate, and LT Jeffrey DeStafano charged their tank platoons across the "crest" and into action. "All of the Troops tanks and scouts were now in the action. The enemy felt the full shock effect and firepower of our armor. Enemy tanks and BMP's erupted into innumerable fire balls. The troop was cutting a five kilometer wide swath of destruction through the enemy's defense."

Traffic on the troop radio net was relatively calm in the face of battle. Captain McMaster directed *"the tanks to keep formation and assault through the enemy positions as the scouts fired to the flanks and "scratched the back" of the tanks with small arms fire to clear pockets of enemy dismounted resistance. Bradley's pumped HEIT and AP rounds into enemy personnel carriers and bunkers along the flanks and occasionally stopped to fire TOW's at tanks in the depth of the enemy position. The tanks continued to press forward. No one was missing the target and fire distribution was perfect. No opposing vehicle escaped destruction. The enemy position was reduced to a spectacular array of burning armored vehicles."*

Captain McMaster's continued the account of the battle. *"We pressed the attack east. The enemy had established a U shaped defense and the troop had moved into the center of their position. The scouts to the flanks, however, reduced enemy vehicles and bunkers to either side, At one point, 3rd platoon (LT Gauthier) received effective fire from a ZSU-23-4, dug into a bunker. The platoon launched two TOW missiles against the target, the first collapsed the bunker and the second hit the ZSU gun. In a particularly tense moment. LT Gauthier swung his Bradley turret onto a T-62 tank just as it fired at him. The enemy tank missed throwing dirt into the air." What LT Gauthier added "was after we fired a TOW at the tank and destroyed it, we had to get out and clean off our weapons optics so that we could continue." Eagles "tanks were now even with the enemy's first line of defense. Now indirect fires fell behind the enemy's position which the troop FIST LT Davis had*

called. " *ILT John Gifford, the troop executive officer called the Eagle Troop commander to remind him the Troop limited of advance was the 70 Easting. Captain McMaster replied "We're still in heavy contact, advancing to the 73 Easting, tell them I'm sorry". Major Douglas MacGregor, the 2 Squadron Executive Officer monitored the transmission since he was well forward of the Squadron's TOC and practically with Eagle's tanks he fully concurred with the pressing of the attack.*"

Eagles tanks and Bradley's "were now cutting down hundreds of infantry fleeing to subsequent positions. Some tried to play dead and pop up behind the tanks with rocket propelled grenades. They fell prey to the Bradley 25mm and coaxial machine guns. " Captain McMaster "finally found a position at which I could halt the troop. It was just beyond the 73 Easting. Dominant terrain is difficult to discern in a relatively featureless desert, but this was it. It consisted of a small hill which allowed observation out to several kilometers in all directions. It was an apparent gap in the enemy's defense between the position through which the troop had assaulted and positions further to the east." Eagle troop reported no casualties. The time was 1630 hours. This action of punching through the defenses took just 23 minutes.

But the fight was far from over. Eagle troop's "tanks fired main guns and Bradley's fired TOW missiles at enemy tanks and personnel carriers forward of the 73 grid line. Violent explosions followed the impact of the perfectly aimed and guided fires. All vehicles were suppressing enemy infantry to the front who fired machine guns at us and scurried back and forth among the endless sea of berms which comprised the enemy position."

"The enemy attempted a futile counterattack just before dark. Enemy tanks, BMP's, and MTLB's weaved between the berms to the troop's front attempting to close within range of their weapons capability. Tanks and Bradley's to the flanks, however, had relatively clear shots through the berms and the enemy effort was soon thwarted as, one by one, the enemy vehicles erupted into flames.

TOW anti-tank missiles pursued and caught truck loads of enemy soldiers fleeing to the east. The Troop's mortar section was well into action now; dropping high explosive variable timed rounds which explode in mid-air and spray shrapnel down on the enemy infantry. We could see through the thermal sights that the mortars were exacting a heavy toll."

"The sun was setting. Continuous machine-gun and 25mm high explosive fire kept the enemy at bay and prevented him from organizing an effective counter-attack. Enemy vehicles and bunkers continued to burn and the fire engulfed the troop in an eerie reddish glow which reflected off the heavy, low clouds. Occasionally, an enemy vehicle's ammunition or fuel compartment erupted in a secondary, violent explosion. An enemy truck full of soldiers approached to within two hundred meters of Staff Sergeant Henry Foy's tank; apparently unaware of their proximity to the Troop's position. SSG Foy's crew demonstrated great compassion and discipline as I (Captain McMaster) ordered all to hold fire until the enemy's intention were known. Upon detecting the Troop's perimeter, the enemy truck halted and, the Iraqis jumped down from the truck brandishing assault rifles and RPG's. SSG Foy's machine-gun opened up, setting the truck's engine on fire and wounding one enemy soldier. The others quickly dropped their weapons and surrendered. Scouts searched the enemy soldiers, treated the wounded one and moved them to a collection point."

"The Troop was now only receiving sporadic machine-gun fire. The enemy forward [momentum] appeared broken. Major McGregor [the 2 Squadron Executive Officer] ordered the HUMVEE mounted psychological operations loudspeaker team to come forward. The Kuwaiti interpreter blasted a surrender appeal forward of the Troop's position. I ordered all to hold fire. What seemed to be countless enemy soldiers came forward as the Kuwaiti gave them instructions in Arabic. The lead enemy soldier carried a white bag affixed to a wooden staff. The prisoners fell into a single file with their hands up. It was strange watching those who had fired at us come humbly forward. A scout squad guarded the enemy with M16 rifles and began searching them. Every inch of their body and clothing was covered to include the inside of boots and wallets. The scouts had rehearsed POW procedures and did a fine job. After the search, we directed them to sit in rows."

" One could see the surprise with which the enemy regarded their humane treatment. They had been told that American would shoot them. The Troop's medic, Sergeant Pivetz, bandaged their wounds. We returned to them all personal items and provided them food and water. There were forty-two in the first batch and over two hundred more would surrender later that night and the next morning."

" William Virrill, the Troop's first sergeant had weaved through friendly units to the rear and brought up a re-supply of fuel and ammunition. Several vehicles at a time rotated back to the re-supply point while others maintained security."

H.R. McMaster continued: "I reluctantly ordered a scout section from first platoon to move north and make contact with an adjacent troop. Ghost and Eagle had fought similar battles and the area between us had been covered with observation and fire. It was still a dangerous mission, however, as no one had physically cleared the ground between us. 1LT Mike Petschek and another Bradley moved north out of the Troop's defense. Shortly after he left, Mike yelled [into the radio] "contact tanks". My heart sank. Before I could send LT Hamilton's tanks north to support, LT Petschek reported killing two T-72 tanks at close range with TOW missiles. The section made contact with Ghost and the troop's northern flank was secure."

"Similarly, the squadron to the Troop's south was linked in with Third Platoon. Iron Troop had progressed to the 70 grid line and halted there. LT Gauthier advised the troop not to fire south of a 120 degree magnetic azimuth to prevent fires from impacting on our neighbor. I and the Iron Troop commander had been roommates at West Point, and, as the battle ebbed, we coordinated our positions with each other over the radio". Captain Dan Miller, the Iron troop Commander commented: " Many times H.R. would come up on my command net and give me his positions as the battle raged. We were about three kilometers behind Eagle and he was worried about us shooting into his formation. We tracked him. A number of times I had to tell H.R. to get off the command net. I did assure him 'Don't worry we know where you are'." Captain McMaster's concluded his account:" Scouts now reported more enemy vehicles to the east. Two BMP's attempted to probe the perimeter. They had no chance at night. The thermal sights allowed us to pick them up early and Sergeant Hevermale of Third Platoon destroyed them with 25mm fire. Moments later, he detected an Iraqi attempting to start one of the BMP's. A TOW missile ensured that the vehicle was unusable."

"The battle waned as the First Infantry Division's column approached. They would continue the attack to the east. Dan Davis called an artillery strike along the

75 Easting; the area from which the enemy counter-attacks and probes had come. Secondary explosions were at the encouragement the artillerymen needed. A massive strike ensued. Artillery rounds and rockets burst in the air sprinkling armor and infantry defeating bomblets across the ground. The visual effect was that of a large sparkler spread across several kilometers. The numerous explosions must have devastated the enemy."

