



*Providing security from the air.*

*KC-130 Hercules (like the one below) and AV-8B Harriers (like the one to the right) provided critical air and logistics support for Marines and coalition forces in the drive toward Baghdad.*



Aircraft Wing (4th MAW) provided support for Operation Iraqi Freedom: Coalition/Joint Force Air Component Commander Liaison Cell, Marine Aircraft Group 42 (MAG-42), Marine Air Control Group 48 (MACG-48), Marine Aerial Refueling Squadrons 234 and 452 (VMGR-234), (VMGR-452), and Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 772 (HMH-772).

*Gen William L. Nyland (right), Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, meets with LtCol Thomas F. Dietrich, the commanding officer of VMGR-234, during Operation Iraqi Freedom.*





*Gen William L. Nyland, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, speaks to the Marines.*

## *Coalition/Joint Force Air Component Commander Liaison Cell*

The only dedicated Marine Corps Coalition/Joint Force Air Component Commander Liaison Cell is assigned to the 4th MAW Headquarters and is staffed

*A Marine AH-1W Cobra helicopter enroute to its mission in Operation Iraqi Freedom takes on fuel at a forward arming and refueling point.*



with reserve Marines. This cell is tasked with providing liaison officers and an air operations center augmentation staff with expertise in Marine aircraft, the Marine air command and control system, coalition/joint operations command and control, and the hardware and software associated with those systems. In January 2003, the Coalition/Joint Force Air Component Commander Liaison Cell was activated and deployed to the Coalition Air Operations Center at the Prince Sultan Air Base in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This cell provided the expertise that ensured proper coordination between the 3d MAW's tactical air command center and the other coun-



*CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters served an integral role in providing logistics support for I MEF.*

tries represented in the Coalition Air Operations Center. The Coalition/Joint Force Air Component Commander Liaison Cell initially performed duties in support of Operations Southern Watch and Enduring Freedom, but rapidly transitioned into the coordination role for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Additionally, some Marines in the liaison cell filled key joint positions within the



*A KC-130 from VMGR-234 dispenses antimissile flares during a flight over Iraq.*

Coalition Air Operations Center. The Marines provided crucial input on close air support operations for the entire theater of war.

## *Marine Aircraft Group 42*

A detachment of Marines was activated from MAG-42 based at Naval Air Station, Atlanta, in January 2003. This detachment augmented the staff of the 3d MAW and deployed to Kuwait in February 2003 in preparation for combat operations in Iraq. At the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Marines from MAG-42 were fully integrated into the battle staff of the 3d MAW and its subordinate commands which included Marine Aircraft Groups 11, 13, 16, and 39; Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 3; and Marine Wing Support Group 37.





The commanding officer of VMGR-234, LtCol Thomas F. Dietrich, stands in front of his headquarters.

### *Marine Air Control Group 48*

A substantial demand existed for Marine air command and control systems and communication equipment in Kuwait. In preparing for future contingencies, Marine Air Control Group 38 needed the assistance of the 4th MAW's Marine Air Control Group 48, which is based in Highwood, Illinois. Marine Air Control Group 48 began preparations in November and December 2002 for the deployment of its subordinate commands. With a portion of Marine Air Control Squadron 24 already deployed to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, the remainder of the unit was activated and sent an electronic warfare command detachment

