

6-41 FA HISTORY DURING OPERATIONS DESERT SHIELD AND DESERT STORM
compiled by Captain Andrew G. Glen

This document is the unofficial summary of events that occurred in the Steel battalion during its deployment to Southwest Asia to assist in liberating the country of Kuwait from Iraqi aggression. Once in Saudi Arabia, the battalion traveled over 800 miles through 3 countries, fired 2000 rounds of artillery on enemy positions, supported a cavalry squadron and an armor brigade, destroyed over 20 enemy vehicles, and suffered not a single casualty.

I. Notification

a. The notification came on 8 November 1990 at Grafenwoehr Training Area, a day before our first field training exercise. Using the opportunity afforded us at Grafenwoehr, the battalion canceled its planned training and concentrated on small arms ranges and howitzer gunnery. The battalion planned a five day field training exercise and fired over 3000 rounds to include multiple battalion fire for effect missions.

b. By order of the Commanding General, the battalion redeployed from Grafenwoehr using multiple relays of heavy equipment transporters (HET) from throughout the division over a three day period.

2. Preparation and Deployment.

a. On 20 November 1990, the battalion arrived back in Kitzingen. The battalion ammunition section accomplished the significant task of repositioning the unit's basic load of wartime ammunition from its storage location in Kitzingen to a staging area at Grafenwoehr. Although we were home for an unexpected Thanksgiving, we knew we'd not be home for Christmas.

b. An unidentified fly date required us to stay prepared every day until we flew. Highlights during this time included learning the ropes on many new areas of the logistics field: MILVANS, shipment dates, manifests, and TAT (To Accompany Troops) equipment.

c. The equipment was railloaded on 28 November 1990, and we waited for the planes to take us away. The Commanding General presided over our send-off ceremony at the gymnasium on Larson barracks, and the Kitzingen community said "Farewell" to the Steel Battalion.

d. 14 December 1990 we flew to Saudi Arabia.

3. The Intermediate Staging Area.

a. The battalion arrived in Saudi Arabia on planes that landed at Dhahran and King Fahd Airports. After an Arab bus ride the battalion reformed at our ISA (Intermediate Staging Area), the "Dew Drop Inn," outside of the man-made port of Jabal. There we waited for our equipment and marching orders.

b. Our vehicles arrived after about a week of waiting in the ISA. We marshalled them in our sand motor pool and painted our tracks sand colored.

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c. On 22 December 1990, we put our tracks on board the fleet of newly acquired civilian HETTs and proceeded on a 150 mile road march to the west into the northeastern desert of Saudi Arabia, destination TAA Seminole.

4. Tactical Assembly Areas (TAAs).

a. By Christmas Eve 1990, we had closed in TAA Seminole. Set up in the brigade perimeter, we immediately started setting up house. We learned the lessons of bedouin tents, how to move in battery wedges without advance parties, what a field artillery raid might look like, and how to really fire Duel Purpose Improved Conventional Munitions (DPICM).

b. Waiting for war, the battalion spent most of its time learning to train in the desert. Given the mission early on of direct support to 2 Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment (2-2 ACR), we immediately started coordinating and interacting with them. It was the start of a very friendly, professional relationship that came to its fruition on the battlefield in Iraq. This newly formed battle group executed a number of regimental and brigade CPXs from the first TAA. With the rest of 210th FA Brigade, the battalion also ventured to King Khalid Military City (KKMC) with all FDCs and one howitzer per platoon on a live fire shoot. The trip to KKMC lasted about 10 days. C Battery distinguished itself as the first unit in the battalion to successfully fire "Killer Junior."

c. At 170145 (local) Jan 1991, the United States initiated the air war with Iraq. With the onset of war, we learned what "reaction" was all about. First there was the reaction to an enemy "Armored-Brigade" attacking LOGBASE A. Twenty-four hours later, we learned that the attack was nothing more than a very effective PYSOPS campaign that convinced enemy and friendly alike. Then came the chemical reactions. We learned to go to mask only, broke our first actual M256 kits, and then went all clear. Although bothersome at the time, these reactions did much towards keeping the Steel Battalion in a ready posture. We kept our equipment uploaded and our newly formed "Go-bags" handy.