"The Troop's battle was almost over. One could hear the whine of First Infantry Division tank engines and the rattle of their tracks as they moved forward of the Troop. The rest of the night was relatively quiet with only occasional machine-gun fire in both directions."

"As the sun rose the next morning [27 February], the true extent of the damage inflicted on the enemy became apparent to us. I had grossly underestimated enemy losses. Countless enemy tanks, personnel carriers, trucks, and bunkers were still smoking or in flames. We had, in fact, destroyed over 35 enemy tanks and over 30 BMP's and other personnel carriers. About 10 enemy trucks were burning. We were faced with the gruesome sight of a battlefield covered with enemy dead...."

"Most importantly, Eagle Troop took no casualties. As the sun rose on the morning after the battle, I and the other soldiers offered prayers of thanks to God. We did not gloat over our victory. We had simply done our part"....

"A certain part of you just dies" said 1LT Keith Garwick of Ghost Troop's First Platoon, Eagle's northern flank partner. "Somebody trying to kill you so desperately for so many hours, and coming so close. We just couldn't understand it. I still don't understand it. Those guys were insane. They wouldn't stop," Garwick said of the Iraqi Army's Republican Guard, which hurled wave after wave of tanks at him. Ghost Troop's gunners, like Eagle Troop, would blow up oncoming vehicles. "They kept dying and dying and dying," said the 25-year old Garwick, a West Point graduate from Santa Monica, California.

PFC Jason E. Kick, 18 from Pembroke, Georgia was a Bradley driver in 1LT Garwick's scout platoon and carried a tape recorder into action. Captain Joseph Sartiano's Ghost Troop received small arms fire beginning on the morning of 26 February. At 0630 Ghost moved out in Squadron box with Eagle Troop to its right flank. Captain Sartiano's scout acquired 4 MTLB's and destroyed them with TOW's and mortar fire. Ghost's scouts took four EPW's including an Iraqi captain schooled at Fort Benning, Georgia. Ghost continued movement to the 56 Easting. After this halt, both Ghost and Eagle moved out abreast of each other due east. Time was about 1200. By about 1300 the fog was replaced by the ferocious winds of the Shamal. Ghost blew through the observation posts of the Iraqi 12th Armored Division on the 60 Easting, reporting only light contact but calling in fire support in their zone. At around 1530 Ghost encountered several personnel carriers and three enemy tanks which were destroyed.

"I had a feeling," said Captain Sartiano, "Everybody else was making contact so I kicked all my scouts back and put my tanks up front." Ghost encountered enemy vehicles dug in at the 73 Easting which was the northern extension of the Tawakalna elements which Eagle was battling to the south. Captain Sartiano's instincts were right. His tanks would battle dug in Iraqi T-72 tanks supported by

infantry. Captain Sartiano fought two actions. First he encountered the dug in forces. And second he would battle the forces which were trying to retreat.

1LT Keith Garwick indicated most of the troop was behind a small ridge, overlooking a wide shallow valley about 1 kilometer which the Arabs call a wadi. It was very shallow but enemy vehicles were well positioned on the reverse slope of the wadi facing west. PFC Kick would record the time as 1642. *"We've pulled up on the line right now. We're engaged in a pretty decent firefight right now... we're shooting again. I can see where we're shooting at, but I can't see of victor [vehicle]."*

"This is chaos here," Kick shouted in his tape-recorder. *"This is total chaos".* Battle commands can be heard on the radio. *"I see smoke on the horizon, that means I killed something. What it is I don't know."* He comments on his platoon leader. *"White One, he's the platoon leader. You can hear it in his voice, he's all shook up. Time 4:54....this is the co-ax [machine gun] firing. Time 5:10 P.M. We're still in contact... there's a few P.C.'s [personnel carriers] here and there, mostly infantry. I just spotted the biggest damned explosion at about 12 o'clock. I don't know what the hell it was..."*

1LT Garwick's platoon had already killed nine personnel carriers alone. The enemy shooting back around 1700. Artillery began falling around the Bradley's and the tanks. Keith Garwick reported *"A tremendous volume of small arms fire and shrapnel hit the berm to my front"*. Iraqi infantrymen ran forward and were mowed down. Enemy fire increased and air-burst artillery began exploding over Ghost, peppering LT Garwick's platoon. Two Bradley's in Garwick's platoon were positioned on his right wing. At 1740 LT Garwick saw three tank rounds hit the imperceptible ridge in his front, each shot closer to the Bradleys on his right. The last shot hit. *"One just got one of our guys"* shouted Kick into his recorder.

Specialist Patrick Bledsoe, from Oxnard, California was driving Bradley number G-16 in First Platoon. All he saw was shooting. *"We were in a little wadi"* he said, but the top of his Bradley looked out over the extended "valley". The difference of 10-20 feet in elevation over a distance of 500-1000 meters is crucial. *" We were kind of 'skylined ' and could easily be seen by the enemy gunners. The Bradley's gunner was Sergeant Lars Moller. Just at this moment the coaxial machine gun jammed and the track commander was trying to fix it. The track commander saw Iraqi infantrymen running toward them and asked SGT Moller" You got the troops to the front?" Suddenly there was an explosion. From his seat at the gunsights, down inside the Bradley turret, SGT Moller couldn't see the area right outside of the fighting vehicle. There was a second explosion which showered sparks across the front of the Bradley. "It was just like somebody hit us with a sledgehammer"* Bledsoe said. He jumped out and ran behind the Bradley, SGT Moller was dead and the Bradley commander was wounded. Friendly tanks were shooting over Bledsoe's head as he jumped down from the Bradley after yet another explosion. Bledsoe tried to get away. *"I low-crawled up to the track",* he said. *"Knocked on the back door but they didn't hear me. I went up and knocked on the driver's hatch. The driver opened it. I said, "We just got hit. I think SGT Moller's dead". Bradley G-16 was just smoking.*

At 1747 PFC Kick spoke into his tape recorder *"It was one-six that got hit"*. A few minutes later he continued, his voice steadier. *"The gunner of one-six who was SGT Moller, is dead. The Track Commander and observer are on one-five right now. SGT Moller, SGT Moller was killed.... time about 5:49."* He paused a moment, then

added, "Can't let this... can't let this affect us or get us down or we're all gonna die. And he wouldn't want that. He don't want that. But I'm scared."

LT Garwick told his men to keep fighting. Artillery, tanks and machine guns were firing all around them on the hill. More were destroyed. More fired. *"This is chaos,"* Kick reported at 1804, *"Total chaos... got nine victors to our front. Enemy victors and more coming."* Night had worsened the reduced visibility of the sand storm. LT Garwick reported seeing two enemy tanks coming at him. This was part of a concerted enemy counterattack from the north. LT Garwick's scouts reported that 12 tanks and more - possibly 25 - were coming from a northern direction. Captain Sartiano ordered his tank platoon into action and artillery. Staff Sergeant Guliomo saw tanks through his thermal sights. He put the laser range finder to work, shot and hit at 3750 meters. This was but one example. Captain Sartiano was directing action into the adjacent northern flank held by element of 3AD. Because Ghost had moved so rapidly eastward there were no friendly 3AD elements there. Artillery fire was called in. Tank fire and TOWS took their toll.

All PFC Kick could see was rounds going down-range. It went on like this - *total chaos* - for nearly four more hours. At one point a forward artillery observer track driven by Specialist Chris Harvey from Virginia Beach looked out: *"All I could see were things burning for 360 degrees, nothing but action." Wave upon wave of tanks and infantry would come at Ghost only to be destroyed.* PFC Kick watched and recorded. *"Boom. Hit. Hit and kill. He hit. That's revenge for SGT Moller. You sonuvabitching Iraqis. God, I hate them. SGT Moller was a good guy. We killed them. That 'four Iraqi PC's for this track alone."*

Major Steven Lambert the Regimental Intelligence officer explained the ferocity of the attacks. Elements of the Iraqi 12 Armored Division and the Republican Guards Tawakalna Division had gotten tangled up with elements of the 12 AD trying to retreat along with the Tawakalna Division both retreating and attacking. Some Iraqi units were in prepared positions and were defending. Others attacked from the northwest in order to allow defending units time to pull out. They fought fiercely in order to get out. They know the terrain well. This was their maneuver area.