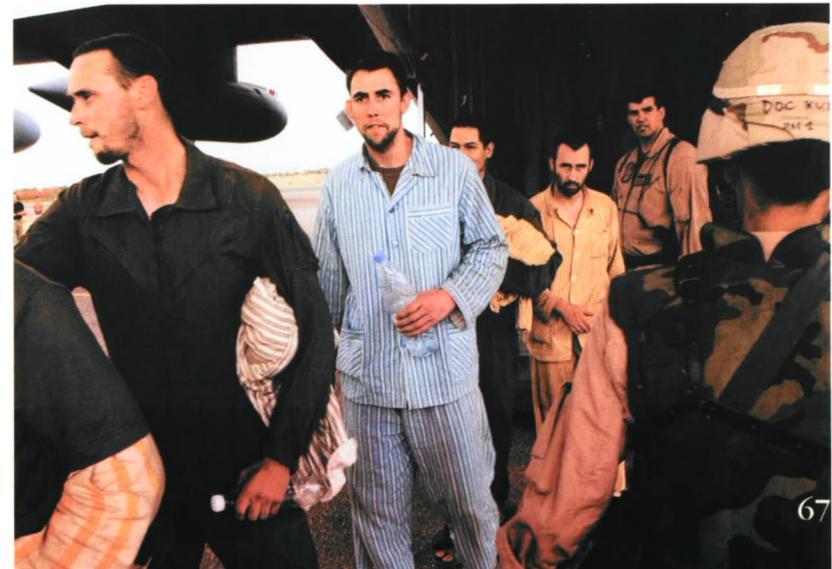


Marines from VMGR-234 in front of a KC-130 at Joe Foss Expeditionary Airfield, named after the legendary Marine aviator who received the Congressional Medal of Honor in World War II.

that provided sector air defense and a tactical air operations center.

In January and February 2003, the following units were activated and sent to Kuwait in support of 3d MAW: Marine Air Support Squadron 6 from Westover Air Force Base, Westover, Massachusetts; and both Marine

Rescued American POWs flown from Iraq by VMGR-452 arrive to a welcome sight in Kuwait.





*Pilots Maj Bill Holmes (left) and Maj Charles Miles smile in the cockpit of their KC-130 transport aircraft in Iraq. Along with their aircrew, they arrived in Iraq on a mission to fly seven former POWs to Kuwait.*

Tactical Air Command Squadron 48 and Marine Wing Communications Squadron 48 from Highwood, Illinois. The Marines from Marine Air Support Squadron 6 provided staff augmentation to Marine Aviation Support Squadron 3 in functional areas such as the ground direct air support center, the airborne direct air support center

*Cpl Christopher Castro (left), Spec Joseph Hudson, Sgt James Riley, CWO Ronald Young, and LCpl Curney Russell ride aboard a KC-130 aircraft flown by Marines from VMGR-452. The Marines took part in house-to-house searches early on 13 April 2003 that led to the rescue of seven American POWs in Sammara, Iraq.*



*A KC-130 from VMGR-452, Detachment A, forward based in Bahrain supporting the 24th MEU (SOC).*

and the air support liaison teams. The Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron 48 detachment worked with Marine Air Control Squadron 38 by providing staff augmentation and systems administrator support for the current and future operations sections of the tactical air command center located at Ahmed Al Jaber Air Base. In early March, more than 200 Marines from Marine Wing Control Squadron 48 arrived in Kuwait and provided vital communication support for the Marine Logistics Command and the U.S. Navy's fleet hospitals. This was a different role for Marine Wing Communication Squadron 48 because the unit was normally tasked with the primary mission of providing communications for the aviation combat element of a Marine expeditionary force.

Throughout March 2003, mission planning, staff coordination, task organization, and unit reorganization took place in preparation for combat operations.

Subsequently, the detachment, composed of Marines from Marine Aviation Support Squadron 6, was split into two sections. One section combined with Marine Aviation Support Squadron 1 and created the air support element for the forces from the United Kingdom. This air support element provided the direct air support center that coordinated and directed aircraft operating in support of the United Kingdom's 1st Armored Division.

