



# Humanitarian Intervention

Assisting the Iraqi Kurds in  
Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, 1991

Gordon W. Rudd



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A human tragedy

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Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, 1991

*by*

*Gordon W. Rudd*



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# Foreword

The United States Army has a long tradition of involvement in humanitarian relief and other military operations other than war. Beginning in the spring of 1991 it supported Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, a demanding effort hastily organized to provide relief to the Iraqi Kurds who had been brutally suppressed in the aftermath of DESERT STORM and had fled to the mountains. The crisis along Iraq's border with Turkey drew heavily upon the Army's broad experience, and also exposed soldiers to emerging features of the post-Cold War world: ethnic strife, multinational relief and peacekeeping missions, military interdependence with other government agencies as well as with nongovernmental agencies, and the continuous glare of media exposure.

A veteran of PROVIDE COMFORT, Gordon W. Rudd was well positioned to observe and appreciate its complexities. He has carefully documented and described this challenging and precedent-setting operation, as well as innovatively drafted his own charts and maps to address the new organizational aspects of employing joint and multinational formations in ad hoc combinations. American soldiers seem increasingly likely to find themselves deployed for complex operations other than war in distant lands amidst unfamiliar people. If so, Dr. Rudd's thoughtful study will provide a useful record of the Army's experience and a forecast of considerations to be taken into account.

The U.S. Army Center of Military History is pleased to add *Humanitarian Intervention: Assisting the Iraqi Kurds in Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, 1991*, to its inventory of published titles. This work joins an increasing array of publications pertinent to the post-Cold War era. As always, the central figures and true heroes of the account are American soldiers, called upon to endure and sacrifice in the service of their nation.

Washington, D.C.  
6 February 2004

JOHN S. BROWN  
Brigadier General, USA  
Chief of Military History

# The Author

**G**ordon W. Rudd was born in Washington, D.C., and raised and educated in Maryland, Alabama, and northern Virginia. He earned his B.A. degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, popularly known as Virginia Tech; his M.A. degrees from Salve Regina College, the Naval War College, and Duke University; and his Ph.D. degree from Duke University. At Virginia Tech he had enrolled in the Reserve Officers Training Corps and, upon graduation in 1972, received a regular commission in the U.S. Army as an infantry officer. He then served in both infantry and Special Forces assignments in the United States, Panama, and South Korea, as well as in foreign area officer assignments in New Zealand, Lebanon, and Israel. Following his graduate studies he taught military history and Middle East history at the United States Military Academy from 1990 to 1993, also serving in 1991 as the U.S. Army field historian for Operation PROVIDE COMFORT in Turkey and northern Iraq. He subsequently was assigned as a joint service officer to the Operations Division of Land South East, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Izmir, Turkey, serving as a project officer for operations in the former Yugoslavia and spending four months as the NATO liaison officer to the United Nations Command in Bosnia. In 1995 he retired from the Army to take a position as professor of national security studies at the United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico, Virginia, and in 2003 he took a leave of absence to serve as the historian for the U.S. Department of Defense's Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance in Iraq. He is the author of numerous articles on military history and peace operations.



# Preface

This is an operational study of a humanitarian intervention. The setting is the spring and summer of 1991. The Kurds of northern Iraq had revolted against the regime of Saddam Hussein in the aftermath of Operation DESERT STORM, only to be brutally suppressed and forced to flee across a mountainous border into Turkey. In response to the international outcry the United States in early April spearheaded the relief effort designated Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, a joint and multinational endeavor that involved U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps formations as well as military contingents from a dozen other countries. The objectives of the operation were to stop the suffering and dying and to return the refugees safely to northern Iraq.

For a time-sensitive crisis erupting in a remote or hostile area where lives are seriously threatened, the immediate employment of military combat and support formations may be the only way to meet the challenges of the situation and to bring some stability to the region. *Humanitarian Intervention: Assisting the Iraqi Kurds in Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, 1991*, confirms the capacity of military forces, well trained for war, to adapt quickly for assistance/intervention missions without specialized preparation and also work alongside civilian relief agencies attempting to assist refugees, requiring significant cooperation between the two groups. Operation PROVIDE COMFORT achieved its assigned tasks in an effective and efficient manner. Thereafter it offered a model for the larger and more demanding American-led efforts that followed in Somalia, in Haiti, and in the Balkans. In fact, much of the PROVIDE COMFORT experience was integrated in those operations, except when the objective shifted from assistance/intervention to nation building—an ambitious endeavor not attempted in PROVIDE COMFORT.

Work on the volume began indirectly as a tasking from the Army's chief of military history, Brig. Gen. Harold W. Nelson, who sought to provide historical support during the initial months of Operation PROVIDE COMFORT. As an Army lieutenant colonel, I deployed to Turkey to be the Army field historian for the humanitarian assistance/intervention in the spring and summer of 1991, during which time I taped over a hundred interviews and collected relevant archival material that I used to produce a forty-page monograph. A copy of this monograph is available at the U.S. Army Military History Institute (MHI), Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Independent of my work for the U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH), I had enrolled in Duke University's Ph.D. program. Selecting PROVIDE COMFORT as the topic, I carried out significant additional research and in 1993 finished a comprehensive dissertation that formed the basis for this book.

I received CMH's offer to review and publish my study of a humanitarian intervention in 1997. Based on chief historian Jeffrey J. Clarke's salient recommendations, I revised portions and reduced the overall length of my original manuscript. Subsequently, while working closely with my editor, I made further archival, organizational, and graphical modifications. I organized the records amassed during Operation PROVIDE COMFORT and the subsequent research phase as the Rudd PC Collection and placed them in MHI's custody. Details on these records, as well as the approach used in my citations, are in the bibliography. In developing the supporting graphics, I planned their design to provide information in a new format with maximum utility for both military and general audiences.

In most military histories the purpose of the supporting graphics, especially maps, is to portray movement, maneuver, and the clash of friendly and enemy forces, often referred to as "big blue arrows." The graphics for this study of a humanitarian intervention, however, contain few big blue arrows. Despite the extensive movement into theater and within northern Iraq and the frequent maneuver at battalion level and below, Operation PROVIDE COMFORT neither required large-scale maneuver nor encountered significant enemy engagements. But the ad hoc combinations of air and ground forces in PROVIDE COMFORT, both joint and multinational, generally well tailored to the operation on short notice and in the end so central to its success, became the main focus of this study. To make this clear and compelling to the reader, I designed figures incorporating both maps and line diagrams of the formations employed to capture the many organizational adjustments over the course of the operation. Whereas military maps normally portray formations with doctrinal symbology, line diagrams may render details either with symbols or with text. Mindful of two audiences, the military professional accustomed to the efficiency of unit symbols and the general reader more comfortable with the clarity of text, each figure consists of a map with unit symbols and two versions of a line diagram—one with the symbols used on the map and one with explanatory text. Some redundancy was required to record the sequence of events and the multiple facets of the PROVIDE COMFORT story.

Over the years that this volume was in the making, I encountered a great many individuals who deserve recognition for their guidance, assistance, and support. Many of the PROVIDE COMFORT participants and relief workers shared pivotal insights and graciously nurtured my understanding of the events, and federal and academic historians offered their perceptive comments and constructive suggestions. I am deeply indebted to all whom I now recognize: Lt. Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA; Col. David R. Bissell, USA Ret.; Col. John M. Bond, USA Ret.; Lt. Col. Ronald J. Brown, USMCR Ret.; Col. Allan K. Campbell, Canadian Forces; Maj. Gen. Donald F. Campbell, USA; Jeffrey J. Clarke; Jeff Crisp; the late Frederick C. Cuny; Maj. Gen. Lee A. Downer, USAF Ret.; Col. Hayward S. Florer, Jr., USA Ret.; Brig. Gen. Leslie L. Fuller, USA; Lt. Gen. Jay M. Garner, USA Ret.; Col. Thomas R. Genetti, USA Ret.; Col. Kenneth W. Getty, USA Ret.; Col. Donald G. Goff, USA Ret.; Rose L. Greaves; John T. Greenwood; Daniel F. Harrington; Ronald B. Hartzler; Maj. Gen. James L. Hobson, USAF Ret.; I. B. Holley, Jr.; Mehrdad R. Izady; General James L. Jamerson, USAF Ret.; General James L. Jones, USMC;

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At the Center of Military History I benefited from the magnanimous support of two successive chiefs of military history, Brig. Gen. John W. Mountcastle and Brig. Gen. John S. Brown. Others deserving of mention are the federal colleagues and civilians who generously answered my or my editor's myriad queries during the research and editing phases; the Marine Corps' visual information specialists who were an invaluable resource as I developed my supporting graphics; and CMH's talented publishing professionals who contributed immensely to the final product. I am most appreciative to Rita M. Baker; Olga Bilyk; Joanne M. Brignolo; Terrance V. Busch; Susan Carroll; Paul T. Dilick; Jack Dyer; John W. Elsborg; Tanya Gilly; Steve J. Hansch; Daniel L. Haulman; Catherine A. Heerin; Maj. Amelia G. Johnson, USAR; Darren R. Jones; Kenneth C. Kan; Don Krumm; Herbert A. Mason, Jr.; Robert L. Milburn; Al Miller; Lt. Col. Frederick W. Mooney, USAF; Julie Novick; Col. George F. Oliver, USA; Patricia E. Parrish; Rolf Sandbakken; Glenn R. Schwegmann; Lori Shinseki; Gloria J. Walker; Lois E. Walker; A. Timothy Warnock; Tom Y'Blood; and Ridha Zargouni.

And for making the PROVIDE COMFORT story more compelling by giving me permission to use their personal photographs, I extend my sincere thanks to Lt. Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA; Morton I. Abramowitz; Farhad Barzani; Rita Bhatia; Col. David R. Bissell, USA Ret.; Col. Allan K. Campbell, Canadian Forces; Maj. Gen. Donald F. Campbell, USAR; Susan E. Carroll; Gene and Charlotte Cuny on behalf of their son Fred Cuny; Maj. Gen. Lee A. Downer, USAF Ret.; Scott Friends; Lt. Gen. Jay M. Garner, USA Ret; Talat Gilly; Lt. Gen. Maurice Le Page, French Army Ret.; Maj. Michael F. Litzelman, USAR; Ruud G. Manning; Giw and Kurdistan Mukriyani; Col. Richard M. Naab, USA Ret.; Julia V. Taft; Lt. Gen. William P. Tangney, USA; and General Anthony C. Zinni, USMC Ret.

I, of course, would be remiss if I did not give special acknowledgment to two people who warrant particular credit for their assistance with this volume. General Garner, whom I had the honor of working with again in the aftermath of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM when he led the U.S. Department of Defense's Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance in Iraq, took an extensive interest in my project and was always ready to spend time with me. He answered questions too numerous to count, provided advice and information, and reviewed the relevant chapters and figures on Joint Task Force Bravo activities. And Joanne Brignolo, my editor at the Center of Military History, was absolutely tenacious in the quest for verification and accuracy of textual details and sources, ensured that

the narrative was well organized and flowed smoothly, and provided that critical eye to achieve overall precision and consistency. Her unwavering zeal and unflagging commitment to produce a quality product for not only the Army but also the PROVIDE COMFORT participants were exemplary, for which I am most grateful.

I also owe my deepest thanks to my wife, Sevgi Rudd, for her understanding and unstinting support during the years this volume was in preparation. She was the behind-the-scene force that brought stability to my endeavor.

In my reflections I thought seriously about dedicating this volume to the refugee children of northern Iraq, for they were everything an American far from home could ask for in smiling faces. But, on balance, my tribute must go to the military forces that served in Operation PROVIDE COMFORT. They endured the cold and heat, monotonous food, flies and mosquitoes, diarrhea and dehydration, long lines, boredom, and more than a little danger not to wage combat but to save lives. Soldiers such as these should make all Americans proud, soldiers for whom there was no parade.

I greatly appreciate the contributions of everyone involved, but I alone assume full responsibility not only for the interpretations and conclusions reached but also for any errors that may be found in my study of a humanitarian intervention.

Washington, D.C.  
6 February 2004

GORDON W. RUDD

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The work of Col. P. Michael Gish, USMCR Ret. (*CH-46s Arrive With Relief Supplies, 1993*, oil on canvas, 24" x 30"), depicted on p. 87, is from the United States Marine Corps Art Collection.

# Humanitarian Intervention



## The Kurdish Quest

*Good Lord, deliver us from wars and peace conferences.*

—Caleb F. Gates, *Not To Me Only*

Almost half a million Kurdish men, women, and children—hungry, destitute, and huddled in the mountains—captured world attention. Late winter rain and low temperatures caused intense suffering and many deaths, offering dramatic material for an aggressive media. Western leaders, flushed with the recent victory over Iraq in Operation DESERT STORM, had hoped that the Iraqi people would overthrow Iraq's infamous leader, Saddam Hussein. They watched closely as several groups revolted against the government in March 1991.

Instead the uprisings galvanized Baghdad's military forces into a fury of oppression. The Iraqi Army, proven inept at fighting the American-led coalition, resurrected its practice of ruthless suppression of the people. As the atrocities and calamity in Iraq reached enormous proportions, the political leaders of the Free World prepared to take action. When the Turkish and international relief agencies became overwhelmed, unable to provide sufficient supplies and aid, the political leaders turned to their military services to deal with the crisis.

The path that the Iraqi Kurds followed through most of the twentieth century locked them in a violent and constant struggle for survival. Ethnic conflicts based on cultural, racial, and religious differences were decidedly a problem, and with the end of the Cold War emerged as a more dominant source of international discontent. Yet the very tenaciousness of Kurdish culture stemmed from this historic animus and quest.

The nature of the Kurdish conflict is foreign and difficult to understand for those of the more stable and affluent Western states. Each ethnic conflict has its own chemistry. Such conflict can be driven by a surge of nationalism, and that quest is often attributed as the drive behind problems encountered by the Kurds. But such a quest may be more tenuous and complex than many suppose, for there are deeper roots to the Kurdish conflict.

Western states have become involved as outsiders in ethnic conflicts for two competing reasons, self-interest and humanitarian concern. That was notable at the end of World War I and, to a degree, after World War II. The nature of the bipolar world during the Cold War restrained ethnic conflict as an international

problem, although it certainly did not eliminate it. When the Cold War ended in the late 1980s, so did many of the restraints on ethnic conflict. Problems with the Kurds, previously of secondary regional concern, grew in significance. Yet ethnic conflict still had to compete with the more vital concerns of interested nation-states. When the international community gets involved in these conflicts, it is normally with limited objectives and the commitment of limited resources. Such has been the case for the Iraqi Kurds in the 1990s.

The evidence suggests that their primary quest, with internal as well as external aspects, was not nationalism but autonomy. A preliminary grasp of their modern history is essential for understanding their quest. That understanding should include the limitations of a culture making an accelerated advance into the modern era unassisted by a renaissance, a reformation, or the incremental achievements in technology that temper and mature political and social institutions. The remoteness that isolated the Kurds from more developed societies also divided them and placed them on the contentious boundaries of great empires, sustaining the Kurdish martial traits. A combination of such traits and geography did not promote peace and harmony.

## The Land and Its People

Kurdistan, meaning the land of the Kurds, has no exact boundary but generally includes a region from the southern Caucasus, through large portions of eastern Turkey and the mountains of western Iran, to much of northern Iraq and a small section of northeastern Syria (*Map 1*). Kurdistan as such has no unifying history nor has it produced a ruling dynasty, a cohesive government, or a political ideology beyond a limited cultural identity. For many centuries this mountainous region constituted the intersection of three competing empires—Ottoman, Persian, and Russian. The pervading influence of these empires continued into the twentieth century, with the effects of war and diplomacy, despite the rise of nationalism, curtailing Kurdish aspirations.

Geography made the Kurds a mountain people, but their common physical environment also produced strong barriers to national unity. Deep valleys and impassable ridges divided both the land and its people from the center and allowed a decentralized association away from the mountains with outlying lowland groups. This led to a diffusion of Kurdish identity, which resulted in different mores and practices. Illustrative of the inherent complications with the Kurdish language, which lacked its own alphabet and assumed the Turkish, Persian, and Arab alphabets in the respective areas, are the many local dialects. The marked differences in pronunciation made communication difficult among the various Kurdish groups.<sup>1</sup>

Without their own state the Kurds, in comparison to their Turkish, Persian, and Arab neighbors, have been regional outsiders. Their distinctive dress and customs, perhaps more than race, separate them from their neighbors. The majority of Kurds and the Turks and Arabs are Sunni Moslem, whereas the Iranians are Shiite Moslem. The Kurdish language, distantly similar to Persian (Farsi), is not related to



Map I

Turkish or Arabic. Thus the Kurds are distinguished by religion from the Iranians and by language from the Turks and Arabs. Not surprisingly, some contemporary Kurds have argued for the existence of an independent Kurdish nation based on cultural distinctions, a common religion, and a common language, although the evidence does not confirm a cohesive Kurdish language. Yet these factors alone make a poor argument for political independence, especially since the region claimed by the Kurds is intermixed with large numbers of other ethnic groups.

An even greater obstacle to national cohesion has been the tribal nature of Kurdish society. Tribal organizations, the earliest political formations of most cultures, normally give way to larger and stronger associations through the development of common interests and experiences. Nevertheless, both geography and history conspired to limit the growth of such broader ties within Kurdish society,



Mountains of northern Iraq





allowing local culture to remain dominant. Tribal loyalties not only competed with national loyalty but led to conflicts among the tribes, which in turn allowed larger powers to manipulate Kurdish factions against one another.

