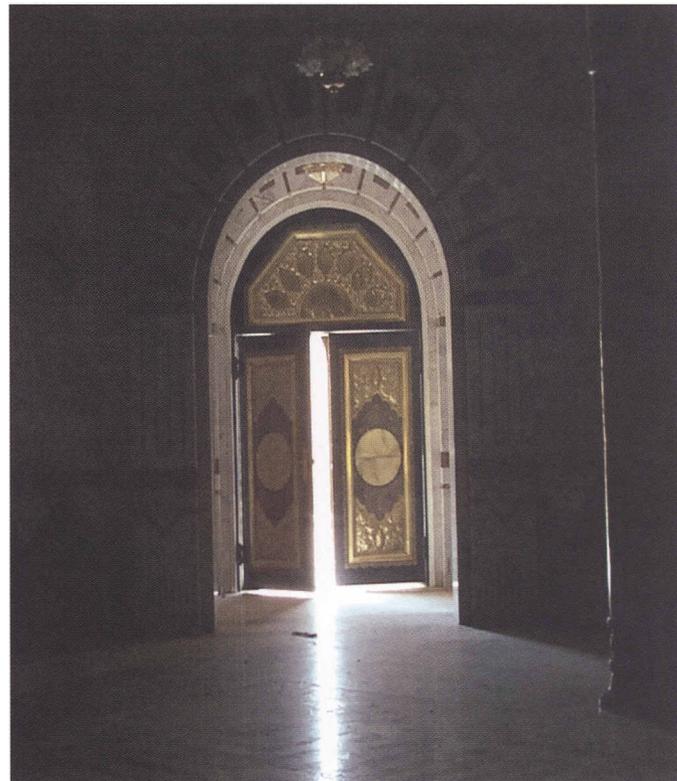


Diwaniyah. Battlespace handover was executed smoothly, and on 21 April the last elements of the Task Force Tripoli repositioned from Tikrit to Ad Diwaniyah. By 22 April, all elements had returned to Ad Diwaniyah, and the Task Force had been stood down.



