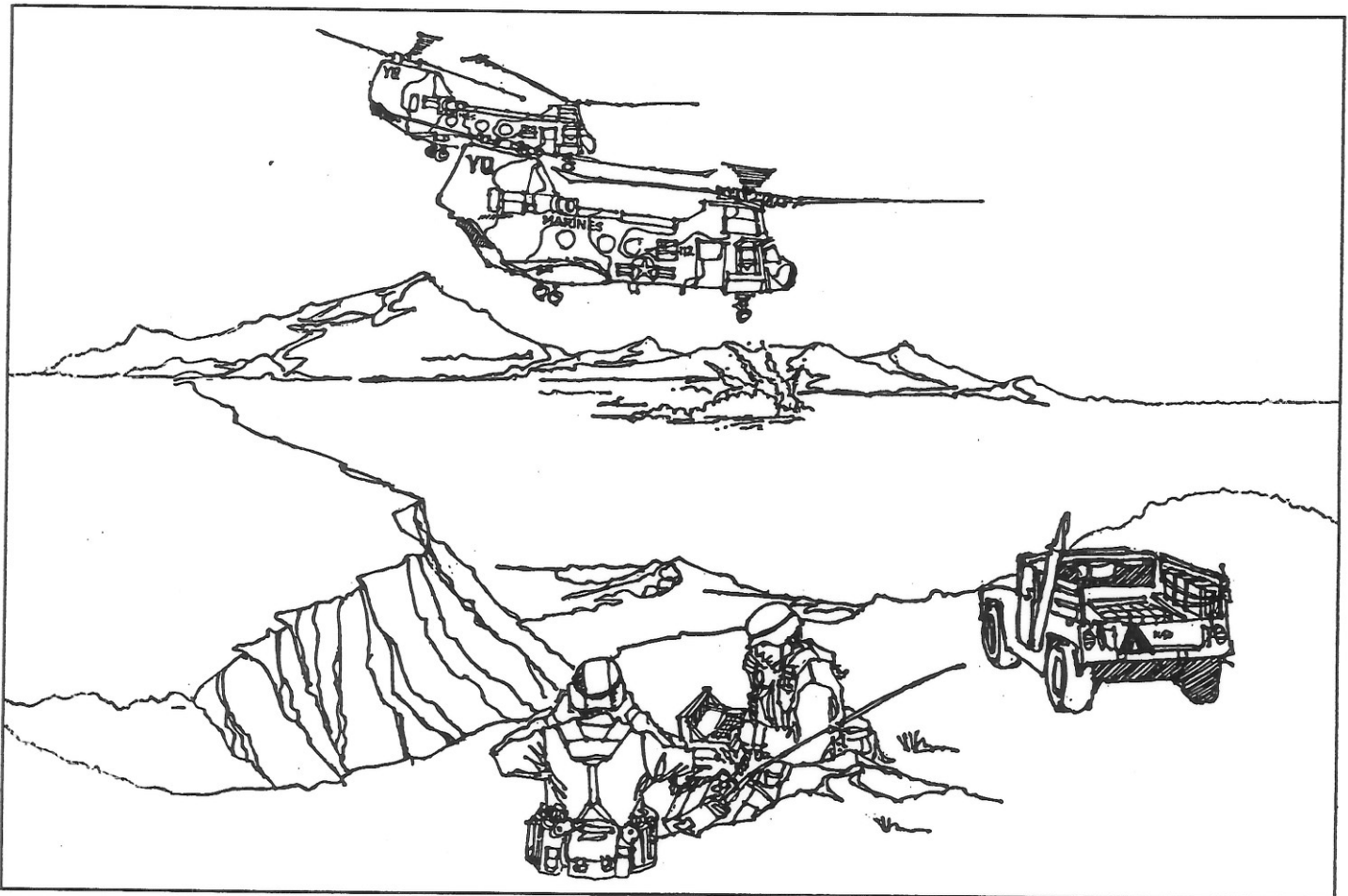

2d Battalion, 5th Marines in DESERT STORM

24 February 1994

A Pocket History



On 2 August, 1990, the Iraqi Army invaded Kuwait. The United States immediately responded by deploying troops to Saudi Arabia as part of a United Nations coalition force. This force was tasked with defeating the Iraqi Army and retaking Kuwait.

