



B Company, 8th Tank Battalion, at a bridge crossing as RCT-5 moves toward Baghdad.



TOW/Scout Platoon, 8th Tank Battalion attached to 2d Tank Battalion supporting RCT-5. These Marines destroyed numerous Iraqi military vehicles and armor in this village south of Baghdad.

Company B and TOW/Scout Platoon, 8th Tank Battalion

Upon activation, Company B, 8th Tank Battalion from Syracuse, New York, and the TOW/Scout Platoon, 8th Tank Battalion from Hialeah, Florida, went to Camp

TOW/Scout Platoon from 8th Tank Battalion supporting RCT-5 in the attack around Baghdad.

RCT-5 moves north through a sandstorm.





Elements of the 2d Tank Battalion move north to secure the southeastern approach to Baghdad.

Lejeune, North Carolina, and served with the 2d Tank Battalion. Company B, 8th Tank Battalion, became an additional tank company while the TOW/Scout Platoon, 8th Tank Battalion, integrated with the TOW/Scout sections of the 2d Tank Battalion. As soon as Company B, 8th Tank Battalion, joined the 2d Tank Battalion, the unit became Company D, 2d Tank Battalion. When 2d Tank



Battalion deployed to Kuwait, it attached to RCT-5 as the 1st Marine Division prepared for combat operations.

When combat operations commenced, RCT-5 crossed the Iraqi border and attacked toward the Rumaylah oilfields. After securing the oilfields, Company D, 2d Tank Battalion, processed numerous enemy prisoners of war. Regimental Combat Team 5 swiftly moved

A Soviet-made Iraqi T-62 tank is destroyed by the lead element of the 2d Tank Battalion just south of Baghdad.





TOW/Scout Platoon, 8th Tank Battalion, and the 2d Tank Battalion in herringbone formation with helicopter support on the road to Baghdad.

along Highway 1 past Ad Diwaniyah and encountered significant enemy resistance near An Numaniyah in early April. Entering An Numaniyah, Company D, 2d Tank Battalion, crossed the Tigris River and came under heavy enemy fire from many dug in emplacements and buildings. Once across the river, the company continued north on Highway 6 and consolidated at the intersection of Highway 6 and Highway 27. The company was oriented to the south to prevent any enemy advance from the Al Kut area.

Fighting intensified as RCT-5 moved toward Al

Aziziyah on 2 and 3 April. Company D, 2d Tank Battalion, engaged numerous bunkers, machine gun emplacements, and armored vehicles, which were pockets of bypassed resistance. The 2d Tank Battalion successfully neutralized an Iraqi ambush site and was relieved in place by RCT-1, allowing the battalion to move north toward Baghdad.

On 4 April, the 2d Tank Battalion came upon an enemy ambush near the town of At Tuwayhah as the TOW/Scout Platoon, which was the lead element of the battalion along Highway 6, encountered heavy fire. In



The 2d Tank Battalion provides support outside one of Saddam's Palace. Company B, 8th Tank Battalion, intergrated into 2d Tank Battalion and re-designated as Company D, 2d Tank Battalion.

Marines from Company B, 8th Tank Battalion, next to roadside sign in Iraq.



this battle, the TOW/Scout Platoon made an integral contribution to the efforts of 2d Tank Battalion by establishing a blocking position and denying the Iraqi Army's Al-Nida Division (a Republican Guard unit) the ability to reinforce Baghdad. In the heavy fighting around At Tuwayhah, the 2d Tank Battalion battled not only the Al-Nida Division, but also irregu-





Marines provide fire support in Operation Iraqi Freedom.



A destroyed Iraqi vehicle after encountering RCT-5.

lar forces wearing black uniforms. The composition of the irregular forces included foreign fighters from Syria, Egypt, Yemen, Lebanon, and the Sudan.

As RCT-5 moved into Baghdad, Company D, 2d Tank Battalion, conducted urban combat operations with 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, and 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. During these missions, the company came under heavy

small arms fire and rocket-propelled grenade attacks from the Iraqis. The unit successfully maneuvered into Baghdad as 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, occupied the Presidential Palace. By the middle of April, Company D, 2d Tank Battalion attached to 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, and moved north to Samarra and Tikrit. However, the

The Marine infantry and armor team clearing positions of Iraqi resistance.



RCT-2 lining up in Camp Shoup at an assembly area prior to movement into Iraq.





towns did not require the presence of these units, so they moved south toward the city of Samawah.

During the drive to Samawah, the units' tanks began showing the effects of the 1,056-mile movement from Kuwait. The maintenance teams and tank recovery crews did an outstanding job of keeping the tanks rolling while dealing with numerous track and suspension problems. The company remained attached to 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, until 29 April, when they rejoined the 2d Tank Battalion and began movement to Kuwait.