The powerful neighbors of the Kurds have employed such imperial methods for centuries, continually undermining any potential for Kurdish nationalism. When empire gave way to nation-states in the twentieth century, the latter continued to use tribal loyalties to play one tribe off against another. But the decline of empire provided fertile ground for more than a tribal consciousness. The Kurdish quest for something between autonomy and nationalism became a reflection perhaps of the proliferation of new nations resulting from the World Wars.<sup>2</sup>

## World War I and the Peace Process

Wars and their aftermath offer diplomats complex opportunities. World War I offered more than most. During the war Great Britain, France, Russia, and Italy had entered into a number of secret agreements to divide up the Ottoman Empire. After the war the Paris Peace Conference and related treaties laid the groundwork for some of the most important and far-reaching diplomatic agreements of the twentieth century. Much of that diplomacy affected the Middle East and inflamed the aspirations of many minority groups in the region, to include those of the Kurds.<sup>3</sup>

The Kurds played only a minor role during World War I, but one that would haunt them and certainly complicate their aspirations after the war. When the Young Turks expanded an Ottoman tendency to persecute the Armenians within the Empire, they often used the Kurds as their surrogates. In some respects, the Kurds and Armenians had much in common. Both came from the same ethnic stock and had lived together in Eastern Anatolia for centuries. But religion and culture divided them, and often put them at odds with each other. While the Kurds were Moslem, somewhat nomadic, with strong martial traits, the Armenians were Christian, more urban, with developed commercial traits.

Ottoman persecution caused the Armenians to seek protection from the Russians. That in turn caused the Young Turks to distrust them even more when Turkey and Russia became adversaries in World War I. The ebb and flow of the Turkish-Russian conflict across Eastern Anatolia during the war enhanced the alignment of the Kurds against the Armenians. When the Young Turks began a program to forcibly expel or otherwise relocate the Armenians in 1915, the Kurds were used to help implement it. To a limited degree, the Armenians resisted, with Russian assistance, and committed atrocities of their own against the Turks and Kurds. But the Armenians suffered the most by a considerable margin, with perhaps half of their population in Turkey annihilated by the end of the war. The atrocities perpetrated against the Armenians received significant attention in the Western media and diplomatic circles.<sup>4</sup>

After the war the initial commitment of the allies to President Woodrow Wilson's principle of self-determination and the subsequent breakup of the Ottoman Empire raised hopes for political independence in the minds of many

groups in the Middle East, to include the Kurds. But Wilson clearly supported self-determination for the Armenians but not for the Kurds. As he declared to the Democratic National Committee on 28 February 1919:

I am not without hope that the people of the United States would find it acceptable to go in and be the trustee of the interests of the Armenian people and see to it that the unspeakable Turk and the almost equally difficult Kurd had their necks sat on long enough to teach them manners and give the industrious and earnest people of Armenia time to develop a country which is naturally rich with possibilities.<sup>5</sup>

While Wilson objected to empires in general, his British and French associates objected only to some empires—not theirs or those friendly to them. The British and the French certainly had reservations about nationalism. Furthermore self-determination did not necessarily mean statehood when ethnic and religious groups were intermixed, contentious, and lacked an established political and civil infrastructure for self-rule. Wilson's influence and much of the idealism he inspired died when the United States refused to participate in the League of Nations and the Mandate System designed to pave the way to statehood.<sup>6</sup>

In April 1920 Iraq became a mandate entrusted to Britain. The British wanted the mandate territory to extend north to the contemporary Turkish border. As a result, a potential Kurdistan was divided, with most of the southern half in what is now northern Iraq and most of the northern half in what is now southeastern Turkey. The British, because of their strategic interests in Iraq and Persia, also toyed with creating an autonomous Kurdistan in Eastern Anatolia to achieve a buffer zone with Russia. They sent agents into the region to promote the concept and attempted to make it work with enforced diplomacy. The effort proved too ambitious and inadequately supported.<sup>7</sup>

With the signing of the Treaty of Sevres in August 1920, the British, French, and Italian governments forced the Turkish government in Istanbul to make significant concessions. Article 62 of the treaty arranged for "local autonomy for the predominately Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia as it may be hereafter determined and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia [Iraq]. . . ." Article 64 of the treaty went further, suggesting a Kurdish state provided the Kurds "address themselves to the Council of the League of Nations in such a manner as to show that a majority of the population of these areas desires independence from Turkey. . . ."<sup>8</sup>

A validation of the treaty might have led to an independent but truncated Kurdistan, a state with many Turks yet without Kurdish areas in Iraq, Persia, Syria, or Russia. But a competing Turkish government established in Ankara by Mustafa Kemal, later known as Ataturk, defined the sultan and government in Istanbul as "a captive of the Allies." The population of Turkey agreed, making the most explicit proposal for Kurdish autonomy and independence a flawed document. When France, Italy, and Greece invaded Turkey in a quest for territory, Kemal led an effective Turkish resistance movement against the Christian invaders, a phrase he used to win over many Kurds to the Turkish side of the conflict. In November 1923 Turkish independence was confirmed in the Treaty of Lausanne, repudiating

most of the Treaty of Sevres. The treaty made no mention of Kurdish autonomy or independence, which divided the Kurds more than ever before.<sup>9</sup>

Prior to World War I most of the Kurds lived within the Ottoman Empire. After the war the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire divided those Kurds among the new state of Turkey, the British Mandate of Iraq, and the French Mandate of Syria, making five separate state divisions counting the Kurds in Persia and the new Soviet Union. These nation-states were suspicious of each other and restricted interaction across their borders, which affected their respective Kurds.<sup>10</sup>

The Soviet Union and Syria absorbed their small minorities of Kurds with little fanfare. Turkey had the greatest number of Kurds, but the larger Turkish population, much of it mixed with the Kurds, outnumbered them. This led to a Turkish policy, driven by Kemal Ataturk, to integrate the Kurds and other ethnic groups for the good of the nation-state. In Persia (later Iran), where the Kurds were even more remote and less numerous, a similar approach was implemented. At the end of World War I only in Iraq did the Kurds account for as much as a fourth of the total population. Concentrated in a defined area north of Mosul, they had greater relative autonomy than in the other states and appeared to have the potential for both political and military leverage.<sup>11</sup>

## The Kurds in Iraq

Iraq was a creation of the Western powers. Without the British Mandate, it might never have emerged as a separate political entity. Any geographical unity provided by the Tigris-Euphrates River valleys was offset by the country's three contentious ethnic-religious groups, whose demographics had shifted by the end of the twentieth century. The Sunni Kurds, roughly 17 percent of the population, resided in the north; the Sunni Arabs, accounting for 20 percent, mainly occupied the central portion that includes Baghdad; and the Shiite Arabs, the poorest segment numbering some 60 percent, mainly lived in the south. Religion separates the two Arab groups, while ethnic background divides the Kurds and Arabs. The Sunni Arabs, in their central position, dominated the other two groups. Not surprisingly, their preeminence over time fostered an uneasy and conflict-ridden atmosphere.<sup>12</sup>

The purpose of the mandate was to guide the country toward self-rule, and Great Britain's first order of business was creating a stable political environment. Maintaining stability during this period was also crucial to the development of Iraq's oil wealth, controlled by British companies and investors. To sustain security at limited cost, the British formed a regional army with indigenous personnel, led by British officers and supported by Royal Air Force squadrons.

British officers were responsible for training the Iraqi officers, mainly Sunni Arabs. The British Army set up military schools in Iraq, modeled after their own establishments. Because of limited educational facilities elsewhere in the mandate, these military schools produced most of the indigenous leaders who would later control the country's civil infrastructure as well as its military forces.<sup>13</sup>



Kurdish chiefs, undated

To temper the power of the Iraqi regulars, Britain formed armed levies from other groups, including the Kurds, who reported to British rather than Iraqi officers. Such practices sustained British authority by exploiting the existing differences among the native ethnic and religious groups, and were not dissimilar to the imperial methods of the Ottomans. When any group rebelled, the Royal Air Force habitually assisted the army in suppressing them, a practice continued by the Iraqi Air Force in later years.<sup>14</sup>

In an effort to break down tribal loyalties throughout the country, rightfully seen as regressive, Britain instituted land reform. As in other emerging agrarian societies, ownership previously vested in tribal groups was broken up and shifted to individual ownership, which promised to bind the rural population closer to the government in Baghdad and the modern world in general. But the results were mixed for the Kurds. Strong tribal leaders managed to buy up much of the tribal land, reducing tribal members to peasants even more beholden to their local chiefs, and many of the dispossessed farmers migrated to the larger towns and cities in search of work. In the northern and more remote Kurdish areas there was less migration and the tribal system survived relatively intact. But farther south the growing urban areas, particularly Kirkuk and Mosul, attracted increasing numbers of Kurds in search of a better life.<sup>15</sup>

During the 1930s, when the mandate was phased out and Iraq became a monarchy, Sunni Arab officers dominated both the Iraqi Army and the civil service. Rather than integrate the Kurds and Shiites by sharing power, they tended



Mustafa Barzani (*seated third from left*) and his men

to exploit them. Such practices led to a series of minor revolts, which were suppressed by military force and intensified the fledgling state's existing divisions. Like the empires before, the Iraqi Army attempted to control minority dissent by manipulating Kurdish tribal groups against each other and, as in the past, found the practice useful.<sup>16</sup>

During World War II Kurdish nationalism again made its presence felt, this time under the leadership of the Barzani Tribe. Its chief, Mullah Mustafa Barzani, proved to be a gifted guerrilla leader, leading a series of raids against Iraqi storehouses and police stations in 1943, ostensibly in the name of Kurdish rights. In 1944 the Iraqi Army responded with a retaliatory campaign, eventually deploying thirty thousand soldiers supported by the Iraqi Air Force. Barzani skillfully used the mountainous terrain of northern Iraq to inflict a series of defeats on the invading government troops, frustrating all attempts to extend Baghdad's authority into the region. But in September 1945 the greater numbers and resources of the Iraqi Army finally forced him to withdraw across the border into Iran with ten thousand members of the Barzani Tribe, including three thousand fighters.<sup>17</sup>

During the immediate postwar period the Soviet Union adopted a policy of encouraging the aspirations of minority groups immediately adjacent to its own borders. In January 1946, as part of a larger effort to extend its influence into Iran, the Soviets sponsored an autonomous Kurdish state in northwestern Iran, the Republic of Mahabad, where the Kurds subsequently formed the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI). Most of the Kurdish tribes involved were from Iran, but some came from Iraq, notably the Barzani Tribe. Barzani's reputation as a military leader allowed him to secure a position as a senior general in the new

republic. The Kurdish state was, however, short-lived. On the other hand, the KDPI would survive as an underground party in Iran into the 1990s.<sup>18</sup>

With the United States supporting the Iranian government against what was seen as a Soviet puppet regime, the Iranian Army commenced operations against the Kurdish republic. As in Iraq, the Kurds in Iran used the mountains to make the war difficult for the government regulars, but Kurdish effectiveness was again compromised by continued dissension among the tribes. In the end, greater numbers and resources resulted in an Iranian victory, with the tribal coalition splintering into its constituent parts.<sup>19</sup>

In the aftermath of the conflict, most members of the Barzani Tribe were allowed to return to Iraq. But Barzani himself, with no amnesty from Iraq or Iran, fled to the Soviet Union with five hundred supporters. There he remained for twelve years, relatively impotent. Finally, when a military coup of Sunni Arabs overthrew the Iraqi monarchy in July 1958 and declared Iraq a republic, Barzani sent his congratulations to the new leaders and was invited to return in the hope that he would support national unity.<sup>20</sup>

Following the initial establishment of the Baghdad republic, the Iraqi Kurds formed the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), intending to participate in the new government. Barzani accepted a leadership position within the party, but soon it became apparent that his political skills were limited. Instead the Kurds from the urban areas, notably Jalal Talabani, a lawyer from the southern Talabani Tribe, dominated the KDP. While Talabani's group was prepared to subor-



Jalal Talabani

dinate tribal interests to those of the party, Barzani's group was not. Barzani and many of his followers, as well as other northerners, remained wedded to the tribal system and gradually distanced themselves from the KDP. Nevertheless, the party continued to rely on Barzani's name and reputation for political purposes.<sup>21</sup>

This division among the Iraqi Kurds would haunt them for years. The rural Kurds from the most mountainous regions made the best resistance fighters; the urban Kurds were more politically capable and astute. Working together, they might have made a formidable team, with Barzani, their most charismatic leader, bridging any philosophical gaps. That did not happen. Instead Barzani returned to his tribal base in the north and left the urban Kurds to deal with the new Iraqi regime. The opportunity to present a united front to Baghdad was again the casualty of Kurdish infighting and disunity.<sup>22</sup>

The Kurdish experience with the new regime was disappointing. Promises to share power proved hollow. Once more the Kurds found themselves shut out of national decision making, and Baghdad's manipulation of tribal groups continued. The new rivalry between urban and rural Kurds only made their internal divisions easier to exploit. By 1960 the Sunni Arab military officers had consolidated their power in Baghdad, and the KDP was forced underground.<sup>23</sup>

Open repression of the party offered Barzani the opportunity to begin another resistance movement. Throughout the early 1960s his battlefield successes against the Iraqi Army renewed his charismatic status among the Kurds, and the other tribes began rallying to his banner. He renewed his contacts in the KDP and used the political party to sustain the resistance movement, but not the reverse. Barzani and his followers remained focused on military affairs and wanted little to do with the urban Kurds or any political agenda they might have favored. Raising and sustaining his partisan army had first priority. Consisting of small lightly armed battalions of several hundred men organized along tribal lines, this force became known as the *Peshmerga*, "those who face death."<sup>24</sup>

During 1963 political questions again rose to the fore. Following a military coup in Baghdad, a new administration made overtures to the Kurds, offering them limited autonomy and a role in the new government. Barzani sent Talabani to negotiate with the Iraqi leaders, but the aggressive politician attempted more than Barzani had instructed. In June 1964 Barzani had Talabani, along with other urban Kurds holding key positions, expelled from the KDP. Control of the party shifted to the rural Kurds. But instead of eliminating tribal politics, the party became driven by them.<sup>25</sup>

Rather than have the party work within the framework of national politics, Barzani used it to seek greater autonomy for the Kurds, particularly his own tribe. His demands included a significant portion of Iraq's oil revenues, a matter that Baghdad would not discuss, and so the fighting continued. When the Iraqi government attempted to organize those Kurds who were hostile to Barzani, he was able to brush them off, but he remained unable to focus the Kurds on any specific political objectives.<sup>26</sup>

By 1969 the government had lost patience with the Kurds. To suppress them, Baghdad massed an army of sixty thousand supported by the air force—



the largest formation that the Kurds had ever faced. With about a fourth as many Peshmerga fighters, no heavy weapons or air force, and only the mountains as a refuge, Barzani's forces were gradually worn down. In 1970 the two parties negotiated a four-year truce that was supposedly to be followed by a grant of substantial autonomy to the Kurds. The promises were much as before; so was the outcome. Neither side trusted the other, and the truce provided little more than a breathing spell. During this period Barzani sought aid from Iran, the United States, and others, while the Iraqi government obtained military assistance from the Soviet Union.<sup>27</sup>



Massoud (*right*) and Idris Barzani

In 1974, after all negotiations broke down, the Iraqi government launched another major campaign against the Kurds. Although the Kurds had received some support from Iran and the United States, it was in no way comparable to what the Soviets gave to Baghdad. Once more the Kurds put up a good fight, but they were outclassed and beaten. Many fled to Iran, where the shah offered shelter. In the process the political leadership fragmented still further when Talabani organized a new party. In June 1975 he formed the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) as an alternative to Barzani's KDP. The two parties made an attempt to cooperate but spent as much time plotting against one another.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, in 1979, the Iraqi officers sought and found a new leader in Saddam Hussein. Promising peace and unity, Saddam allowed the Kurds to return to Iraq but attempted to resettle them away from the areas along the Iranian border. At the same time, he agreed to relinquish some claims to the Shatt al Arab, a disputed waterway on the southern border, in exchange for Iran's agreement to cease all assistance to the Kurds. Believing the struggle lost, Barzani went into exile in the United States, where he died in 1979.<sup>29</sup>

The Kurdish parties survived—the KDP controlled by Barzani's sons Mas'ud and Idris, the PUK controlled by Talabani. In 1979 the followers of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini toppled the shah of Iran. The Kurds in Iran rose up to demand autonomy, only to be suppressed by the revolutionary forces. When the Iran-Iraq War broke out in September 1980, manipulation of the Kurds became a secondary feature. The Barzani brothers and the KDP sided with Teheran and Ayatollah Khomeini, while Talabani and the PUK backed Baghdad and Saddam Hussein. Dissenting Kurds in Iran also sided with Iraq. While the armies of Iran and Iraq competed in conventional warfare, the two Iraqi Kurdish groups fought each other in partisan warfare as surrogates of the larger powers. Factions within each Kurdish group frequently shifted sides. As the war progressed, Talabani

became disenchanted with Saddam Hussein, accused him of genocide against the Kurds, and switched his support to the KDP and Iran. The other Kurds distrusted the PUK and Talabani. The intensity of the conflict had increased with the mass arrests of Kurdish men and boys, who were never seen again, and the use of poison gas against the Kurds. The most notable use of gas occurred in March 1988 at Halabjah, where an estimated five thousand may have been killed. The Iraqi Army distrusted and suppressed all Iraqi Kurds, forcing many to flee to not only Iran but also Turkey.<sup>30</sup>

The Turkish government had its own difficulties with its resident Kurdish population, but with some contrast to the situation in Iraq. In Turkey the only Kurdish party of significance was the Kurdistan Workers Party, known as the PKK. Displaying no tribal characteristics, the PKK had a harsh socialist and terrorist agenda that was foreign to the other Kurdish parties. It violently suppressed the activities of any competing Kurdish groups in Turkey and conducted a guerrilla campaign against the Turkish government and military establishment. Turkish authorities regarded the Iraqi Kurds seeking asylum as suspect, but international sympathy for the Kurds encouraged Turkey to protect them. By the end of the Iran-Iraq War in August 1987 sixty-five thousand displaced Iraqi Kurds had entered Turkey, which confined them to refugee camps along the border.<sup>31</sup>

The cost of sustaining the refugees fell mainly on the Turkish government, which received little support from those states that had pressured it to protect the Kurds. The squalid conditions in the camps frustrated the Iraqi Kurds, destroying any sense of gratitude toward Turkey. That frustration tended to make some of the Kurds sympathetic to the PKK, which further complicated their relationship with Turkey. Saddam Hussein eventually agreed to allow the Kurds to return to Iraq, but twenty-seven thousand refused to go and remained as wards of Turkey. Preferring to call them “economic guests,” Ankara denied them status as political refugees, which precluded the international support and inspection that came with the latter designation. In eastern Turkey and throughout the region Kurdish turmoil remained a troubling issue.<sup>32</sup>

## Contentious and Vulnerable

Throughout the twentieth century geographical, cultural, political, and military conflicts plagued the Kurdish quest for autonomy. The mountains that gave the Kurds refuge and identity also divided them, and the tribal nature of their culture—so evident in the organization of their emerging political parties and partisan forces—prevented the growth of a larger Kurdish national entity. Always suspicious of one another, the Kurds continued to plan and act primarily on the basis of tribal loyalties, unable to present a united front to the outside world or common adversary. The conflict between Barzani, their greatest military leader, and Talabani, their best political organizer, was only the most visible manifestation of the deeper internal weaknesses of Kurdish society.