2d Battalion, 5th Marines, as part of the 5th MEB, sailed for the Persian Gulf on December 1, 1990. Echo, Fox and H&S Companies embarked at San Diego aboard the *USS Tripoli* (LPH-10). Golf Company, Weapons Company and a detachment of H&S

Company embarked aboard the *USS Tarawa* (LHA-1).

After stopping in Hawaii, the battalion spent New Year's Day 1991 in Subic Bay, Philippines. While in the Philippines, 2/5 conducted a two-day, live-fire exercise at the Green Beach training area and an additional live-fire exercise in the jungle west of Olongapo.

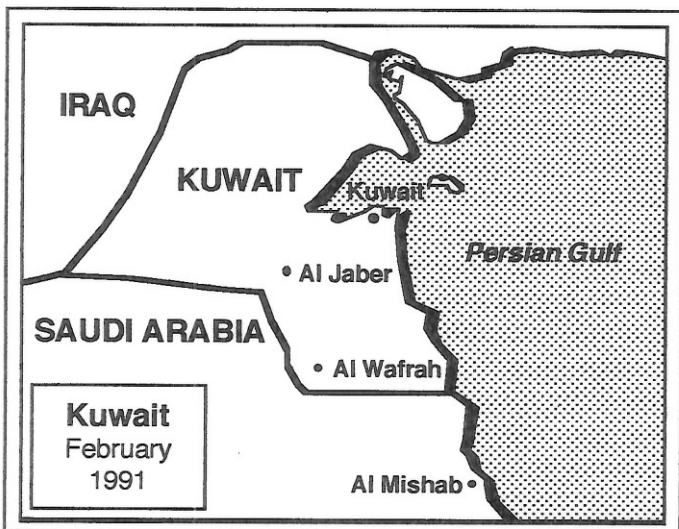
Upon leaving the Philippines, the 5th MEB joined the 4th MEB and the *USS Ranger* (CV-61) Carrier Battle Group to become the largest U.S. flotilla at sea since World War II. The air war against Iraq started on 17 January as the battalion

crossed the Indian Ocean. On the 18th of January, Echo, Fox and H&S(-) Companies moved to the *USS New Orleans* (LPH-11). A detachment of 2/5 Marines stayed on the *Tripoli* as it moved into the Persian Gulf for minesweeping operations.

On 28 January, 2/5 landed in Oman as part of Sea Soldier IV, the largest amphibious landing since Inchon, Korea. Both the 4th MEB and 5th MEB landed in a demonstration of amphibious readiness. Ashore in Oman, 2/5 trained in desert operations. The exercise lasted until 4 February, when 2/5 executed a battalion-sized helicopter lift back aboard amphibious shipping. The battalion passed through the Straits of Hormuz and entered the Persian Gulf during the first week of February.

On February 10, the battalion participated in a SACCEX, a three-day supporting arms exercise in the United Arab Emirates. 2d Battalion, 11th Marines provided the artillery support.

On the 16th, while in port at Al Jabail, Saudi Arabia, a SCUD missile landed in the vicinity of the *Tarawa*. The following day, the *Tripoli* hit a mine at sea, blowing a large hole in its starboard bow. No battalion Marines were injured.



G-Day. The ground war began on February 24, 1991 as the 1st Marine Division attacked into Kuwait and took the Al Jaber airfield.

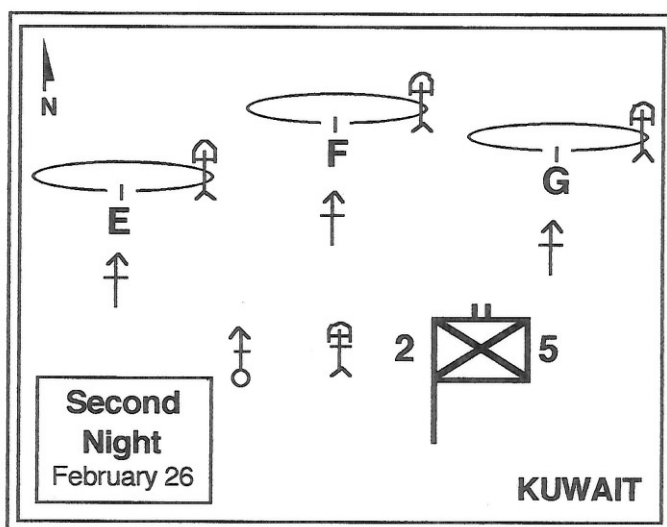
2d Battalion, 5th Marines began landing at Al Mishab, Saudi Arabia on G-Day. The battalion commander, LtCol **K.M. Kennedy**, the command post, and 1st Platoon, Echo Company flew in before dark. The Heavy Machine Gun

Platoon, under 1stLt K.M. Eisgruber and Platoon Sgt K.C. Lukeman, came ashore in LCUs across the beach. LtCol Kennedy and the Heavy Machine Gun Platoon immediately moved inland to coordinate the battalion's route and mission.