Captain Sartiano orchestrated the fight to the north while attacking the northern edge of the position which Eagle had attacked earlier. Ghost was primarily involved to the north. After Eagle's main action at 1630 Captain McMaster ordered his scout section to make positive ground verification with Ghost. This was done by fixing a time for two scout sections to meet at a distinct GPS (Ground Position System) verified location. Eagle's scouts were already beyond the 01 northing and had to back-track. While doing so they had fought into the rear of the Iraqi position. Ghost came at it from the northeast. The physical link-up was accomplished at about 1740. (?)

More than once, the artillery and helicopters helped kill tanks and saved Ghost and, Eagle and Iron. At the end of the action Ghost Troop ran desperately short of ammunition. The 2 Squadron decided to place its Hawk tank company in sector so that Ghost could be re-supplied between 2230-2300 hours.

After the Ghost's battle there was reflection. *"No one, however, really knew what to call the battle... And none of them could judge how important it had been. They didn't know how hard they had fought or any one else. They still don't. It might take months or years before people who write history books will decide*

whether Ghost Troop , or Eagle, or Iron, is worth a page or not". And they may decide on a name: The Battle of 73 Easting.

For Iron Troop commanded by Captain Dan Miller, day three 25 February again began with an artillery preparation and MLRS fire. Iron Troop was to the south of Eagle troop, and part of 3 Squadron maintained its flank.

Captain Miller' assembled his platoon commanders for the historical team and he began his account with the crossing of the SP" at 0630 to continue our movement to contact. The sunrise gave way to overcast skies and falling temperatures. By 0800 the rain began to fall and it would be on and off for the next 24 hours; mostly 'on' seemed to be the order of the day."

"As the Troop continued north there was a real sense that today our training would culminate with enemy contact. In the afternoon the scouts reported dismounts to our front, they opened fire and again the enemy surrendered. As the ten or so surrendered many more began coming out of their bunkers with arms raised high over their heads, waving white flags or white papers. It turned out that we had stumbled on to an infantry company and they all surrendered. The scouts quickly disarmed the prisoners and gathered them together in one large group. There wasn't time to search them all, so they left a guard force and continued to move. Later reports revealed that a lot of surrendering Iraqis were overwhelmed by the amount of firepower we possessed. The EPW's had slowed our move, so we picked up the pace. As we went forward we came across dozens of revetted positions and infantry fighting positions. These positions are difficult to see unless you're right on top of them. In the next day and a half, we would see a lot more of these revetted positions and they wouldn't all be empty."

"Intelligence reports provided by fourth squadron revealed a lot of enemy activity to our front. Our graphics showed that we had already covered a lot of ground, close to 100 km. PL Blacktop, which we were quickly approaching, was to be the end of Phase II. The operations order indicated a good chance of contact. The Troop had long since altered its course from due north to a mostly eastern azimuth. Our mission was to find and fix the Republican Guard, but we expected to find other units before them. As we approached Blacktop it seemed that Phase II would end without a fight - we were wrong!"

" At around 1430 third platoon reported on the command net that they had dismounts to their front again. First platoon reported artillery piece and more dismounts. As the scouts approached, it didn't take long to figure out that the flashes they were seeing were those of AK-47's . Third platoon followed suit a few seconds later."

"The scouts laid a heavy base of fire as they advanced to develop the situation. The command net buzzed with spot reports as CPT Miller demanded clarification of the situation: How many? Where are they? What do they have? etc.. Third platoon responded with a TOW missile launch into an MTLB that had emerged from a revetted position."

"The MTLB exploded as if it were made of plastic. The metal armor shot up into the air accompanied by a fire ball and it seemed to rise and fall in slow motion. In the blink of an eye, a perfectly functional vehicle had become a burning heap of metal."

"With that shot and the report by first platoon that they found themselves in the middle of about 25 unmanned MTLBs in revetted positions, the Commander called for 'Action Front'! We had rehearsed this drill a hundred times in the past couple of months. It was as if 'The Commander' had hit a switch and set in motion a machine of destruction. The scouts immediately went to a split vee formation and the tankers burst forward on line, utilizing the 1500 HP Turbo Engine to hurl their 63 tons of steel destruction forward. Fourth platoon shot up between third platoons Bradleys and Second Platoon, along with I-66, shot through First Platoon and actioned rights on a T-55 and an MTLB. I-66 quickly took out the artillery piece by pumping a 120 mm SABOT round through it. Second Platoon immediately opened fire and annihilated the other two vehicles. After passing through Third Platoon remained on line and devastated MTLBs in revetted positions at close range and snagged a couple of long range moving MTLBs. Fifty caliber rounds ripped into bunkers and soon the white flags of surrender rose from the bunkers. Iraqi soldiers emerged with hands held high and a look of relief - their lives would be spared."

"When the enemy guns were silenced and the prisoners were gathered together we found that we had just destroyed an Infantry Battalion. There were at least 180 prisoners and the fires of burning vehicles were everywhere. Iron Troop had found the enemy and in their first taste of combat, they were overwhelmingly successful. We ended the battle as we started it with 12 Bradleys, 9 tanks a mortar section, an engineer platoon, GSR, the First and all trains. We suffered no inquiries and no deaths. The training had paid off. We had tasted combat and all walked away to fight another day. As the day grew old, the familiar sound of rain drops started Iron Troop reconstituted."

"That night, as we sat on the screen line and in hasty defensive positions, the sound of artillery rumbled at a constant tone. The rumbling could not only be heard, but you could feel it in the pit of your stomach in the same way you feel the bass on a good sound systems, only this wasn't a good feeling. The sounds would roll closer and then start to fade; only to return a little louder and a little more intense. The artillery, accompanied with a constant rain, made for a long, miserable night. The artillery would never really find I Troop, but some enemy dismounts and an MTLB would."

"The dismounts that probed our screen line were quickly eliminated by some alert scouts. LT Daigle called for and adjusted artillery on an MTLB and more dismounts to the front of his sector. After adjustment, HE and DPICM were fired on the targets and Red One [the artillery forward observer] reported 'End of mission, target destroyed'."

"A second MTLB found its way through the seam between Iron Troop and Killer Troop to the south. The scanning by the tanks ended the early morning stroll of the enemy vehicles. Second platoon reported vehicle movement to their front and fourth platoon confirmed. Those who had taken a few hours to rest were rudely awoken by fellow crew members who were watching over the sector. The report and flash announced the departure of a tank main gun round from a gun tube in second platoon. The receiver was the MTLB that had infiltrated the sector. A second round delivered by Fourth Platoon with a fiery splash announced a HEAT round. Second Platoon then swept the sector and took care of any dismounts that remained. Except for more artillery rumbles, the remainder of the morning was

calm. Some managed to get a little sleep, others just tried to stay dry, still others remained wired and alert knowing that our enemy doesn't sleep."

"As the light of morning started to show through the heavy overcast skies, Iron Troop prepared to move."

"As expected, Phase III was a frag order. We would continue movement to contact heading due east towards Basra. As far as we could tell, the Republican Guard Divisions still lay in waiting and "the Cavalry" had to find them."

"By 0600 26 February, Iron Troop had formed the familiar Vee formation, SP was at 0630 so we set and waited. There was a report that someone was shooting flares from the Troops northern flank. A quick look to our left rear confirmed the report and CPT Miller called on Fourth Platoon to turn their sights to the direction of the flares. Scanning the area revealed a BTR-50 and an MTLB with Iraqi soldiers apparently trying to signal someone. At less than 1500 meters, the two stationary targets were easy prey for the MIAI. With an order to destroy the target, Fourth Platoon's SFC Stewart 'ripped two rounds in the direction of the flares. Both rounds were center mass hits and the now familiar flying debris and fire balls followed. There wasn't time for further observation; it was 0630 and the scouts reported SP."

"About 10 or 15 kilometers into the march, we stopped. Fourth Squadron had reported tanks and personnel carriers advancing in our direction. The decision was made to allow the combat multipliers to handle the situation. A-10 Thunderbolts circled overhead like a hawk eyeing its prey. The aircraft were mostly hidden from sight because of cloud cover, but explosions that we observed about 5 km to our front assured us the Air Force was close by and eliminated our troubles. Artillery was also called in after close air support departed."

"Early that afternoon we back stepped about 3 or 4 km and shifted our boundary to the south. By this time the winds out of the south started gaining intensity. Soon the sand started blowing and we had a definite Shamal to contend with. Visibility was reduced to less than 1000 meters and the sand became unbearable as it pelted all exposed skin. Soon after the storm began we received orders to begin movement. The war wouldn't wait for the weather to cooperate."