After World War I the Kurds could not compete with the more developed political institutions of the five countries among which they were divided. In particular, these countries were loath to forfeit sovereignty to the Kurds or to share any wealth from oil or other resources with them. The Kurds were minority groups in Syria, the Soviet Union, Turkey, and Iran. Syria and the Soviet Union assimilated them with little notice. Turkey and Iran, on the other hand, made a determination to absorb them without significant concessions to Kurdish identity but encountered conflict in the process.

In Iraq the Kurds, the smallest of the three ethnic components, were the most different of the three and the most remote. Despite their developed martial traits, they were poorly equipped to effectively challenge the much better organized and ruthless Iraqi state. Furthermore their internal disunity reduced what capacity they might have had through cohesion. Certainly, Baghdad's Sunni Arab leadership felt it had more to gain from Kurdish disunity than cohesion. By 1990 the future was not bright for the Kurds. Given the territorial ambitions of Saddam Hussein and the increased military capabilities of Iraq, continued conflict in the region and additional trials seemed inevitable.

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup>Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements in Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'athists, and Free Officers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 8–12.

<sup>3</sup>Howard M. Sachar, *The Emergence of the Middle East, 1914–1924* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp. 87–107; Jacob C. Hurewitz, ed., *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: D. Norstrand Co., 1956), 2:7–12, 18–25. For background on World War I diplomatic efforts, see relevant volumes of *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States*—especially 3, 5, 9, and 12 of *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, 13 vols. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1942–47), 2 of 1923 (1938), 2 of 1926 (1941), and 3 of 1927 (1942).

<sup>4</sup>McDowall, *History of the Kurds*, pp. 102–06.

<sup>5</sup>Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, 4 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971–96), 1:316.

<sup>6</sup>Sachar, *Middle East*, pp. 255–56.

<sup>7</sup>McDowall, *History of the Kurds*, pp. 117–31.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 131–37, 450 (quotations).

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 121–46; David Fromkin, *A Peace To End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Avon Books, 1990), p. 407 (quoted words).

<sup>10</sup>Harry N. Howard, *The Partition of Turkey: A Diplomatic History, 1913–1923* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1931), pp. 225–27.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*; McDowall, *History of the Kurds*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>12</sup>For background, see Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1985), pp. 30–32, 40–43; Cecil John Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs: Politics, Travel, and Research in North-Eastern Iraq, 1919–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 121–24, 301–02, 344–46, 403–04, 419–20; statistics from Landsat Global Population Database, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, as shown on map of Iraq in *National Geographic*, February 2003, Geographica sec.

<sup>13</sup>See Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks, Arabs*, pp. 387–89, 419–20, 431–37; Edith Penrose and E. F. Penrose, *Iraq: International Relations and National Development* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1978), pp. 50–51; Howard, *Partition of Turkey*, pp. 336–37.

<sup>14</sup>Marr, *Iraq*, pp. 55–58; Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Iraq, 1900–1950: A Political, Social, and Economic History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 165–68, 176–220; Stephen Hemsley Longrigg and Frank Stokes, *Iraq* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959), pp. 148–54; Batatu, *Old Iraq*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>15</sup>Marr, *Iraq*, pp. 62–65; Stephen C. Pelletiere, *The Kurds: An Unstable Element in the Gulf* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1984), pp. 17–19, 84–87; Longrigg and Stokes, *Iraq*, pp. 118–22, 194–96, 229–37.

<sup>16</sup>Batatu, *Old Iraq*, pp. 26–27, 337–40.

<sup>17</sup>Longrigg and Stokes, *Iraq*, pp. 324–28; Hassan Arfa, *The Kurds: An Historical and Political Study* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 119–29; William Eagleton, Jr., *The Kurdish Republic of 1946* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 47–50.

<sup>18</sup>Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 144–45, 274–75, 282–87; McDowall, *History of the Kurds*, pp. 240–41, 249–51, 346–47.

<sup>19</sup>Kuniholm, *Origins of the Cold War*, pp. 144–45, 274–75, 282–87, 378–82, 394–95; Eagleton, *Kurdish Republic*, pp. 14–15, 44–46, 59–61, 111–29.

<sup>20</sup>Arfa, *The Kurds*, p. 129; Penrose and Penrose, *Iraq*, pp. 166–67, 174–75; Longrigg and Stokes, *Iraq*, pp. 148–54, 161–63.

<sup>21</sup>Majid Khadduri, *Republican Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics Since the Revolution of 1958* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 175–79.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*; Marr, *Iraq*, pp. 176–79; Arfa, *The Kurds*, pp. 135–36.

<sup>23</sup>Arfa, *The Kurds*, pp. 136–38.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*; Pelletiere, *The Kurds*, pp. 153–54.

<sup>25</sup>Arfa, *The Kurds*, pp. 139–40; Dana A. Schmidt, *Journey Among Brave Men* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1964), pp. 78–81.

<sup>26</sup>Marr, *Iraq*, pp. 186–89, 192–99; Arfa, *The Kurds*, pp. 140–47.

<sup>27</sup>Edgar O'Ballance, *The Kurdish Revolt, 1961–1970* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), pp. 91, 106, 158–63.

<sup>28</sup>Pelletiere, *The Kurds*, pp. 168–71; Edmund Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question in Iraq* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981), pp. 168–69, 176–81; Robert O. Freedman, *Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1978), pp. 26–27, 33–34, 75–79, 126–27; Anthony H. Cordesman and Abraham R. Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War*, 4 vols. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990–96), 2:22; Marr, *Iraq*, pp. 160–70, 235–37.

<sup>29</sup>Marr, *Iraq*, pp. 236–37; Pelletiere, *The Kurds*, pp. 178–81.

<sup>30</sup>Marr, *Iraq*, pp. 294–96; Cordesman and Wagner, *Modern War*, 2:26–27, 84–87, 96–97, 166–67, 177–79, 201, 207–08, 224–25, 228, 257–59, 281–92, 320, 359, 370, 383; McDowall, *History of the Kurds*, pp. 357–61.

<sup>31</sup>Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds in Turkey* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 61–63; Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958* (London: I. B. Tauris and Co., 1987), pp. 187–90; Ghareeb, *Kurdish Question*, pp. 181–85.

<sup>32</sup>Cordesman and Wagner, *Modern War*, 2:517; Sheri Laizer, *Into Kurdistan: Frontiers Under Fire* (New Jersey: Zed Books, 1991), pp. 89, 112–21, 132; Bill Frelick, “The False Promise of Operation PROVIDE COMFORT: Protecting Refugees or Protecting State Power,” *MERIP Middle East Report* 22, no. 3 (May/June 1992): 24–27.

## 2

# *Impact of the Gulf War*

*It was tough to get into that war.*

—Col. Kenneth W. Getty

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait took the world by surprise. The world's reaction to the invasion took Iraq by surprise. Few observers believed that Iraq's posturing and disputes with Kuwait over oil, money, and the Iran-Iraq War would lead to a takeover of Kuwait by force of arms. But Saddam Hussein was mistaken if he thought that such a blatant act against a small state in the strategic oil-rich region would be taken in stride by an industrial world dependent on the free flow of oil.

The coalition that came together in the fall of 1990 deployed its forces to secure Saudi Arabia against an impending Iraqi threat. During the buildup phase, known as Operation DESERT SHIELD, the coalition forces effectively contained the Iraqi formations at the northern Saudi border while posing the threat of a massive intervention. Saddam Hussein had little choice but to back down and leave Kuwait or accept the risk of a counterinvasion.

When Saddam chose the latter, DESERT SHIELD shifted gears to Operation DESERT STORM. American forces led a military coalition in a devastating thirty-day air offensive, followed by a five-day ground attack that destroyed the Iraqi formations in Kuwait and a large portion of those in southern Iraq. Most of the DESERT STORM forces conducted the war from Saudi Arabia. A small but important part of the war, known as Operation PROVEN FORCE, was conducted from Turkey. Many of those involved in PROVEN FORCE would later play an important role in Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, the humanitarian effort hastily organized after DESERT STORM in early 1991 to assist the Kurds and other refugees.

The coalition leaders might have attempted to integrate the Kurds into the war effort, and the Kurds might have tried to take advantage of Baghdad's preoccupation with its southern border. Neither occurred. Instead Turkey's critical role in the economic blockade of Iraq discouraged the coalition from supporting Kurdish nationalism, and Baghdad's ability to keep the Kurds quiescent with a variety of short-range programs ensured their temporary loyalty. Only at the conclusion of DESERT STORM in late February 1991 did Iraq's internal policies toward its Kurdish minority begin to fall apart.

## Kurdish Support of Baghdad

The Kurds watched the events of the Persian Gulf War with great interest, only becoming hostile to the Iraqi central government when the fighting was over. During DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM they were a mixed blessing for Iraq and demanded attention. If Baghdad could harness the efforts of the Kurds, they could become an asset—a source of personnel and agrarian support; if that could not be achieved, they remained a liability, requiring the diversion of military forces to keep them out of mischief.

As Saddam Hussein mobilized his reserves and created new units to counter the coalition buildup, large numbers of Kurds were drafted. The Kurds accounted for some 20 percent of those who served in the Iraqi Army during the war, though rarely in senior positions. Given their recent history and suspected loyalty, they probably posed less of a threat in Iraqi uniform than if left to cause trouble in the mountains.<sup>1</sup>

Baghdad also tapped the agrarian capacity of the Kurds. The threat of an immediate embargo after the August invasion caused some concern for a country accustomed to importing much of its food. Planning ahead, the Iraqi government instructed farmers to overplant during the fall of 1990. The Kurds in the wheat-producing north responded with zeal and planted far more acreage than normal. Although their motivation was more mercenary than patriotic, it made little difference to the government. Furthermore an intensive effort by the Kurds in the fields could further reduce any countergovernment activity.<sup>2</sup>

Prudence and recent history still dictated that Baghdad secure its northern region with a military presence in the Kurdish areas. Second-echelon troops thus remained garrisoned in northern Iraq throughout the desert conflict. The matter became even more important when Turkey joined the coalition forces and beefed up its military presence along the Iraqi border as an Iraqi adversary.<sup>3</sup>

Making Turkey an active partner in the coalition embargo of Iraq was a primary American objective. Despite some dissension within the Turkish government, President Turgut Ozal actively supported the embargo. The pipelines passing through Turkey and Saudi Arabia carried 85 percent of Iraq's export oil. When these two countries joined the embargo and the U.S. Navy closed the Persian Gulf to Iraqi shipping, the result had an adverse effect on the Iraqi economy.

The pipeline issue had a significant impact on each player. Turkey stood to lose about US\$5 million a day in revenues with the closing of the pipelines, but Germany agreed to help compensate for the loss. Iraq, on the other hand, reaped an unintended advantage from the situation when its vulnerable pipelines were removed from the coalition's air target list. The situation also forced Washington to handle the Kurdish question with care, lest Turkey react to concern that coalition policies might agitate its own restive Kurdish minorities along the Iraqi border.<sup>4</sup>

When Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, the Iraqi Army had three corps stationed in the northern region that comprised the Kurdish areas: *VI Corps* covered the western Dahuk Province, which ran along the Turkish border; *I Corps* occupied the central Erbil Province, which faced the border junction of Turkey and

Iran; and *V Corps* occupied the eastern As Sulaymaniyah Province, which faced the Iranian border.<sup>5</sup>

Before DESERT STORM neither the Kurds nor Turkey posed a major military threat to Baghdad. Instead the danger had been to the east, revolutionary Iran. The Iran-Iraq War had ended with an uneasy armistice and a heavily fortified border on both sides. In the summer of 1990 six of Iraq's seven active-duty regular army corps (to include mobilized reservists and new conscripts), plus its reinforced corps-size *Republican Guard* formation, were still positioned within 100 miles (160 kilometers) of the Iranian border. The exception was *VI Corps* at Dahuk. Even when *Republican Guard* and other army units invaded Kuwait in August, the bulk of the Iraqi Army remained close to Iran.<sup>6</sup>



President Ozal

With the coalition buildup proceeding apace in the fall and winter months, Iraq was forced to alter its military dispositions. The most dramatic changes came after Baghdad returned Iranian prisoners and land captured during the Iran-Iraq War in exchange for Iran's apparent agreement not to exploit Iraq's situation against the coalition. Iraq then reduced its military presence along the border with Iran from six to two corps. Of the latter, *V Corps* remained in As Sulaymaniyah Province, perhaps as much to keep an eye on the Kurds as on Iran.<sup>7</sup>

When Syria joined the coalition and sent forces to Saudi Arabia, it also placed fifty thousand soldiers along its border with Iraq. In response, Iraq shifted *VI Corps* from Dahuk Province to the Syrian border and stretched *I Corps* to cover both Erbil and Dahuk. These and other successive changes reduced the forces in the northern Kurdish areas from three to two corps and removed most of the Iraqi armor from the provinces.<sup>8</sup>

In Dahuk *I Corps* retained six regular infantry divisions, and in As Sulaymaniyah *V Corps* had five. Their positions covered the Kurds in northern Iraq, in Turkey, and near the Syrian and Iranian borders. During the fall and winter mobilization of reserve forces Baghdad reinforced the northern provinces with eight more understrength infantry divisions—all recently mobilized formations.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the coalition threat from the south, Iraq clearly did not leave the Kurdish areas or the Turkish border uncovered. Although many of the Iraqi infantry divisions in the north were undoubtedly understrength and many of the recently mobilized divisions poorly trained and equipped, the numbers remained impressive. The Kurds had little reason to assume that Iraq was vulnerable in that region.

As the embargo began to be felt in Iraq and shortages mounted, smuggling of many commodities increased along Iraq's borders. The Kurds, long involved in such activities, became active participants and quickly expanded into new areas.

Iraqi deserters attempting to flee the country soon became a lucrative source of income, and, as the probability of war increased, so did desertions. The harsh consequences that faced captured deserters encouraged them to flee the country through areas dominated by Kurdish tribesmen, who charged Iraqi dinars to help them escape. Reportedly, in 1990, the cost to smuggle a soldier out of the country was ID500 (US\$150) and ID1,000 (US\$300) for an officer.<sup>10</sup>

As the coalition buildup accelerated during DESERT SHIELD, Iraqi opposition groups in and out of the country responded in a mixed fashion. Some Kurds and Shiites took a nationalist view, considering the Kuwaiti people spoiled and arrogant and the foreign powers exploiters of Arab wealth. Some felt otherwise, perceiving the Baghdad regime as the worst of immediate evils or identifying with the hapless Kuwaitis. In the south the boundary between Iraq and Kuwait split some tribes. Iraqi Shiites probably had some ties with the large number of Shiites in Kuwait. Perhaps some Iraqi Kurds could identify with the outrage that the Kuwaitis felt when invaded by the army of Saddam Hussein.<sup>11</sup>

Opposition political leaders also took different approaches. Mohammad Bakr al-Hakim, an Iraqi Shiite leader, instructed his followers to join Iraq's military forces and resist "United States aggression." Massoud Barzani, speaking for the KDP, opposed both the war and the Western military buildup. Similarly, the Kurdistan Front, a coalition of Kurdish parties, advocated a secession of all Kurdish military activities against the Iraqi Army rather than "stab the Army in the back."<sup>12</sup>

Only Talabani of the PUK took an aggressive stand against Baghdad. When Iraq invaded Kuwait, he maintained that it was Saddam Hussein's biggest mistake. Believing that the Kurds might exploit it, he traveled to Washington, D.C., to explore possible opportunities. However, he was unable to attract the attention of any American political leaders; no one at the U.S. Department of State or the Central Intelligence Agency would meet with him. Seemingly, the Bush administration still sought to avoid becoming involved with any of the issues surrounding Kurdish nationalism.<sup>13</sup>

## Turkey and Operation PROVEN FORCE

Turkey played several critical roles during the Persian Gulf conflict. The first and most obvious was its economic blockade of Iraq, which helped cut off Iraq's ability to export oil. Less obvious to many, Turkey discouraged coalition leaders from supporting any form of Kurdish resistance in Iraq, concerned about the adverse effect on its efforts to restrain its own Kurdish population. But, to contribute, the Turkish government repositioned its ground forces internally along the Iraqi border and allowed the coalition to conduct supporting military operations from bases in southeast Turkey.

