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**Iraq War Note: Closing in on Baghdad: New Concepts of Joint War**  
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**1. "Focus and Precision" versus "Shock and Awe:" A New Form of Joint Warfare**

Some two weeks into the war, what is most striking is the partnership between airpower and ground maneuver, and the ability to disrupt and destroy Iraqi operations at relatively long ranges. It may be months before the full details are clear, but this has not been a "shock and awe" campaign as defined by Harlan Ullman and Jim Wade.

Instead, nearly 10,000 precision weapons and 700 cruise missiles have paralyzed Iraqi operations in most of the country, hit hard at every Iraqi unit that moved, and disrupted cohesive command and operations. One crude way to think of the air battle is that there were really at least four U.S. division equivalents in the fighting: Two on the ground and two in the air.

At the same time, airpower alone would have failed. The major advances and ground operations have forced the Iraqi forces to come out and fight or lose the outer approaches to Baghdad, while ranger, airborne, and SOF operations have targeted Iraqi operations throughout the country and moved forward towards Fallujah from the west.

There is no way to know the full impact of air vs. attack helicopter vs. artillery vs. direct ground combat. Perhaps the balance is irrelevant. What is clear is that the mix of synergy and simultaneity has so far thrown the Iraqi defense off balance. The nature of U.S. maneuver has also forced many Iraq forces out into the open in ways that have cost the Republican Guard much of its cohesion, and in ways where no Iraqi regular army division has yet been able to bring U.S. and British forces into a major direct armored/infantry battle.

The direction of U.S. maneuver has also helped. While some 1 MEF and V Corps operations have gone into the Tigris-Euphrates area, the fact V Corps fought largely on the edge with rear areas near the desert allowed thrusts deep into the outer approaches of Baghdad. It also meant the Republican Guards had to move quickly and regular forces could not cohesively regroup. The history of I MEF fighting is still unclear, and in theory should have driven through populated areas. However, the Marines hit the northern highway above Al Kut and the Iraqis had to maneuver against them or lose the entire Eastern outer defenses of the city.

In both cases, the Iraqis probably took more risks than was logical in exposing their forces to airpower, either for ideological reasons or because they did not estimate the full nature of the air/helicopter/artillery forces the U.S. could deploy, and the ability of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry and 1 MEF to secure their rear and flanks. Ironically, the media may have done the U.S. and British forces a major favor by exaggerating the effectiveness of the Fedayeen and irregular forces and the threat they posed to U.S. lines of communication.

Throughout, it is also important to note that the U.S. used its vastly superior intelligence and targeting assets to focus its precision strikes and maneuver, rather than achieve shock and awe.



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The targets in Baghdad may partly have been symbolic but were clearly chosen to strike at the regime. There were no strikes at symbols per se, or to try to intimidate the people of the city. Equal restraint and focus on military and regime targets seems to have taken place throughout the rest of the country, with most airpower focused directly on support of the joint land/air advance.

## **2. Jointness, the 1 MEF, and the East**

One forgotten aspect of the 1 MEF success is that it had nothing to do with amphibious operations and vertical envelopment. The Marines fought a classic combined arms and armor battle with M-1A1s, AAFVs, and LAVs.

Given some of the prewar emphasis on amphibious task forces, it is striking that they now seem to have joined up with a major advance through the Baghdad Division. They now seem to be fighting the Al Nida Division, and will be able to open up lines of advance from the southeast, the east, and even to the north.

## **3. V-Corps Advance and the International Airport**

The V Corps is closing in on Saddam International Airport against what may be elements of up to four regular divisions. It probably has secured the main roads from the south at least up to Khan Azad and is driving through what seems to be a two-pronged advance where the right flank can take the east part of the airport and close the western road to the city.

The left flank can go beyond the airport, cut off Fallujah, and drive through relatively open areas towards Salah ad Din and the main road west of the Tigris towards Samarra and Tikrit. It's guesswork at this stage, particularly if Iraqi resistance stiffens, but possible.

The great wild card remains the 101<sup>st</sup> Air Mobile Division, which may be used with great flexibility to seal off parts of Baghdad, and the ability of elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> British Armored to advance and secure the 1 MEF rear or drive up towards Baghdad.

## **4. The Iraqi Defense**

The allies may still face bitter fighting in the Baghdad areas and a last stand action in Tikrit. Today, euphoria is as dangerous as yesterday's sloughs of despond. It is still striking, however, that Iraq has done so poorly in maintaining a cohesive defense of the outer areas of the city. This is a type of fighting the Iraqis had four years of intense experience with during the Iran-Iraq War. They have had a decade in which to develop defenses since 1991, and good incentive to prepare ever since the first U.S. logistic movements early in 2002.

Even allowing for airpower, however, their performance has been far too aggressive in the wrong places, and far too weak in holding prepared defenses. The Guards, regular army, and popular army should have been much better prepared and dug in.



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### 5. Is the City a Trap?