"Our move would take us about 20 km east to the 60 Easting where we would set the screen line again. We reached the screen line about two hours later at about 1530 and CPT Miller surveyed the terrain to find a place for his tanks to overwatch the scouts. The tank platoons cheated forward a bit because of reduced visibility. CSM Tommy Nester had brought his tank forward to replace I-66 which had thrown a track and needed a sprocket. Before the transition could be made, we were ordered to move and CSM Nestor took up position on the left flank of fourth platoon, CPT Miller had jumped to I-55, the XO's Bradley, and it was from I-55 that he fought Iron Troop on 26 February. With all positions confirmed the Troop began occupation procedure, only to be interrupted by another frag order. . Reports stated that the Iraqi Army that was in Kuwait was breaking north heading toward Baghdad. Our mission was to push hard and fast to the East to intercept a retreating army."

"After a somewhat misorientated start, the troop re-grouped and pushed forward. The sand storm continued with no loss of intensity; the visibility remained poor at best."

"Third Platoon, commanded by 1LT Thomas H. Isom from Miami, Florida, reported contact with an enemy observation post (OP), and called for indirect fire. The spotting rounds came in, but the reduced visibility made it impossible to adjust fire. 1LT Butner, the FIST was forced to cancel the mission because of lack of observation. A few minutes later, Third Platoon again reported an OP with a BTR-50 and a BMP1. While the artillery prepared to fire, Iron Troop mortar men came up on the command net and advised Third Platoon they could range the mission. Within a few seconds, the first round was out of the tube. SFC Letterman called for an adjustment. SFC Letterman called for "Add 50, fire for affect." The mortars dropped ten rounds per tube right on target. With speed and accuracy the mortars took out their first OP, and the Troop continued to move."

"Two to three kilometers past the OP, First Platoon commanded by 1LT Steve Daigle, reported numerous revetted positions and berms to their front. Immediately following the report came the familiar sound and flash of AK-47s. These positions were occupied with an enemy that was looking for a fight. The enemy seemed to be scrambling to their positions as small arms fire increased with the addition of RPGs whipping toward the scouts. The scouts responded with 25mm fire and put up their TOW launchers. Third Platoon report small arms fire on their left flank from a group of buildings. They suppressed and continued to advance."

"The sand storm had forced Iron Troop to advance closer then they cared, to develop the situation. The reports of armored vehicles and tanks in revetted positions, hurled the tanks into action. Again this day Captain Dan Miller commanded; "Action front". and Iron Troop lunged forward with cold steel."

"Third Platoon reported receiving small arms fire coming from the buildings they had just passed, now to their left rear. Fourth Platoon commanded by 1LT Joseph Paydock, of Oak Harbor Ohio, answered the call with 50 caliber suppression fire and 120mm destruction main tank gun HE rounds. The buildings no longer proposed a threat to Iron Troop. This was the same building complex that Eagle had fired into with two tank platoons earlier, by about 30 minutes. The tanks of the platoon were attacking the southern flank of the positions Eagle slammed into half an hour earlier."

"The tankers soon found themselves passing just in front of the scouts and didn't hesitate to announce their arrival with main gun rounds, 50 cal. and coax. The scouts had already done a "damn, damn" on a good portion of the enemy tanks and PC's, but the target environment remained rich. The scouts had crushed the initial resistance and the tanks would ensure there wouldn't be a counter attack."

"Enemy tank turrets were hurled skyward as 120mm SABOT rounds ripped through T-55's and T-72's. The fire balls that followed hurled debris one hundred feet into the air. Secondary explosions destroyed the vehicles beyond recognition. Resistance was sporadic. The small arms fire continued and the RPGs were following short or just plain missing their mark. EPWs started to emerge from yet unexploded bunkers. The tankers and scouts continued to lay down a high volume of fire passed the surrendering enemy. With the precision and control of a surgeon's scalpel, the troopers cut away at the enemy who continued to resist and

spared those who surrendered. Iron Troop had fought elements of the Tawakalna Division, which were on Eagle's right flank earlier. By arriving several minutes - about 30 - later than Eagle Troop, Iron Troop rolled the tactical flank of these elements. It was as an oblique movement in a classical sense."

"The annihilation of this Iraqi Armor Battalion continued with the Troop found itself surrounded by burning hulls and exploding ammo bunkers. The unforgettable odor of burning diesel, melting metal and plastics, expended munitions and anything else that happened to be burning in bunkers, hung heavy in the air. For a moment there was an abrupt calm. An occasional shot from a TOW or a tank kept us alert. The scouts were told to continue their advance as the tanks held the line and overwatched. The report of advancing T-72s from the east, told us the battle wasn't over."

"Seven T-72s had managed to crawl out of their revetted positions and attempt a counter attack. The enemy was advancing at about 2500 meters to our front. The flash from their gun tubes confirmed that they had a fix on us. The scouts were in no position to continue the advance on T-72s. The T-72s, 125mm main gun splashed short and kicked up a wall of dirt. Indeed SFC Minilix (?) stated: They hit so close we were covered with dirt and had to get out and clean the optics." In seconds they would have us in range and a Bradley was not built for such a hit."

"Again the tanks quickly bound forward. At 2100 meters the inferior T-72 didn't stand a chance against the Abrams' M1A1. The depleted uranium, long rod penetrators from the SABOT round passed through the T-72s like a hot knife through butter. The TOW missiles also had no problem with the range on penetration and counter attack was squelched like a match in a cup of water."

"The battle had come upon us without warning and now it was over, I Troop had walked up upon a dug-in Armor Battalion of the elite Republican Guard. The time of the fight - from 1530 to 1700 was short but intense. The sand storm had worked to our advantage as it concealed our advance and left the enemy seeking shelter from the blowing sand. After we extinguished the OPs, we expected contact, but what and how much was uncertain. The Commander continued the advance of the Troop to clarify the situation. As the engagement began, CPT Miller quickly evaluated the situation. If he halted, he would give the enemy a chance to react and initiate their defense. If he continued to advance, he could find himself committing the Troop to a well defined fire sac. The Troop advance and CPT Miller capitalized on the element of surprise and limited visibility to overwhelm an Armor Battalion that had given us a flank to exploit. The Battalion was oriented to the Southwest and unaware of our advance."

"A cavalry troop does not fight an Armor Battalion by itself. Realistically, this was at least a Squadron fight. But once the troop had committed to the fight there was no way to call for reinforcements or pull out. I Troop had taken a gluttonous bite into the enemy. It was their fight and their fight alone. The bite needed to be devoured quickly and without hesitation, the Troop swallowed it whole."

"The Troop again reconstituted and set the screen line to begin resupply operations. Darkness had fallen quickly and once again the night sky was illuminated by the fires from burning vehicles and bunkers. On occasional secondary explosion blinded the observer. The artillery started again, as the prep began for the forward passage of the rest of VII Corps."

As Captain Miller ordered his men into a defensive position, he awaited the passing of the 11D.