Although most of the allied forces in DESERT STORM operated from Saudi Arabia, other formations deployed to Turkey in support of Operation PROVEN FORCE. The regional divisions between America's unified commands placed





F-16s in support of Operation PROVEN FORCE

Southwest Asia within the area of responsibility of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), with headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. Turkey, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), was within the area of responsibility of the U.S. European Command (EUCOM), with headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany.

At the beginning of the Gulf War military planners in Washington, D.C., and at CENTCOM headquarters paid little attention to Turkey. They knew that Ankara was supporting the embargo against Iraq and that, at American request, the Turkish government had massed several divisions along the Iraqi border to fix Iraq's forces in that region. But CENTCOM had no plan for integrating Turkey or its bases into the military campaign against Iraq. Nevertheless, several American commands in Europe, somewhat chagrined that many units stationed in NATO countries were left out of the buildup in Saudi Arabia, proposed a scenario that would allow them to make a contribution.

An air initiative from bases in Turkey began to appear promising. A group of junior Air Force officers assigned to the 52d Tactical Fighter Wing, located at Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, suggested using the large Incirlik Air Base in south central Turkey to project American air power against Iraq. After having the concept reviewed by the EUCOM operations staff, the Air Force officers approached CENTCOM and proposed a supporting operation for DESERT STORM. Subsequently, they briefed the concept to the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>14</sup>



General Galvin

At first some officers expressed reservations, but the EUCOM commander, Army General John R. Galvin, who also served as the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, a NATO position, directed the Air Force staff at the U.S. Air Force, Europe (USAFE), headquarters at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, to keep working on the concept. With diplomatic leverage from the American ambassador to Turkey, Morton I. Abramowitz, the Turkish government and the Turkish General Staff were also persuaded to consider the idea. After imposing some restrictions, they consented to air operations conducted from air bases in Turkey. Operation PROVEN FORCE kicked off as a second front for DESERT STORM, with Galvin establishing Joint Task Force (JTF) Proven Force in mid-December 1990 “to coordinate EUCOM operational planning with Turkey and CENTCOM prior to hostilities and to direct EUCOM military operations in

support of CENTCOM in the event of hostilities.” On the twenty-seventh USAFE’s deputy commander for operations, Air Force Maj. Gen. James L. Jamerson, was appointed commander of the effort in Turkey. His mission was to achieve air supremacy over northern Iraq; destroy Iraqi heavy missiles and any chemical or biological weapons; and disrupt Iraqi air defense, command and control, and communications networks. He also targeted munitions production and storage areas, energy power production and distribution nodes, and petroleum production and distribution centers.<sup>15</sup>

A JTF formed by one unified command to support another required a clear definition of command relationships. For Operation PROVEN FORCE EUCOM was the supporting command and CENTCOM the supported command. Once deployed to Turkey, JTF Proven Force would fall under the operational control (OPCON) of EUCOM but under the tactical control (TACON) of CENTCOM, thereby ensuring its proper integration in the regional area. To better manage the air support of the operation, CENTCOM in turn would delegate JTF Proven Force TACON to the U.S. Central Air Forces (CENTAF).<sup>16</sup>

On 7 January 1991, when JTF Proven Force was formally activated at Ramstein, General Jamerson began to organize his operational headquarters. He formed his JTF staff, which consisted primarily of Air Force officers from USAFE, along Air Force staff lines, but for this mission using joint designators

to organize the J-1 (Personnel), J-2 (Intelligence), J-3 (Operations/Plans), and J-4 (Logistics) Sections. He noted later that to make the transition from an Air Force staff to a JTF staff, his officers had consulted a copy of *The Joint Staff Officer's Guide* (AFSC Pub 1) to confirm the staff alignment. As a result, they added a chief of staff position, which was typical of joint, Army, and Marine staffs but not Air Force staffs. Jamerson picked an Air Force colonel for the position, although unsure about the chief of staff's exact role. He would later learn the specifics of that role during his service with Operation PROVIDE COMFORT.<sup>17</sup>



General Jamerson

A notable exception to a JTF otherwise staffed with Air Force officers was Jamerson's deputy, Brig. Gen. Charles E. Wilhelm, a Marine infantry officer, formerly assigned to the Pentagon's Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict. On the basis of a credible recommendation Jamerson had requested an officer with a special operations background to complement his Air Force-dominated staff, and EUCOM was able to broker the appointment of General Wilhelm. As it turned out, Wilhelm helped give the JTF headquarters a more balanced air-and-ground perspective.<sup>18</sup>

General Jamerson had already formed two subordinate commands: the 7440th Composite Wing (Provisional), and a special operations organization to support the air operations (see Figure 1). The 7440th, a tactical combat wing activated at Incirlik for PROVEN FORCE, was the JTF's major component. Air Force Brig. Gen. Lee A. Downer, a previous commander of a fighter wing in Germany and then the USAFE inspector general, took charge of the 7440th at the end of December. General Downer formed his wing staff around Air Force Col. Gary R. Lorenz's 39th Tactical Group, an air base infrastructure formation permanently assigned at Incirlik for training purposes. Downer also reinforced his headquarters with staff officers from USAFE units—mainly the 20th, 36th, 52d, and 401st Tactical Fighter Wings—in Europe.

The 7440th's new mission was to conduct combat operations from Turkey against Iraq. Prior to DESERT SHIELD the Turkish government had restricted the total number of American combat aircraft conducting exercises and training in Turkey to forty-eight. But because of the Iraqi threat this cap was waived in the fall of 1990, and additional U.S. Air Force units from Europe, the United States, and the Philippines (the 23d, 79th, 525th, and 612th Tactical Fighter Squadrons; the 38th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron; the 42d and 43d Electronic Combat Squadrons; and detachments from the 3d and 32d Tactical Fighter Squadrons, the 552d Airborne Warning and Control Wing, and the 804th Air



General Downer with munitions personnel at Incirlik

Refueling Wing), with a variety of aircraft (F-4Es and -4Gs, F-15s and -16s, F-111Es, RF-4Cs, EF-111As, EC-130Hs, E-3As, and KC-135As), began to deploy as part of a slow low-profile buildup.<sup>19</sup>

As PROVEN FORCE began to form, EUCOM directed its Army forces command in Heidelberg, Germany, the U.S. Army, Europe (USAREUR), to provide air defense protection for the Incirlik Air Base. In response, the 32d Army Air Defense Command at Darmstadt deployed its 4th Battalion, 7th Air Defense Artillery, with two Patriot batteries under the command of Lt. Col. William D. Knox. They arrived at Incirlik in mid-January 1991.<sup>20</sup>

Because Turkey wanted to keep a low profile on the buildup, General Jamerson had to delay the departure of his JTF headquarters from Ramstein until the third week of January. Air planning filled the time in preparation

for the mission. With the approval of the Turkish government, Jamerson deployed the JTF staff to Incirlik in two components on 18 and 19 January. By the twentieth, three days after DESERT STORM began, the number of U.S. Air Force aircraft stationed in Turkey had expanded from forty-eight to over one hundred forty. Turkey required that only one hundred of them qualify as combat aircraft. During DESERT STORM the 7440th conducted 4,595 sorties, or roughly 10 percent of the operation's total air missions.<sup>21</sup>

General Jamerson's other subordinate formation had a mission with an even lower profile. In January 1991 Army Brig. Gen. Richard W. Potter's Special Operations Command, Europe (SOCEUR), was attached to Jamerson under a supporting operation designated ELUSIVE CONCEPT. When SOCEUR deployed on such an assignment, it would normally be designated a joint special operations task force—frequently referred to as JSOTF. But to appease Turkish sensitivities to the term *special operations* and its implications, General Potter's organization in Turkey was formally referred to as JTF Elusive Concept and, in message traffic, as JTFEC. Although unplanned at the time, Potter and his JTF staff would later play a pivotal role in Operation PROVIDE COMFORT.<sup>22</sup>

As part of EUCOM in Stuttgart, SOCEUR consisted of a permanently assigned joint special operations staff with the capacity to exercise command and control over Special Forces units assigned to EUCOM's area of responsibility. Frequently, SOCEUR exercised operational control of the Air Force's 39th Special

Operations Wing (SOW), located in the United Kingdom and Germany, and the Army's 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, with headquarters and two battalions in the United States and another battalion and support element in Germany.<sup>23</sup>

Unlike General Jamerson's ad hoc JTF staff, SOCEUR was a standing and cohesive joint staff. General Potter and his J-3 (Operations), Army Col. Kenneth W. Getty, had extensive experience with Special Forces units, and both his deputy commander and his J-5 (Plans), Air Force Cols. James N. Roberts and Norton A. "Norty" Schwartz, had experience in special air operations. Moreover, Potter's staff represented all four American services, with the majority having some back-



General Potter

ground in special operations. By the beginning of 1991 most of them had served together for several years and conducted a number of exercises throughout EUCOM's operational arena, although not previously in Turkey.<sup>24</sup>

The role of SOCEUR in the Gulf War turned out to be limited. When General Potter went to Turkey with General Jamerson, the Turkish government and Turkish General Staff made it clear that they would permit no special operations other than search and rescue to be conducted from Turkey. Certainly, no operations that might involve any Kurds would be permitted.<sup>25</sup>

PROVEN FORCE planners had anticipated that as many as thirty-three aircraft might be lost over northern Iraq in the first seventy-two hours of the war. To support General Potter in carrying out subsequent search and rescue operations, most of Air Force Col. Byron R. "Hoot" Hooten's 39th Special Operations Wing from the United Kingdom and Germany, Army Col. William P. Tangney's 10th Special Forces Group headquarters from the United States, and Army Lt. Col. Hayward S. "Stan" Florer, Jr.'s 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group, from Germany received orders to deploy to Incirlik Air Base. Subsequently, a small component of the 2d Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group, deployed from the United States to reinforce the operation. Much to the planners' surprise, none of the aircraft flying from Turkey was shot down during the war. Potter's force participated in only one rescue, and that involved an aircrew flying from the Gulf.<sup>26</sup>

To handle the logistical requirements of the Army elements of JTF Proven Force, support organizations were also sent to Turkey. Two USAREUR units involved were the 7th Special Operations Support Command (SOSC), with the mission of planning and coordinating the support and sustainment of special operations forces in EUCOM's area of responsibility, and the 21st Theater Area Army Command's 66th

Maintenance Battalion. The 7th SOCS commander, Col. Darrell W. Katz, took a 60-man element to Incirlik, and on 2 February USAREUR designated Colonel Katz as the Army forces (ARFOR) commander. The 66th's 186-man detachment, commanded by Lt. Col. James Price and consisting of transportation, maintenance, supply and service, and chemical decon elements, was placed under the control of Katz.<sup>27</sup>

If Potter's men had little opportunity to participate in the war, their time in Turkey still involved substantial work. To improve the response time and extend the range of the MH-53J Pave Low helicopters over Iraq, both the 39th Special Operations Wing and 10th Special Forces Group moved 400 miles (640 kilometers) east from Incirlik to an austere airfield at Batman, relatively near the Iraqi border. According to Potter, Batman initially consisted of no more than "an airstrip and a water source."<sup>28</sup>

Many of the troops sent to Batman in January 1991 found it difficult just to subsist. Whereas the Special Forces soldiers were trained and accustomed to working under austere conditions, they discovered that the SOW personnel were not. At first the airmen tried to quarter themselves in the cargo component of their C-130 Hercules, but the arrangement soon proved impractical due to requirements for proper aircraft maintenance, fueling, and crew readiness.<sup>29</sup>

To make Batman capable of supporting sustained air operations under bare base conditions, the Air Force deployed an air transportable Harvest Eagle system, consisting of the requisite housekeeping set and a utility support package, as well as a base emergency engineering force, called Prime BEEF, to establish and operate it. The Prime BEEF personnel came from several Air Force installations in Europe to run the Batman complex under the command of Air Force Lt. Col. Alfred B. Hicks, Jr. Colonel Hicks was the commander of the 36th Civil Engineering Squadron, which provided installation support at the Bitburg Air Base in Germany. The core Prime BEEF team came from Hicks' squadron, augmented by Air Force engineers from Ramstein.<sup>30</sup>

"The Prime BEEF folks have a work ethic that won't quit," declared General Potter. If the Army personnel found the SOW airmen slow to adapt when faced with harsh living conditions, the Prime BEEF engineers demonstrated that they were a different breed. Approaching their work with enthusiasm and competence, they made the base infrastructure livable by building reinforced shelters, heating and water systems, a mess hall, and a laundry. They also took care of the fuel and related support for the aircraft and vehicles sent to Batman.<sup>31</sup>

In contrast, medical support was minimal. The 39th Tactical Group's 39th Tactical Hospital deployed only an air transportable hospital (ATH) package from Incirlik Air Base to Batman. At the time the ATH package, consisting of just palletized equipment, medicine, and tentage, was not augmented with medical personnel.<sup>32</sup>

An interesting aspect of the SOCEUR operation was how General Potter distributed his organization in Turkey. He based his two subordinate units at Batman but kept his SOCEUR staff at Incirlik, with the advantage that Potter's and Jamerson's staffs were able to maintain a solid connection with each other. Any problems that developed between the two could be sorted out face to face, rather

than over a telephone or radio. Furthermore the cohesive SOCEUR staff materially assisted the JTF staff, which had arrived at Incirlik with less than all of the clerical and related assets necessary to operate deployed.<sup>33</sup>

At Batman the 10th Special Forces Group and the 39th Special Operations Wing had their own staffs. Their operations and intelligence staffs quickly came together to plan and train for anticipated search and rescue operations. But service support lagged behind. The main problem was the absence of a joint logistics staff section to order, receive, and distribute food, fuel, and other supplies, causing some friction between the Army and the Air Force elements.

The detachment from the 66th Maintenance Battalion had forward deployed to Batman to assist with supply and maintenance, but was unable to coordinate Air Force service support at Batman. To bridge the gap, General Potter brought in Marine Lt. Col. Paul D. Wisniewski from the EUCOM Logistics (J-4) Section. Almost a one-man show, Colonel Wisniewski forged a working arrangement with logistics units at Batman and an appropriate connection with the JTF headquarters at Incirlik. With few operational missions to carry out, the units at Batman seemed to accomplish little beyond learning to live and work together. The political environment in Turkey prevented Potter from undertaking more ambitious special operation tasks.<sup>34</sup>

When the war ended in Kuwait and southern Iraq, the SOCEUR staff, the 10th Special Forces Group, the 39th Special Operations Wing, and support units redeployed to their home stations in Europe and the United States. Most of the Air Force units at Incirlik that had conducted the air operations also returned to European and American bases, although JTF Proven Force was not formally disbanded until 31 March. While en route, Jamerson, Potter, Getty, Schwartz, Hicks, Wisniewski, and many others had little reason to think they would soon return to Turkey. But the situation in Iraq had turned grave, a resurgence of vengeful Iraqi aggression causing large populations to flee in panic.<sup>35</sup>

## Revolt, Suppression, Exodus

As DESERT STORM ended, two internal but uncoordinated insurrections flared up within Iraq—the first in the southern Shiite region and later in the northern Kurdish region. In late February 1991 the local Shiites, who had no love for the regime in Baghdad, revolted in the south, and disaffected Iraqi soldiers, who had survived the debacle in Kuwait, joined them. Adding fuel to the fire, if not an extreme dimension, was a number of Iranian paramilitary groups that had entered Iraq from the east. But the Shiite uprising lacked planning, leadership, and sustainment, with the Iranians' participation only increasing the local confusion. Clearly, the coalition leaders were not interested in supporting a cause whose only program and battle cry appeared to be the slogan *Ja'fari* ("Shiite Rule").<sup>36</sup>

Insurrection in the north followed. As in the south, it was spontaneous rather than organized. Crowds of Kurds, suddenly eager to join in the campaign against

the weakened Iraqi government, began demonstrations that led to riots and often violence toward local Iraqi Army and security forces. Some, especially Kurds in the regular army or reserves, simply surrendered or joined the uprising rather than become easy targets; in either case they provided the rebels with an immediate supply of military weapons and equipment. From 5 to 20 March Kurdish groups took As Sulaymaniyah, Halabjah, Erbil, Dahuk, Zakho, and Kirkuk. Peshmerga guerrillas joined the civilians and gave limited structure to the revolt. For the moment, the Iraqi Army units that retained any cohesion kept their distance and allowed the Kurds free rein in the towns and cities they occupied.<sup>37</sup>

