

## 2015 Marks 2 Important Anniversaries

This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Ia Drang and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Operation Desert Shield, the precursor to Operation Desert Storm or the First Gulf War.

### Battle of Ia Drang

The Maneuver Center of Excellence commemorated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vietnam War's Battle of the Ia Drang Valley Nov. 23-24. The bloody fights at landing zones (LZs) X-Ray and Albany tested the air cavalry in its infancy. Veterans from 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, and the newly created 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, were in fierce firefights with the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) for the first time in the Vietnam War.

The initial North Vietnamese assault against 1/7 Cavalry's landing at LZ X-Ray was repulsed after two days and nights of heavy fighting Nov. 14-16, 1965. The Americans inflicting major losses on North Vietnamese regulars and Viet Cong guerrillas.<sup>1</sup> In a follow-up surprise attack Nov. 17, the North Vietnamese overran the marching column of 2/7 Cavalry near LZ Albany in the most successful ambush against U.S. forces of the war. Both sides suffered heavy casualties.

The seminal work on Ia Drang remains the 1992 book *We Were Soldiers Once ... And Young* by retired LTG Hal G. Moore and journalist Joseph L. Galloway. Galloway was guest speaker at the commemorative dinner Nov. 24 at the National Infantry Museum, Fort Benning, GA. Galloway is a former United Press International reporter who served 16 months as a war correspondent in Vietnam beginning in April 1965 – shortly after the first American combat troops landed on China Beach in Danang. Galloway returned to Vietnam on three other tours in 1971, 1973 and 1975, when he covered the fall of Cambodia and South Vietnam. On May 1, 1998, the Army belatedly awarded Galloway a Bronze Star with V for rescuing a badly wounded soldier under heavy fire in the Ia Drang Valley Nov. 15, 1965; this is the only medal of valor the Army awarded to a civilian during the Vietnam War.

### 'Battle that changed everything'

Former leaders from 1/7 and 2/7 Cavalry participated in leadership professional-development sessions at Fort Benning Nov. 24. Leaders from 1/7 included retired COL Ramon "Tony" Nadal, retired CSM Southern "Buddy" Hewitt, retired SFC Clyde "Ernie" Savage, retired COL Walter "Joe" Marm Jr. and retired LTC William Franklin. Leaders from 2/7 who spoke were retired MAJ Joel E. Sugdinis, J.L. "Bud" Alley Jr., James T. Lawrence and S. Lawrence Gwin.

MG Scott Miller, commander of the Maneuver Center of Excellence, spoke to the assembled leaders during the sessions, explaining that the lessons that came out of LZ X-Ray and LZ Albany were timeless. Some leadership points from the sessions follow.

The Battle of Ia Drang has been touted as "the battle that changed everything." For Americans, it was the beginning of a new kind of warfare using helicopters. The battle was also a historical turning point because it changed American involvement from advisers and materiel support to full-scale combat. The battle was also seen as a blueprint for tactics by both sides: the Americans used air mobility, artillery fire and close air support to accomplish battlefield objectives, while the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and Viet Cong forces learned they could neutralize U.S. firepower by quickly engaging American forces at very close range. In fact, North Vietnamese COL Nguyen Huu An included his lessons from the battle at LZ X-Ray in his orders for LZ Albany: "Move inside the column, grab them by the belt, and thus avoid casualties from the artillery and air."

Both sides thought this battle to be a success for them. In fact, Gwin (who served almost nine months as executive officer for Company A 2/7 Cav – serving under Sugdinis) disputed that the Americans had been beaten at the disastrous encounter at LZ Albany: "We killed more of them than they got us. We got caught with our pants down but recovered enough to kick ass."

The Battle of Ia Drang was also one of the first battles to popularize the U.S. concept of the "body count" as a measure of success. American losses, especially at LZ Albany, were severe.<sup>2</sup>

Galloway later described Ia Drang as "[t]he battle that convinced [North Vietnamese leader] Ho Chi Minh he could win." Moore said, "[The] peasant soldiers [of North Vietnam] had withstood the terrible high-tech firestorm

delivered against them by a superpower and had at least fought the Americans to a draw. By their yardstick, a draw against such a powerful opponent was the equivalent of a victory.”