The other section provided staff support for both

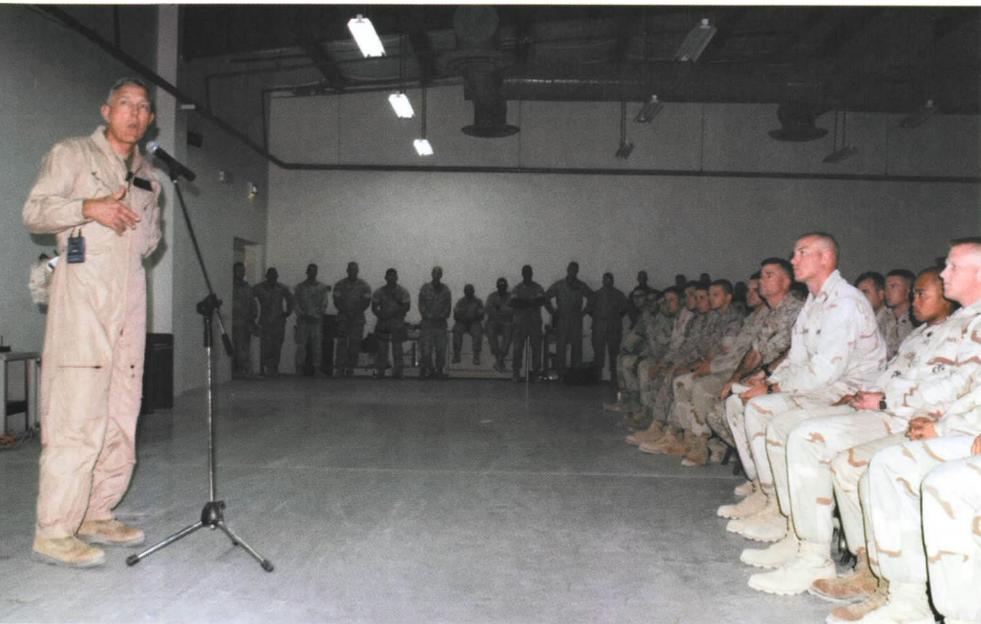
*Marines from the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing staff at Ahmed Al Jaber Air Base, Kuwait.*



the forward and main elements of the direct air support center of Marine Aviation Support Section 3. Additionally, this section of support provided critical crew augmentation for the air support liaison teams located with the 1st Marine Division's Regimental Combat Teams 1, 5, and 7 and the 11th Marines.

The Marines from Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron 48 filled key positions in the 3d MAW's tactical air command center. These positions included senior watch officer and senior air coordinator, as well as duties in the deep and close battle staff planning cells and the rapid order dispatch positions for fixed and rotary wing aircraft. These Marines also filled the joint issues coordinator position and performed various recorder, plotter, and systems administrator duties.

At the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Marines from Marine Air Control Group 48 were involved extensively in operations throughout the theater. The Marines from Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron 48 served in key command watch positions in the 3d MAW tactical air command center. They were instrumental in managing the Marine Corps' portion of the air war against Iraq. The Marines from Marine Air Support Squadron 6 served an integral role in coordinating and directing air support for the units in the 1st Marine Division and the United Kingdom's 1st Armored Division. They were with the 1st Marine Division's RCT-5 in the capture of the South Rumaylah oilfields and RCT-7 when it captured the Az Zubyr pumping station. They also were with RCT-1 in the fighting around An Nasiriyah. Marines of Marine Air Support Squadron 6, attached to the United Kingdom's 1st Armored Division, supported the attack and seizure of Basrah as well as the Royal Marines' 3d Commando



*LtGen James T. Conway, Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force, speaks with Marines during Operation Iraqi Freedom.*

raid on the Al Faw Peninsula and the 15th MEU's raid on the port facility at Umm Qasr.

During the early stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Marine Wing Communication Squadron 48 provided critical support, strengthening the communication network in northern Kuwait, which allowed other units to move forward as needed. During the first week of the war, the Marine Logistics Command set up the U.S. Navy fleet hospital at Camp Viper in Jalibah and Marine Wing Communication Squadron 48 provided the communications support. A detachment from Marine Wing Communications Squadron 48 moved north to Camp Viper and built the communications system for the hospital and the camp.

During the first week of April, the U.S. Army's V Corps and the 1st Marine Division closed in on Baghdad and surrounded the city. Major Peter J. Carzoli from Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron 48 went to the V Corps air support operations center and served as a liaison between the I Marine Expeditionary Force and V Corps. In his duties in the air support operations center, Major Carzoli provided key Marine air command and control knowledge to the Air Force and Army planners. He also coordinated cross boundary air fires and air asset management between the V Corps air support operations center and the 1st Marine Division direct air support center. At the same time, Marines from Marine Air Support Squadron 6 entered Baghdad with the regimental combat teams they were supporting. Their efforts coordinating and controlling direct support aircraft helped in the capture of Baghdad.

Once Baghdad was in control of coalition forces, the I Marine Expeditionary Force established Task Force Tripoli and assigned it the mission of securing Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit. The Marines of Marine Air



Support Squadron 6, serving with the 1st Marine Division direct air support center, were attached to Task Force Tripoli's air support element. The air support element received and coordinated close air support requests for Task Force Tripoli in the successful capture of Tikrit.