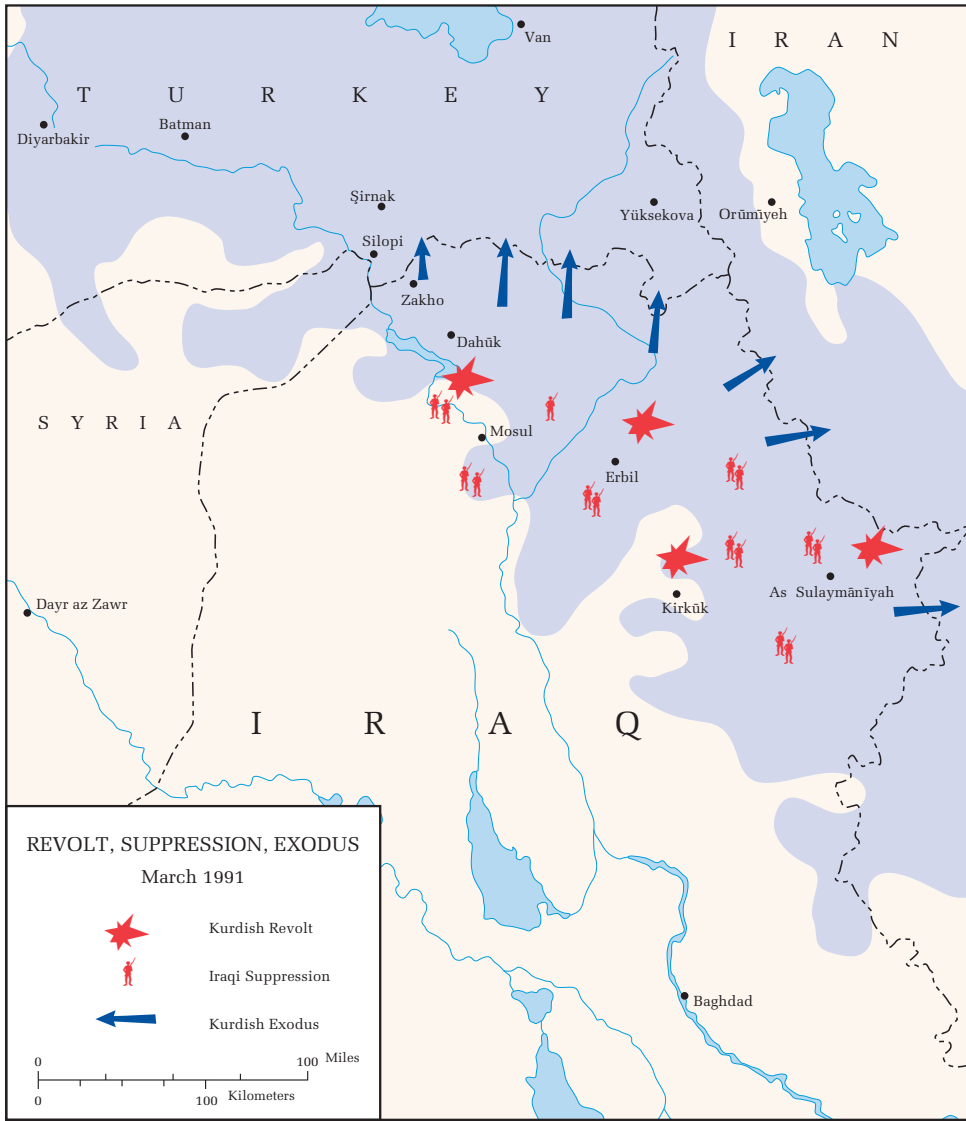
In spite of the zealotry with which the Shiite and Kurdish populations had challenged the Iraqi government, the separate revolts became overextended as they spread. More importantly, they lacked a cohesive leadership capable of guiding and sustaining the overall momentum. Opposition parties outside Iraq were unprepared to provide direction for either uprising, while the coalition forces that freed Kuwait offered no military assistance. Sensing disorganization, Baghdad's leaders moved quickly to suppress both insurrections with minimal fighting.

The Iraqi government responded first to the revolt in the south. Iran's involvement there and the proximity of coalition forces made it the greater threat than the more remote Kurdish uprising in the north. Iran's intentions, if unclear, proved more supportive of Shiite ambitions than those of the Kurds. Also, direct access to the sea was more important than access to the mountains. If Saddam Hussein had lost the better part of forty-three army divisions during DESERT STORM, he still had significant military forces available, notably several *Republican Guard* divisions that had escaped most of the war. Those near the uprising in the south moved quickly to quell it. The Iraqi generals, proven ineffective in dealing with a coalition of the most modern armies in the world, still knew how to suppress a disorganized popular uprising. Their formations took little more than a month to crush the Shiite revolt.<sup>38</sup>

Later in March some *Republican Guard* units moved north against the Kurds. The army divisions that had stood aside and watched as the Kurdish revolt spread quickly joined the suppression. At first the Kurds attempted to defend Kirkuk and other cities in positional warfare. However, because of the developed road networks around the urban areas, the Iraqi commanders were able to deploy tanks and other heavy equipment with ease, and soon the Kurds found that they were easy targets for those weapons.

The allied coalition had restricted the Iraqis from using fixed-wing military aircraft, but allowed the use of helicopters for humanitarian purposes. The Iraqis first violated this arrangement by using the helicopters to deploy forces and supplies to sustain their operations against the two uprisings. When coalition forces failed to respond to that abuse, the Iraqis began employing helicopter gunships to suppress the northern revolt. Rockets and machine guns fired indiscriminately kept the Kurds on the move. Many feared that the Iraqis might fire chemical weapons at them.





Map 2

The Kurdish civilians supporting the revolt became a liability. The Peshmerga could neither protect them nor hold ground against the conventional Iraqi forces. Their proficiency with hit-and-run mountain warfare had little utility in the urban built-up areas. The end result was a mass exodus to the mountains (*Map 2*). Encouraged to flee by the Peshmerga, close to a million Kurds and other refugees set out for the border areas to the north and northwest by the end of March and early April.<sup>39</sup>



Refugee exodus



## Early Relief Efforts

When the exodus of refugees began, preparations for such an event had been under way for several months. Immediately following the invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the United Nations (UN) had directed two of its relief agencies to plan for displaced refugees. The United Nations Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO), responsible for assisting host countries with refugee problems, became the UN's executive agent for refugee matters resulting from the Gulf War. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), responsible for assisting political refugees, became subordinate to UNDRO during the early phases of relief operations.<sup>40</sup>

At the outset UNDRO projected a requirement of US\$40 million in order to pre-position a module of food, clothes, and other supplies for sustaining a hundred thousand refugees for three months. Normally, donor nations or other groups would not make such a large disbursement until a refugee group existed. But given the obvious potential for an immediate refugee crisis resulting from the situation in the Persian Gulf, UNDRO action officers requested the funds in advance. After some delay they received the money to purchase and structure the relief module.<sup>41</sup>

Some uncertainty existed regarding the direction from which the refugees would exit Iraq in case of war. As a result, UNDRO personnel attempted to pre-position the relief module in four equal components in four of the six neighboring countries: Jordan, Syria, Turkey, and Iran. No relief provisions were pre-positioned in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia, given the likelihood that the refugees would not leave Iraq along the most probable battlefield area.<sup>42</sup>

Jordan, Syria, and Iran cooperated with the plan to pre-position relief supplies, but Turkey did not. The Turkish government was already dealing with significant numbers of Kurdish refugees from the Iran-Iraq War and internal Iraqi conflicts. It preferred to assist any new refugees on a case-by-case basis and certainly did not want to encourage another exodus from Iraq. UNDRO personnel thus positioned the quarter-module identified for Turkey in Larnaca, Cyprus.<sup>43</sup>

The United Nations supported two relief operations as DESERT STORM approached. During the fall and winter of 1990 a large number of Iraqis and non-Iraqis began to depart Iraq through Jordan. To assist them, UN and Red Cross personnel established temporary camps at the border and along the routes the refugees would follow to their destinations. From Jordan, many continued on through Syria and its Mediterranean ports. Syria offered its Boy Scout camps as temporary sites, which were used to sustain the refugees.<sup>44</sup>

The second relief operation assisted a smaller number of nationals from Pakistan and Bangladesh. Most were transient workers who wanted to leave Iraq before any fighting started. In cars and buses they went overland through Turkey and then on by sea or through Iran; those from Bangladesh continued on through India. To assist their movement, UN personnel established way stations. In the end UNDRO expended three-quarters of the supplies obtained for the two relief efforts, with the quarter-module in Cyprus left untouched.



A Turkish border guard halting the flow of refugees

In the aftermath of DESERT STORM most of those fleeing Iraq were Iraqi refugees—the Shiites in the south and the Kurds in the north. Because these two groups were previously recognized as political refugees, unlike most of those UNDR0 had assisted, UNHCR took over the UN effort to assist them. A number of the Iraqi Shiites in the south crossed into Kuwait, in contrast to UN expectations, where the coalition forces cared for them. Others fled into southwestern Iran.<sup>45</sup>

Teheran received and assisted both the Shiites fleeing across its southern border and the Kurds fleeing across its northern border, with the total estimated number of refugees from both areas eventually exceeding a million. The UNHCR assumed control of UNDR0's quarter-module in Cyprus and acted as a conduit for assistance from other donors and relief agencies, especially in the case of Iran because of the strained relations with the coalition members.<sup>46</sup>

The situation along Iraq's border with Turkey involved nearly half a million refugees and another set of complications. The Iraqi Army, including *Republican Guard* units, had advanced north, quickly moving up the western plain through the regional capital of Dahuk and cutting off access to the main border crossing between Zakho and Silopi. The refugees had no recourse but to flee northwest; none was noted going into Syria. The terrain northeast of Zakho and Dahuk was very rugged. To make matters worse, the Iraqis had mined some less rugged areas on their side of the border, making many crossing points difficult to bypass locally and forcing the refugees farther into the mountains. Although the Kurds had begun their flight in a variety of cars, trucks, or farm tractors, the road network into the mountain passes could not sustain such heavy traffic. Thus most aban-



A Kurdish mother and child

doned their vehicles along the roads and continued on foot.<sup>47</sup>

Not unexpectedly, the Turkish government resisted having the refugees move too far inland, and so makeshift camps were formed in the mountain passes along the Turkish side of the border just short of Turkish checkpoints. If possible, Turkey did not want to accept any new refugees and certainly not on the scale of the many thousands closing on its border. Based on its past experience with Iraq and the Kurds, relief operations had been a losing situation. With almost twenty thousand Kurdish refugees from the Iran-Iraq War still in Turkish refugee camps, Ankara wanted no more.<sup>48</sup>

The new refugees were in dire straits. After leaving their vehicles at the base of the mountains on the Iraqi side of the border, they possessed only what

they could carry. It was too late to seek alternatives. More of the Kurds going toward Turkey, compared to those fleeing to Iran, were from the urban areas with less tribal cohesion. Even those with a tribal base saw it break down during the flight, with the extended family as the remaining basis of social organization. Without access to food, water, and shelter, their situation quickly became perilous.<sup>49</sup>

Responding to the crisis, Turkey's Red Crescent Society sent its personnel to assist in the mountains. Eventually, others from the International Red Cross joined them. But only the UNHCR had control of the pre-positioned quarter-module stored in Cyprus, which could support twenty-five thousand refugees for three months. Even if the means to deliver the supplies to the mountains had existed, they would last less than a week for half a million people. An effective relief effort required access to the mountains and governmental support.<sup>50</sup>

Although Ankara had directed its border guards to keep the refugees from entering far into Turkey, it also instructed them to provide assistance where they could. But the remote outposts had little to offer the many thousands descending upon them, while the UNHCR could not provide supplies it had not yet moved into Turkey. The Red Crescent, Red Cross, and other volunteers were no better off, having exhausted their limited stockpiles to support those fleeing before the Gulf War started.

The Turkish and international relief agencies had foreseen the problems of a refugee exodus, but neither the direction nor on the scale encountered. With the calamity escalating out of control, they realized that they were vastly overextended. A much more capable force would be necessary to save the Kurds in the mountains.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory: The History of the Persian Gulf War* (New York: Random House, Times Books, 1992), pp. 404–05; Isam al-Khafaji, “State Terror and the Degradation of Politics in Iraq,” *MERIP Middle East Report* 22, no. 3 (May/June 1992): 19.

<sup>2</sup>Telecon Notes, author with Frederick C. Cuny, 9–10 Jan 92.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, pp. 57–58, 94.

<sup>4</sup>Jean E. Smith, *George Bush's War* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1992), pp. 127–28, 155.

<sup>5</sup>Frank Chadwick and Matt Caffrey, *Gulf War Fact Book* (Bloomington, Ill.: GDW, 1992), p. 97.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 68–69, 97; Richard Jupa and Jim Dingeman, *Gulf Wars: How Iraq Won the First and Lost the Second* (Cambria, Calif.: 3W, 1991), pp. 14–15.

<sup>7</sup>Chadwick and Caffrey, *Gulf War Fact Book*, pp. 68–69, 97–98; Norman Friedman, *Desert Victory: The War for Kuwait* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1991), p. 163.

<sup>8</sup>Friedman, *Desert Victory*, p. 118; Chadwick and Caffrey, *Gulf War Fact Book*, pp. 68–69, 97–98.

<sup>9</sup>Chadwick and Caffrey, *Gulf War Fact Book*, pp. 68–69. In DESERT STORM a second-line Iraqi division was often no more than five thousand strong.

<sup>10</sup>Faleh Abd al-Jabbar, “Why the Uprisings Failed,” *MERIP Middle East Report* 22, no. 3 (May/June 1992): 7.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 3–7.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup>Elaine Sciolino, *The Outlaw State: Saddam Hussein's Quest for Power and the Gulf Crisis* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1991), p. 215; U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, pp. 136–37.

<sup>14</sup>Bryan T. van Sweringen, “Joint Task Force Proven Force: We Can Bring This to Your War” (paper delivered at 1992 Conference of Army Historians, U.S. Army Center of Military History, Washington, D.C., 8–11 June 1992), pp. 6–9, EUCOM History Office (HO) files, Stuttgart, Germany, copy in Rudd PC Collection, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.; Jerome E. Schroeder and Thomas L. Raab, “History of Joint Task Force Proven Force,” 13 Dec 91, pp. 1–3, USAFE HO files, Ramstein Air Base, Germany; Intervs, author with Maj Gen (later Gen) James L. Jamerson, 1 Jul 91, 3 Jan 01.

<sup>15</sup>Jamerson Interv, 1 Jul 91; U.S. World & News Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, pp. 239, 254–57; van Sweringen, “Proven Force,” pp. 1, 11 (quotation), 12–13, EUCOM HO files, copy in Rudd PC Collection.

<sup>16</sup>Van Sweringen, “Proven Force,” p. 13, EUCOM HO files, copy in Rudd PC Collection.

<sup>17</sup>Jamerson Interv, 3 Jan 01; Telecon, author with Brig Gen Rudolf F. Peksens, 2 Apr 01.

<sup>18</sup>Jamerson Interv, 3 Jan 01; Telecon, author with Brig Gen Norton A. Schwartz, 26 Mar 97; Interv, author with Gen Anthony C. Zinni, 5 Jul 01.

<sup>19</sup>Jamerson Interv, 3 Jan 01; Peksens Telecon, 3 Apr 01; Telecon, author with Maj. Gen. Lee A. Downer, 2 Jan 03; E-mail, Downer to author, 2 Jan 03; E-mail, Patricia E. Parrish to author, 11 Dec 02 and 16, 23 Jan 03.

<sup>20</sup>E-mail, Daniel F. Harrington to author, 8 Jun 01; Schroeder and Raab, “Proven Force,” 13 Dec 91, pp. 34–35, USAFE HO files.

<sup>21</sup>Jamerson Intervs, 1 Jul 91, 3 Jan 01; Peksens Telecon, 3 Apr 01; van Sweringen, “Proven Force,” pp. 3, 12–13, 17–18, EUCOM HO files, copy in Rudd PC Collection.

<sup>22</sup>Jamerson Interv, 1 Jul 91; van Sweringen, “Proven Force,” p. 12, EUCOM HO files, copy in Rudd PC Collection.

<sup>23</sup>Interv, author with Brig Gen Richard W. Potter, 13 Jul 91; van Sweringen, “Proven Force,” p. 12, EUCOM HO files, copy in Rudd PC Collection.

<sup>24</sup>Schwartz Telecon, 26 Mar 97; Intervs, author with Col Norton A. Schwartz and with Col Kenneth W. Getty, 9 Jul, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>25</sup>Jamerson, Potter Intervs, 1 Jul, 13 Jul 91.

<sup>26</sup>Jamerson, Potter, Schwartz, Getty Intervs, 1 Jul, 13 Jul, 9 Jul, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>27</sup>Harrington E-mail, 8 Jun 01; E-mail, Col Darrell W. Katz to author, 14 Jun 01.

