

MONOGRAPH OF:

CPT REMBERT A. EDWARDS

BASED ON EXPERIENCES IN OPERATION DESERT STORM

IOAC 2-92

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As the scout platoon leader for the 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry, 197th IN BDE (M)(S), my unit arrived in Saudi Arabia on 1 September 1990. Although the 197th was a separate brigade, it was not deployed as such, but as the 3rd DBE of the 24th Infantry Division out of Fort Stewart, GA. For five and a half months, we trained. By the time we were called into action, we were at a high proficiency level on everything from individual tasks to Task Force maneuvering.

When Operation Desert Storm was launched on 24 February 1991, 2/18 was on the west flank of the 24th ID(M) and the last U.S. mechanized force on the west flank (See Annex A). The only U.S. forces further to the west were the 101st Air Assault and 82nd Airborne divisions. Our mission, as part of the 24th ID, was to seize objectives located on the six lane highway that ran along the Euphrates River Valley down into Kuwait. Once we had seized our objectives, we were to establish blocking positions on the highway to cut off the resupply of Iraqi forces in Kuwait.

At 1500 hours, on 24 February 1992, we crossed the Iraqi border enroute to defeat the Iraqi Army. After moving continuously for about nine hours, at approximately 0200 hours, our Task Force reached PL Lion, which was just short of OBJ Brown 1, our intermediate objective (See Annex B). Immediately following a USAF close air support attack by A-10's, the scout platoon was sent forward to "get eyes" on OBJ Brown 1. With near zero illumination from the moon, and a sudden change in terrain from a totally flat desert to a series of steep wadis, movement nearly halted. After two

hours of much confusion and difficult maneuvering, the scouts arrived on OBJ Brown 1, just as dawn began to break. We reported no activity on the OBJ, as no enemy personnel or vehicles were found. Our immediate task was to establish screening positions to the east and west to ensure there were no forces coming on the OBJ as we cleared it. We cleared the surrounding area mounted, but we did not clear the buildings that were on the OBJ. The Task Force, moving much faster now that it was light, began to arrive around 0630 hours. My platoons moved out to conduct our next mission, which entailed moving to our west flank and linking up with the 101st Air Assault Division. As the Task Force rolled onto the OBJ, eleven Iraqi soldiers came out of a building and surrendered. By 0700 hours, the objective was secure, and by 0845 hours link up with the 101st was complete.

For the next nine hours, four of my platoon's vehicles were in an assembly area with crews resting while two vehicles, including my own, were awaiting new transmissions at the Combat Trains location. With only one transmission on hand, work began on my vehicle while the track belonging to SSG Jones, my junior squad leader, was towed to the Field Trains location. While my track was being worked on, I was able to get a couple of hours of sleep, but my driver and track commander worked diligently to fix our vehicle.

At approximately 1800 hours, on 25 February, our Task Force began to move again. The Task Force was already under way as the last bolts were being tightened on my track. By the time I had caught up with the rest of the scouts and gotten out in front of the Task Force, darkness had fallen, and this night was the same as the

previous one. There was no moon! Our mission at hand was to follow along a route marked by our Brigade's tank battalion to attack position Kelley, our launching point for our assault onto OBJ Guard. OBJ Guard was our final objective before establishing BP 101, which was our Brigade's blocking position of the six-lane highway to the north (See Annex C).

Although the route was marked with yellow flashing lights, the darkness of the night and the number of vehicles traveling this route made the Task Force movement difficult. Finally, at 1000 hours on 26 February, we reached attack position Kelly. The Task Force quickly moved into a small assembly area and conducted maintenance as LTC Olson met with the Brigade Commander, COL Reid, to coordinate the final plans prior to the Brigade attacking.