d. Soon after our defense of LOGBASE A, we were given orders to road march West to Forward Assembly Area (FAA) Richardson. This 100 mile road march proved to be a maintenance shakedown that probably worked out every bug in the M109 system. But soon after closing in FAA Richardson on 21 Jan 1991, we managed to fix all equipment and plan for the battle against the famed Iraqi "Republican Guard." An interesting discovery at FAA Richardson was that in the flat, open desert maps were unnecessary. All one needed was 1:100,000 grid lines overlaid on any mapsheet or blank page. When combined with the newly issued Global Positioning System (GPS) navigational aids, we were soon able to navigate in the desert more precisely than any other army in history-all without maps.

e. During the period of 21 January 1991 to 14 February 1991, the battalion waited in FAA Richardson for word on the impending ground war. We had two very realistic FTXs during which the entire Regiment, with the FA Brigade included, marched over 110 kilometers in one day of "training." The Steel battalion learned then how to keep up with the Cavalry, refuel quickly, establish a battalion movement formation, and fire missions during battalion

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level hipshoots. On 11 February 1991 the battalion received a Q-36 radar section from E Btry 333 FA, Fort Lewis Washington. "Reaper" proved to be a valuable asset in training and in war.

f. As the ground campaign became imminent, the Steel battalion, and all of VII Corps, repositioned to within 15 kilometers of the Saudi-Iraqi border. By the evening of 16 February 1991, 6-41 FA was set in its attack position alongside 2-2 ACR, screening the Saudi-Iraqi border 70 miles WEST of the country of Kuwait. On 22 February, with Iraq desperately trying to trade political space for time, VII Corps and the Steel battalion received the order to start the ground campaign the next morning.

5. War. The plan all along for VII Corps was to completely flank the Iraqi frontal defenses in Kuwait, travel deep into the Iraqi desert, and destroy the famed Iraqi Republican Guards. Our mission was to provide direct support fires to the 2-2 ACR's covering force mission. In effect we were one of the two lead artillery battalions in the attack of any that came from USAREUR. A day by day account of operations by the Steel battalion during 100 hours of combat follows:

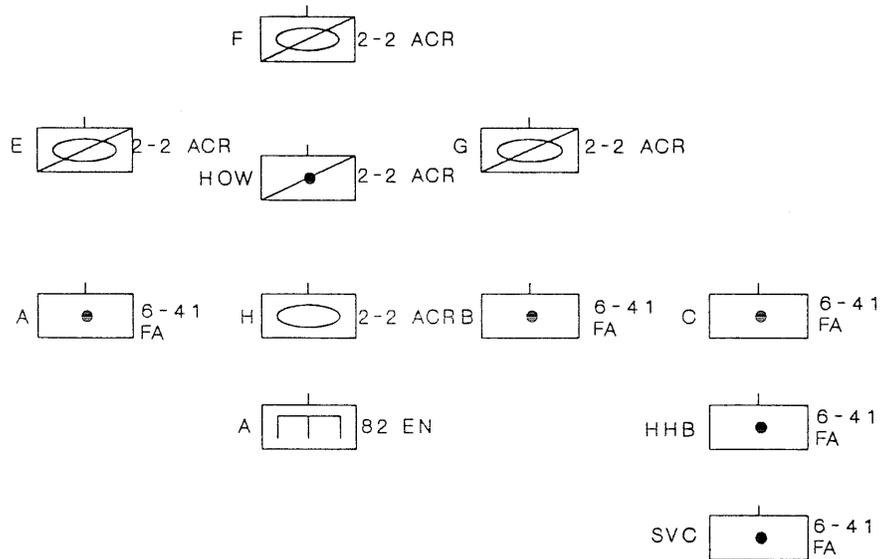
a. 23 February 1991: The squadron was organized for battle with three cavalry troops (EAGLE, FOX, and GHOST), a tank company (HAWK), an organic howitzer battery (CAISSON, OPCON to Steel), an attached engineer company (AVENGER) and the Steel battalion in direct support. The batteries within the battalion were designated as follows: A battery--"Adam," B Battery--"Badger," C Battery--"Celtic," Headquarters Battery--"Hatchet," and Service Battery--"Marne Dog."