With this as the context, the speakers’ overall theme was that training saved the day for U.S. Soldiers. The 2/7 speakers emphasized that there were three factors for them as they were ambushed at LZ Albany: bad tactics for the terrain (they were strung out in a line, with the company commanders called away from their units); the terrain itself (the elephant grass cloaked enemy fighters); and 2/7’s ragtag nature (Alley said of his unit, “We’re not a company, we’re a gaggle” and pointed out that 2/7 had never moved as a unit overland). Only training saved the Americans from an even bigger disaster.

**Nadal** – Nadal thought there was one other factor: “The role of the leader in a battle of this intensity [1/7 Cavalry at LZ X-Ray] is essential,” he said. He credited Moore with the unit’s survival.

Nadal’s Vietnam service included command of Detachment A and Camp Nam Dong in the jungles of northwest South Vietnam. Leading a force of 400 South Vietnamese and Nung soldiers, he conducted patrols along the Laotian border and engaged in ambushes, reconnaissance and an intensive civic-action program. Upon returning from Vietnam, Nadal attended the Armor Officer Career Course and Pathfinder School, then he volunteered to return to Vietnam. Nadal commanded Company A 1/7 Cav and served as S-3 of 2/7 Cav. During his Vietnam tour, Nadal, the only commander with experience in Vietnam, was engaged in heavy infantry combat in the Ia Drang Valley. He received the Silver Star for his actions in the Battle of Ia Drang.



**Figure 1. The Chu Pong Massif and Ia Drang.**

Nadal credited training for Savage's ability to command the "Lost Platoon." "Moore's philosophy was to train two levels down," Nadal recalled, "so when Savage lost his platoon leader and platoon sergeant, he – as an assistant platoon sergeant – was able to assume command."

**Savage** – Savage began the Battle of Ia Drang leading a squad from 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, Company B, 1/7 Cav. After the death of his platoon leader and most of his platoon, Savage found himself outnumbered, surrounded and cut off from the rest of his battalion. His swift action and successful leadership of the "Lost Platoon" resulted in many enemy casualties. He demonstrated personal bravery as he called for supporting artillery fire within 50 meters of his location and fought back a number of attacks throughout his platoon's isolation. For his actions that day, he received the Distinguished Service Cross.

Savage reflected on persistent criticism of his platoon leader's actions in pursuing the enemy, becoming separated from the rest of his unit (which created the Lost Platoon). "The lieutenant (LT Henry Herrick) was technically and tactically proficient but did not have experience," Savage recalled. "The lieutenant's mistake was that he did not analyze the consequences of his decision."

Savage said his platoon moved as a well-trained infantry platoon but spotted the enemy moving down a dry creek bed; Herrick pressed forward to intercept them. Herrick's platoon had 27 people, but three did not belong to the platoon: the medic, the artillery forward observer (FO) and the mortar FO. Savage said that during the exchange of fire, the radio was shot up and jammed open in its frequency. Herrick, the platoon sergeant, the artillery FO and the mortar FO were wounded or dead.

"Artillery saved us from annihilation, but training put us in position to be able to use artillery," Savage declared.

**Marm** – Then-2LT Marm was platoon leader of 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, Company A, 1/7 Cav. During the Battle of Ia Drang, he single-handedly attacked an enemy position. When shot in the jaw, he modestly summarized, "That ended my day," but his Medal of Honor (MoH) citation recounts several examples of conspicuous gallantry, some despite being severely wounded. The epitome of a leader, "Marm's selfless actions reduced the fire on his platoon, broke the enemy assault and rallied his unit to continue toward the accomplishment of this mission," according to the MoH citation.

This courageous soldier offered as a leadership point that communication was very important.

**Sugdinis** – As one of the speakers for 2/7 offering lessons-learned about the battle at LZ Albany, Sugdinis criticized his leadership's decision-making that day. Commanding Company A 2/7 during the Battle of Ia Drang, Sugdinis said that when the fighting ended at LZ X-Ray Nov. 16, his unit was ordered to clear out of that LZ, as B-52s were on their way from Guam and there had to be at least two kilometers empty of friendlies around the target area. On the way to the next LZ, Sugdinis said 2/7's mission was to check for/recover a downed pilot,<sup>3</sup> then go to LZ Albany. Sugdinis said they didn't have a mission at LZ Albany; they were just told to go. His leadership point here was that Soldiers should ask for more information to ensure they are clear about their mission.