At 1300 hours on 26 February, the scout platoon moved out ahead of the Task Force. As we moved out of the attack position enroute to the Line of Departure (LD), the scout platoon encountered very soft, mushy, ground. Thinking we were just crossing a creek bed, we traveled deep into this terrain before realizing it was not suitable for the Battalion Task Force to pass. My platoon was ordered to return to the attack position as the Task Force was going to take a different route to the LD. It was at this point that we learned just how bad the terrain was. As my platoon attempted to turn around, two of my vehicles became stuck in the mud. These two vehicles, as it would turn out, would not return to my control again until the cease fire was announced because recovery vehicles were unable to get to their location. The recovery of these vehicles was done by the individual crews digging themselves out with

shovels. In addition, a third vehicle of the scout platoon was located in the Battalion field trains because it was awaiting a new transmission. The remainder of this operation was conducted with only three scout platoon vehicles.

We arrived at the Line of Departure just as dusk approached. This was the point where we were to deploy into our battle formation and assault our final objective. There were a few small problems, however, in our Task Force proceeding as planned. The terrain had turned very wet and soft, similar to that which my platoon had encountered earlier, and traffic was limited to the roads across the desert. Attempts at traveling cross country were halted after several tanks and other vehicles became stuck immediately upon leaving the trails.

A second problem was the direction the roads were leading across the desert. Our map reconnaissance showed that the roads only headed north, but our objective was to the northeast. It was at this point, LTC Olson, the Task Force Commander, sent the remainder of my platoon forward to find a route that would take us to our objective. As we proceeded forward, our attempts to find a direct route were failing, and the distance between us and the Task Force was increasing. Realizing we had no support, LTC Olson, sent forward the Advance Guard Company (TM Dawg) to assist us in the event that we made contact with enemy forces.

As our element moved farther and farther north, trafficability became worse. LTC Olson, who had followed behind TM Dawg, decided that the road had become impassable for any more vehicles,

and ordered the rest of the task force back south, with instructions to travel further to the east before heading north again.

Meanwhile, my platoon had reached what appeared on the map as a hard surface (blacktop) road that would lead us to our objective. At first, I thought we had come to a dirt road with a berm on either side and the map was incorrect about the road. I did not realize exactly what we had discovered until we dismounted and reconned across the second berm. It was only then that I discovered the paved road and that the two berms were actually speed bumps emplaced by the enemy's engineers. After a few more minutes, TM Dawg was at our location.

With TM Dawg's arrival came the word from LTC Olson for my platoon to move across the berms and a couple of kilometers to the north to make sure the area was clear of enemy personnel. As we moved forward, all we could see were vehicles traveling along the six-lane highway about four kilometers to our north. As far as enemy personnel in the area, there appeared to be none. With our report, LTC Olson withdrew us back south of the berm, and we began to move our small force to the southeast toward our original objective. As we crept along, I began to receive reports from one of my squad leaders, SSG Little, that he and his crew could see flares and white flashes of light. At this point, I was cautious as to what I would report to higher for a couple of reasons. My men had heard over the BN radio net only about 15 minutes prior that the Marines had taken Kuwait City, so I knew they were eager to see some action themselves. Also, the last time our adrenalin had been this high (when we were allowed to conduct operations along the Iraqi border

prior to the ground war), the platoon sent in spot reports that did not accurately depict the real situation. As SSG Little continued to send these reports, I thought about the source that was sending them. I had been the scout platoon leader for 16 months now, and during that time, I had learned that SSG Little was a particularly professional NCO, and his credibility throughout the battalion was high. Had I not had so much confidence in SSG Little, I may not have taken to heart the reports I was hearing because I was only a couple of hundred meters from his vehicle, and I had not seen any of what he reported. I reported SSG Little's reports to the BN CDR, and his reaction was much like my initial reaction. He told us to continue moving toward our objective and to keep our eyes open.