Company D and the TOW/Scout Platoon, 4th Tank Battalion

Company D, 4th Tank Battalion, from Riverside, California, and the TOW/Scout Platoon, 4th Tank

Battalion, from Amarillo, Texas, were activated in January 2003 and integrated into 1st Tank Battalion. The battalion's personnel, tanks, vehicles, and equipment were split between the active duty companies in 1st Tank Battalion. As the 1st Marine Division prepared for combat operations, the 1st Tank Battalion provided the armor strength for RCT-7.

When 1st Marine Division began the offensive into Iraq, RCT-7 maneuvered west of Safwan and attacked north toward Basrah with objective of seizing the gas oil separation plant at Az Zubayer. The pumping station at Az Zubayer was critical due to its ability to pump oil into the Persian Gulf and create an environmental danger.

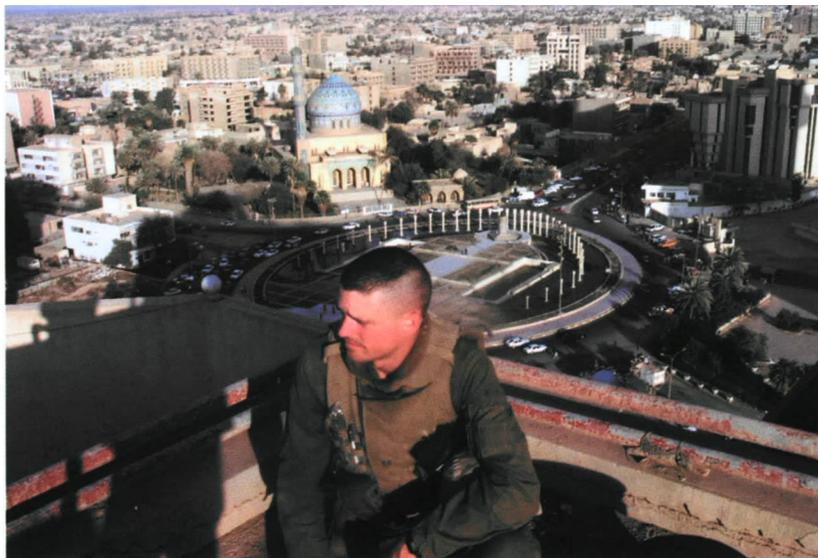
A destroyed Iraqi tank along I MEF's march north.





Marines from Company D, 4th Tank Battalion, serving with 1st Tank Battalion in central Baghdad. An Iraq ministry building is burning in the background.

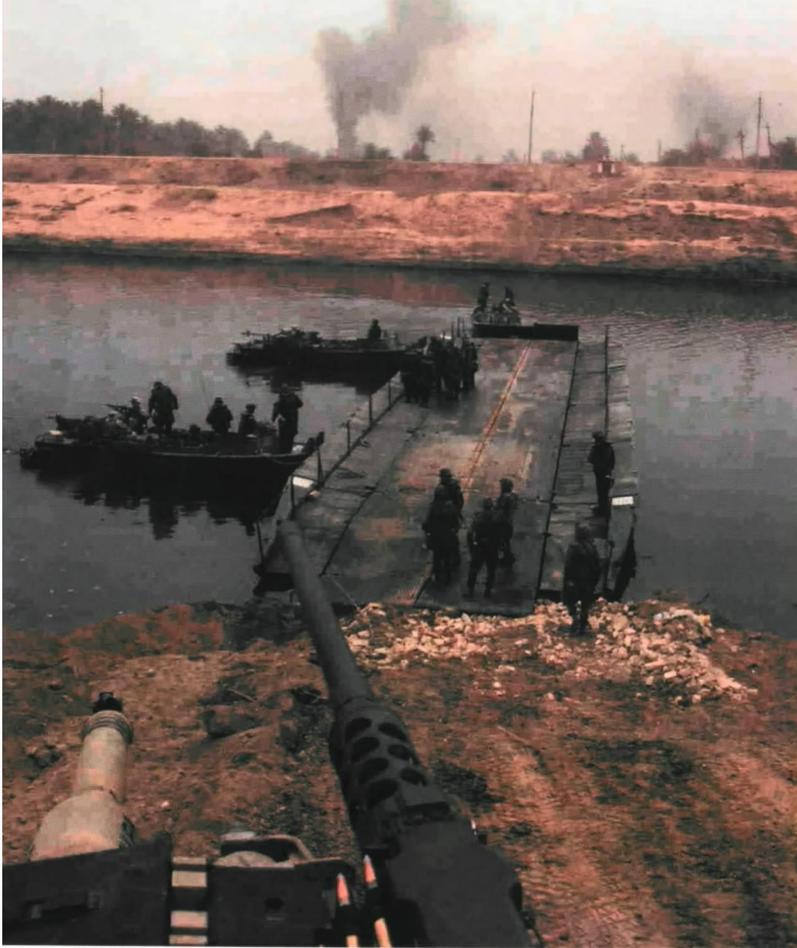
Capt Edward Oglesby from Company D, 4th Tank Battalion, looks out from the roof of the Palestine Hotel overlooking the circle where Saddam Hussein's statue was removed days earlier.