Despite the lack of a clearly defined mission, Sugdinis calmly and effectively maneuvered Company A 2/7 as his company led 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in its movement from LZ X-Ray to LZ Albany. As the spearhead, Alpha Company provided security for the battalion command when the rest of the unit was cut off by the North Vietnamese.

Sugdinis also objected to the assertion by Moore and Galloway in their book *We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young* that he had ordered the grass hut burned that likely had alerted the NVA to the Americans' presence. "I did not order that," he declared. "We [my unit] left the hooch intact."

As the B-52s were making their bombing runs on the Chu Pong Massif, LT D.P. "Pat" Payne, the reconnaissance platoon leader, was walking around some termite hills when he came upon a resting North Vietnamese soldier. Payne jumped on the PAVN trooper and took him prisoner. Simultaneously, about 10 yards away, his platoon sergeant captured a second PAVN soldier. As word of these captures reached him, battalion commander LTC Robert McDade ordered a halt as he went forward from the rear of the column to interrogate the prisoners personally, accompanied by his command group. The prisoners were policed up about a hundred yards from the southwestern edge of LZ Albany.

McDade then called his company commanders forward for a conference, most of whom were accompanied by their radio operators, and this is where Sugdinis said McDade erred. Alpha Company (Sugdinis' company) moved forward to LZ Albany, accompanied by McDade and his command group. Delta Company, which was next in the column following Company A, held in place, as did Charlie Company, which was next in line. Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC) followed, and Company A, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, brought up the rear of the column. The effect was that the American column was halted in open terrain and strung out in 550-yard line of march. Most of the units had flank security posted, but the men were worn out from almost 60 hours without sleep and four hours of marching. The elephant grass was chest high, so visibility was limited. The column's radios for air or artillery support were with the company commanders. It was at this point the NVA ambushed them.

Sugdinis was also critical of his command's denial of his request for reconnaissance by fire. "If I was able to still recon by fire [as they approached LZ Albany], this would have caused the enemy to disperse and would have killed many of them," Sugdinis said. "And the LZ Albany disaster would not have happened."

**Lawrence** – Promoted shortly before the battle, then-1LT Lawrence served as the executive officer for Company D 2/7 Cav at the Battle of Ia Drang. He had been the recon-platoon leader 20 days earlier. Wounded during the intense fighting at LZ Albany, Lawrence was awarded a Bronze Star. His book, *Reflections on LZ Albany: The Agony of Vietnam*, is reviewed in this edition of **ARMOR**.

Lawrence's leadership point was "Trust your gut" – his intuition had told him that the "Green Wall" alongside their corridor of approach to LZ Albany was perilous. The Green Wall referred to an area of small trees and elephant grass. The NVA had allowed the Americans to walk past them as they lay camouflaged in the grass and collapsed on them from all sides as they were strung out in the corridor and into LZ Albany itself. Payne and his sergeant had caught the two NVA soldiers, but three had gotten away and reported to their headquarters – Lawrence believed they were NVA recon. As the Americans were vulnerable, the Green Wall "erupted" with an NVA ambush.

Another leadership point from Lawrence was to perform repetitious training so that actions in combat are automatic. "There's not *too much* training that goes on in the U.S. Army," he emphasized.

Lawrence also said that McDade had called ceasefire because he thought his battalion's Company C was firing on them – he didn't realize it was NVA – but Lawrence saw NVA coming at him from the Green Wall, so he ignored his battalion commander in battle. Lawrence wryly said he didn't recommend that, but he said he couldn't follow McDade's ceasefire order.

**Alley** – As the platoon leader for HHC's communications platoon, Alley led his men under fire from North Vietnamese troops at LZ Albany. After being separated from friendly lines, Alley guided a group of mostly wounded soldiers to the artillery position at LZ Columbus. For his valor, Alley received the Silver Star. He is the author of *The Ghosts of the Green Grass*, also reviewed in this edition of **ARMOR**.

Alley emphasized that HHC consisted of all noncombatants at that time and that 2/7 Cav was the "oh shucks battalion." "We were a green, green unit; we had not trained together; we didn't know each other," Alley said.

A battalion of 500 had shrunk to 300 Soldiers by November 1965, as it was the monsoon season in Vietnam and troops were getting malaria and trenchfoot. Many of the lieutenants were beginning to get sick. By the end of October 1965, 2/7 had a new battalion commander; new S-3, S-2 and S-4 officers; plus two new company commanders.