- <sup>28</sup>Potter, Schwartz, Getty Inters, 13 Jul (quoted words), 9 Jul, 14 Jul 91.
- <sup>29</sup>Potter, Schwartz Inters, 13 Jul, 9 Jul 91.
- <sup>30</sup>C/M/S300 Lesson 2, Reading 8, 18 Jun 98, sub: USAF Support to the Joint Force Commander, p. 2; Potter, Jamerson Inters, 13 Jul, 1 Jul 91; Interv, author with Lt Col Alfred B. Hicks, Jr., 15 Jun 91; Steven T. Rose, "Operation PROVIDE COMFORT: An Airman's Show," *Civil Engineer* 1, no. 2 (February 1993): 18.
- <sup>31</sup>Potter, Getty, Schwartz, Hicks Inters, 13 Jul (quotation), 14 Jul, 9 Jul, 15 Jun 91.
- <sup>32</sup>Interv, author with Maj Alan K. Campbell, 14 Jul 91.
- <sup>33</sup>Potter, Getty Inters, 13 Jul, 14 Jul 91.
- <sup>34</sup>Interv, author with Lt Col Paul D. Wisniewski, 9 Jul 91; Potter, Getty Inters, 13 Jul, 14 Jul 91.
- <sup>35</sup>Jamerson, Potter, Getty, Schwartz Inters, 1 Jul, 13 Jul, 14 Jul, 9 Jul 91; van Sweringen, "Proven Force," p. 18, EUCOM HO files, copy in Rudd PC Collection.
- <sup>36</sup>Al-Jabbar, "Why the Uprisings Failed," pp. 9–10.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 9–13.
- <sup>38</sup>U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, pp. 403–04.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 399–403.
- <sup>40</sup>*The Humanitarian Emergency in Iraq: Appeal by the Secretary General* (Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations, 10 April 1991), pp. 3–4; Interv, author with Sergio Piazza, 3 Jul 92.
- <sup>41</sup>*Humanitarian Emergency in Iraq*, p. 3; Piazza Interv, 3 Jul 92.
- <sup>42</sup>*Regional Humanitarian Plan of Action Relating to the Crisis Between Iraq and Kuwait* (Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations, 26 February 1991), Jordan, Syria, Iran secs.; Piazza Interv, 3 Jul 92.
- <sup>43</sup>*Humanitarian Plan of Action*, Jordan, Syria, Iran secs.; Piazza Interv, 3 Jul 92.
- <sup>44</sup>*Humanitarian Plan of Action*, Jordan, Syria secs.; Piazza Interv, 3 Jul 92.
- <sup>45</sup>*Humanitarian Plan of Action*, Turkey sec.; Piazza Interv, 3 Jul 92.
- <sup>46</sup>*Humanitarian Plan of Action*, Iran sec.; Interv, author with Ekbar Menemenciogu, 2 Jul 92.
- <sup>47</sup>*Humanitarian Plan of Action*, Turkey sec.; Lance Clark, "Relief Operations for Kurds on the Iraq-Turkey Border and in Coalition Controlled Northern Iraq," 10 Jun 91, p. 2; Piazza, Menemenciogu Inters, 3 Jul, 2 Jul 92.
- <sup>48</sup>See Clark, "Relief Operations," pp. 2–3; Piazza, Menemenciogu Inters, 3 Jul, 2 Jul 92; Frelick, "False Promise," pp. 24–27; Laizer, *Into Kurdistan*, p. 119.
- <sup>49</sup>Menemenciogu Interv, 2 Jul 92.
- <sup>50</sup>Ibid.; *Humanitarian Emergency in Iraq*, pp. 3–4.



# 3

## *Crisis in the Mountains*

*Hello Charlemagne. You got that hemisphere under control?*

—General Colin L. Powell to General John R. Galvin

The telephone woke General Potter at two o'clock in the morning on Saturday, 6 April 1991. He was at a guesthouse in Bad Tolz, Germany, where the preceding day he had visited the 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group. Potter and the battalion had just returned from Turkey. The alert notice indicated that they were going back. After passing it on to the battalion, Potter drove to Stuttgart. Arriving at six o'clock that morning, he found his SOCEUR staff packing for deployment. Alert calls had already gone out to Colonel Hooten's 39th Special Operations Wing, Colonel Tangney's 10th Special Forces Group, and Colonel Katz's 7th Special Operations Support Command.<sup>1</sup>

Potter quickly went to the J-3 (Operations) Section of General Galvin's European Command several buildings away. There the EUCOM J-3, Rear Adm. Leighton W. "Snuffy" Smith, was waiting to brief him. Smith told Potter the president had stated the previous evening that American assistance to the Kurds would begin on Sunday. "We are not going to let the president be a liar," declared the admiral.<sup>2</sup>

Potter also learned that General Jamerson had already been alerted the night before. Admiral Smith had received notification of the mission late that evening while attending a dinner party at a restaurant in Stuttgart. He immediately called Jamerson at Ramstein Air Base, bypassing the USAFE commander and deputy commander who were out of town. It was Jamerson that the admiral wanted anyway, and Smith told him that he would be returning to Turkey right away to take command of a relief effort to assist the Iraqi Kurds and other refugees massing in the mountains along the Turkish border.<sup>3</sup>

The immediate plan was to airdrop relief supplies to the refugees. The 39th SOW's 7th Special Operations Squadron was ordered to load three of its MC-130E Combat Talons at Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany, and to depart for Incirlik Air Base as soon as possible. The rest of the unit prepared to follow. The lead aircraft, under the command of Air Force Maj. Lewis Evans, deployed with two additional aircrews to sustain the mission. Air Force personnel rigged parachutes for eight 2,000-pound bundles of blankets and troop rations and loaded



Refugees massing in the mountains

them on the two other aircraft, which followed under the command of Capt. Steven Henneberry and Maj. Steven Weart. Once at Incirlik, the aircrews received a weather briefing and coordinated fighter protection for their parachute drops. Two aircraft dropped relief supplies to the refugees at 1100 on Sunday, 7 April, keeping the president's promise. Later that day additional sorties to the border area were made to drop more supplies.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile a EUCOM order was issued that officially assigned General Jamerson as commander of the humanitarian relief effort Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, with General Potter as his supporting commander. Jamerson's appointment was appropriate. His recent successful experience with Operation PROVEN FORCE and the indications that PROVIDE COMFORT would be largely an Air Force operation made Jamerson the logical choice. When the situation changed later and ground forces dominated PROVIDE COMFORT, General Galvin would reassign Jamerson as the deputy and appoint an Army general as commander of the operation.<sup>5</sup>

Jamerson and Potter had worked well together during Operation PROVEN FORCE, and they would continue to do so during Operation PROVIDE COMFORT. Their personalities were dissimilar but complementary. Jamerson was a warm, engaging, unpretentious, almost gregarious officer, well suited to lead a joint and multinational operation. Potter was more intense. He did not natural-



Delivering relief supplies by parachute drop

ly put people at ease, but there was little doubt what he expected of them. His suffer-no-fools reputation did not always make him popular, but he was not in the popularity business. If it were not apparent when he left for Turkey, he would soon be forcing military units to the limits of their capacity. Fortunately, he had an astute grasp for the capacity of the Special Forces and other units he would lead. Jamerson was the right man with the appropriate finesse to form a complex headquarters and an ad hoc multinational organization for a difficult mission. Potter was the right man to drive the field forces under adverse conditions to see their tasks well executed.<sup>6</sup>

In an Air Force C-20 Gulfstream, a small passenger aircraft, General Jamerson flew from Ramstein to Stuttgart on the evening of 6 April to pick up General Potter and then continued on to Incirlik Air Base, arriving early on Sunday. With no prior planning PROVIDE COMFORT was under way, its first days focused on the airdrops of relief supplies to stem the crisis in Turkey. For Jamerson and Potter, the operation had kicked off with no notice. The political guidance was limited, but challenging: assist the Kurds and other refugees in the mountains. There was no operations plan to activate such an effort, nor was there any formal doctrine for humanitarian assistance. Jamerson, Potter, and others went to Turkey with warfighting skills they would have to adapt quickly to a critical and time-sensitive mission.

## Key Decisions

American and coalition leaders had maintained a hands-off policy toward the Kurds during Operations DESERT STORM and PROVEN FORCE. Soldiers and airmen were told to avoid the “K-word.”<sup>7</sup> But as the world press captured the plight of the destitute Kurds and other refugees massing in the mountains of Turkey, a political and operational consensus formed quickly in support of Operation PROVIDE COMFORT.

Two key decisions were made on Friday, 5 April. In New York the United Nations passed Resolution 688 condemning Iraqi repression of its people; Baghdad’s actions, it stated, threatened international peace and justified international action. The second decision took place in a California hotel, where President George H. W. Bush, Secretary of Defense Richard B. Cheney, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Colin L. Powell, and National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft were attending the USO fiftieth anniversary with comedian Bob Hope. After several calls from British and French leaders on the escalating dimension of the emergency with the Kurds, the senior American leaders determined that it was time to act. Bush stated the political objectives of PROVIDE COMFORT: This “is an interim measure designed to meet an immediate, penetrating humanitarian need. Our long-term objective remains the same for Iraqi Kurds, and indeed, for all Iraqi refugees, wherever they are, to return home and to live in peace, free from oppression, free to live their lives.”<sup>8</sup>

The American leaders had not waited to return to Washington, nor did they rely on a formal meeting of the National Security Council. As General Powell noted later, each administration had its own means of forming crucial decisions. The key body for national security matters in the Bush administration was the Principals. Under most conditions they consisted of the president, the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, the Central Intelligence Agency director, the national security adviser, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) chairman. When a national security crisis developed, they would come together as a body constituting the National Command Authority (NCA) to determine what action to take. The designated representatives of the Principals, known as the Deputies, worked together as a group to execute the decisions made.<sup>9</sup>

Responsibility for implementing the military portions of such decisions went to the offices of the secretary of defense and the JCS chairman. Since the late 1980s the roles of the service secretaries and their respective departments had declined, while the authority of the secretary of defense and the JCS chairman had increased proportionally. The title *chairman* originally referred to the senior military officer designated to chair meetings of the four American service chiefs. But with the strengthening of the chairman’s position through the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, the chairman passed on the directives from the NCA and the secretary of defense to the military commanders of the U.S. unified and specified commands.<sup>10</sup>

In that role General Powell forwarded the military directives to the commanders responsible for any regional areas covered in the decisions and became their point of contact for responses. During Operation DESERT STORM, for example, he

dealt directly with General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr., who, as the CENTCOM commander, had responsibility for Southwest Asia, excluding Turkey. Operations conducted from Turkey, which was a NATO member in EUCOM's area of responsibility, involved the EUCOM commander. Thus, for Operations PROVEN FORCE and PROVIDE COMFORT, the directive to initiate action went from Defense Secretary Cheney through General Powell to General Galvin.<sup>11</sup>

Although the alert calls for PROVIDE COMFORT had gone out only after the decision was made, Powell had already discussed its possibility with Galvin. The two senior generals had followed the uprisings in Iraq and maintained a regular dialogue on the possible consequences of the internal conflicts, usually through daily telephone calls. When it came time for action, Powell's order was an American directive. Galvin was free to act on it as the EUCOM commander, rather than as the NATO commander, which did not require him to get NATO political approval. Since Galvin normally resided at the NATO headquarters in Mons, Belgium, the EUCOM deputy commander in Stuttgart, Air Force General James P. McCarthy, supervised much of the ensuing staff work for PROVIDE COMFORT.<sup>12</sup>

General McCarthy orchestrated EUCOM's daily activities. His Air Force experience complemented Galvin's Army background and provided a fortunate perspective for an operation with significant air and ground aspects. While Galvin remained the senior commander for PROVIDE COMFORT, much of the organizational work was done under McCarthy's eyes. One articulated American policy and guidance; the other put it into action.<sup>13</sup>

## Command and Control

Assisted by General Potter, General Jamerson faced several critical tasks that had to be tackled at once. First, he had to provide relief supplies to the refugees, committing immediately the 39th SOW's few specialized aircraft that could conduct parachute airdrops and subsequently the many multinational cargo transports that deployed. Second, he had to be prepared to expand his air component to meet the demands of the operation, given that the additional U.S. and allied aircraft soon to arrive would require base support and assistance in operating over the mountainous terrain. Third, he needed a staff to implement and supervise his decisions and to plan ahead.

At the beginning of PROVIDE COMFORT the 39th SOW's squadrons supported the initial airdrop missions. Their equipment was specialized but limited. The 7th Special Operations Squadron had six MC-130E Combat Talons, modified with special navigation equipment to support Special Forces operations. They proved crucial to penetrating the mountains during the first days, when the refugees were difficult to find. The 67th Special Operations Squadron had four HC-130N and HC-130P Combat Shadows, modified C-130s with a refueling capacity to support the other aircraft within the wing. The 21st Special Operations Squadron had six MH-53J Pave Low helicopters, modified with equipment to support special operations. Maintenance support came from the 667th Special



General Zinni (*right*) with Jamerson

Operations Maintenance Squadron, and pararescue medics—referred to as PJs, who were also trained combat air traffic controllers—came from Detachment 1, 1732d Special Tactics Squadron. If necessary, the 39th SOW could put men and supplies virtually anywhere on the ground within the range of the aircraft.<sup>14</sup>

Additional C-130 Hercules transports from USAFE's tactical airlift squadrons quickly deployed to Turkey. The initial airdrops by both the MC-130Es and C-130s during the first days of the operation were carried out with coverage by U.S. Air Force fighter aircraft, stationed at Incirlik. As the airdrops continued for the next two weeks, other American and allied transports joined the effort. The growing force soon demanded a greatly expanded supply and support base.

To exercise command and control of PROVIDE COMFORT within Turkey, General Jamerson employed an ad hoc task force staff, with most of his personnel coming from USAFE headquarters or its subordinate units. Some had recently participated in PROVEN FORCE, and he valued their knowledge of Turkey and Iraq, despite their normal orientation on Europe. Jamerson's headquarters was initially known as JTF Provide Comfort. On 9 April, with the addition of other coalition partners, the designation was changed to Combined Task Force (CTF) Provide Comfort (*see Figure 2*).

Although the task force headquarters was ultimately composed of officers from many services and countries, the bulk of the staff remained U.S. Air Force personnel. A notable exception was Marine Brig. Gen. Anthony C. Zinni, who began as Jamerson's deputy and later became the CTF chief of staff. Like General Wilhelm, the Marine deputy commander of JTF Proven Force, Zinni was an infantryman

with a broad knowledge of the other American services and their capabilities. His presence on the staff would temper its Air Force orientation.<sup>15</sup>

During the first week EUCOM reactivated the 7440th Composite Wing (Provisional) at Incirlik, with the unit once again assuming control of Colonel Lorenz's 39th Tactical Group and receiving additional U.S. Air Force units as part of the buildup. The commander of the 52d Tactical Fighter Wing in Germany, Air Force Col. Rudolf F. "Rudi" Peksens, who had served as the 7440th's deputy under General Downer during PROVEN FORCE, was detached for PROVIDE COMFORT. Colonel Peksens assumed command of both the 7440th Composite Wing and, until 9 April, the JTF air component known as Air Force Forces (AFFOR). The 7440th's mission



Major General Hobson  
(Rank as of 1 October 1992)

during the early stages of PROVIDE COMFORT was to provide air security for the airdrops and combat air support for any ground forces committed in the future. Washington wanted Baghdad to know it meant business, and on 7 April President Bush directed that no Iraqi aircraft, of any kind, would be allowed to fly north of the 36th parallel. The 7440th's aircraft enforced the president's decree.<sup>16</sup>

As PROVIDE COMFORT began, the air component quickly took shape. General Jamerson realized that he needed a consolidated air staff to control the 7440th's operations, as well as those of other American and coalition air formations expected to join the relief effort. On 9 April he reorganized the American combat aircraft and the multinational cargo transports under Air Force Brig. Gen. James L. Hobson, Jr., who replaced Colonel Peksens as the CTF's AFFOR commander. General Hobson, then commanding the 322d Airlift Command in Germany and a former commander of the 39th Special Operations Wing, had been sent to Turkey to make an assessment of airlift requirements. He arrived at Incirlik on the eighth, in his words, with "two sets of underwear." He would remain in Turkey until 8 June, at which time his deputy, Air Force Col. William P. Bowman, filled in as AFFOR until the arrival of Air Force Col. John W. "Bill" Rutledge on the twentieth.<sup>17</sup>

Centralized command and control of air operations was necessary for fixed-wing aircraft and, in some cases, for rotary-wing aircraft. When PROVIDE COMFORT began, the 7440th Composite Wing functioned as the senior air component in the region. Most of the additional U.S. Air Force units that deployed fell temporarily under the 7440th, but the 39th Special Operations Wing, upon arrival in Turkey, became part of General Potter's command—the latter initially designated JTF

Express Care (or, in message traffic, JTFEC) and then on 17 April renamed JTF Alpha (*see Figure 3*). As the senior airlift officer on an operation whose air missions were as much airlift as combat, General Hobson was put in charge of fixed-wing and most rotary-wing operations early in PROVIDE COMFORT.<sup>18</sup>

As the AFFOR commander, General Hobson oversaw three subordinate operational commands: the 7440th Composite Wing, a fixed-wing airlift component known as Commander Airlift Operations, and a helicopter component known as Commander Helicopter Operations (*see Chart*). The 7440th was composed of American fighter, tanker, and electronic warfare elements (the 81st, 92d, 512th, and 525th Tactical Fighter Squadrons, with A-10s, F-4Gs, F-15Cs, and F-16s; and detachments from the 43d Electronic Combat Squadron, 552d Airborne Warning and Control Wing, and 306th Strategic Wing, with EC-140Hs, E-3As, KC-135s, and RC-135s) under Colonel Peksens and, with the latter's rotation back to Germany, successively under General Hobson as of 18 April, Colonel Bowman as of 8 June, and Colonel Rutledge as of 20 June. The airlift component, more of an AFFOR staff section with tasking authority for airlift operations, controlled six airlift formations (the 37th, 39th, 61st, 143d, and 731st Tactical Airlift Squadrons, all with C-130s, and the 58th Military Airlift Squadron, with C-12s and C-21s) and worked loosely with national airlift contingents from the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Italy, Belgium, and Portugal. The helicopter component, which was also joint and multinational, was organized around a composite U.S. Army aviation brigade and often supported by U.S. Navy and Air Force helicopters. Rotary-wing elements from the United Kingdom, Italy, and Germany were employed to move supplies, operating without a tight command relationship.<sup>19</sup>

The AFFOR staff performed mainly operational functions involved with the movement of aircraft, relying on the CTF headquarters for other staff support. The core of air operation planning and execution was the Air Tasking Order (ATO), produced daily by General Hobson's Operations Section. During PROVIDE COMFORT the ATO was the vehicle used to coordinate all fixed-wing aircraft and some rotary-wing aircraft. In accordance with U.S. Air Force doctrine, it served as a centralized system for integrating airlift operations protected by the 7440th's fighter aircraft (A-10 Thunderbolts, F-16 Fighting Falcons, F-4G Wild Weasels, and F-15 Eagles). Even though the 39th SOW remained under Potter's command, all of its air missions were integrated on Hobson's ATO.<sup>20</sup>

Hobson was also responsible for Incirlik Air Base, for the location of the CTF and AFFOR headquarters, and for most of the fixed-wing aircraft supporting PROVIDE COMFORT. A large NATO base with a developed infrastructure, most of it American, Incirlik had ample hangars and housing, as well as fuel storage, electrical, and communications facilities. But it was not enough. To sustain the growing transport and combat air forces, Hobson wanted to increase as quickly as possible the installation support and maintenance capabilities of the Air Force's 39th Tactical Group permanently assigned at the air base. Fortunately, the warehouse and open areas available on the base could be used to store the relief supplies and house the arriving coalition forces. The airstrip was long enough to accommodate



the large C-5 Galaxies, and it had enough taxiways and parking areas to handle the influx of aircraft soon to be stationed there.