On G+1, 25 February, the command post and BAS moved out under the battalion XO, Maj M. Wisloski. This convoy drove west all day and linked up with LtCol Kennedy.

The remainder of the battalion landed during the day. Echo Company flew ashore in the morning. Fox and Golf Companies came ashore later. The Anti-Armor Platoon, under 2dLt B.B. McBreen flew into the assembly area in helicopters and immediately attached one section to each rifle company. The 81mm Mortar Platoon, under 1stLt F. Connor, and the remainder of the battalion vehicles came ashore in LCUs in the afternoon. That evening, the battalion loaded into five-ton trucks and moved into Saudi Arabia. The convoy traveled west all night long.

G+2, 26 February. In the morning, after an eighteen-hour drive, the battalion linked up in an assembly area just south of the Kuwaiti border. The convoy refueled. Before noon, the first elements of the battalion moved north through the earthen berm border, and into Kuwait. The column passed through two belts of minefields and into the Kuwaiti desert. In the minefield, a destroyed D-9 bulldozer lay wrecked as evidence of the danger of the minefield. Enemy mines were visible through the wind blown sand and fires burned on the horizon.



In the afternoon, the battalion dug into a defensive position oriented north. Each company was reinforced with Dragons and had a Heavy

Machine Gun section in direct support. The 81mm Mortar Platoon was positioned in general support of the battalion. 2/11 moved in on the battalion's right flank. An LAV unit moved up behind the position. It rained that night on the battalion positions.

That night, 3d Platoon, Echo Company, under 2dLt J.D. Davis, reinforced with an assault team and a squad of machineguns, along with LAVs, HMGs, and the 81mm Mortar Platoon, executed a 26 kilometer combat patrol southeast toward the Al Wafra oil complex in order to find two tanks and 20 Iraqis reportedly trying to surrender. In the fog, cold, and rain, travel was difficult, and visibility extremely poor. After leaving at 2200, the last units did not get back into position until 0500. No Iraqi soldiers were found.

G+3, 27 February. At 0800, after refueling the vehicles, the Heavy Machine Gun Platoon again led the battalion toward the northeast. On the horizon, a cloud of inky black smoke, created by the burning oil fields of Kuwait, was visible. At 1400, the convoy drove into complete darkness.

The battalion moved north in the darkness, passing through a huge 1st Marine Division convoy. A traffic jam of 1st Marine Division units was caused at a traffic circle just short of the airport when the division CP passed across the battalion's front toward the east.

2/5 arrived at the Al Jaber airport at dusk. 3d Battalion, 7th Marines held the airport, 1st Battalion, 25th Marines held the prisoner of war compound in the airport. The airport was completely destroyed. Rubble and unexploded ordnance lay everywhere, along with abandoned Iraqi vehicles, weapons and equipment. The battalion occupied a portion of the airfield that night.

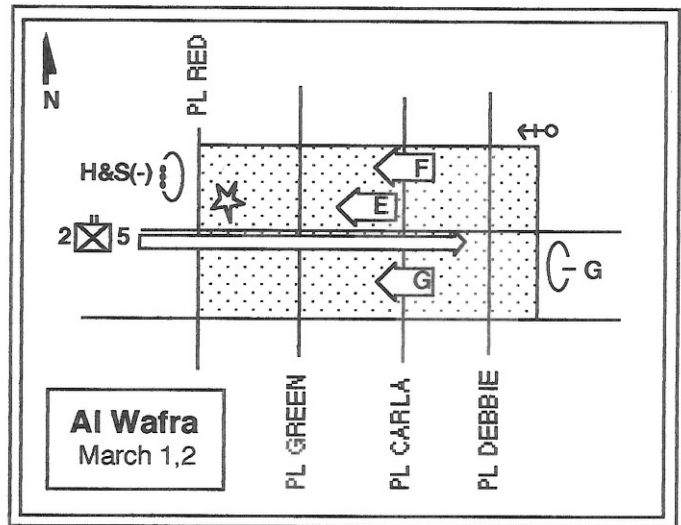
At 0400 on G+4, 28 February 1991, the cease fire went into effect. At the airport, the battalion combed the area. Marines found dug-in trenches full of ammunition, maps, and weapons. Craters pocked the runways. The battalion found four MTLBs, two T-55s, one T-72, and Chinese Type 531 APCs. The Heavy Machine Gun Platoon raised a U.S. flag over a bombed-out aircraft bunker.