As much as 2/7 Cav had a leadership vacuum, Alley saw a strong leader at 1/7 Cav. He said that after the battle for LZ X-Ray, reporters came to see Moore. "This stern, stoic man, a man of men, teared up when talking about the heroism of his Soldiers," Alley said. "This taught me that you can love your men."

As far as his own part in leading wounded soldiers to safety and escaping LZ Albany, Alley said he crawled all the way to LZ Columbus. Since he and the wounded men with him were outside the perimeter, he feared being shot by friendly fire. "This was the longest night of my life," Alley said.

**Gwin** – Another author among the group, Gwin demonstrated valor in personally closing with and killing enemy soldiers during the harrowing events at Ia Drang. As the executive officer of Company A 2/7 Cav, he personally

repelled a number of attacks on the company's command group once he arrived at LZ Albany. He was awarded the Silver Star for his valor at Ia Drang. He chronicled his experiences in *Baptism: A Vietnam Memoir*.

As Sugdinis summarized, the battle intensity was such that the most Purple Hearts were awarded for this "one day, one battle": 250 Purple Hearts.

## Operation Desert Shield/Storm

Operation Desert Shield began after the Iraqi army occupied the small oil-rich country of Kuwait Aug. 2, 1990. Kuwait appealed to the international community for help. President George H.W. Bush deployed U.S. forces into Saudi Arabia and urged other countries to send their own forces; an array of nations joined the coalition, the largest military alliance since World War II. Most of the coalition's military forces were from the United States, with Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and Egypt as other leading contributors.

An aerial and naval bombardment began Jan. 17, 1991, continuing for five weeks. This was followed by a ground assault Feb. 24. This was a decisive victory for coalition forces, who drove the Iraqi military from Kuwait and advanced into Iraqi territory. The coalition ceased its advance and declared a ceasefire 100 hours after the ground campaign started. Aerial and ground combat was confined to Iraq, Kuwait and areas on Saudi Arabia's border.

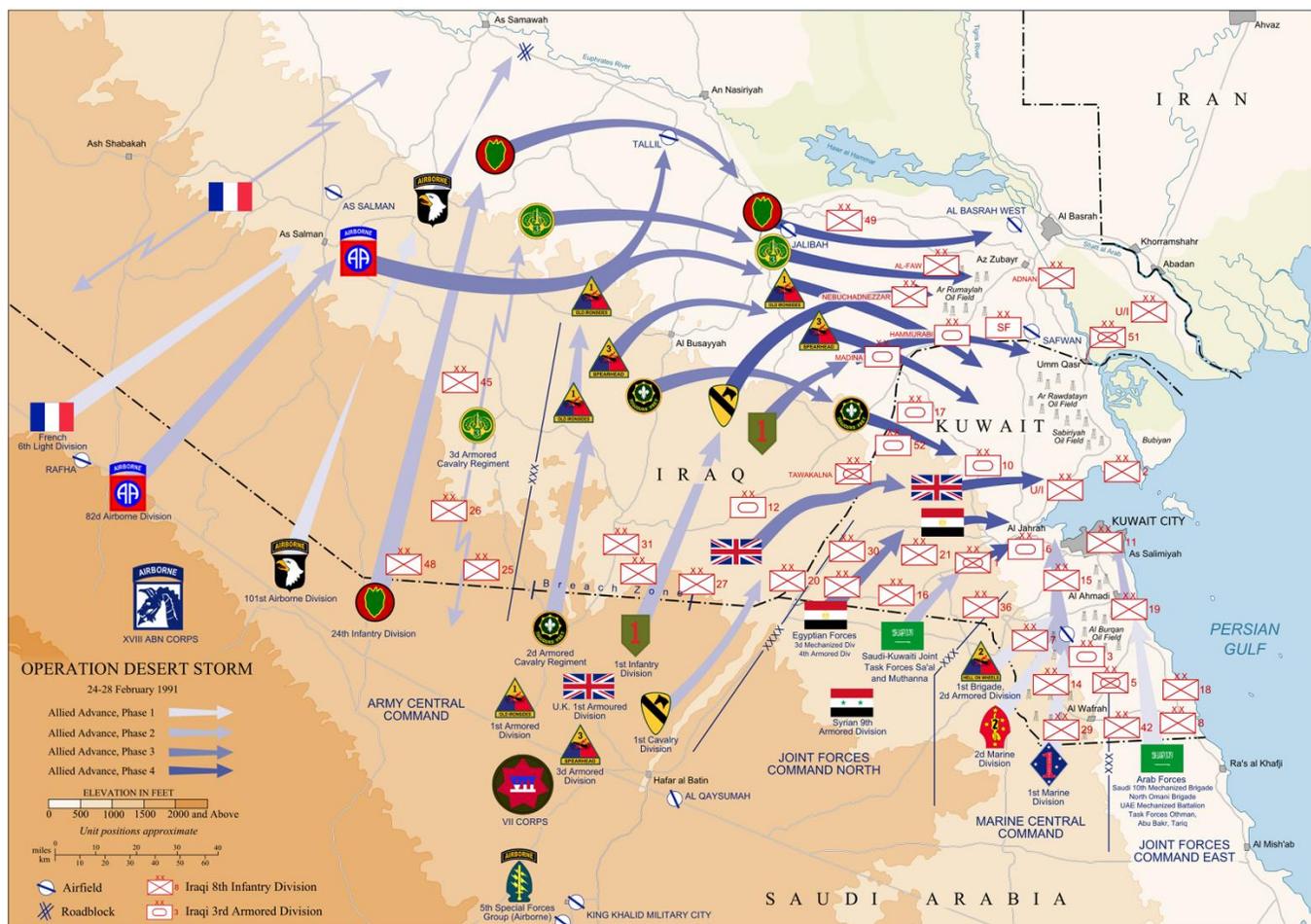
To be clear, *Operation Desert Shield* was the U.S. operational name for the coalition buildup of forces and Saudi Arabia's defense from Aug. 2, 1990, to Jan. 16, 1991. *Operation Desert Storm* was the U.S. name of the conflict from Jan. 17, 1991, through April 11, 1991. *Operation Provide Comfort* was the name for the Southwest Asia ceasefire April 12, 1991, and follow-on actions through Nov. 30, 1995.