Although Incirlik was critical for base support, its location posed some problems. Because it was 400 miles (640 kilometers) from the mountain camps, other airfields had to be used during PROVIDE COMFORT, particularly for helicopters, which needed to be closer to Iraq to operate. Nevertheless, as the total force structure grew, most of the arriving elements passed through Incirlik, allowing Jamerson, Hobson, and their staffs to meet with them directly before forwarding them on into the interior.

## Air Operations

PROVIDE COMFORT quickly expanded from the original two airdrops of 7 April. British C-130 Hercules and French twin-engine C-160 Transalls arrived on the seventh and participated with American drops on the following day. Other aircraft from many nations delivered relief supplies to Incirlik and other airfields in Turkey but did not join the operation. By 10 April the amount of relief supplies coming in from all over the world soon overran the capabilities of the available aircraft. Some countries—Italy, Australia, and New Zealand—airshipped supplies to Incirlik; others—Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, Spain, and Japan—directly to the air base at Diyarbakir, located much closer to the border. Canadian C-130s joined and made airdrops on the eighteenth, followed by Italian twin-engine G-222s on



Italian G-222 transports. The tail of a U.S. Air Force Reserve transport is visible on the left.

the twenty-first. All combat aircraft supporting the operation through the spring and summer were American, and included Air Force and Navy fighters and Army and Marine Corps helicopter gunships.<sup>21</sup>

Most of the rigging for airdrops took place at Incirlik Air Base. Because parachutes and packing material were bulky, it proved more efficient to off-load the incoming relief supplies at Incirlik and then repackage them there for airdrops—a labor-intensive operation. As these requirements increased, Air Force and Army quartermaster detachments trained to rig parachute loads arrived from Europe. Later a detachment of Marine parachute riggers, with recent DESERT STORM experience, deployed from California to assist. The British and French brought their own riggers because the internal configurations of each nation's aircraft often differed, even if the airframes were otherwise identical.<sup>22</sup>

Once the operation expanded, riggers from all services and national groups began to work together and combine their efforts. As the volume of the relief supplies increased, so did the labor requirements for rigging. Many enlisted personnel assigned to other positions at Incirlik finished their daily tasks and then went to the rigging stations, where they worked well into the night to provide the additional labor required. The driving force was the will to save lives. Everyone wanted to participate.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile volunteer relief agencies throughout the world, perhaps spurred by the news media, began collecting all types of food, clothing, and shelter for the refugees. Soon commercial planes loaded with relief supplies began arriving in Turkey, many appearing over Incirlik and other Turkish airfields. Simply receiving, storing, and accounting for these additional supplies became a major burden. As the airdrops continued, several new problems surfaced.

The relief forces had had little contact with the refugees in the mountains. What feedback existed on the airdrops indicated that they were on target but that many of the bundles were damaged after they hit the rugged terrain.

Another unforeseen problem was the unsuitability of some of the food and clothing. Coming primarily from Western sources, they did not fully meet the needs of the refugees. In fact, what was most appropriate for them could be obtained commercially within Turkey. But their specific requirements could not be identified from the air. Providing effective delivery of the most desirable relief supplies required military personnel on the ground to organize the situation within the mountain camps.

## A New Direction

The day after the first airdrop Secretary of State James A. Baker arrived in Turkey, linked up with several U.S. Navy helicopters, and flew out to see the refugees in the mountains. "A gruesome tragedy," he declared. The situation was extraordinary. In many cases Kurdish women rushed the aircraft and threw their infant babies on board, a sign of extreme desperation. Decisive action followed. Based upon guidance from Washington, EUCOM defined three operational

tasks: first, stop the dying and suffering in the mountains; second, resettle the refugees in temporary camps within northern Iraq; and third, return the refugees to their original homes in Iraq. An implied task included securing a safe area in northern Iraq. These were the fundamental operational objectives for PROVIDE COMFORT from April to June.<sup>24</sup>

To achieve the first task, EUCOM defined two objectives for General Jamerson: first, provide immediate relief and stabilize the refugees in place; second, build a distribution infrastructure for continuous logistical support. The operation would soon take a new direction, its orientation shifting from air to ground operations. On 9 April, as the CTF commander, Jamerson received a change in orders for the Special Forces units under Potter's command. In addition to the search and rescue mission, Potter was to move Special Forces companies and teams into the mountain camps, organize the refugees, establish a distribution system for food and water, erect tents for shelter, and provide medical assistance.<sup>25</sup>

At the same time, support for expanding the mission began to solidify. On 10 April a White House spokesman repeated President Bush's warning to Saddam Hussein against operating any aircraft, fixed-wing or rotary-wing, in northern Iraq or engaging in any military action there. British and French representatives also issued similar warnings, as did the European Community conference in Luxembourg. If Baghdad's leaders hoped that the international consensus forged by the coalition power would fade, they were mistaken.<sup>26</sup>

While the CTF at Incirlik began to direct the enormous airlift effort, General Jamerson assigned Potter's JTF an area of operations 100 miles (160 kilometers) east to west along the Turkish-Iraqi border, starting at the Turkish town of Silopi and stopping short of the Iranian border. The depth of the operational area was 20 miles (32 kilometers) on the Turkish side and about 12 miles (20 kilometers) deep on the Iraqi side. The JTF also controlled the airspace two thousand feet above ground level.<sup>27</sup>

General Potter immediately shifted gears and prepared to send ground forces into the operational area. He had one of the 39th SOW's helicopters take him to visit the camps; most were located on the Turkish side of the border. What he found was appalling: "There it was . . . unwashed humanity." In cold



Secretary of State Baker at Diyarbakir Airport, greeted by Super-Governor Hayri Kozakcioglu (*left*) and Foreign Affairs Minister Ahmet Alptemoçin (*right*)



Potter meeting with Kurdish leaders

rainy weather thousands of refugees, who were poorly dressed for the conditions, clogged the mountain trails and valleys. They had no shelter and little food, and the local water supply was badly polluted. Many were sick and some of the weakest, notably the infants, were dying. Sanitation facilities were nonexistent, and the camps reeked of urine, feces, and death. In the mountains the Kurds and other refugees lacked a civil infrastructure or developed social organization. Whatever value the tribal system might have been for them previously, it had broken down during the crisis. All that remained were extended families trying to stay together and survive. The airdrops provided some food and blankets, but could not alter the sanitation problem.<sup>28</sup>

With one Special Forces battalion already in Turkey and the other two on the way, Potter quickly determined that his new task required a more specialized force structure. Consequently, he requested augmentation: additional medics, civil affairs personnel, a psychological operations detachment, and more communications support. Despite the lack of any humanitarian assistance doctrine, his JTF staff quickly prepared a detailed plan of action to provide the necessary assistance. The basic concept went to General Galvin on 10 April and received formal approval the following day. Potter's staff then briefed senior military and civilian personnel at the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, and they in turn began coordinating specifics with key Turkish officials. Subsequently, the Turkish government relaxed its restrictive customs requirements to assist the

movement of supplies and personnel in and through the country and allowed Potter and Jamerson to discuss further issues directly with the Super-Governor Hayri Kozakcioglu.<sup>29</sup>

To sustain ground forces and support them with helicopters along the Iraqi border, the coalition needed bases much closer than Incirlik. The CTF made arrangements with Turkey to activate or build up forward airfields at Diyarbakir, Batman, and Yuksekova, allowing fixed-wing transports to move supplies forward to support the coalition forces working in the mountains. In addition, Turkish officials agreed to allow the coalition to use the border town of Silopi, astride the main highway that went into northern Iraq, as the operation's forward base. Silopi had a Hajj transit camp for Moslems making the pilgrimage to Mecca and an unoccupied base for a mechanized infantry battalion. Since the Hajj camp was already occupied with Kurdish refugees who had entered Turkey during the Iran-Iraq War, the Turkish government made the infantry base available to the coalition forces.<sup>30</sup>

To ensure coordination with Jamerson's CTF staff, Potter decided to keep his JTF staff at Incirlik, as he had during PROVEN FORCE. He also kept Colonel Katz's sixty-man 7th SOSC detachment at Incirlik to assist his JTF staff. As on PROVEN FORCE, Katz, who once again was designated the ARFOR commander, received support from the 66th Maintenance Battalion. The 66th deployed a large detachment, which set up a supply receiving and distribution point at Incirlik and subsequently at Silopi.<sup>31</sup>

As soon as Silopi was approved for use, General Potter sent Colonel Tangney there to establish his 10th Special Force Group headquarters. The base compound consisted of several buildings and a large enclosed parking area. Tangney used the buildings to support staff operations and otherwise sustain his personnel. Subsequently, the parking area was transformed into a helo pad and storage site for relief supplies. A large wheat field across the road was soon acquired and used as a helicopter airfield, a fuel storage site, and a tent city for the coalition forces. Later the field would house a large ammunition storage site, separated from the other facilities. The 10th Special Forces Group headquarters opened for business on 15 April, just over a week after President Bush's decision to start the operation and just four days after General Galvin decided to send the Special Forces formation into the mountains. No one had wasted any time or thought in terms of peacetime deployment schedules. The Silopi base would quickly expand from a small improvised site into the CTF's largest forward logistical base in southeastern Turkey.<sup>32</sup>

Most of Colonel Tangney's men would normally refer to such an installation as a Special Forces operational base, or SFOB. But since the Turkish Army wanted to avoid the appearance of having foreigners conduct special operations within their borders, General Potter coined the term *humanitarian service support base*, or HSSB, for Silopi. A second but smaller HSSB would later be established farther east at Yuksekova, where a section of the highway would be converted into a landing strip for incoming aircraft. HSSB was a new designation; so was the nature of the Special Forces mission.<sup>33</sup>



HSSB Yuksekova and highway landing strip

## Building Forward Bases

Before General Jamerson's CTF could move beyond the limited airdrops, a base infrastructure had to be established at each forward area so that supplies could be ordered, received, stored, reloaded, and delivered. As the forward bases were set up east of Incirlik, coordination between them was difficult due to the initial shortage of communications equipment and the great distances and rough terrain that separated them.

Colonel Getty, Potter's J-3, stated later that a higher priority ought to have been given to the deployment of communications units early in the operation. Although the Special Forces units had long-range radios, they could not handle the volume of traffic adequately. As the expanded mission unfolded, Potter requested additional communications support. For the first few weeks the forward units had to cope until the arrival of detachments from the 112th Signal Battalion at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.<sup>34</sup>

Because of limited communications between Incirlik and the forward areas and the time required for assessments by the personnel entering the camps, the logistics plan began as a "push" system. This situation forced those in the rear to assess relief requirements with little information, assemble supply modules based on rough estimates, and push supplies forward as quickly as possible. It took almost three weeks before the CTF staff could fully implement a "pull" system, which allowed units on the ground to identify specific requirements and send back priority requests.<sup>35</sup>

The airdrops of troop rations, water, blankets, and tents met the most immediate needs, but airdrops remained the least efficient means of delivery. Eventually, the movement of relief supplies had to transition through three overlapping phases: parachute airdrops into the mountain camps; helicopter-transported deliveries from the airfields at Diyarbakir, Batman, Yuksekova, and Silopi; and, later, commercial truck deliveries directly into the camps.

A key to improved logistics was the establishment of an airfield closer to the mountain camps. Silopi was a more ideal location for a forward base, but it had no

fixed-wing airfield. An engineering assessment, conducted early in the operation, determined that building a fixed-wing field at Silopi would be expensive and require several weeks of work, absorbing the CTF's limited construction resources. Establishing Diyarbakir as a forward air base made more sense. But while Diyarbakir was well east of Incirlik, it was still 130 miles (209 kilometers) from Silopi and farther still from the mountain camps. Relief supplies delivered to Diyarbakir had to be moved forward to the mountains by trucks or helicopter. Logisticians at Incirlik would later send supplies directly to Silopi, relying on commercial trucks contracted in Turkey and an improvised transportation plan.<sup>36</sup>

Once the Silopi base became operational and began to expand, it required additional support infrastructure to sustain the equipment, aircraft, and personnel stationed there. The U.S. Air Force assumed the major portion of this task, just as it had at Batman during PROVEN FORCE, deploying Prime BEEF teams from Colonel Hicks' 36th Civil Engineering Squadron at Bitburg Air Base and the 564th Civil Engineering Squadron at Ramstein Air Base, a total of 200 airmen. Hicks was alerted on 9 April to take charge of these teams and left later that day with some of his engineers; the rest followed quickly. Like others on PROVIDE COMFORT surging to help the refugees, peacetime deployment schedules were not used. Once at Incirlik, Hicks' Prime BEEF engineers then traveled by bus to Silopi. Arriving on the thirteenth, they began preparations to support the 10th Special Forces Group and the rotary-wing operations supporting it. Additional Prime BEEF teams would follow. The teams from the 66th and 50th Civil Engineering Squadrons at Sembach and Hahn Air Bases, Germany, supported operations at Yuksekova and Diyarbakir, respectively; another team from the 401st Civil Engineering Squadron at Torrejon Air Base, Spain, erected and sustained a large tent city at Incirlik. Hicks managed the Prime BEEF efforts at most of these areas and later when some of the Air Force engineers deployed to northern Iraq.<sup>37</sup>

Silopi, as the operation's main forward base, occupied most of Colonel Hicks' efforts. His Prime BEEF engineers started right away to improve the roads and buildings, install a fuel storage system, and erect security barriers. An Air Force



Prime BEEF engineers at HSSB Silopi, building the base infrastructure and installing and operating fuel bladders

Prime RIBS (readiness in base services) unit, which provided military police, mess halls, and postal, laundry, shower, and related services, augmented Hicks' engineers.

Harvest Eagle systems accompanied the Prime BEEF and Prime RIBS units. These prepackaged kits included tents, generators, mess halls, water source material, and engineer equipment, all preloaded on pallets deployed from many air bases in Europe and elsewhere. The USAFE staff saw that these items were quickly sent to Incirlik, and from there the CTF staff had them forwarded to the required locations. The living conditions for PROVIDE COMFORT were never plush, but the Prime BEEF engineers made them adequate.<sup>38</sup>

As Colonel Hicks supervised the construction work at Silopi, he reported to Colonel Tangney and effectively became an extension of his command. Tangney was the senior officer stationed at Silopi during the early stages of PROVIDE COMFORT. The 10th Special Forces Group's staff sections had arrived at Silopi on 15 April and began to conduct operations that day. The Logistics Section was prepared to support the battalions and companies, but it lacked the depth to handle the high volume of relief supplies sent to Silopi and stored there. To better manage that effort, General Potter needed additional logistics personnel. As during PROVEN FORCE, he brought in Colonel Wisniewski from the EUCOM J-4 (Logistics) Section, this time to handle the movement of relief supplies at Silopi.<sup>39</sup>

Colonel Wisniewski, who had worked with both Hicks and Tangney during PROVEN FORCE, arrived at Silopi on 15 April. He immediately began building an ad hoc logistics section out of personnel sent from different staffs and units. Some were not trained logisticians, but the zeal to accomplish the mission helped overcome the lack of specific training. He picked up part of the detachment from the Army's 66th Maintenance Battalion and a medical supply officer, Maj. Allan K. Campbell, from EUCOM. Major Campbell, a Canadian Medical Associate officer, comparable to a U.S. Army Medical Service Corps officer, had begun his service in the infantry and had served with special operations-type units. Attached to the Surgeon's Office, EUCOM, when PROVIDE COMFORT began, he deployed to Turkey as a EUCOM asset. The fact that he was Canadian was incidental.<sup>40</sup>

Meanwhile relief supplies continued to be pushed forward with limited coordination. American supply ships redeploying from DESERT STORM had already been diverted to the port of Iskenderun on Turkey's southern coast to off-load excess stores, making them available for the refugees rather than returning them to the United States. Lt. Col. Warner T. Ferguson, Potter's J-4, and the CTF C-4 Section had the push system operating at Iskenderun, moving supplies to Incirlik and the forward bases farther east with commercial trucks. Soon, with the assistance of contracting officers sent by the U.S. Air Force to support the logistical effort, food and other relief supplies were procured from the Turkish economy and pushed forward. Even before Colonel Wisniewski's appearance at Silopi, truckloads of relief supplies were in movement.<sup>41</sup>

To move the large number of troops, equipment, and supplies across Turkey, the CTF C-4 staff contracted Turkish commercial trucks and buses. This effort was not without problems. Some control over the movement of buses transporting coalition soldiers was feasible, but it was another matter for trucks loaded with



supplies and equipment that departed Incirlik or Iskenderun with no accompanying servicemen. The CTF staff could neither monitor them while en route nor protect the cargo. It took several days for the trucks to reach Silopi or other destinations. Not surprisingly, they often arrived in a different order than they had left. Some pilferage was also evident. The losses were not excessive, but the problem could not be stopped, which irritated coalition personnel trying to assist the refugees. The use of the commercial bus and trucking system, whose drivers spoke little English and displayed no sympathy for the Kurds, complicated the operation throughout.