The next report dismissed my thoughts that we were making things up because just as SSG Little reported it, I too saw it. A truck full of people was driving without any lights along the road that we had been following. The truck was coming toward us on the paved road. When I sent this report higher, I was told to disregard it, because it was probably just Bedouins. The truck drove right past (a couple hundred meters) and continued traveling west. No sooner had I received the word to disregard the vehicle, we found ourselves in the middle of a flock of sheep. This made me believe that the truck was full of Bedouins. We turned our formation to the south to bypass the sheep and then north again to the berms before getting back on course. As soon as we returned our formation to the berm, we spotted six stationery vehicles on the horizon to our left front. By this time, LTC Olson had received word from the BDE commander to treat all vehicles operating without their lights as

enemy. With this information, LTC Olson had our formation to conduct a left flank to orient our force toward the vehicles. This put us with approximately 16 vehicles on line. My three vehicles were on the east flank of Delta Company. Once in position, we were given permission to fire warning shots at the nearest vehicle to our location. We fired, but there was no indication of a response. The TC (track commander) for my vehicle brought my attention to what appeared to be white flashes through our night vision devices. Moments later, we realized these white flashes were actually the muzzle flashes from the enemy's small arms weapons.

To solicit a response from the vehicles, LTC Olson ordered the lone tank in our formation to engage one of the enemy vehicles. The response was not exactly what we had expected -- multiple explosions began occurring, but none that were directed at us. The vehicle was a truck full of ammo that was now on fire and igniting the munitions. As I continued to look through my thermal night site (UAS 11), I began to pick out a few personnel moving around on the objective.

Our next course of action was to suppress the objective with MK19 fires. As I continued to observe through my night site, I reported that we were still only receiving a minimal response. The BN FSO, CPT Eisminger, had been working on getting us fire support. We had sent our mortars and the battery of field artillery that was trailing our element along the new route with the rest of our task force, so our support was limited. After about 20 -30 minutes, artillery began falling on the objective from the battery in support of our sister Infantry battalion located 5-6 kilometers to our east. It

was at this time that I observed through my thermal night site 200-300 personnel running across the objective toward the northwest where Tallil Airfield was located. My request to the BN FSO was to shift the artillery fires "left 1000" to cut off their withdrawal. However, this adjustment of fires was too great because of the positioning of the artillery. The maximum adjustment the artillery could provide us was "left 500". With several communication exchanges over the radio and the time it took to deliver the fires, the artillery had a minimal effect on our objective.

Once the fires were complete, LTC Olson gave the order for TM Dawg to assault across and clear the objective, with my platoon screening to protect its right flank. We moved forward on line and crossed the berms. Once across the berms, we discovered enemy dug-in positions in a linear defense along the paved road. For the next few hours, Delta Company cleared bunkers to its front, while my platoon began discovering position after position extending to our east. We began to work on our own, clearing bunker after bunker. All crews dismounted their tracks except for drivers and track commanders. The tracks were used to overwatch the bunkers as the dismounted teams went in to clear them. For approximately four hours, we searched. All enemy personnel appeared to have departed the area but had left numerous weapons and supplies.

At about 0300 hours, LTC Olson told me to bring my men into TM Dawg's assembly area to allow us a couple hours of sleep because he anticipated having to send us out later in the morning for follow on operations. As we pulled back to TM Dawg's area, we ignited some demo we had rigged to a bunker full of mortars. A fire caused

by the explosion could still be seen burning as I put my men to rest. Three hours later, we were up and at it again only our job was easier as dawn had already begun to break.

As we were provided the light of day, the speed in which we were able to clear the objective area increased ten fold. With great initiative and aggressiveness, the soldiers in my platoon acted upon the skills that they had been taught and trained. Before we had received word to move on to our next mission, the scout platoon had taken 23 enemy prisoners of war, cleared 100 plus bunkers, and captured and destroyed numerous enemy weapons and equipment.