After diplomatic negotiations with Saddam Hussein failed, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 678 Nov. 29, 1990, which gave Iraq until Jan. 15, 1991, to withdraw from Kuwait and empowered states to use "all necessary means" to force Iraq out of Kuwait after the deadline. A coalition of forces opposing Iraq's aggression was formed, consisting of forces from Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Kuwait, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Portugal, Qatar, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Spain, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Although they did not contribute any forces, Japan and Germany made financial contributions totaling \$10 billion and \$6.6 billion respectively. U.S. troops represented 73 percent of the coalition's 956,600 troops in Iraq.

After the air campaign, which was dubbed "Shock and Awe" by U.S. leaders and the news media, the main ground offensive began. Several tank battles took place, but apart from that, coalition troops encountered minimal resistance, as most Iraqi troops surrendered. First Kuwait was liberated, then coalition troops moved into Iraq. The war's ground phase was officially designated Operation Desert Saber.

Elements of 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, directly attacked into Iraq Feb. 15, 1991, followed by in-force attacks Feb. 20 that led through seven Iraqi divisions caught off guard. From Feb. 15-20, the Battle of Wadi Al-Batin took place inside Iraq; this was the first of two attacks by 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. It was a feint attack, designed to make the Iraqis think that a coalition invasion would take place from the south. The Iraqis fiercely resisted, and the Americans eventually withdrew as planned back into the Wadi Al-Batin. Three U.S. soldiers were killed and nine wounded, with one M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle turret destroyed – but they had taken 40 prisoners and destroyed five tanks, and successfully deceived the Iraqis. This attack led the way for the XVIII Airborne Corps to sweep around behind 1<sup>st</sup> Cav and attack Iraqi forces to the west.



**Figure 2. Map of Operation Desert Storm ground operations Feb. 24-28, 1991. Shows allied and Iraqi forces. Special arrows indicate the American 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division moved by air and where the French 6<sup>th</sup> Light Division and American 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment provided security. (Map by Jeff Dahl; used under license)**

On Feb. 22, 1991, Iraq agreed to a Soviet-proposed ceasefire agreement. The agreement called for Iraq to withdraw troops to pre-invasion positions within six weeks following a total ceasefire, and for monitoring of the ceasefire and withdrawal to be overseen by the United Nations Security Council.