*Marines investigate Saddam's elaborate palace complexes.*



*Closing the door on Saddam's last hideout.*

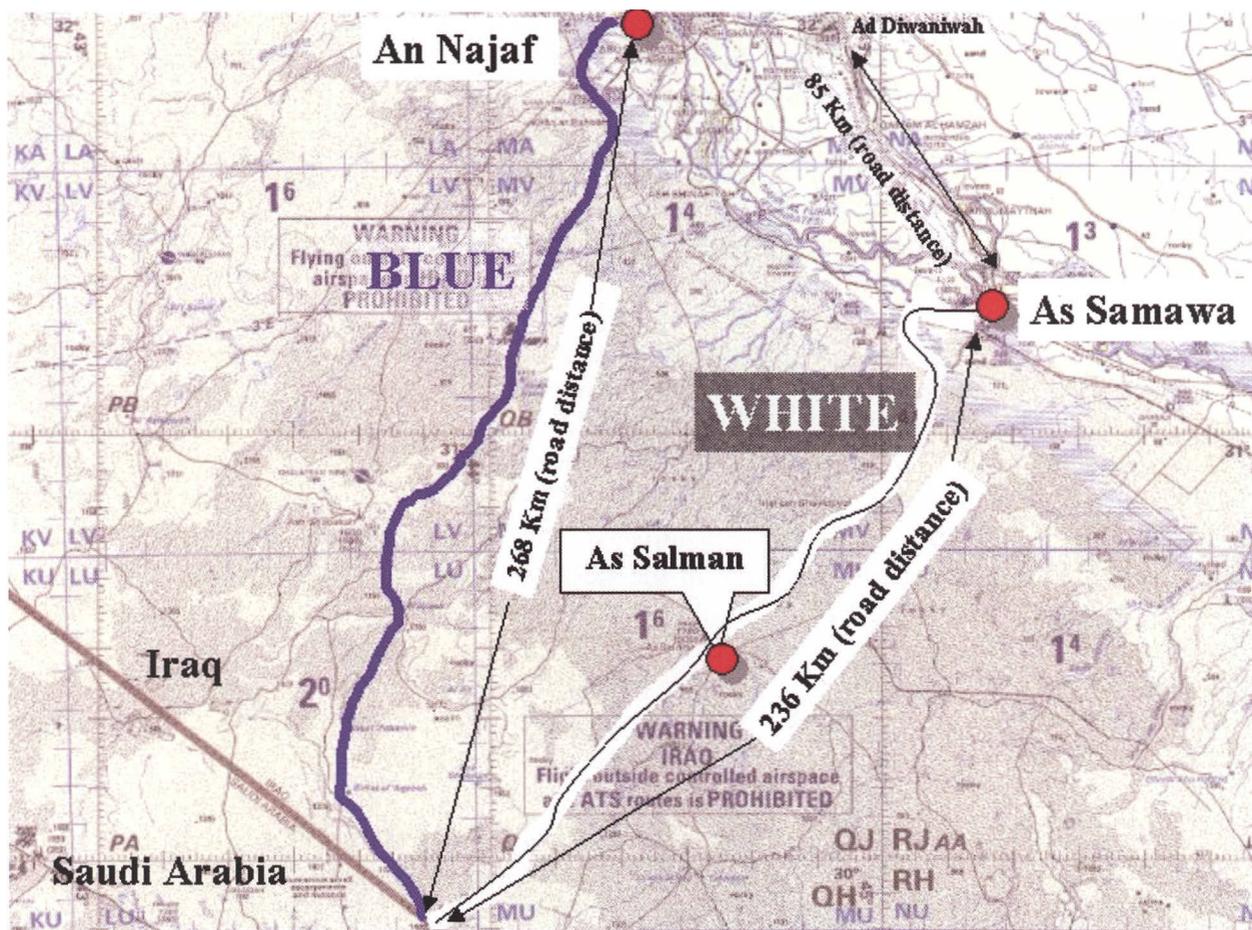
## **2-5 May Tripoli Rides Again**

In late April, the Division continued its duties of stabilization and security for five of the southern Iraqi Governates. During the execution of this follow-on mission, the Division CG received intelligence that violent religious extremism and illegal drug shipments were finding their way across the Saudi Arabian border into the Division's southernmost area of responsibility. It was assessed that if these actions were allowed to continue unmolested they would help serve to undermine stabilization operations, directly threaten the restoration of order and inhibit the security conditions for a free Iraq. Additionally, the concern of local leaders about the influx of extremists of all types and the need to demonstrate the sovereignty of Iraq's borders dictated a response by the Marines. The CG determined that a show of force in the southern zone would help to assert coalition authority in an area previously untouched by combat or presence operations.

The CG and ADC determined that the pre-existing framework of Task Force Tripoli would best serve the mission requirements for this long-range reconnaissance and show of force. With minor changes, the Task Force (minus 2<sup>d</sup> LAR) was stood up again on 1 May. Colonel Dunford, the incoming Division Chief of Staff, took command of the Task Force. First and 3<sup>d</sup> LAR Battalions would serve as the combat elements of the Task Force. Combat Service Support Company Tripoli (CSSC-Tripoli) was reestablished, and began acquiring sufficient Class I, III, and IX-block supply items for five days in the desert without re-supply. As the Task Force would be operating over 150 miles from the nearest Division outpost, a Shock Trauma Platoon and a Forward Resuscitative Surgical Support (FRSS) element were attached in order to provide immediate on-site medical support. Facilitating MEDEVAC and local re-supply were two CH-53Es in direct support. Additionally, sufficient assets were attached to provide the full spectrum of data and voice communications to the commander and his subordinate elements.

On 2 May, a P-3 Patrol aircraft was assigned to support the mission, and immediately began to reconnoiter the battlespace. Based on imagery and map analysis, two approach routes were identified for the combat elements; designated Routes BLUE and WHITE. The G-3 tasked the combat elements to conduct a reconnaissance in zone to identify and detain smugglers, conduct route analysis, and establish a presence along the Iraqi-Saudi Arabian border. Task Force objectives included the airfield and town of Salman along Route WHITE, including a possible WMD site at the airfield.