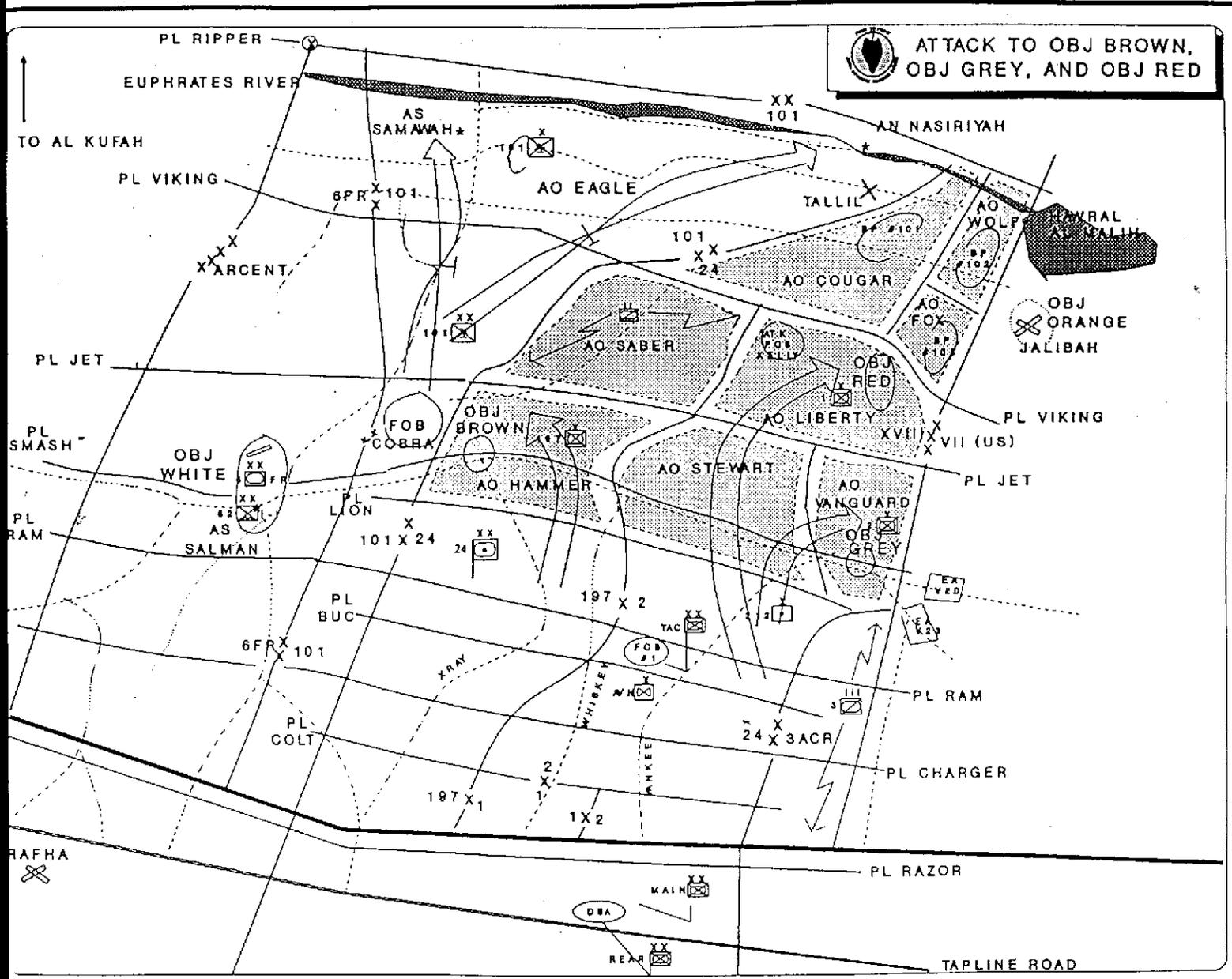
#### Lessons Learned:

(1) In a mechanized unit, one should always have his BN mortars as far forward as possible to support the lead element. I believe that if we had brought even a section of our mortar platoon along the same route traveled by the scouts and TM Dawg, we could have destroyed the enemy in greater numbers and in a quicker manner. Also, with the illumination capabilities of the mortars, we could have detected much earlier exactly what we were up against on our objective. Due to the problem we were having of getting vehicles stuck, I can understand LTC Olson's decision in not bringing any more forces along the route we had traveled.