At H-hour, precisely 1330 hours, Steel executed its portion of the Regimental preparation on Iraqi observation positions (OPs) at the border. The ground war had begun. Celtic and Caisson fired copperhead under the watchful eye of OH-58Ds, while Adam and Badger unloaded battery sixes at other OPs. At the end of the prep, Steel and Cougar moved forward and Avenger established breaches through two 10-15 foot high sand berms along the border. By 1420 hours, Adam had crossed into Iraq behind Eagle troop, making A Battery the first Third Infantry Division unit to enter Iraq. By 1530, the entire squadron battle group had crossed the border and assumed hasty defensive positions south of PL BUD, 10 kilometers into Iraq. At 1630, the squadron received orders to advance no further that day. No enemy contact was encountered nor was there any evidence of enemy activity in the area.

b. 24 February 1991: At 0700 hours, Steel accompanied the squadron during a deliberate zone reconnaissance 15 kms forward to PL BUSCH. The squadron reached PL BUSCH and established hasty defensive positions quickly. There was no enemy contact in the squadron's zone. At 1000 hours, regiment confirmed that there would be no further movement until 25 Feb. However, due to the significant, unanticipated success of ground attacks into Southern Kuwait by elements of two Marine divisions, the squadron was ordered to attack in zone to the North, orienting on Objective MERRILL. At 1430, the squadron crossed the line of departure across PL BUSCH in a diamond formation with Fox leading, Eagle on the left, Ghost on the right and Hawk in reserve. Caisson moved in the center of the diamond, about 2 kilometers forward of Hawk in order to provide immediate fire forward. The three firing batteries of Steel

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were on line with Hawk, with Adam on the left of Hawk, Badger on the right of Hawk, and Celtic to the right of Badger. Hatchet and Marne Dog followed in trail behind Celtic. Reaper traveled with Badger. Steel TOC co-located with Cougar TOC and enjoyed the protection of Cougar's Bradley Fighting Vehicles that secured the TOC Elements. A schematic of the formation would look like this:



At roughly 1530 hours, Fox's lead scout platoon, 8-12 kilometers in front of the main body, reported contact with dismounts who were later identified as elements of a company size security echelon. After a brief exchange of fire, the lead scout platoon accepted the surrender of an enemy platoon. Thanks to excellent intelligence and incessant attacks by A-10's on Objective MERRILL between 1300 and 1600 hours, subsequent intermittent fire fights between Cougar scouts and enemy infantry produced mass surrenders in squadron zone.

On orders from regiment to refuel, and due to the lingering presence of small groups of enemy infantry, we halted and consolidated along PL DIXIE, approximately 60 kilometers north of PL BUSCH. AT 1730 hours, the squadron received orders to halt along PL DIXIE until the next day. Enemy resistance was now broken on MERRILL. The day ended with contact so light that the Steel battalion did not fire a round.

c. 25 February 1991: At 0630, the Steel battalion, in concert with the 210th FA BDE, started the regiment's day with a preparation on Objective MERRILL. The battalion fired sixty-four rounds of RAP (Rocket Assisted Projectile) and then march-ordered quickly to resume our attack in the squadron's diamond formation at 0640. As the squadron moved across Objective MERRILL, an additional 30 EPW's surrendered. After moving another 25 kilometers to PL LITE, the squadron continued to make light contact and accepted more enemy surrenders. At 1400 hours, Ghost troop engaged and destroyed a MTLB equipped Republican Guards reconnaissance company. The battalion assisted in the destruction with ninety-six rounds of RAP that destroyed a number of enemy bunkers. Regiment ordered the squadron to halt along PL BLACKTOP, 70 kilometers from PL DIXIE, at roughly 1500 hours despite no enemy contact in zone at the time other than the processing of an

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additional 100 Enemy Prisoners of War (EPWs). At 1600, the Steel battalion was given a change of mission to become DS to 1st Squadron. As night was beginning to fall, the Steel battalion moved 30 kilometers south into WAR EAGLE country (1st Squadron, 2nd ACR). We closed into their formation at dusk, and spent the rest of the night preparing to support this squadron. Throughout the night the battalion witnessed the detrimental effect of MLRS fires as they shot forward towards Republican Guards security elements groping in the night. Our mission was again changed at 2100 hours. Steel was to return to direct support of Cougar early the next morning to support the continuation of the regiment's attack to the east.