On 4 May, the Task Force crossed the Line of Departure and began its reconnaissance down Routes BLUE and WHITE. First LAR, traveling down Route BLUE, did not encounter either enemy forces or any significant civilian population. The route was a difficult unpaved road, covered with sharp rocks and boulders. The poor quality of the road forced the battalion to keep the rate of movement at 15 kph or less for over 200 km. Highlander went through over 25 vehicle tires during this single movement to the border. Meanwhile, 3<sup>d</sup> LAR, the command



*The routes depicted above (BLUE and WHITE) outline the patrol area for Task Force Tripoli's mission to investigate reported foreign insurgents moving into Iraq from the Saudi Arabian border.*

element, and CSSC-Tripoli moved by serial down Route WHITE to secure the Task Force objectives, and eventually reached the border. The Marines were greeted intermittently by smiling and waving Bedouin animal herders on the sides of the road, but no enemy forces or smugglers were detected during the movement. Wolfpack moved on the airfield in force to discover that the facility had long-since been abandoned. Structures had been bulldozed to the ground, and Iraqi forces had deliberately cratered the airfield. Other elements of 3<sup>d</sup> LAR entered the town of As Salman, where more Bedouin greeted them. The town itself was assessed to be friendly, and no signs of enemy or illegal activity were present. The attached HET interviewed several people and helped to spread printed copies of (CENTCOM Commander) General Franks' message to the Iraqi people.

Upon reaching the border with Saudi Arabia, Wolfpack observed Saudi Border Patrol units aggressively patrolling on the other side of the berm. The Saudis spotted the Americans and waved. First LAR completed its movement along Route BLUE and established inspection and observation points along the main (illegal) crossing points on a cliff running along the border. A former Iraqi Border Patrol post was discovered in the 1<sup>st</sup> LAR zone. The two-story concrete structure was littered with abandoned boots, uniforms, and gas masks. No Iraqi forces were identified in the area. The general security situation was stable, and the Saudis had tight control of the border area.

After conducting a personal inspection of the border area on 5 May, Colonel Dunford determined that the mission of the Task Force had been accomplished. During the day of 5 May, both LAR battalions began retrograde operations. The Task Force began movement to Ad Diwaniyah along Route WHITE. Local Iraqi leaders were reassured that fundamentalists were not infiltrating the border, and the Marines had established a baseline for future security operations along the border. Task Force Tripoli was disestablished once again, this time permanently.



*Tripoli Marines patrol the barren open expanses near the Saudi Arabian border*

## **Chapter 8**

### **Security and Stabilization Operations**

By the middle of April the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division had fought spectacularly from the sands of Kuwait, across the dusty Fertile Crescent, and into the 'mean streets' of Baghdad. Task Force Tripoli had extended this success 150 miles further north to Bayji on the upper Tigris River, and removed the organized remnants of the Regime there. However successful these past operations were, however, the Division had paid a price. As the Marines contemplated their battlefield victory, they realized that that price, though heavy, might have been much worse. Now, the Division faced the possibly even greater challenges of providing security, stability, and humanitarian assistance to a country and a people devastated by decades of brutal repression and neglect. The Marines would experience this transition first in Baghdad, and then in several of the governates of southern Iraq. As many of the combat units of the Division began to return home, Marines who remained behind opened an entirely new chapter.

There was a doctrinal definition for the tasks that lay ahead of the Division Marines. 'Security and Stability Operations (SASO)' made the job seem very clear cut. Doctrine rarely captures the brutal realities of the situation on the ground, however, and the Marines of Blue Diamond were about to embark on a set of tasks that, although planned for in general terms, no one could have foreseen. With the removal of the Regime leadership, an enormous power vacuum opened up. Because of the ethnic, religious, tribal, and cultural fissures that run through the Iraqi people, it was quite possible that an unstable security situation could quickly degenerate into bloody civil conflict. Even before combat operations had ended, various factions in Iraq had begun jockeying for a piece of the post-Saddam power structure. The Marines had to fill the security void quickly, before this anarchy or civil conflict erupted. There was no time to rest on the laurels of a successful attack to Baghdad, as looters, factional violence, and even tribal vendettas had begun. The fissures that ran through the Iraqi people were already beginning to widen as the Marines stepped into this new mission. Fortunately, the Marines of Blue Diamond were prepared. The 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division remained mindful of its motto, 'No better friend, no worse enemy.' The Division would help restore a sense of normalcy to the lives of ordinary Iraqis, and help set the conditions for restoring the public services, infrastructure, and food supplies. Yet, the attention paid to these new tasks did not detract the Marines from remaining combat tasks. There were still a great number of Former Regime Loyalists, foreign terrorists, and jihadis who actively worked to degrade the security situation. For those who sought a return to brutal repression or who sought to bring violence back to the streets of Iraq, Blue Diamond Marines would unhesitatingly unleash its offensive strength. The Marines and Sailors of the Division were mentally prepared for the new mission requirements, a mental agility that spoke highly of their professionalism, training, and humanity.