That afternoon, 2/5 was ordered to attack southwest in order to clear the Al Wafra cultivated area of any remaining Iraqi forces. At 1400, the CO and the Heavy Machine Gun

Platoon moved out to recon the route for this new mission.

Before evening, the battalion followed the command group to the Assembly Area. The CO gave the attack order at midnight in the headlights of a HMMWV.

Hours later, before dawn on March 1, 2/5 moved out from the assembly area with LAI and the Heavy Machine Gun Platoon in the lead followed by Echo Company. The convoy crossed the line of departure at 1100 attacking southeast toward Al Wafra. Passing abandoned artillery positions, wrecked vehicles, and oil wells, the battalion came to the Al Wafra transfer station.



Late in the afternoon, 2d Section, 81mm Mortar Platoon set up at the west end of the cultivated area to support the movement of the battalion. 2/5 moved completely through the forest from west to east. All battalion units slept in positions at the east end of the forest that night. Echo Company set in a company defensive position oriented south, and patrolled out to 600m from their positions. Two cobra gunships from HMA-773 landed that night inside the battalion lines in order to provide twenty-four hour air support.

In the morning of the 2d, Echo and Fox Companies swept the forest from east to west. 81mm Mortar Platoon supported this action by setting up at the northeast corner of the forest. Echo Company's 60mm mortars supported their movement from the main road. The companies cleared the area, moving from house to house and farm to farm, marking all unexploded ordnance and mines. The smell of dead animals permeated the entire forest. A blocking position at the west end of the forest was formed by two security platoons from H&S Company, one under Marine

Gunner J.J. Hill. Golf Company moved from a blocking position at the east end of the forest to sweep through the forest in trace of the battalion. 2/5 moved from Phase Line DEBBIE to CARLA, then GREEN and finally RED.

At the west end of the forest, 2d Platoon, Echo Company, received a burst of green tracer fire from a brick house. As the company reacted, 2d Section, 81mm Mortar Platoon fired an immediate illumination mission. Two cobra gunships, one flown by 1stLt J.K. Hall, shot up the building with guns and rockets, and received return fire.

The company sweep linked up with the blocking position at dusk. A Huey Psychological Operations bird played music and appeals for the Iraqis to surrender.

Later that night, H&S and Weapons moved to support 3/5s attack on 3 March.

3 March, 1991 was the 2/5's last day in Kuwait. With 2/5's 81mm Mortar Platoon in support, 3d Battalion, 5th Marines attacked an oil facility and Loran station. MG Hill's platoon secured an unoccupied hill in the morning and found enemy bunkers full of grenades, RPG rounds and light machine guns. They observed 2/11's fire on a police station until noon.

As the clearing operation was completed, a Marine from LAI walked into a minefield and stepped on a mine. The Motor Transport Officer, 2dLt B.S. McCaw, drove straight into the minefield and pulled the injured man out.

The battalion then regrouped to move out. As the battalion drove south out of Al Wafra, dead camels, horses and chickens littered the farmland roads south to the border.

With the Heavy Machine Gun Platoon marking the route, the battalion moved through the minefields and across the border into Saudi Arabia. The battalion assembled, collected ammunition, and cooked chow over bonfires made of MRE cartons. For 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, the Gulf War was over.

The next day, March 4, 2/5 moved to Ras Al Mishab, the same port where the battalion had landed eight days earlier. Mail was delivered and the Marines played touch football.

Golf and Weapons Company immediately reembarked aboard the *USS Tarawa*. After three weeks of living in a tent camp, Echo, Fox, and H&S Companies reembarked aboard the *USS Juneau* (LPD-10) on March 22. Fox, and some of H&S company moved on the following day to

the *USS Vancouver*. 2/5 started the long voyage home.

For service during Operation Desert Storm, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines was awarded the Combat Action Ribbon, the Navy Unit Commendation, the Kuwaiti Liberation Medal, and the South West Asia Service Medal with three stars.

Contributors

Special thanks to the following 2/5 Marines who participated in Desert Storm and contributed to this monograph:

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