d. 26 February 1991: At 0330 hrs on a very dark and rainy morning, the Steel battalion re-oriented north to mate up with Cougar who had a morning attack straight east. It was the start of a very busy day. On the move north, the battalion received its first taste of traveling through the desert after the US Army had turned it into a battlefield. Secondary explosions, and sounds of fighting on the horizon provided a very eye-opening prelude to the upcoming events of this day. By 0700 hours the battalion had caught up with Cougar as they started a very deliberate attack east beginning at the PU 50 easting. Sporadic incoming artillery was reported all over the zone. At about 0900, Reaper was given the order to cue in zone and the battalion fired 32 rounds of DPICM on what was believed to be a mortar position. Between 0900 and 1200, the squadron received intermittent orders to move East in zone with limits of advance being first the 52, then the 55, then the 57 Eastings. At approximately 1200 hours, the squadron received a warning order detailing the regiment's new mission as the VII Corps reserve and shifting the squadron's zone south so that 3AD could pass to the east on the squadron's northern flank. This left the squadron with a zone only 9 km wide and Eagle and Hawk were subsequently shifted South, leaving Ghost leading Fox in the North and Eagle leading Hawk in the South. Steel's batteries remained 5 kilometers behind the lead elements in this slow attack, with the battalion leap frogging one or two batteries at a time to retain a firing capability.

At 1520, the squadron abruptly received the order to continue the attack in zone to the East with a initial limit of advance of the 65 Easting. The squadron attacked East at 1525. After experiencing no contact between the 60 and the 65 Easting, squadron asked for and received permission to continue to the 70 easting. In the Southern portion of the zone, at approximately the 68 Easting, Eagle encountered prepared defenses in zone with dug-in infantry and tanks in revetted positions. Sporadically laid anti-personnel and anti-tank minefields were identified and bypassed in both the Eagle and Ghost zone. Steel assisted Eagle's advance with a number of DPICM missions that destroyed 3 BTRs and about 50 dismounts. Between the Steel and Eagle's fires, the squadron destroyed over 20 tanks and other armored vehicles, as well as several bunkers and supporting infantry. This was later identified as a security echelon of the Tawakalna Republican Guards Division. Eagle then moved up on line with Ghost along the 70 Easting after this brief action, but was still located in the midst of the enemy defenses.

During this attack, visibility was 800-1000m due to a sandstorm; but, thermal sights could easily identify enemy out to 3000 meters. This provided the squadron with an incredible advantage throughout the fighting. While halted along the 70 Easting, the squadron received an ineffective artillery

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barrage and requested and received permission to move forward to the 73 Easting. Artillery landed within 200 meters of Celtic. Reaper queued their radar, acquired 3 targets and reported. The battalion fired counterfire missions at the targets, and the enemy artillery was silenced. 3d Squadron also received artillery and withdrew to the 68 Easting, forcing Eagle to move scouts back in order to refuse the squadron's right flank by keeping contact with Iron troop.

Upon moving forward to the 73 Easting, both Eagle and Ghost acquired targets moving in their zones. The majority of these targets were elements of the Tawakalna Division and the 12th Armored Division continuing to defend or fleeing North in zone. Steel, with Caisson, engaged numerous enemy armor targets forward of the 73 Easting with over 1600 rounds of cannon fire between the hours of 1700 and 2200. One fire mission of particular importance was an immediate suppression mission initiated by Ghost FIST that prevented enemy T-72's from overrunning Ghost's 3d Platoon. Another mission initiated by the Eagle FIST fired 388 DPICM rounds and 12 MLRS rockets on armored vehicles moving beyond direct fire range. By 2230 hrs, contact was fading when Eagle FIST called in fires on what appeared to be bunkers and revetments. The DPICM fired on these bunkers produced devastating effects. As the FIST adjusted the Fire For Effect to cover more of the bunkers, numerous secondary explosions were sighted. The next morning, Eagle FIST drove to the area and assessed the following Battle Damage Assessment: 27 Ammunition Bunkers, 3 tanks, 4 BMPs, 3 SA-9s, 35 trucks and jeeps, and 5 Fuelers. Based on analysis, reports and EPW interviews, it is estimated that the squadron and Steel were responsible for the destruction of a mechanized brigade with armor support that night.