#### **SASO Operations in Baghdad**

The Marines began their mission transition by continuing to build on the successes they had already achieved in Baghdad. The 11th Marines CMOC had already been established, and was doing a booming business. In their zones, Marines continued their aggressive routine of patrols, searches, and roadblocks. The Marines remained a visible presence on the streets, deterring looters, maintaining order, and defusing potentially violent situations.

*Our mission was to do security patrols, clear out weapon caches, and have security posts at a food bank. Three posts, two hours apiece, two hours relief and a quick reaction force (QRF) team ready. I was on the QRF, with my squad leader being Sergeant Capitol, and we got called early in the shift this day for a situation down at the food bank. The situation turned out to be three women and a man attempting to scale one of the walls to get some food from the food bank. We had just cleared this area earlier of looters and weren't too happy to be called back into action for this. Anyway, these four people became extremely shocked and frightened once they saw a squad of Marines running over to them with rifles at the ready. Instantly, it became a game of "charades," really the only way we had of communicating with them.... So after a few minutes of pointing and gesturing, the one man kept saying, "thank you, thank you!", to our squad leader, Sergeant Capitol. The man even went as far as attempting to kiss Sergeant Capitol on the cheek, which I guess is fairly common in their culture. Well, what started out as a strange day turned even stranger, as Sergeant Capitol, accepted and then returned the gesture. Our mouths all dropped, and nobody, not even Sergeant Capitol said a word until we got back to the gates at the CP. Finally, I just couldn't take it anymore, and I asked Sergeant Capitol, "So Sergeant, what was your boyfriend's name anyway?" Everyone died laughing, and I spent the following week pulling extra watch, but it was worth it. Since then we are quick to remind him of his "Arabian Night Love Affair" with the Iraqi man.*



***Marines have a hard time adjusting to some Arab customs.***

Each RCT established checkpoints to regulate and screen movement within their sectors. They augmented these checkpoints with mobile and foot patrols, frequently relocating checkpoints to prevent the former regime holdouts or terrorists from targeting them. The patrols were intended to both promote good will between Marines and the residents of Baghdad, and provide a tactical function as well. According to Captain Sean Blodgett, Commander of Charlie Company, 1/5, "The Division needed to return a normal sense of life to people, as quickly as possible, but soon realized it could not import enough food and water for the entire city." The Division,

consequently, worked at restoring Baghdad's public safety, food supplies, health services, transportation, and basic utilities, in order that the city might support itself. By restoring normalcy and rooting out remaining perpetrators of violence, the Division began to gain the trust of the people. As the citizens of Baghdad began to enjoy the fruits of the Marine's security operation, they began to help identify and eliminate those who still wished to promote violence against the Americans or within the civilian community. The Division systematically denied the remaining enemy sanctuary from which to operate against the Marines or the civilian population.

The task of coordinating the resumption of these critical services remained with the Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC), established by the “cannon cockers” of 11<sup>th</sup> Marines. The 11th Marines found themselves solving problems ranging from neighborhood squabbles to reported terrorists, to alleged chemical weapons caches. The Marines really had their 'finger in the dike' as parts of one division of Marines tried to step in the place of a mature city government for several million people. Restoring a functioning city bureaucracy became one of the first orders of business. The Marines could not govern the city; that would have to be done by Iraqis. The Marines hoped to restore the conditions of normalcy that would allow the influx of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), civil authority, and provisional civilian government. It was especially hoped that NGOs would coordinate their efforts with the CMOC to rapidly begin working on critical projects. Initial CMOC meetings were specifically designed to take place with Baghdad's secular and religious leaders, who were expected to be full partners in the effort to repair and rebuild the city. The first order of business was to contract English-speaking Iraqi citizens to serve as interpreters and advisers on local customs.