{Next to be written will be 2/1 Aviation LTC John Ward}

Epilogue

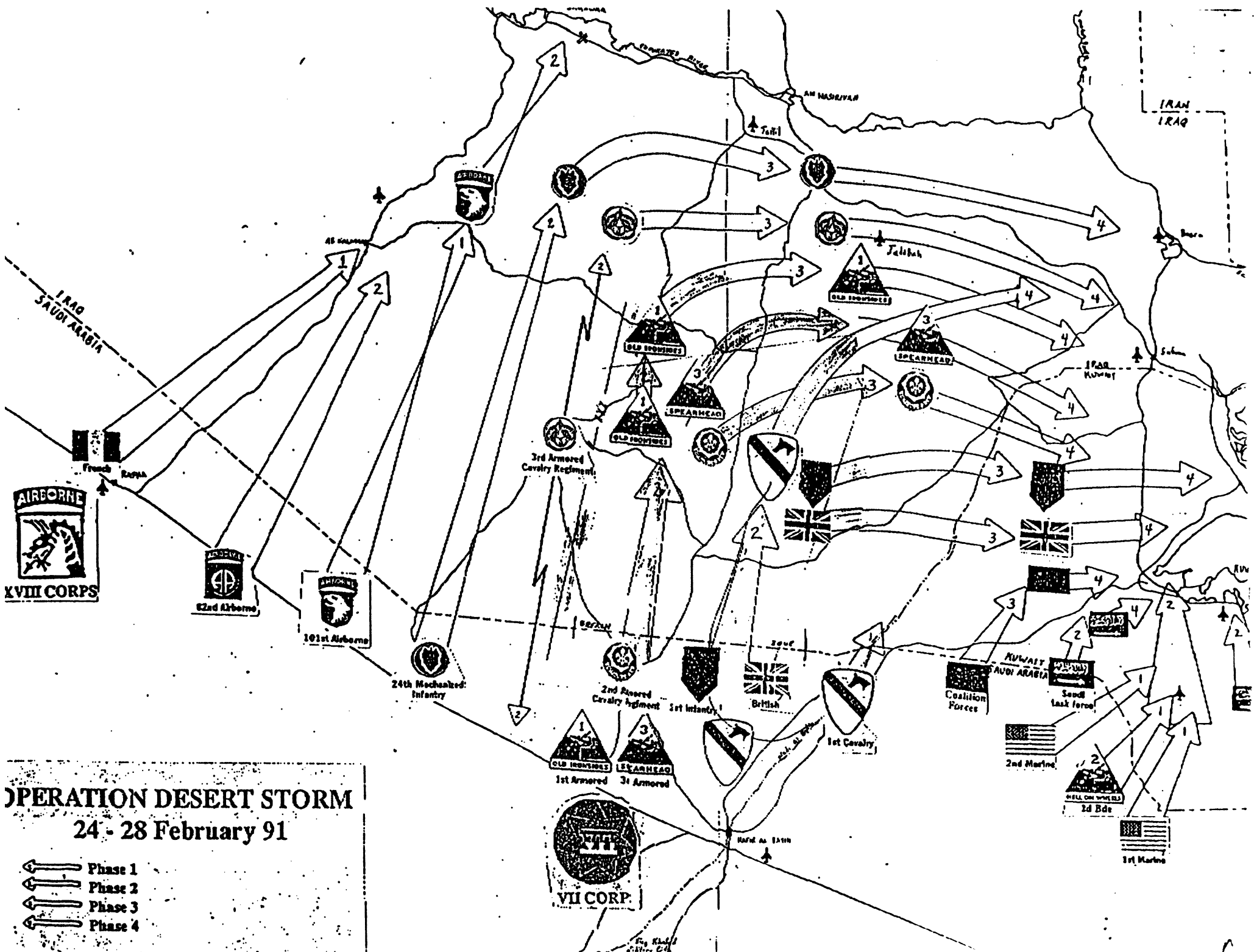
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Methodology

Documentation

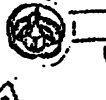
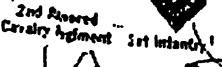
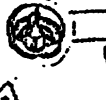
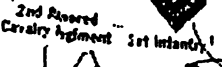
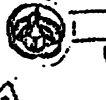
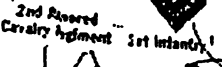
Appendices

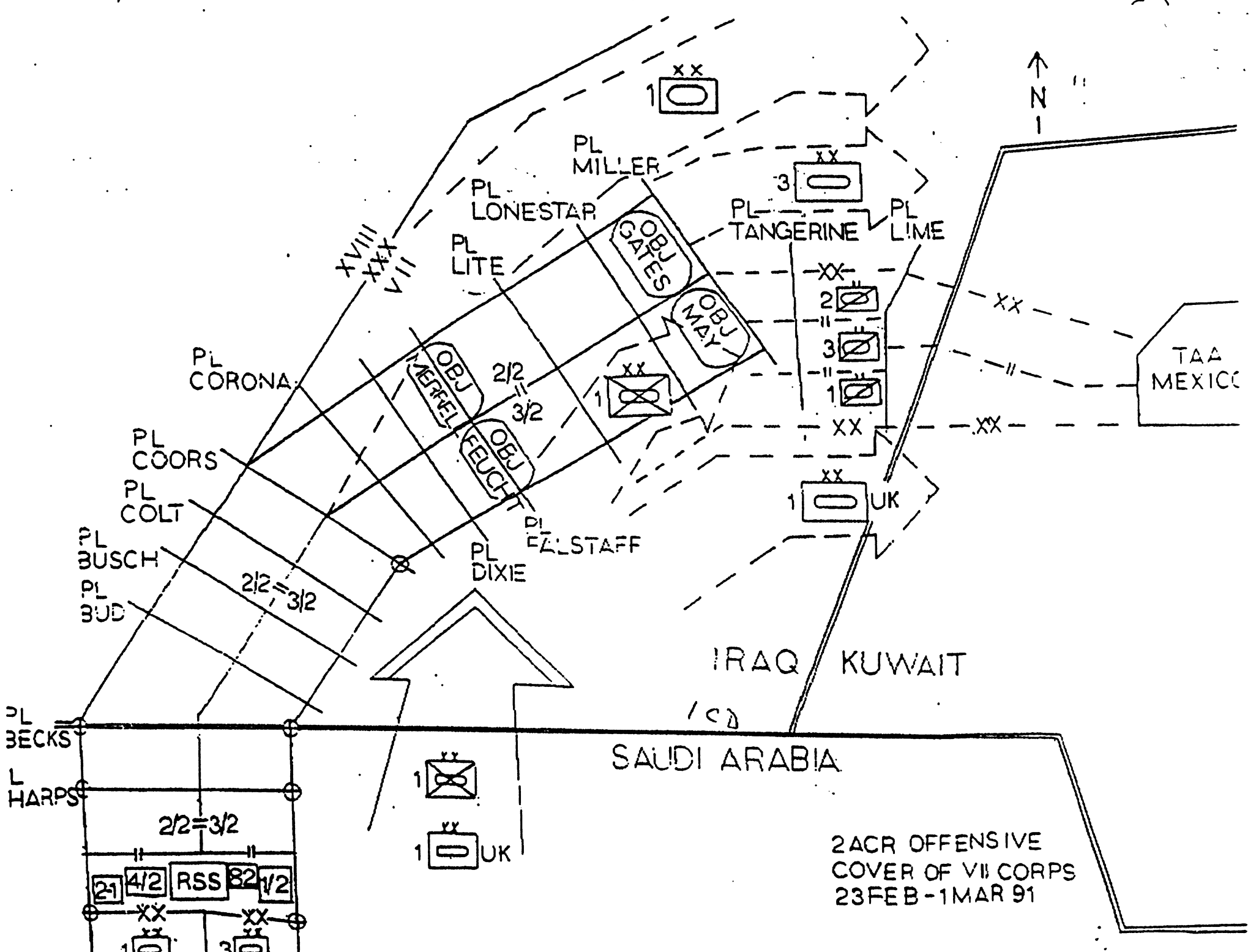
1. Operations Orders
2. 2ACR Log extracts
3. Ghost, Eagle, Iron written AAR
4. Transcribed oral AAR's with Ghost, Eagle, Iron (When available)
5. Organization schema (with Names) of Ghost, Eagle, Iron Troop.