As the fire missions died, 2 ACR was assigned the mission of passing the 1st Infantry Division through its zone. 210th FA Brigade was assigned a reinforcing mission to 1st Infantry Division Artillery, and through the night, the battalion coordinated so that in the early morning it could move east on the heels of the lead brigade of the Big Red One.

e. 27 Feb. The morning brought the move east to follow with the 1st Infantry Division. Initially the battalion was assigned a reinforcing mission to 1-5 FA, DS to 1st Brigade. Very soon after linking up in their zone, the battalion was shifted to a reinforcing mission of 4-5 FA and the 2nd "Dagger" Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division. Moving as fast as possible, the Dagger Brigade, with Steel in tow, advanced over 70 kilometers throughout the day. At this point the battalion treated its first and only casualty. The casualty was a wounded Iraqi 2LT (once a retired SGM who was called up for duty) who had a wounded arm and severe blood loss. He was eventually medically evacuated and survived. The Steel battalion entered the newly freed country of Kuwait at 1145 hrs on a full speed pursuit of fleeing Iraqi forces. By 1300 hours, the brigade stopped to refuel, re-orient Northwest, and continue the pursuit. Soon after the refuel, a very difficult navigational situation for the whole brigade resulted in the Steel battalion's infamous role as the lead element in the brigade's movement to contact. After a couple of confusing hours, the brigade was able to re-establish its positional control. By the time all was well, a dark, moonless night enveloped the brigade, and all units stopped for the night. Excitement continued though as the entire

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Dagger brigade chain of command met at the Steel TOC (the most forward C2 element in the zone at the time) and planned for the next morning's continuation of the pursuit.

f. 28 February 1991. By 0500, it was evident that a cease fire was close at hand, so the Dagger brigade, with Steel to the rear this time, continued its pursuit the final 40 kms to the northern Kuwaiti-Iraqi border. As the 0730 hour cease fire took effect, the Steel battalion found itself occupied on the eastern side of the Kuwait City--Basra six lane highway, in the midst of an apocalyptic scene of destroyed enemy vehicles that could not escape the Air Force's deadly bombardment. The Steel battalion was perfectly placed to support the Dagger brigade's next mission--guard the cease-fire negotiation site at Safwan air strip.

6. Peace. On the morning of 28 February 1991 the battalion prepared for its fire support role as the reinforcing artillery for the force guarding the negotiation site. We repositioned to within 2 kilometers of the Iraqi border, about 6 kilometers from the airstrip where the coalition forces set forth their conditions for a cease fire. The Steel battalion remained in that position until relieved of its reinforcing mission on 10 March 1991 when it became General Support with the 210th FA BDE and moved 20 miles south. The battalion set up 3 kilometers south of one of Kuwait's many burning oil fields, and awaited word and instructions on redeployment to Kitzingen.

7. CIVIL UNREST.

a. Shortly after the cease-fire negotiations, civil unrest between Iraqi military and civilian forces began to escalate. Instead of redeployment instructions, the Steel battalion was given march orders on 15 March to head northwest as the direct support artillery to 2-2 ACR. The cavalry was assigned the mission of screening the demarcation line along the Euphrates River vicinity AN Nasiriyah and the ancient city of UR.

b. The advance party at KKMC, which had departed the Safwan Airfield 10 March, was recalled. Only a few personnel were left at KKMC to secure equipment and ground for redeployment.

c. Located just southwest of the Iraqi Tallil Airfield, the battalion spent from 24 March to 7 April supporting 2-2 ACR. We witnessed the mass exodus of Iraqi civilians and former military personnel along Highway 8. They were heading for the Safwan Refugee Camp to the east. We also observed many small engagements and firefights between the Iraqi military and civilian forces to our north.

d. Due to the malaria threat near the Euphrates River, the battalion began taking malaria tablets. The 2nd ACR as a whole reported about five contracted cases by 1 April.

e. One of the most startling incidents for the battalion was the unannounced demolition of the ammunition storage area at the Tallil Airfield. The 82d Engineers were tasked to destroy the ammunition to prevent Iraqi military and civilians from procuring more munitions, thus prolonging, the local fight. The demolition was to take place around 1500 hours, but was

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delayed for two days, unknown to us. Finally, at about 2100 hours one night, the earth shook, a shock wave hit us and the sky lit up with a mushroom cloud to at least 1000 feet. Soldiers scrambled for flak jackets, helmets and weapons and headed for the nearest fighting positions. Two more enormous explosions followed with numerous small detonations to last more than an hour.