Meanwhile, during the course of their security patrols Marines uncovered huge caches of weapons, ordnance, and terrorist materiel. Most of the caches included a staggering number of small arms and RPGs, but many also included artillery, anti-aircraft guns, demolitions, missiles, and rockets. In fact, there were weapons stashed caches in almost every block and on every street in the city. Had the Iraqi military chosen to defend the city in any kind of organized and determined way, the cost would have been much higher as the regime certainly had the equipment to drive up the butcher's bill. A Marine from 3/4 recalled:

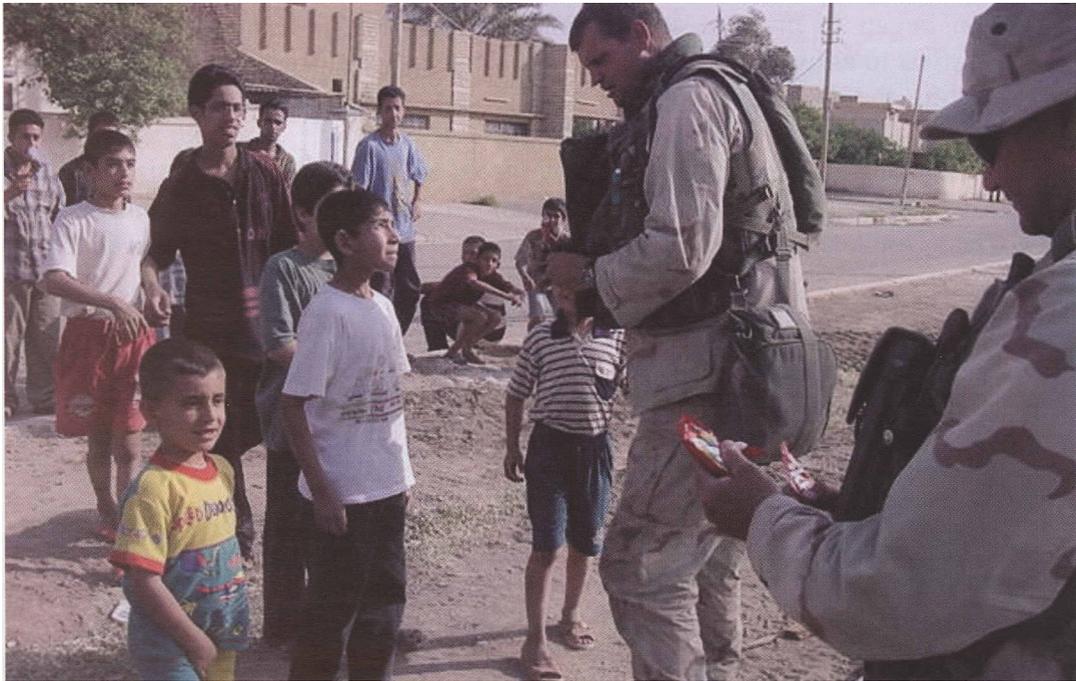
*On 11 April the Main CP moved to the ministry compound, establishing what would become the central node of operations for the remainder of 3/4's time in Baghdad. Ultimately, CPs, Combat Trains, Bravo Company, HET, and a Force Reconnaissance platoon would be stationed there. Kilo moved to establish a company CP in a traffic circle southeast of the hotels. The mortar platoon consolidated around two hospitals in its zone, conducting patrols and liaison with local citizens for the remainder of the operation. The engineers soon undertook the demanding task of collecting and transporting those weapons caches they did not destroy themselves, and can very well attest to the staggering quantity of weapons the Iraqi regime had hidden throughout the urban area.*

The RCTs shifted positions as the Division received tasks to assume additional missions. RCT-1 conducted a Relief in Place (RIP) with RCT-5 to allow Grizzly to move to the north of the city to provide support for Task Force Tripoli's operations in the Tikrit area. While this relief was the RIP was underway, RCT-7 secured several major sources of food. They coordinated the redistribution of these critical food supplies to the local population through the CMOC. During this time, units relentlessly hunted members of the former regime. Many of these figures began to turn themselves in, or were pointed out by local citizens. Included in the catch was Iraqi Lieutenant General Amir Hamudi Hasan Alssaadi, Presidential Advisor for Scientific and Technical Affairs. He was taken into custody at the Palestine Hotel in the center of eastern Baghdad. On 13 April, he was transferred into the hands of US governmental agency representatives and transported to Baghdad International Airport for further exploitation.