In early May 2003, Marine Wing Communication Squadron 48 was assigned the mission of providing communication support for the special purpose Marine air-ground task force established for the reconstruction, regeneration, and redeployment of the equipment for the ships of the maritime prepositioning force. While the Marines of Marine Wing Communication Squadron 48 provided communication support for the task force, other elements of the air control group began the retro-

*A Marine door gunner monitors the situation on the ground from his aerial position, August 2003.*



grade back to their respective home training centers in the United States. As the communication support mission concluded for the special purpose task force, the remainder of the Marines from Marine Air Control Group 48 returned home in November 2003.

### *VMGR-234, VMGR-452, and HMH-772*

As the 4th MAW provided squadrons of KC-130s and CH-53Es in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, the same was true for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Marine aerial refueler squadrons VMGR-234 and VMGR-452 provided aircrews and KC-130 aircraft, and HMH-772 provided aircrews and CH-53E heavy lift helicopters in the air operations against Saddam Hussein's regime.

Both VMGR-234 and VMGR-452 served essential roles supporting the missions of forward air refueling, assault support, and troop and cargo transportation. Frequently, these units were involved in night vision goggle assault landings at forward operating bases. These forward operating bases were often recently captured airfields or unimproved highway landing strips near the frontline of hostilities and within range of enemy small arms fire and anti-aircraft missiles. While providing forward air refueling support for coalition aircraft, VMGR-234 and VMGR-452 also pushed forward critical logistical supplies such as food, water, ammunition, and medical aid as well as evacuating critically wounded casualties and freed American prisoners of war.

In March 2003, after completing their mission in support of Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa, the detachment of Marines and CH-53Es from HMH-772

-serving in Djibouti returned to the ships that embarked the 24th MEU. In early April 2003, the 24th MEU participated in the combat missions of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Marines and CH-53Es of HMH-772 flew assault and logistical support missions in support of I MEF and coalition elements. These missions included troop inserts and extracts; re-supply of food, water, and ammunition; and emergency medical evacuation of casualties. Flight and maintenance crews worked 12-hour shifts and the sorties often covered enormous distances from naval shipping in the Persian Gulf to Baghdad.

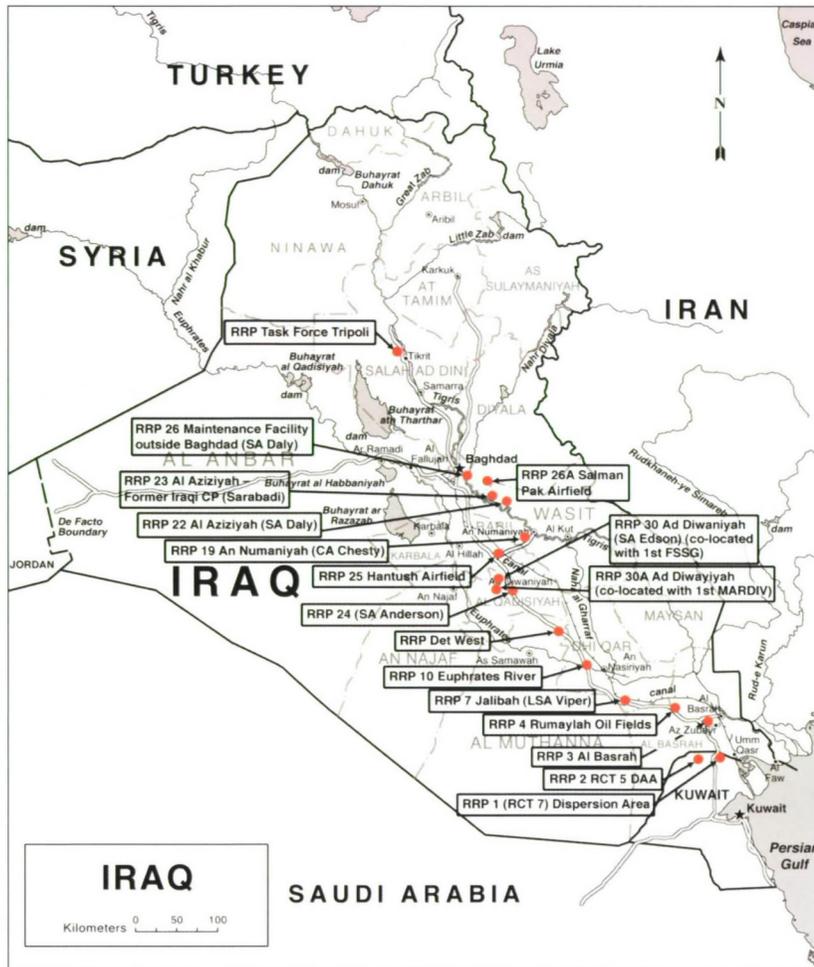
## Combat Service Support Operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom

As the Marine ground and air elements maneuvered successfully toward Baghdad, the reserves from the 4th Force Service Support Group made a significant contribution to the combat service support capability of the 1st Force Service Support Group and its ability to sustain I MEF. The units from the 4th Force Service Support Group that

activated and deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom were the Headquarters and Service Battalion, 6th Engineer Support Battalion, 6th Motor Transport Battalion, 6th Communications Battalion, 4th Landing Support Battalion, 4th Medical Battalion, and 4th Dental Battalion. The 4th Supply Battalion and elements of the 4th Maintenance Battalion were also activated but did not deploy overseas to Operation Iraqi Freedom as units. While some individuals from both of these commands deployed to Kuwait and Iraq, most of the Marines deployed to Marine bases at Camp Pendleton, California; Twentynine Palms, California; Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Arizona; Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, California; Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina; and Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

### *Headquarters and Service Battalion*

Headquarters and Service Battalion was mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom and provided two communication detachments, three military police companies, and a mortuary affairs detachment to I MEF. The communication detachments were assigned to various units throughout I MEF. Military Police Companies A, B, and C worked closely with the 1st Transportation Group in the 1st Force Service Support Group and U.S. Army military police units. The mission of the military police companies focused on convoy security, traffic management, and the handling of enemy prisoners of war. The Mortuary Affairs detachment conducted the recovery and processing of friendly and enemy killed in action. This unit employed recovery teams and collection points along the



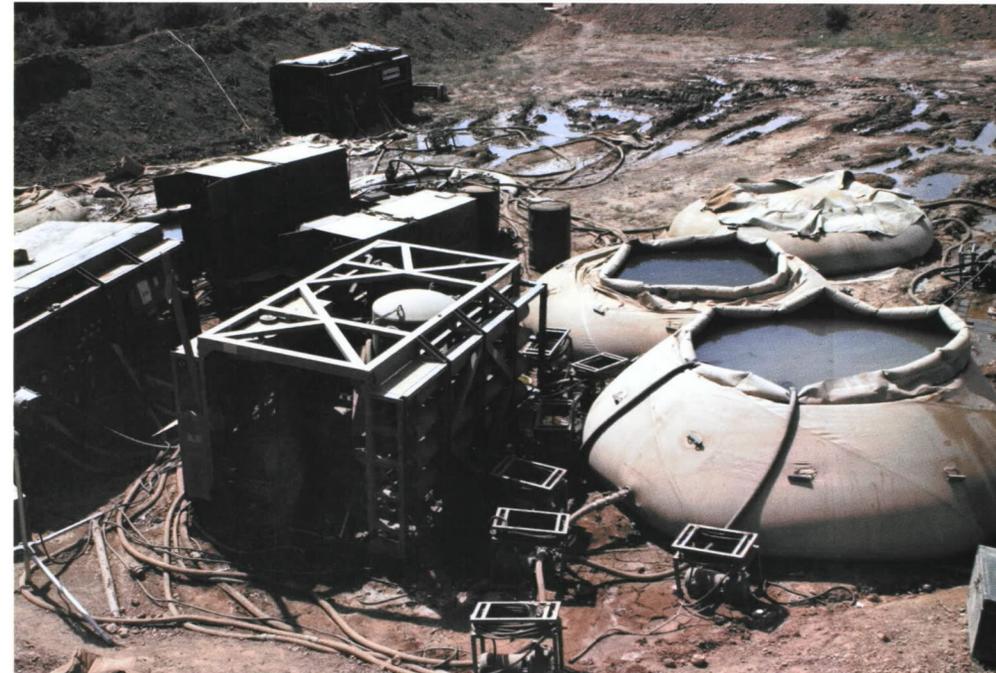
Locations of resupply and replenishment points in Iraq.