The coalition rejected the proposal, but said that retreating Iraqi forces wouldn't be attacked and gave 24 hours for Iraq to begin withdrawing forces. On Feb. 23, fighting resulted in the capture of 500 Iraqi soldiers. On Feb. 24, British and American armored forces crossed the Iraq-Kuwait border and entered Iraq in large numbers, taking hundreds of prisoners. Iraqi resistance was light; only four Americans were killed.

Shortly afterward, the U.S. VII Corps, in full strength and spearheaded by 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR), launched an armored attack into Iraq early Feb. 24, just to the west of Kuwait. It took Iraqi forces by surprise. Simultaneously, the U.S. XVIII Airborne Corps launched a sweeping "left-hook" attack across southern Iraq's largely undefended desert, led by U.S. 3<sup>rd</sup> ACR and 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Mechanized).

### Battle of 73 Easting

An example of the speed and surprise U.S. armored forces brought to the battlefield was exemplified by the Battle of 73 Easting. On Feb. 26, 1991, U.S. armored forces from VII Corps squared off vs. the Iraqi Republican Guard's Tawakalna Division's 18<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Brigade and 37<sup>th</sup> Armored Brigade. The battle was later described in a documentary of the battle as "the last great tank battle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century."

The Battle of 73 Easting refers to the armored-combat action that took place in the final hours of 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR's covering-force operation. During the battle, four of 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR's armored-cavalry troops – Troops E, G and I, with Troop K contributing to Troop I's fight (totaling about 36 M1A1 tanks) – defeated two enemy brigades. (An "easting" is a north-south coordinate line measured in kilometers and readable on Global Positioning System receivers.)

On the one hand was 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR, a 4,500 man reconnaissance and security element assigned to VII Corps. It consisted of three ground squadrons, an aviation (attack helicopter) squadron and a support squadron. Each ground squadron was made up of three cavalry troops, a tank company, a self-propelled howitzer battery and a headquarters troop. Each troop comprised 120 soldiers, 12-13 M3 Bradley Fighting Vehicles and nine M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks. The 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR's three squadrons consisted of about 4,000 soldiers.

Opposing them were the two Iraqi brigades, each consisting of between 2,500 to 3,000 soldiers.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR's job was to advance east as a forward scouting element, led by cavalry scouts in M2A3 Bradleys equipped with highly advanced thermals to detect enemy positions. Following closely behind were M1A1 Abrams tanks covering them from the rear, ready at a moment's notice to move forward and engage the enemy. The 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR's mission was to strip away enemy security forces, clear the way of significant defenses and locate the Republican Guard's defensive positions so they could be engaged by 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division armored forces and artillery.

On the night of Feb. 23-24, 1991, as described previously, VII Corps raced east from Saudi Arabia into Iraq in a maneuver later nicknamed the "Hail Mary." The corps had two goals: cut off Iraqi retreat from Kuwait, and destroy five Republican Guard divisions near the Iraq-Kuwait border that might attack Arab and Marine units moving into Kuwait to the south. Initial Iraqi resistance was light and scattered, and 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR fought only minor engagements until Feb. 25.

However, moving through the Republican Guards' security area along 70 Easting the morning of Feb. 26, 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR encountered Iraq's heavily armored Tawakalna Division in the north and 12<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Armored Division in the center and south. All Iraqi units occupied well-constructed defensive emplacements and had prepared alternate positions that enabled them to reorient to the west to face VII Corps' attack. Despite extensive aerial and artillery bombardment by U.S. forces, most defending Iraqi units remained effective. Sandstorms slowed 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR's movement throughout the day, restricting visibility to as little as 400 meters (1,300 feet).

Near the east-west coordinate line 00 Northing, 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR's Eagle Troop received fire from an Iraqi dismounted outpost, a dug-in Iraqi ZSU-23-4 and several occupied buildings in an Iraqi village. The American scouts returned fire with their tanks and Bradleys, silenced the Iraqi guns, took prisoners and continued east three more kilometers. More enemy fire came in and was immediately returned.

*(Editor's note: Eagle Troop's actions at 73 Easting are the subject of a book review in this edition of **ARMOR: Fires of Babylon** by Mike Guardia. The perspective of Eagle Troop's commander, then-CPT H.R. McMaster, is available in an e-paper, "Battle of 73 Easting," posted to Donovan Research Library's collection, [http://www.benning.army.mil/Library/content/McMasterHR%20CPT\\_Battleof73Easting.pdf](http://www.benning.army.mil/Library/content/McMasterHR%20CPT_Battleof73Easting.pdf).)*

The operation escalated into a full-out battle as Eagle Troop maneuvered to 70 Easting. Heavy combat then spread to the south as Troop I closed the gap between the two squadrons and joined the fight. Troop G's attack to the north of Troop E made contact with defending units farther east, and combat there became intense. Fighting continued into darkness as the Iraqi division commander reinforced 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade with his 9<sup>th</sup> Armored Brigade in the Troop G zone.