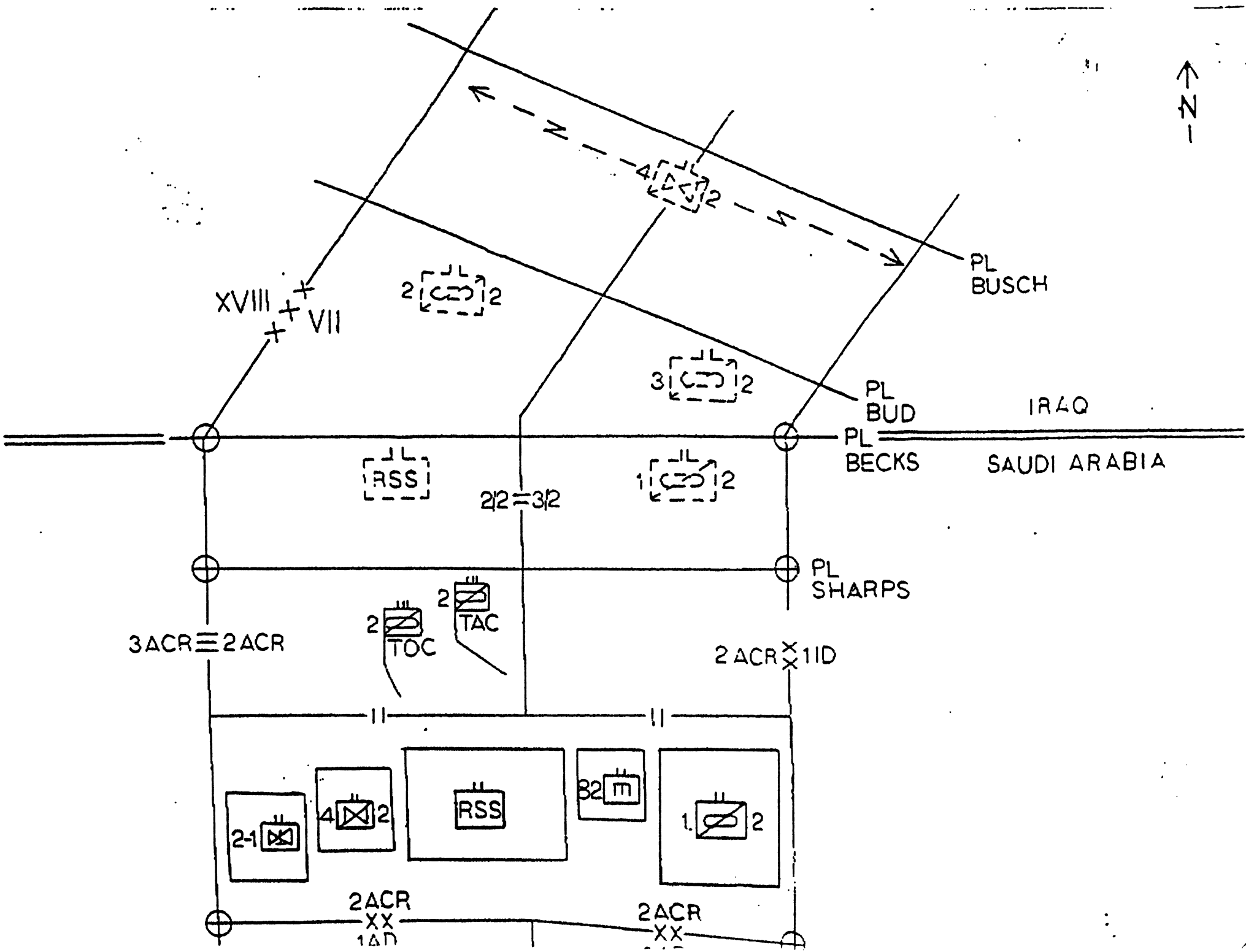
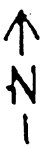
OPERATION DESERT STORM
24 - 28 February 91

- ← Phase 1
- ← Phase 2
- ← Phase 3
- ← Phase 4





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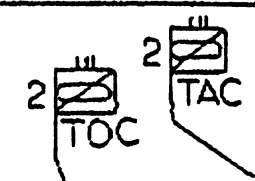
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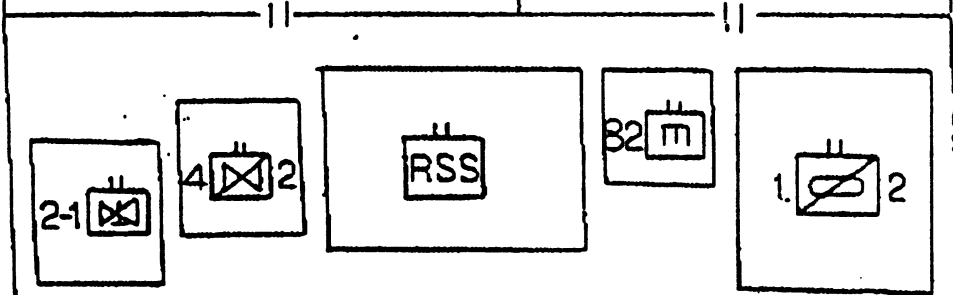
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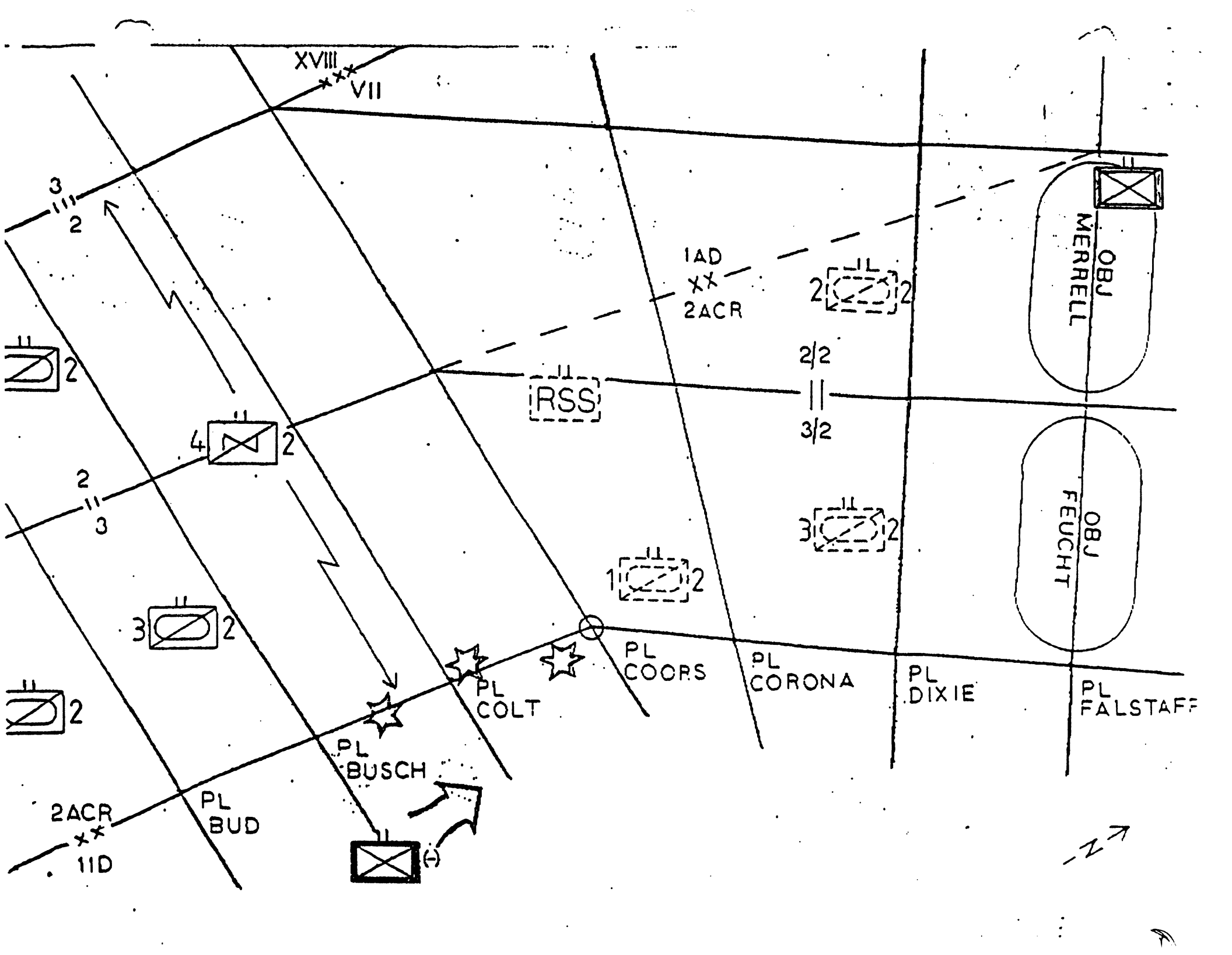


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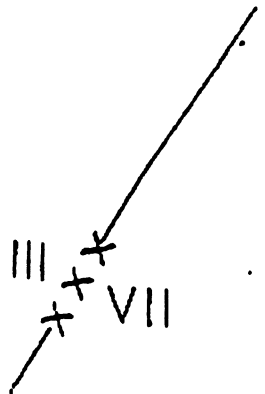