Marines from Company D, 4th Tank Battalion, after the attack near Al Kut.

With 1st Tank Battalion leading the attack, RCT-7 quickly seized the pumping station at Az Zubayer and the Marines from Company D and the TOW/Scout Platoon, 4th Tank Battalion, contributed to the destruction of four Iraqi tanks, 10 armored personnel carriers, three trucks, and three artillery pieces along the way.

Regimental Combat Team 7 continued pressing the attack to Basrah, encountering resistance from elements of the Iraqi 51st Division. The 1st Tank Battalion moved toward the Basrah International Airport and swiftly defeated enemy defensive positions. On 23 March, the United Kingdom's 1st Armored Division relieved RCT-7 in Basrah and RCT-7 moved west along Highway 1 to Ad Diwaniyah. The Marines from Company D and the TOW/Scout Platoon, 4th Tank Battalion, worked closely



A tank crew member's view as 1st Tank Battalion prepares to cross the Diyala River on the southern outskirts of Baghdad.

with elements of RCT-7 in a vital link-up along Highway 17 between RCT-7, moving east of Ad Diwaniyah, and RCT-1, moving west of Qal'at Sukkar.

As RCT-7 moved back north past Ad Diwaniyah, resistance increased with both Iraqi regular troops and irregulars contesting the movement between An Numaniyah and Al Kut. During this period, the 1st Tank Battalion participated in numerous engagements. After crossing the Tigris River, RCT-7 quickly moved into



Iraqi Free Rocket over Ground (FROG) missiles are seen parked on the road interchange near Babylon as Marines from Company D, 4th Tank Battalion, move toward Ad Diwaniyah.

Baghdad and the 1st Tank Battalion served an essential role in clearing neighborhoods throughout the city, especially near the Palestine Hotel. Once again, the Marines from Company D and the TOW/Scout Platoon were extensively involved in these operations until late April, when elements of 1st Tank Battalion moved south to Karbala. After completing their mission, Company D and the TOW/Scout Platoon returned to California with the 1st Tank Battalion in June 2003.

4th Light Armor Reconnaissance Battalion

In early 2003, the 4th Light Armor Reconnaissance Battalion was mobilized and served extensively throughout the 1st Marine Division in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Prior to crossing the line of departure, Companies A and B were attached to the 1st and 3d Light Armor Reconnaissance Battalions respectively. Company A

served with the 1st Light Armor Reconnaissance Battalion, which was attached to RCT-5 from February to June 2003. Company B served with the 3d Light Armor Reconnaissance Battalion, which was attached to RCT-7 from February to June 2003. Both the 1st and 3d Light Armor Reconnaissance Battalions served vital roles in the combat operations from the South Rumaylah oilfields to Baghdad.

While Companies A and B were involved in supporting their respective regimental combat teams along the route of movement by the 1st Marine Division, the remainder of the 4th Light Armor Reconnaissance, which consisted of Headquarters and Service Company and Companies C and D, conducted security and screening operations in support of Task Force Tarawa in the city of Al Kut in the Wassit Province and along the Iranian border.



Sunset at Camp Babylon, October 2003.

Marines from Company A, 8th Tank Battalion, after capturing an Iraqi indoctrination site on the north side of An Nasiriyah.