(2) Soldiers must be able to navigate mounted in a desert environment using only a map and a compass. Although the use of the global positioning system (GPS) played a major part in navigating

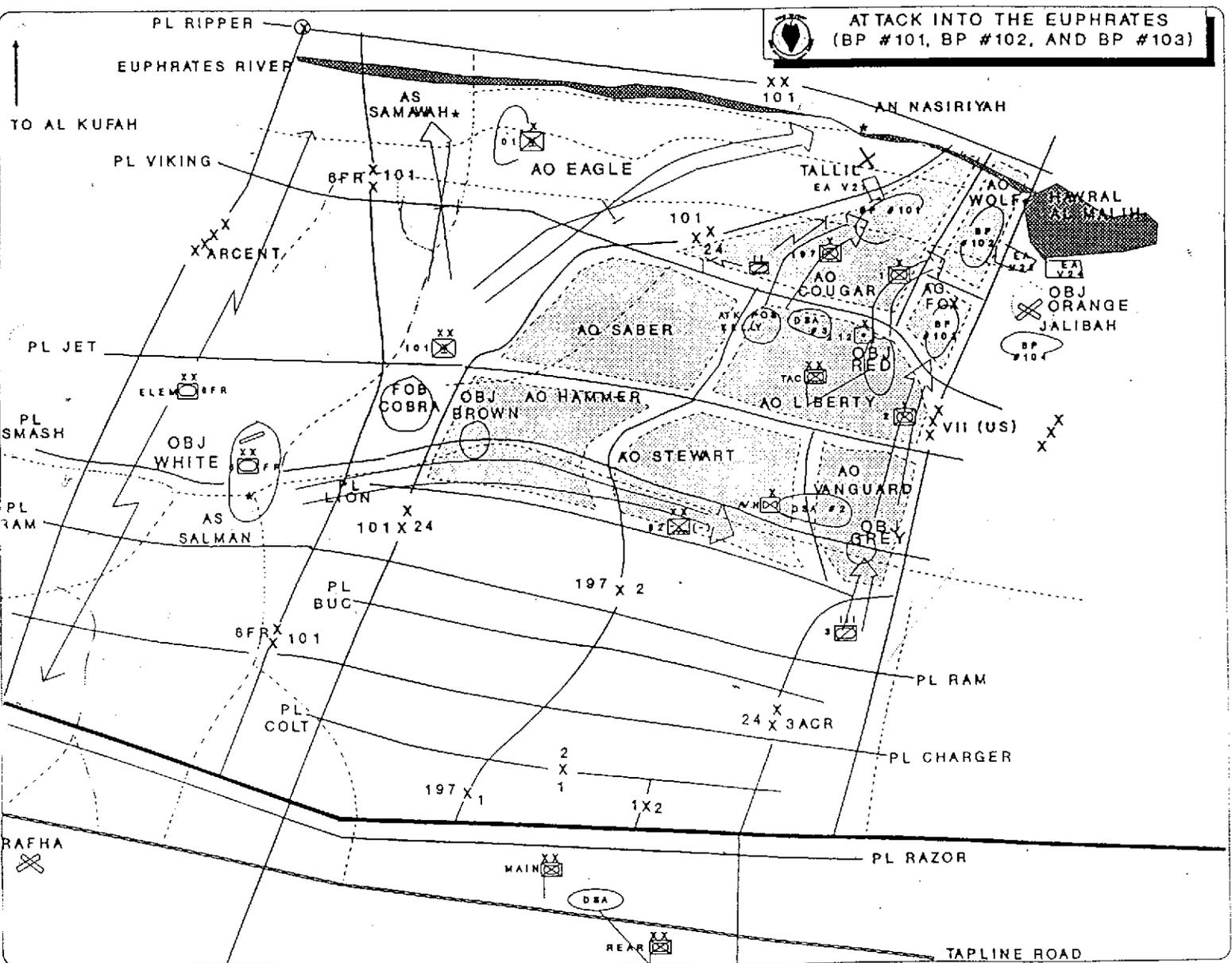
our task force some 360 kilometers to our final objective, there were times when elements only had a map and compass. If the person navigating the vehicle does not use his odometer (or if it is inoperable) and/or his compass is being thrown off by the radios on the track or the track itself, disorientation in the desert is a given.