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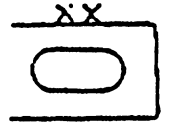
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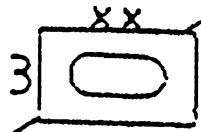
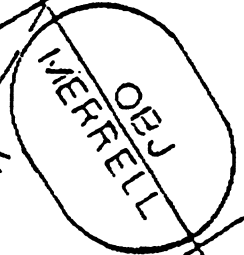
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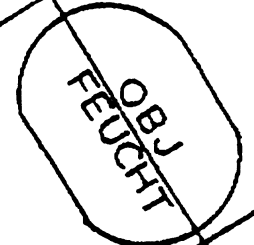
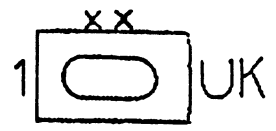


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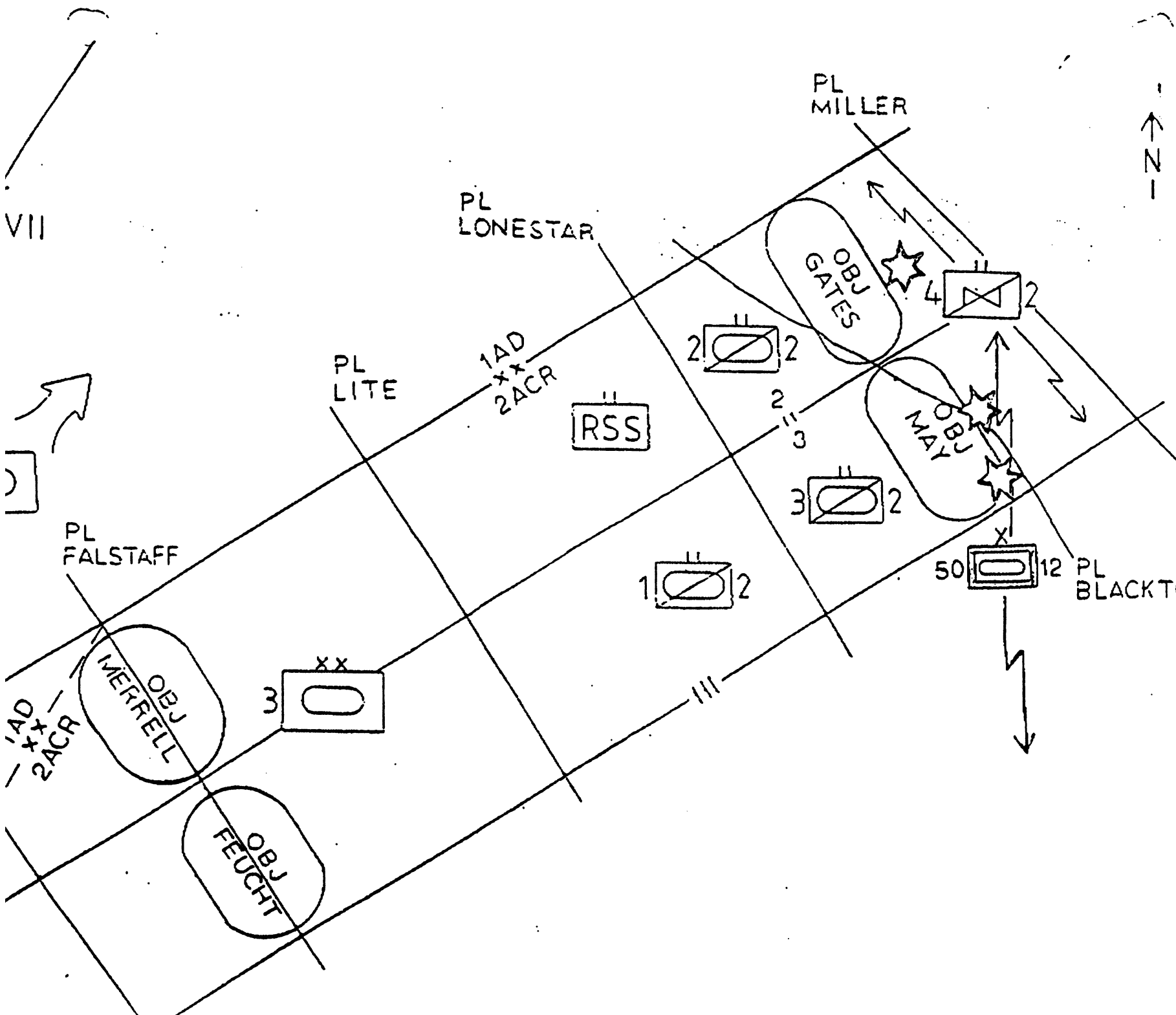


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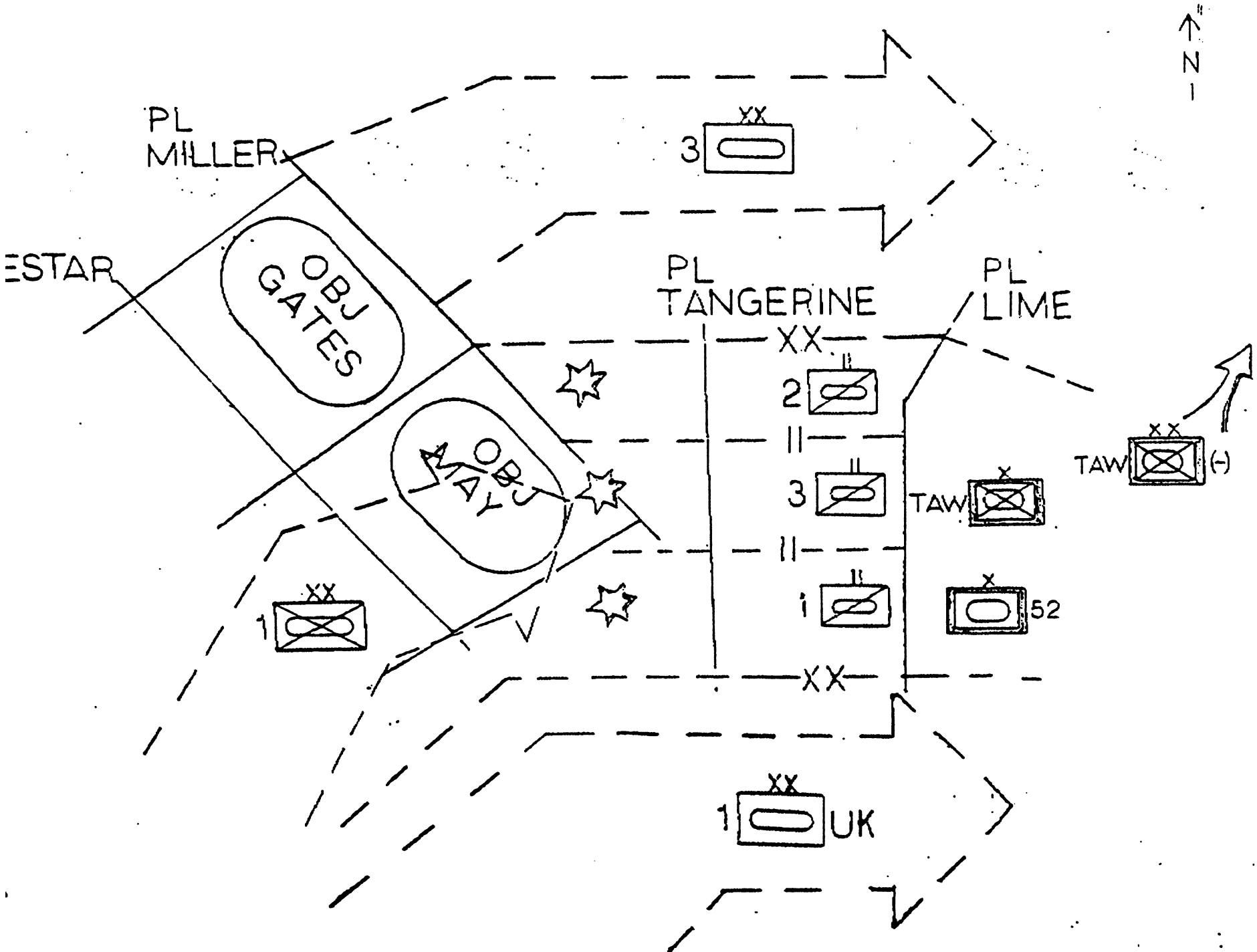
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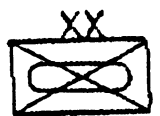
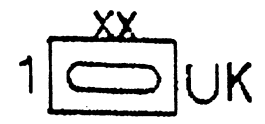
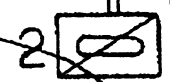
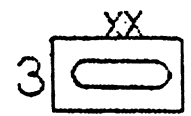
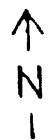
PL MILLER