During all this the Iraqi people were clearly pleased the Marines were pursuing and eliminating the terrorist infrastructure, and providing the city much needed law and order. Lance Corporal Dane Jensen, India Company, 3/7 remembers:

*In Baghdad, I witnessed many American flags being flown or displayed with pride and courage. In other ways of expressing gratitude, some Iraqis even went out of their way to greet Marine patrols with flowers and other souvenirs. I believe the media's assumption of the Iraqi citizens to be totally wrong. Yes, there were people some people who didn't want us in Iraq. However, I felt that this small fraction couldn't compare to the Iraqi's who are overwhelmed with joy for our presence.*

In this environment, the vast majority of Iraqis welcomed the Marines as liberators and friends, but a wary eye and lightening quick life-and-death decisions were required of every member of the force; regardless of rank, age, or occupational specialty. There was no front, no rear, no secured area; only reliance on your brother to cover your "six," and the professional maturity to know when and how to act.



***Iraqi children are fascinated by the Marines, and the Marines return their attention with kindness and good-natured humor.***

With literally no help or even guidance from an outside agency the CMOC established functional areas for police, fire, electricity, water, and medical care. It appointed an interim police chief and opened an Iraqi Police Academy in RCT-7's zone. The Red Cross assessed the water system at only 40% capacity due to the lack of power. Electrical engineers worked furiously to restore the power grid, as it was central to restoring the most basic of human services to the people of Baghdad. Agencies like CARE, Red Crescent, the World Food Program, and

many others arrived and willingly joined the Division's efforts. These organizations were the first and most knowledgeable people on the ground to set the city and its people right. After RCT-7 secured the major Red Cross medical supply warehouse, the distribution of critical medical supplies to the major care centers began to flow to those who needed them most.

The Division also took on the pressing, and often-times very violent issue of crime, then running rampant throughout the city. After three decades of terror and repression, members from every segment of society sought revenge not only against symbols of the former government, but also against individuals associated with the previous regime by vandalizing their homes and businesses. As the looting spread from government buildings to private businesses, it was apparent that this wanton destruction would severely impede the nation's recovery. Crime spread rapidly to the commercial and banking centers of the city. Local thugs, using recently stolen military weapons, took advantage of the general breakdown in public order. Armed criminal gangs were formed, which began to rob banks, hijack vehicles, and steal whatever they could get their hands on. These gangs brazenly held proprietors at bay while they looted their establishments. Major combat operations with Iraqi military units were all but over, but the Marines of Blue Diamond began to combat this criminal element throughout the city.

The Division began to produce and disseminate Psychological Operations messages via broadcast and leaflets to assist in protecting the innocent civilians of eastern Baghdad. Lebanese Television, covering the daily CMOC-NGO meetings, provided reliable third person objective reporting regarding the level of effort and progress being made restoring services. Radio broadcasts also assisted local leaders and security forces by appealing to the citizens of Baghdad that for their own safety they remain in their homes between evening and morning prayers. Private First Class Devin Schmitt, Weapons Company, 1/7, recalled the situation in Baghdad at the time:

*In Baghdad, people would always come to us for help. They would yell "Ali Babba" and point in a direction. We could not understand a word they said except that someone was stealing stuff.*

The CMOC's activities accelerated in the face of these and many more challenges. By identifying and meeting with key leaders, civil and military authorities began to plan the restoration of the city's services and repair of its infrastructure in a comprehensive way. Colonel Marletto also made liaison with the US Army's 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division to ensure the synchronization of Civil-Military operations on both sides of the Tigris River.

Most important of these early contacts were with Iraqi electrical engineers who would eventually restore the power grid. The CMOC's 'electrical' section chaired a meeting with Dr. Karim Hasan, Directing General of Iraq for Electrical Affairs, along with 50 key plant managers and engineers. A major issue concerned jump-starting a 2-megawatt generator for the eastern Baghdad grid. Jump-starting the generator required more power than existed in I MEF's generation capacity. The engineers coordinated a plan to bring several substations on line to provide the massive jolt needed to re-establish Baghdad's service. The issue of electricity was significant, not only for the restoration of lights and power, but also as it was the required

resource for generation of fresh water supplies. The Red Cross Water and Habitat managers reported that the water supply was adequate for the current Baghdad population, but would collapse under the strain as refugees returned to the city. With the onset of summer temperatures of 120 degrees, the demand for water and electricity for air conditioning would skyrocket.