(3) If one trains his soldiers to standard during peace time, they will excel in times of combat. The soldiers within the scout platoon of 2-18 IN performed in a manner far beyond my expectations.



**ATTACK TO OBJS BROWN, GREY AND RED**

- \*FOLLOWING CLOSE AIR SUPPORT AND ARTILLERY PREPARATORY FIRES, 197TH BDE, SUPPORTED BY DIVARTY, ATTACKED TOWARD OBJ BROWN, CLEARED AO HAMMER, LINKED UP WITH THE 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION, AND ESTABLISHED BLOCKING POSITIONS TO THE EAST AND WEST.
- \*FOLLOWING 3-41 FA BN FIRES AGAINST ENEMY EARLY WARNING RADAR SITE, 2ND BDE ATTACKED TOWARD OBJ GREY, CLEARED AO VANGUARD, AND ESTABLISHED BLOCKING POSITIONS TO THE EAST.
- \*FOLLOWING SEIZURE OF OBJ GREY AND OBJ BROWN, 1ST BDE ATTACKED THROUGH AO STEWART TOWARD OBJ RED, CLEARED AO LIBERTY, AND ESTABLISHED BLOCKING POSITIONS EAST AND NORTH.
- \*2/4 CAV FOLLOWED 1ST BDE THROUGH AO STEWART AND SCREENED DIV LEFT FLANK ALONG PL VIKING.
- \*DIVISION SUPPORT COMMAND (DISCOM) ESTABLISHED FORWARD OPERATING BASE #1 (FOB #1). DIVISION SUPPORT AREA #2 (DSA #2) WOULD LATER BE ESTABLISHED IN AO VANGUARD. WHILE ONLY OPERATIONAL FOR ABOUT 12 HOURS, IT SERVED AS THE PRIMARY LOGISTICS BASE TO SUPPORT THE ATTACK INTO THE EUHRATES RIVER VALLEY.
- \*36TH ENGINEER GROUP CONTINUED TO MOVE WITH FORWARD ELEMENTS IN EACH BRIGADE ZONE TO MARK COMBAT TRAILS AND IM-



**ATTACK TO BP #101, BP #102 AND BP #103**

\*1ST BDE CONDUCTED DIVISION MAIN ATTACK TO SEIZE BP #102, ESTABLISHED AO WOLF AND BLOCKED IRAQI LINES OF COMMUNICATION FROM THE EAST. THE COMMANDING GENERAL AND DIVISION ASSAULT CP COLOCATED WITH 1ST BDE TACTICAL CP DURING THE ATTACK. COUNTERBATTERY ARTILLERY FIRE FROM 1/41 FA BN AND 212TH FA BDE SILENCED FOUR IRAQI ARTILLERY BATTALIONS.

\*2ND BDE ATTACKED TO SEIZE BP #103. ESTABLISHED AO FOX AND PREPARED TO CONTINUE THE ATTACK TO THE EAST TOWARD BP #104 AND JALIBAH AIRBASE.

\*197TH BDE ATTACKED FROM OBJ BROWN TO ATTACK POSITION KELLEY. THE BDE CONTINUED THE ATTACK TO SEIZE BP #101 AND ESTABLISH AO COUGAR. BLOCKED IRAQI LINES OF COMMUNICATION FROM THE WEST AND NORTH.

\*2/4 CAV CONTINUED TO SCREEN DIVISION'S WEST FLANK.