8. REDEPLOYMENT

a. On 7 April we headed for KKMC with the 2nd ACR and 210 FA Bde. The Steel battalion reentered Saudi Arabia 071333Apr91 with a few cheers. All battalion vehicles closed on our redeployment position, just south of the KKMC Airfield, and immediately began redeployment actions. On 110200Apr91, AFN reported the signing of the official ceasefire treaty.

b. On 280800Apr91, the first plane touched down at the Nurnberg Flughafen. Within twelve hours, every man in the battalion was home.

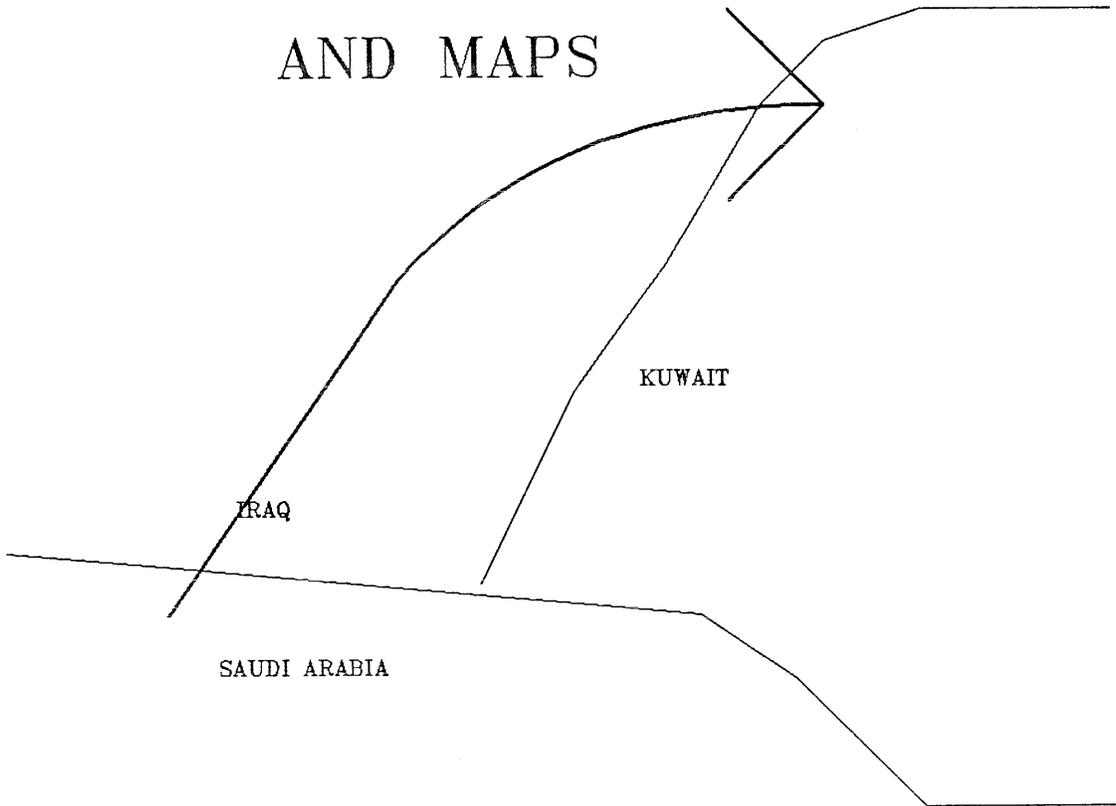
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ELAPSED TIMETABLE OF COMBAT OPERATIONS:

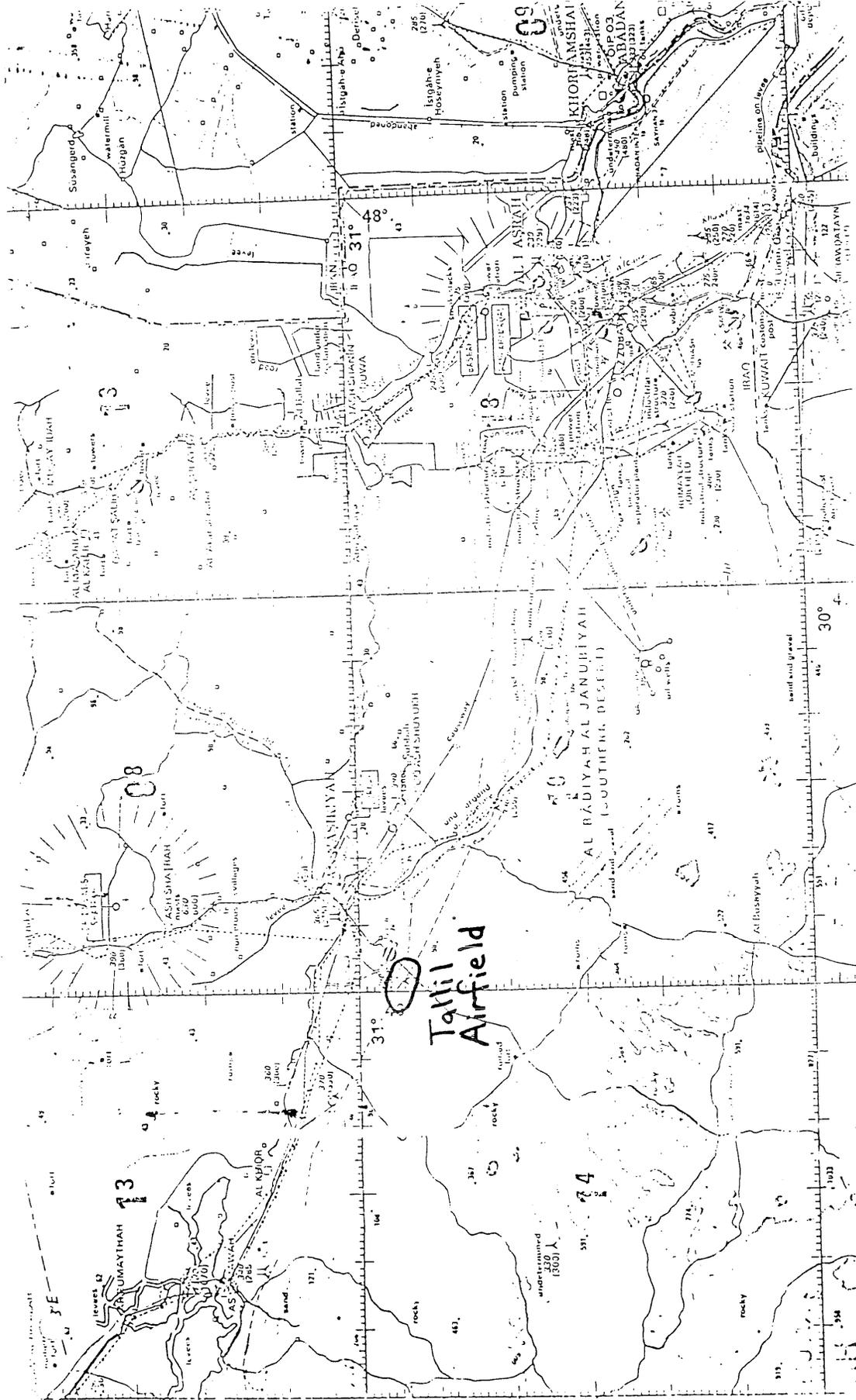
DISTANCE TRAVELED

231330 Feb	H-Hour for initial prep	0 kilometers
231420 Feb	Bn crossed into Iraq	2
241445 Feb	PL Busch	15
241510 Feb	PL Colt	30
241545 Feb	PL Coors	47
241600 Feb	PL Melon	59
241645 Feb	PL Corona	74
250700 Feb	PL Dixie	104
250730 Feb	PL Falstaff	112
250830 Feb	PL Lite	125
251110 Feb	PL Lonestar	133
251145 Feb	PL Smash	145
251400 Feb	DS to War Eagle	160
252020 Feb	DS to Cougar	180
260440 Feb	Move with Cougar	205
262300 Feb	R to 1-5 FA	225
270800 Feb	R to 4-5 FA	255
271145 Feb	Entered Kuwait	276
280730 Feb	Cease Fire initiated	336

II. OPERATIONAL OVERLAY AND MAPS



STEEL IN THE SAND



Tahlil Airfield

AL RADIYAH AL JANUBIYAH
(SOUTHERN DESERT)

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