The 12 M1A1 tanks of Eagle Troop destroyed 28 Iraqi tanks, 16 personnel carriers and 30 trucks in 23 minutes with no American losses. Then Eagle Troop crested a low rise and surprised an Iraqi tank company set up in a reverse slope defense. The Iraqi troops mounted the first determined defense 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR had encountered in its three days of operations, but they were destroyed by the better-trained and better-equipped American troops.

The Battle of 73 Easting and the movement-to-contact south of the battle brought 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR's covering-force mission for VII Corps to its conclusion. During the operation, 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR covered the advance of three U.S. divisions in turn, moved 120 miles in 82 hours and fought elements of five Iraqi divisions. The Battle of 73 Easting fixed the southern

forces of the Iraqi Republican Guard Corps and permitted the VII Corps commander to launch 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division into the depths of the Iraqi defenses and on into Kuwait.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR, which advanced between the Iraqi 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division and the Tawakalna Division, was the only American ground unit to find itself significantly outnumbered and outgunned. Nonetheless, 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR's three squadrons, along with 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division's two leading brigades, destroyed two Iraqi brigades. In moving to and through the Battle of 73 Easting, 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR and 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division's lead brigades destroyed 160 tanks, 180 personnel carriers, 12 artillery pieces and more than 80 wheeled vehicles – along with several anti-aircraft artillery systems – during the battle. The equivalent of an Iraqi brigade was destroyed at 73 Easting; it was the first ground defeat of the Republican Guard. Within 24 hours, most of the other Iraqi brigades were gone.

The coalition's advance was much swifter than U.S. generals had expected. On Feb. 26, Iraqi troops began retreating from Kuwait after they had set its oil fields on fire (737 oil wells were set on fire). American, British and French forces continued to pursue retreating Iraqi forces over the border and back into Iraq, eventually moving to within 150 miles of Baghdad before withdrawing back to Iraq's border with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

One hundred hours after the ground campaign started, on Feb. 28, Bush declared a ceasefire, and he also declared that Kuwait had been liberated.

On March 10, 1991, 540,000 U.S. troops began moving out of the Persian Gulf.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> "Viet Cong" was what Western sources called the National Liberation Front, the political organization of the People's Liberation Armed Forces of South Vietnam that fought the United States and South Vietnamese governments during the war.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. estimates of American deaths at LZ X-Ray were 79 killed and 121 wounded; LZ Albany: 155 killed, 124 wounded and four missing; LZ Columbus: three killed and 13 wounded; four helicopters shot down, 55 damaged. The NVA claimed that U.S. casualties totaled somewhere between 1,500 to 1,700 soldiers killed. On the other side of the body-count "ledger," the United States reported the bodies of 634 NVA soldiers were found in the vicinity of LZ X-Ray and estimated that 1,215 NVA were killed a distance away by artillery and airstrikes. Six North Vietnamese soldiers were captured. Six PAVN crew-served weapons and 135 individual weapons were captured, and an estimated 75-100 weapons were destroyed. For LZ Albany, between 403 (body count) and 503 NVA soldiers were killed, and at LZ Columbus, at least 27 NVA soldiers were killed. North Vietnamese figures for their own casualties were 559 killed and 669 wounded. Both sides' estimates of their opponent's casualties are likely inflated. Galloway thought the battle at LZ X-Ray claimed 80 men dead and 124 wounded, "many of them terribly," and that the death toll for the entire battle was 234 Americans killed and perhaps as many as 2,000 North Vietnamese soldiers.

<sup>3</sup> Sugdinis' unit found the downed helicopter but the canopy was open and they did not find the pilot. He said the pilot's remains are unrecovered to this day.

## Acronym Quick-Scan

**ACR** – armored-cavalry regiment

**FO** – forward observer

**HHC** – headquarters and headquarters company

**LZ** – landing zone

**MoH** – Medal of Honor

**NVA** – North Vietnamese Army

**PAVN** – People's Army of Vietnam