I MEF route of movement in accomplishing the mission. Due to a shortage of manpower, approximately 100 Marines from Battery A, 1st Battalion, 14th Marines, an artillery unit from Aurora, Colorado, were activated and deployed for service with the Mortuary Affairs detachment.

## 6th Engineer Support Battalion

The 6th Engineer Support Battalion from Portland Oregon, was activated in support Operation Iraqi Freedom and consisted of more than 1,500 Marines and sailors. The 6th Engineer Support Battalion, along with the 7th Engineer Support Battalion and 8th Engineer Support Battalion, formed the core of the engineer support capability of the 1st Force Service Support Group. The following units comprised the 6th Engineer Support Battalion: Headquarters and Support Company; Engineer Support Company; three bulk fuel companies; three engi-

*The 6th Engineer Support Battalion provided the bulk fuel and liquid support mission for I MEF and coalition forces.*





*The 6th Engineer Support Battalion dispensed 16.5 million gallons of fuel and produced 4.5 million gallons of water during Operation Iraqi Freedom.*

neer companies; and one bridge company.

Upon the battalion's arrival in Kuwait in early February 2003, Bridge Company A was assigned to the 8th Engineer Support Battalion and Engineer Companies A and B were transferred to 7th Engineer Support Battalion. From 9 February to 18 March 2003, 6th Engineer Support Battalion trained at Camp Coyote in

*Cpl Geraldo Cortez, a bulk fuel specialist, tops off a light armored vehicle at the 6th Engineer Support Battalion's fuel farm in Iraq.*



Kuwait. Training consisted of hose reel deployments and retrogrades as well as the construction of fuel farms. An advance party set up a base camp at the Breach Point West site and established a water point.

At the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Bulk Fuel Companies B and C established a hose reel deployment from Breach Point West in Kuwait to Logistics Support Area Viper in Iraq. This distance covered almost 60 miles and included 17 booster stations. At Logistics Support Area Viper, Bulk Fuel Company A established a 1.2 million gallon fuel farm. Originally projected to take six days to complete the hose reel and fuel farm, this mission was actually accomplished in 4 days despite major sandstorms. In addition to the establishment of fuel operations at Logistics Support Area Viper, water operations were constructed. Sadly, during this operation, Sergeant Bradley S. Korthaus and Corporal Even T. James drowned while providing security across a local canal for the utilities platoon as it was establishing a water point in the area. Water operations began on 24 March 2003 and required only 12 hours of the projected



*Supplying the fight, Marines with the 1st Force Service Support Group kept I MEF resupplied during the rapid advance toward Baghdad.*



*The logistics element of the Marine Air-Ground-Logistics Team offloads vehicles and equipment from maritime prepositioning shipping in preparation for Operation Iraqi Freedom.*

48 hours in the operational plan for completion. Water operations consisted of 14 reverse osmosis water purification units with a one-day production of 120,000 gallons. The Viper water point was a theater-level asset providing water for the 1st Marine Division, 3d Marine Aircraft Wing, 1st Force Service Support Group, Task Force Tarawa, and the U.S. Army.

In keeping up with the movement of Marine forces, numerous resupply and replenishment points were established along the route. Resupply and Replenishment Points Anderson and Chesty were set up between 30 March and 4 April that included the use of reverse osmosis water purification units for water production and the construction of a 1.2 million gallon fuel farm. At this

point in Operation Iraqi Freedom, this extended elements of the 6th Engineer Support Battalion for 150 miles across Iraq.

As I MEF and the U.S. Army's V Corps moved closer to Baghdad, fuel demands increased and the 6th Engineer Support Battalion installed another hose reel system from Logistics Support Area Viper to Logistics Support Area Cedar in support of V Corps operations. This was done in three days and covered 27 miles with eight booster stations. Ultimately, this tactical fuel system became a theater-level asset.

On 12 April, the 6th Engineer Support Battalion established bulk liquid production and storage sites at Resupply and Replenishment Point 26, located southeast