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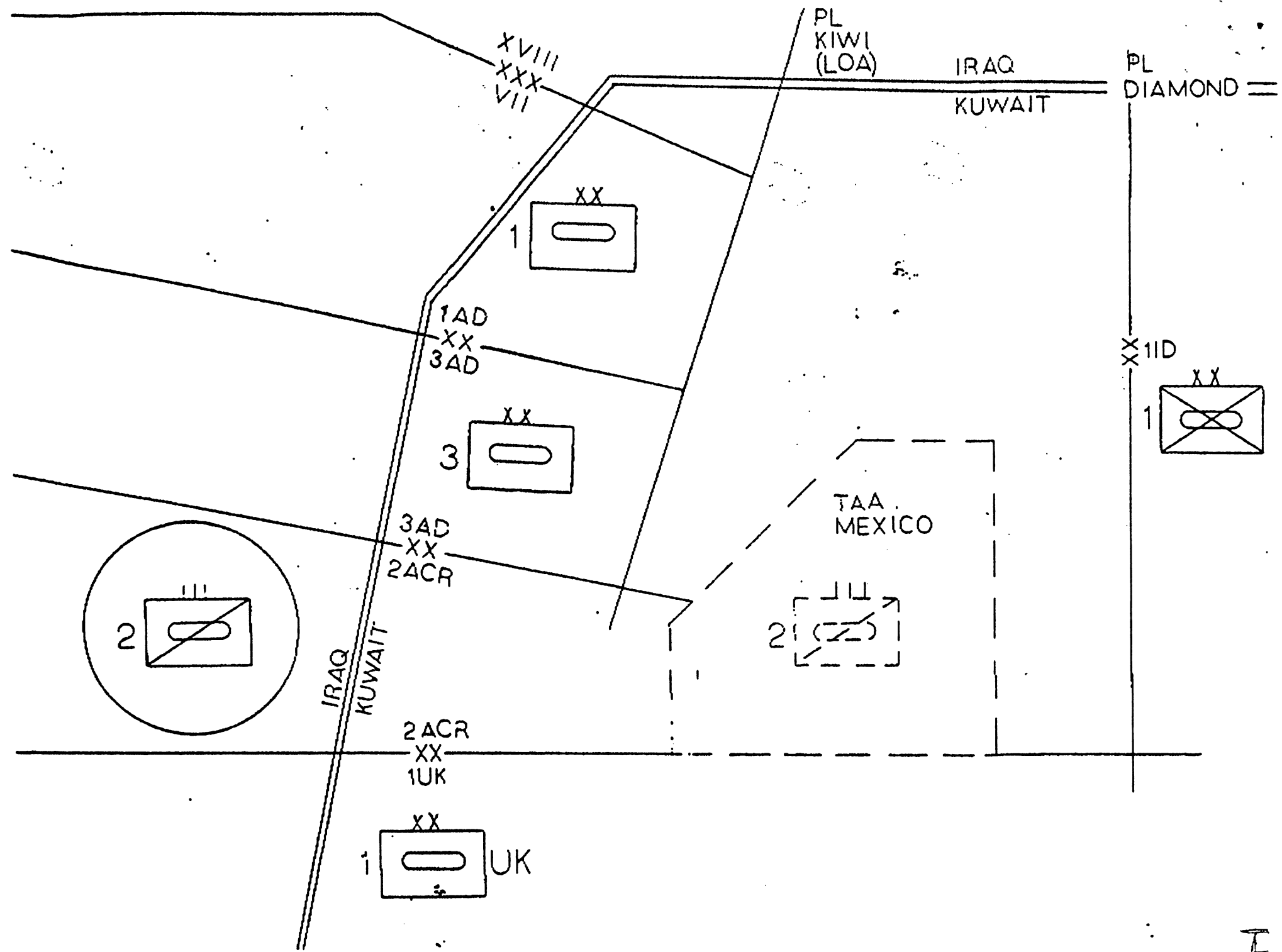
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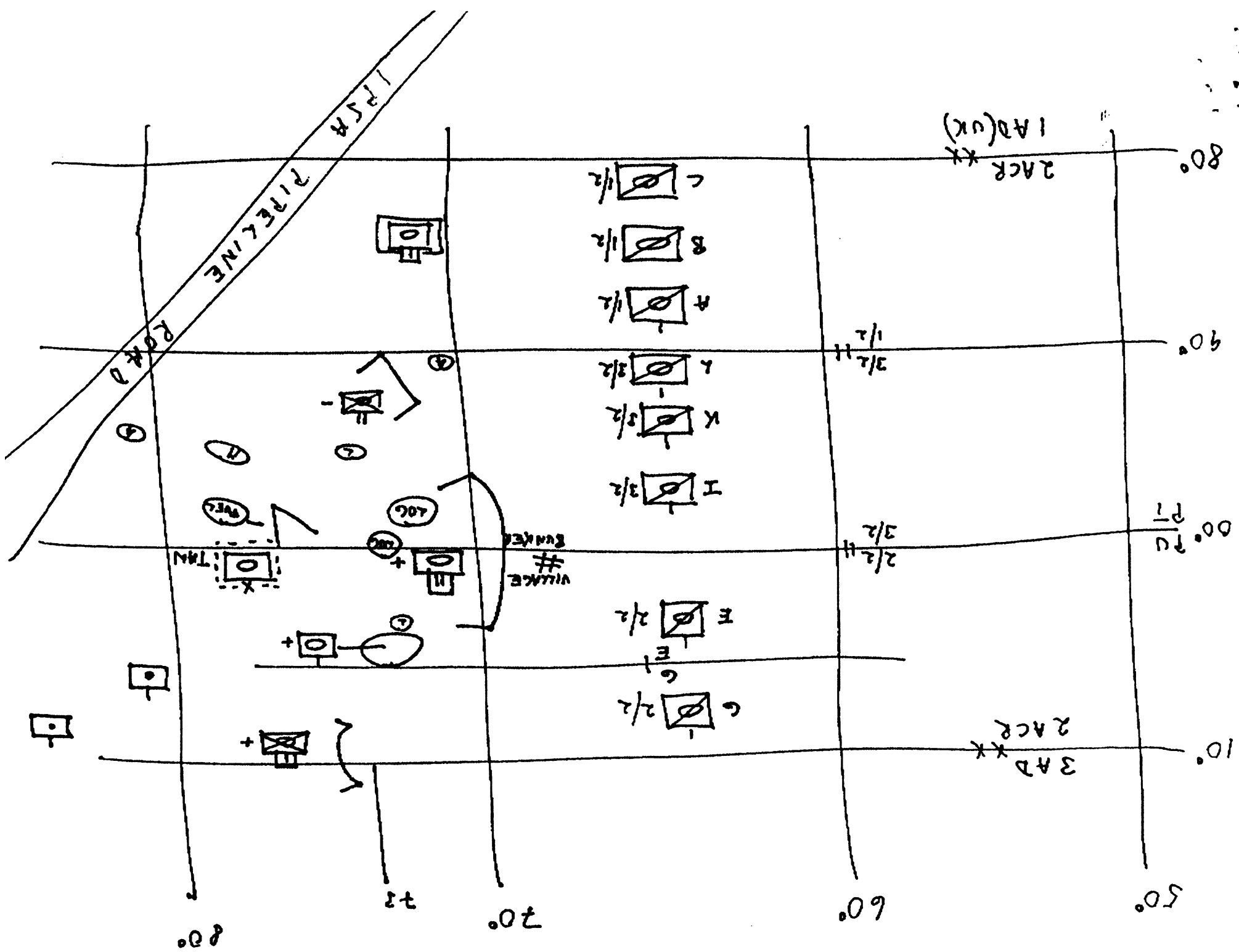
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26 Feb abt 1530

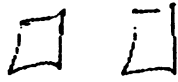
abt 1600

60 EASTING

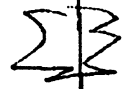
70 EASTING

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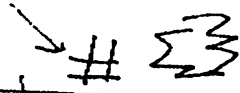
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GHOST



EAGLE →



27 T-72



IRON



IRSA PIRLING
ROAD