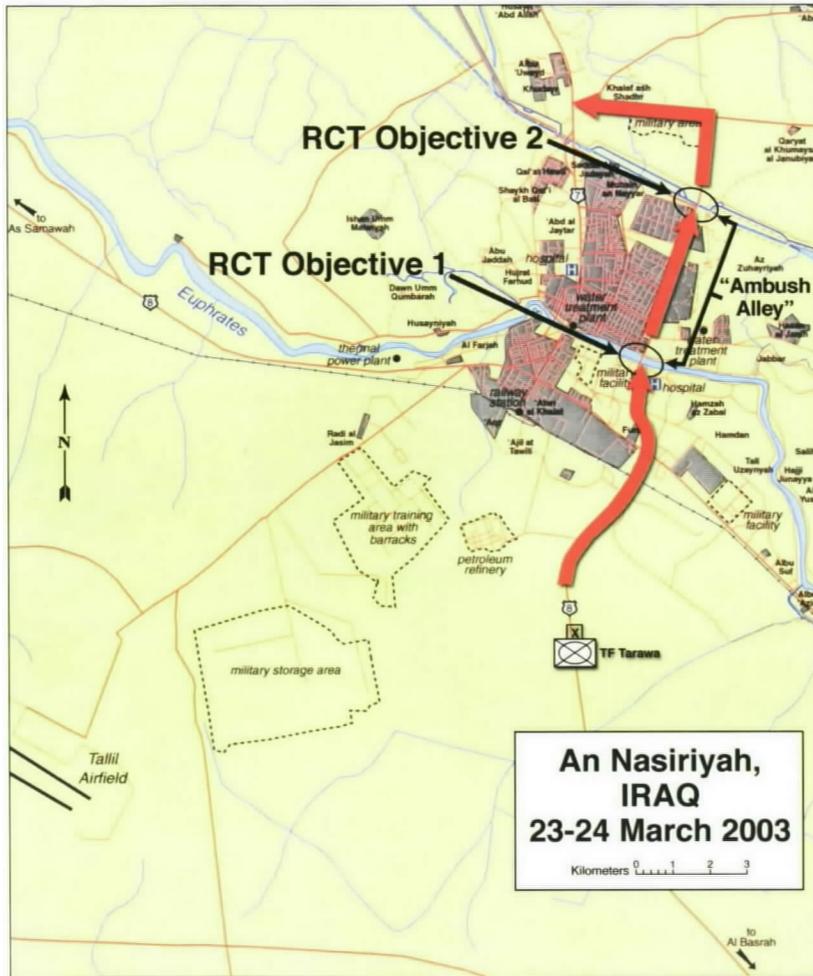
Marines from Task Force Scorpion on patrol in light armored vehicles, August 2003.



Company A, 8th Tank Battalion

Company A, 8th Tank Battalion, from Fort Knox, Kentucky, was activated in January 2003 and moved to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. It was assigned as an additional maneuver company for 1st Battalion, 2d Marines. The 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, was part of RCT-2, which served as the ground combat element of the 2d MEB (also known as Task Force Tarawa). Company A, 8th Tank Battalion, received wheeled and tracked vehicles from 2d Tank Battalion and completed embarkation aboard amphibious shipping on 15 January as the 2d MEB sailed to Kuwait.

Company A made effective use of the transit time, conducting tactics classes, tank maintenance, and preparing for potential missions. The Marines spent considerable time in gunnery classes and studying military opera-



Company A, 8th Tank Battalion, serving with Task Force Tarawa, getting ready to move forward into Iraq.



1stSgt Roger D. Huddleston supervising the resupply of Company A, 8th Tank Battalion.





Marine armor moving south through An Nasiriyah toward Jalibah airfield.

tions in urban terrain. Specific emphasis was placed in analyzing attack plans for the city of An Nasiriyah, with special emphasis on the eastern bridges of the city and the route through the city, which was nicknamed “Ambush Alley” because of its fortified bunkers and narrow streets.

In mid-February, the company arrived in Kuwait and continued to perform maintenance on vehicles and equipment and planning with 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, for combat operations. During this period, the company was split into Team Tank and Team Mechanized.*

On 20 March 2003, RCT-2 moved across the Iraqi

* The combat team designation is based on the composition of the force. Team Tank is a concept whereby a force is composed of tanks and mechanized vehicles such as the amphibious assault vehicle. However, this force will generally have a larger number of tanks than mechanized vehicles. Conversely, Team Mechanized is a force composed primarily of mechanized vehicles with a fewer number of tanks. In summary, a force that has a mix of tanks and mechanized vehicles is given its designation based on which weapon system is in larger numbers within the force.



Three M1A1 tanks from Company A, 8th Tank Battalion, in Al Kut.

border, traveling past the Jalibah airfield into a blocking position on Highway 7 south of An Nasiriyah. On 23 March 2003, Team Tank of 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, received small arms and mortar fire moving north along Highway 7 on the outskirts of An Nasiriyah. After neutralizing the enemy attack, Team Tank came upon two badly damaged vehicles from the U.S. Army’s 507th Maintenance Company. The 507th Maintenance Company had inadvertently driven into An Nasiriyah and was ambushed by the Iraqis prior to the arrival of RCT-2. The Iraqis had killed or taken prisoner several soldiers from the 507th Maintenance Company, including Army Private First Class Jessica Lynch. Team Tank continued north destroying Iraqi troops and tanks along the way while rescuing the remaining wounded of the 507th Maintenance Company.