The CMOC medical committee optimistically forecast that the medical system could provide basic emergency care and services if medical professionals of all categories returned to their places of work. Commander Kevin Moore, the Division Surgeon, coordinated with various NGOs and identified 14 hospitals that were necessary to be restored in order to provide even basic medical services to millions of people ravaged by war. The CMOC worked feverishly to restore them to full operations. Requests for volunteers were made on local media broadcasts, and several hundred volunteers arrived at the Palestine Hotel to provide assistance. Medical support improved with the addition of four Qatari physicians, and the arrival of critically needed supplies.

By 15 April, the Division was well into preparations for the turnover of eastern Baghdad to the US Army's 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. The 358<sup>th</sup> Civil Affairs Command Deliberate Assessment Team arrived first and evaluated the needs of the city. As part of its preparations Colonel Jim Howcroft, the Division's senior Intelligence officer, prepared a detailed sector-by-sector analysis of the enemy threat for the commanders of the 'Rock of the Marne' Division. In each functional area, staff coordination surged forward. These two proud Divisions had fought side-by-side from Kuwait to Baghdad, and both had similar mindsets about both combat operations and SASO. Without written orders, instructions, or doctrine of any kind, the members of these proud Divisions who had fought side-by-side in the assault on Baghdad, quickly worked out the details of an urban reconstruction effort without precedent. After detailed staff work and commander interaction at every level was completed, the relief was initiated.

On 18 April, the relief in place with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> BCTs of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division began. Both 3/7 and 3/4 turned over their areas to the Army units, then and headed south to the RCT staging area just north of Al Iskandariyah. The following day, the remainder of RCT-7 completed its battle-hand over and moved to the assembly area. On 20 April, the remaining elements of Blue Diamond began movement to an intermediate TAA south of Baghdad. By 21 April, the Division planted its colors in the vicinity of Ad Diwaniyah, and continued its RIP with V Corps and movement into its Phase IV (SASO) positions. The Commanding General, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division personally coordinated the historical close out of the battle space with Major General "Buck" Blount, General Officer Commanding, 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. Blue Diamond continued to move to its new zone in southern Iraq.

### **Into the Shia Heartland**

The men and women of Blue Diamond had already begun their journey south to their designated Phase IV (SASO) zone. In what amounted to be the entire southern half of the country (excluding only the British zone to the east around Basra), the area contained nearly half of Iraq's population. It was bounded by borders with Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the southern suburbs of Baghdad.

## Stabilization Operations in Southern Iraq



*Blue Diamond conducts Security and Stabilization Operations in seven southern governates of Iraq. This zone included much of the Shia heartland, including the holy cities of Karbala and An Najaf. Most of the supply routes for US Army forces operating in Baghdad and to the north also ran through this zone.*

The first unit to move into the southern zone was RCT-5, ordered to conduct a relief in place with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team (BCT) of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. The RCT, and subordinate battalion command groups, moved to an area southwest of Ad Diwaniyah and established an Assembly Area for the entire Division in an abandoned Iraqi military facility there. The Division's composite quartering party began to receive units in its area co-located with RCT-5. The next day, RCT-5(-) moved to an intermediate TAA south of Baghdad with its remaining infantry battalions, 2/5 and 3/5, moving from over 100 km north from the city of Samarra where it had supported TF Tripoli's actions, and joined on its parent unit the next day in Ad Diwaniyah and As Samawah. To avoid adding to the friction already caused by the thousands of Shia faithful participating in the Arba'een Pilgrimage, RCTs 1 and 7 delayed movement into their Phase IV positions until the Pilgrimage was completed. The fact that thousands of Shias were, for the first time in decades, able to participate freely in one of their most highly regarded traditions was a historic event. The smooth conduct of this pilgrimage, with US forces handing out water and providing medical services, greatly aided the relationship with the Shia populace in the south.