Baghdad can now only be a trap if the US goes in with the wrong assessment of the situation and rushes forward without careful probe and reconnaissance. Some tactical ambushes are inevitable. There also is no way at this point to know:

- How many of Saddam's Fedayeen are left and what elements of the intelligence and security forces will really fight.
- What Baathist Party and Popular Army forces will really stand and fight.
- How many elements of the Republican Guards and regular army will be able to retreat into the city and retain enough equipment and supplies to fight effectively.
- Whether chemical weapons will be used.
- Whether the regime can keep lines of communication open to the north and reinforce with forces from the north.

However, if the regime loyalists disperse too much, then that opens up the ability to thrust through their positions and focus on key regime centers of power in selected areas and facilities. Each separate communications node has to rely on landlines or become a target.

The "silent duel" between regime dispersal, deception, and decoys and U.S. ability to use SIGINT/ELINT UAVs, etc, to find where the regime locates its key leadership and loyalist elements is one the U.S. can probably never win decisively, but also one the regime can lose over time. **Once again, precision air, precision artillery, SOF, and air mobile forces can be extremely effective over a period of days, and no urban warfare in history has even been fought with anything like those tools.**

### 6. The Special Republican Guards or Al-Haris al-Jamhuri al-Khas

The Special Republican Guards are an interesting force. It was well equipped and well trained by Iraqi standards before being slammed by 14 days of air and cruise missile attacks, but anything but combat experienced. Many elements are light forces and security oriented. The various intelligence and security services like the SSO can also add only small elements of regular forces to them.

The main headquarters has been at Al-Nisoor Square in Baghdad, and it probably has a total active strength of about 12,000 to 15,000. However, some sources claim it can mobilize to 20,000 to 25,000. It is the only force stationed in central Baghdad and in the Republican Palace, although there are also brigades of the Special Security Service (SSO), the Iraqi Intelligence Service (IIS), and secret police in the city. British intelligence reports that it has played a role in securing WMD warheads and maintains control of a few launchers.



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**The First Brigade** is a relatively light defensive force headquartered at Hayy Al-Qadisiyeh in Baghdad and has five battalions, including ones stationed in the Republican palace and at Saddam The Military International Airport. Additional battalions, including plain-clothes units, are assigned to protect Saddam while he is in transit, and are assigned to guard other palaces and facilities. According to Jane's, only two battalions – the fifth and eight -- are really trained as forces fully suitable for street fighting:

- The First Battalion protects Saddam in movement.
- The Second Battalion deploys men on foot to guard Saddam's farms and places near Baghdad's Saddam International Airport.
- **The Fifth Battalion is based inside the Republican Palace and guards it and the National Assembly. It guards the Presidential House in the palace compound and has training from the SSO. Elements travel with Saddam at all times and is commanded by friends and relatives of Saddam.**
- The Seventh Battalion provides plain cloths bodyguards and protects Saddam's private residences in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, Fallujah, Jebel Makhool, and other locations.
- **The Eighth Battalion protects Baghdad's Saddam International Airport.**

**The Second Brigade** is normally headquartered at the Al Rashid military base, and has combat experience elements outside Baghdad and in the Mosul area. Three battalions – the 11<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> seem reasonably well suited for urban fighting, but some may have moved towards Tikrit.

- The Fourth Battalion is a significant combat unit that protects Saddam's palace in Makhool in the Bayji area that is north of Baghdad.
- The Sixth Battalion protects the palaces in the Mosul area.
- **The Eleventh Battalion guards the approaches to Baghdad from the direction of Taji.**
- **The Fourteenth Battalion guards the approaches to Baghdad from the direction of Salam Pak and Kut.**
- **The Fifteenth Battalion is part of the western defenses of Baghdad.**

The **Third Brigade** is headquartered at Taji and has four combat battalions to defend Taji and the approaches to Baghdad. The Third Battalion is particularly strong, but all of these forces may have already been hit hard from the air.

- **The Third Battalion is a rapid reaction combat force.**
- **The Ninth Battalion protects the palaces and road approaches in the Tharthar area.**
- **The Tenth Battalion is a combat unit in Taji that protects Baghdad from the direction of the north and northwest.**
- **The Twelfth Battalion reinforces the defense of Baghdad in the direction of Taji.**
- **Headquarters and key command, control, communications, and intelligence (C3I)**



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**facilities hit hard from the air. No damage assessment.**

The **Fourth Brigade** is motorized and is located at Al Harithiyeh and Al Quadisiyeh, and defends the southern outskirts of Baghdad. It has two regiments with T-72 tanks and BMP-1 and BMP-2 armored fighting vehicles. Its **Armor Command** (Fourth Armored Brigade) is the only heavy war-fighting element in the SRG. It has T-72s, BMP-1 and BMP-2s, and has two armored regiments. The First (Adnan) Regiment is located at the Abu- Ghraib Camp, and the Second Regiment is located near the Al-Makasib village. They provide armored forces to defend the major entrance points to the city.

There is also an intelligence bureau and an **Air Defense Command** with two regiments and three independent batteries. The First Regiment defends the International Airport and has elements near Tharthar Lake and Radwaniyah. The Second Regiment defends key locations in Baghdad. The batteries cover key locations near Door, Tikrit, and Kirkuk.