The Turkish truck drivers were not always easy to deal with. They were paid by the trip, and their income became a function of how many trips they could make in a given period. They expected that their trucks, carrying such cargo as food for the refugees, Harvest Eagle systems, and material-handling equipment, would be unloaded as they arrived at Silopi—on a first-come, first-served basis. They had difficulty accepting any variation due to the operation's changing priorities.

The transportation problems were magnified at Silopi. The amount of supplies and equipment was immense for a new base with a limited unloading capacity and led to a two-day backlog. Unloading trucks by cargo priority rather than arrival sequence, combined with language problems, made sorting out the situation more difficult. The result was confusion, frustration, and a few fistfights among truckers. Colonel Wisniewski had a series of colorful experiences dealing



Turkish trucks waiting to unload relief supplies at Silopi

with the contract drivers, and the use of commercial trucking to move military and relief supplies remained a controversial aspect of the operation.<sup>42</sup>

PROVIDE COMFORT started as a fast-moving train. No one knew in advance that they were getting on, how far they were going, or when they would get off. Only a few tasks were well defined, and many were supported with difficulty. None of the units that deployed to Turkey had doctrine, plans, or procedures designed specifically for relief operations. But throughout the world the nature of the crisis had captured everyone's attention. Refugees were suffering and dying, and the situation would worsen if quick action were not taken. The train was accelerating, but no one hesitated to get on. Coalition elements from all over the world were soon on board, ready to help organize and shape the assistance effort.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Potter Interv, 13 Jul 91; E-mail, Col Darrell W. Katz to author, 14 Jun 01.

<sup>2</sup>Potter Interv, 13 Jul 91.

<sup>3</sup>Jamerson Interv, 3 Jan 01.

<sup>4</sup>Rpt, 39th SOW, n.d., sub: Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, pp. 1–2; USAFE History Office, "History of Combined Task Force Provide Comfort, 6 April 1991–30 June 1992," vol. 1, pp. 39–40, USAFE HO files, Ramstein Air Base, Germany (hereafter cited as "History of CTF PC").

<sup>5</sup>Interv, author with Gen John R. Galvin, 20 Aug 92.

<sup>6</sup>"History of CTF PC," vol. 1, p. 20, USAFE HO files; Jamerson, Potter Intervs, 1 Jul, 13 Jul 91.

<sup>7</sup>Getty Interv, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>8</sup>Interv, author with Gen Colin L. Powell, 3 Sep 92; "History of CTF PC," vol. 1, pp. 17–19, 47, USAFE HO files.

<sup>9</sup>Powell Interv, 3 Sep 92; Interv, author with Lt Gen Howard D. Graves, 27 Aug 92.

<sup>10</sup>Powell, Graves Intervs, 3 Sep, 27 Aug 92. On the unified and specified commands, see AFSC Pub 1, *The Joint Staff Officer's Guide, 1997* (Norfolk, Va.: Armed Forces Staff College, 1997), pp. 2–20 to 2–43.

<sup>11</sup>Powell, Galvin Intervs, 3 Sep, 20 Aug 92.

<sup>12</sup>Galvin stated that immediately prior and throughout PROVIDE COMFORT, he talked with Powell virtually every day by telephone, a recollection confirmed by the chairman. See Galvin, Powell Intervs, 20 Aug, 3 Sep 92.

<sup>13</sup>Galvin Interv, 20 Aug 92.

<sup>14</sup>Rpt, 39th SOW, n.d., sub: Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, pp. 4–7.

<sup>15</sup>Jamerson Interv, 1 Jul 91.

<sup>16</sup>"History of CTF PC," vol. 1, pp. 19, 24–25, USAFE HO files; Peksens Telecon, 2 Apr 01.

<sup>17</sup>Jamerson Interv, 1 Jul 91; Telecon, author with Maj Gen James L. Hobson, Jr., 21 Mar 97 (quoted words); E-mail, Daniel F. Harrington to CMH, 25 Jul 00; E-mail, Brig Gen John W. Rutledge to CMH, 4 Jun 03.

<sup>18</sup>Jamerson Intervs, 1 Jul 91, 3 Jan 01. Potter's use of the same JTFEC acronym for his command during both Operations PROVEN FORCE and PROVIDE COMFORT caused some confusion, with many PROVIDE COMFORT participants assuming that it still meant JTF Elusive Concept rather than JTF Express Care.

<sup>19</sup>"History of CTF PC," vol. 2, p. 229, USAFE HO files; Hobson Telecon, 21 Mar 97; E-mail, Patricia E. Parrish to author, 11 Dec 02 and 16, 23 Jan 03; Rutledge E-mail, 4 Jun 03; E-mail, Brig Gen Rudolf F. Peksens to CMH, 9 Jun 03.

<sup>20</sup>Schwartz, Jamerson, Getty Intervs, 9 Jul, 1 Jul, 14 Jul 91; Hobson, Peksens Telecons, 21 Mar 97, 2 Apr 01.

<sup>21</sup>“History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 49–51, 82, USAFE HO files.

<sup>22</sup>Jamerson Interv, 1 Jul 91; Ronald J. Brown, *Humanitarian Operations in Northern Iraq, 1991, With the Marines in Operation PROVIDE COMFORT* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1995), p. 2.

<sup>23</sup>Jamerson Interv, 1 Jul 91.

<sup>24</sup>“On Misery Mountain,” *Economist*, 13 Apr 91, p. 40 (quoted words); Zinni Interv, 5 Jul 01; AAR, Opn PC, J-3, EUCOM, 29 Jan 92, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup>AAR, Opn PC, J-3, EUCOM, 29 Jan 92, p. 4; Powell, Galvin and Potter, Jamerson Intervs, 3 Sep, 20 Aug 92 and 13 Jul, 1 Jul 91; Brown, *Marines in PROVIDE COMFORT*, pp. 5, 8.

<sup>26</sup>“That Slippery Slope,” *Economist*, 13 Apr 91, p. 39.

<sup>27</sup>Potter, Jamerson Intervs, 13 Jul, 1 Jul 91.

<sup>28</sup>Potter Interv, 13 Jul 91.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*; Getty, Jamerson Intervs, 14 Jul, 1 Jul 91.

<sup>30</sup>Getty, Potter Intervs, 14 Jul, 13 Jul 91.

<sup>31</sup>Katz E-mail, 14 Jun 01.

<sup>32</sup>Getty, Potter Intervs, 14 Jul, 13 Jul 91; Weekly Sum 5–21 Apr 91, Opn PC, 10th SFG(A), p. 1.

<sup>33</sup>Getty, Potter Intervs, 14 Jul, 13 Jul 91. For Special Forces terminology, see FM 31–20, *Special Forces Operations*, March 1989, p. 4–1.

<sup>34</sup>Getty Interv, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>35</sup>Warner T. Ferguson, “Operation PROVIDE COMFORT: A History of JTF-A Logistical Operations” (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, 1992), pp. 3–9, 15–16.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*; Interv, author with Col John D. Glass, 1 Jul 91.

<sup>37</sup>Hicks Interv, 15 Jun 91; Rose, “Operation PROVIDE COMFORT,” p. 18.

<sup>38</sup>Hicks Interv, 15 Jun 91; Ferguson, “JTF-A Logistical Operations,” pp. 3–4.

<sup>39</sup>Weekly Sum 5–21 Apr 91, Opn PC, 10th SFG(A), p. 1; Potter, Wisniewski Intervs, 13 Jul, 9 Jul 91.

<sup>40</sup>Wisniewski Interv, 9 Jul 91; Campbell Interv, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>41</sup>Ferguson, “JTF-A Logistical Operations,” pp. 15–17.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*; Wisniewski Interv, 9 Jul 91.

## Assistance Takes Shape

*Thank God for the absolutely fantastic young men of the 10th Special Forces Group. . . . They went into those unbelievable conditions and none of them left until the last refugee was out.*

—Lt. Gen. John M. Shalikashvili

With media reports on the refugee crisis galvanizing world attention, relief assistance in all forms poured into Turkey on a daily basis. In addition to Incirlik, the newly established forward bases became hubs of coalition activity for the movement of supplies and troops. Using these bases as staging areas, the men of Colonel Tangney's 10th Special Forces Group worked to quickly carry out their relief mission and enter the mountain camps.

But the coalition forces were not the first to offer assistance to the Kurds and other refugees. The incredible numbers fleeing into the mountains greatly concerned the Turkish government, which at the outset sought to handle the situation with its military forces and local relief agencies. When the first refugees closed on Iraq's northern border, they encountered Turkish border guards and rural farmers. Most were sympathetic, but they could not offer substantive assistance on the scale required.

As Turkey attempted to deal with the situation utilizing its own resources, the international media alerted the world to the urgency of the crisis. Even before the American and allied leaders decided to provide relief assistance, some humanitarian groups had entered the mountains and joined the Turkish effort. When the coalition forces arrived in the camps, they found a sporadic network of relief activities under way. The military involvement was the stabilizing factor that soon provided the organizational base as well as additional resources for expanding the overall operation.

### Red Crescent Activities

When the Kurdish crisis began in late March, it quickly caught the attention of the League of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, based in Geneva, Switzerland. One member of that organization with past experience with Turkey cautioned about being too proactive in relief operations with the Turkish government, mindful of its preference of using local agencies to handle internal emer-

**Table 1—Relief Agencies Operating in Turkey and Northern Iraq,  
April–July 1991**

United Nations Organizations	Government Organizations
United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund World Food Programme	Swedish National Rescue Services Board Swedish Rescue Services Agency
<b>Nongovernmental Organizations</b>	
Action Nord Svd, Handicap International Action Against Hunger Adventist Development and Relief Agency American Friends Service Committee American Red Cross American Refugee Committee Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team CARE Christian Outreach Catholic Relief Services Concern DanChurchAid Doctors of the World <i>Equilibre</i> Food for Peace German Red Cross Global Partners	International Committee of the Red Cross International Medical Corps International Refugee Trust International Rescue Committee Italian Red Cross Japan <i>Sotoshu</i> Relief Committee <i>Malteser Hilfsdienst</i> <i>Médecins Sans Frontières</i> Operation Mercy Oxfam UK Samaritan's Purse Save the Children Tear Fund Turkish Red Crescent Society World Council of Churches World Relief World Vision Australia
<p><i>Source:</i> Adapted by author from Briefing Slides, Opn PC, CTF PC, in <i>Civil Affairs in the Persian Gulf War: A Symposium</i> (proceedings of the Civil Affairs Symposium at the U.S. Army JFK Special Warfare Center and School, Fort Bragg, N.C., 25–27 October 1991), pp. 374–75.</p>	

gencies. Yet others regarded the Turkish Red Crescent Society “as a strong and competent body which would require little assistance” in handling the growing problem along Turkey’s border. Assuming control of internal relief operations, the Turkish Red Crescent subsequently served as the first receptacle for international aid sent to Turkey.<sup>1</sup>

Early planning for possible emergencies had a beneficial effect. In late 1990 the buildup of forces in the Persian Gulf had led Turkish Red Crescent officials to anticipate a refugee crisis. In response, they positioned relief personnel and limited supplies along Turkey’s southeastern border to support not only any Iraqi refugees but Turkish soldiers if Turkey became involved in the war effort. Before the end of the

year Red Crescent workers had assisted some fourteen thousand, mostly non-Iraqis, fleeing Iraq through Turkey on their way to Pakistan and India. After Operation DESERT STORM kicked off in mid-January 1991 they helped another ten thousand crossing the Turkish border, to include two thousand deserting Iraqi soldiers.<sup>2</sup>

The Turkish Red Crescent was prepared to deal with about ten thousand refugees at a time. Even with some additional preparation during the period before the war, the flood of Kurds and other refugees fleeing into the mountains by early April greatly exceeded the relief agency's capacity. The political decision not to allow the refugees to enter beyond the immediate border area of Turkey further complicated its efforts, given its limited capacity to operate in the more remote regions.

On 2 April the Turkish government alerted the Red Crescent of the extensive nature of the Kurdish exodus. The next day UNHCR officials released the pre-positioned supplies in Cyprus, enough to fill sixteen trailer trucks, for the Red Crescent's relief operations in Turkey. On the sixth, thirty Red Crescent workers began unloading relief supplies arriving by air at Diyarbakir. During the same period thirty-five others had set up several mobile food kitchens along the border area to feed the refugees. The kitchen teams, along with some medical personnel, soon entered two of the large mountain camps.<sup>3</sup>

Despite these efforts, the several hundred thousand Kurds streaming into the mountains were more than the Red Crescent could handle. On 7 April the Turkish relief agency requested aid from the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. An assessment group and several small medical teams promptly left Geneva for Turkey. Their initial survey underlined the need for additional help, and the word went out to other relief agencies, backed by media reports. Soon elements of several civilian groups from around the world were headed for Turkey. Known as nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs, they flowed into Turkey on their own initiative and found their own way into the mountains to assist the refugees (*Table 1*). Their low profile and small numbers attracted little attention, and their coordination with the Turkish government was limited. The coalition military forces arriving at Incirlik Air Base were more numerous, more obvious, and required more formal accommodation.<sup>4</sup>

## Coalition Coordination

When Generals Jamerson and Potter arrived in early April, they knew from their experience during Operation PROVEN FORCE that the Turkish government would establish the parameters within which a military coalition could operate. With the assistance of Ambassador Abramowitz and the head of the Joint U.S. Military Mission for Aid to Turkey, Maj. Gen. William N. Farmen, they met with Turkish officials. At the meeting they requested and received the access necessary to set up the coalition infrastructure and to move into the mountain camps. Abramowitz, Farmen, Jamerson, and Potter proved to be a remarkably effective team dealing with the Turks, an ongoing process during PROVIDE COMFORT. They under-



Ambassador Abramowitz visiting  
a mountain camp

stood Turkey's objectives and limitations and designed their operations to be compatible with its interests and guidelines.<sup>5</sup>

At the regional level, the senior Turkish political official for the south-eastern portion of Turkey was Super-Governor Kozakcioglu. Located in Diyarbakir, he was responsible for coordinating civil and military activities in Turkey's eastern provinces. Because one of his primary tasks was to combat the PKK insurgency, the provincial governors normally deferred to him on security matters and Kurdish issues.<sup>6</sup>

On 13 April, while meeting with Generals Jamerson and Potter in his office in Diyarbakir, the super-governor expressed a number of concerns but also offered solutions. He defined three objectives: first, consolidate the Kurds, scattered all over the mountains, into several large camps; second, stabilize their condition; and third, return them to their homes in Iraq. To ensure control over the Kurds' relocation, Kozakcioglu suggested that they be resettled temporarily in the area around Zakho, an Iraqi border town surrounded by broad open plains. He also discussed the issue of security and the ongoing internal actions of the PKK, whose members had killed three border guards on the tenth. Given the seriousness of the Kurdish situation, the super-governor thanked Jamerson and Potter for the support offered by the coalition.<sup>7</sup>

At the national level, Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement defining the relief operation proposed by the United States as a "constructive step." This action notwithstanding, the government also set a few conditions. First, the effort had to "be carried out for the sole purpose . . . [of providing] humanitarian assistance to Iraqi nationals." Second, it had to be limited to "thirty days, with the objective of ensuring [that] the United Nations relief agencies assume this task . . . in close cooperation and coordination with the Turkish authorities. . . ." Third, all needy Iraqi civilians had to "be [re]established in northern Iraq. . . ."<sup>8</sup>

The situation with the Turks was delicate. They knew that they had to assist the Kurds, but at the same time they were concerned about being burdened with them for an indefinite period. Returning the refugees to northern Iraq was the basic goal of Turkish policy. Although the Turkish government realized that it was unable to manage the task alone, it was understandably sensitive to the presence of foreigners, especially foreign military forces, in an area where it had troubles of its own. Ankara wanted the United Nations to assume the role from the coalition military forces as soon as possible.

To assist the Kurds within the parameters established by the Turks, General Potter developed a three-phase concept of operations. First, Special Forces companies and A Teams would go into the mountain camps to work with the Turkish border guards and assess the situation. Second, for a period of thirty days, they would

arrange for helicopter deliveries of supplies while helping to organize the camps, in the process providing basic medical care, hygiene, and shelter. Third, after the camps were stabilized, the coalition would turn over the operation to the international relief agencies, allowing the Special Forces units to redeploy to their home stations.<sup>9</sup>

Turkish reservations about the use of U.S. Army Special Forces led General Potter to make some cosmetic changes. In line with his redesignation of Silopi as an HSSB installation, he similarly coined the term *humanitarian service support detachment*, or HSSD, for the individual Special Forces companies. In both instances the euphemistic designations fit the mission in the camps, and soon everyone in Potter's command was using them. The mountain camps received significant attention within and beyond the CTF. Throughout April and May there would be a steady flow of visitors, including General Powell, General Galvin, and the new CTF commander, Lt. Gen. John M. Shalikashvili.<sup>10</sup>



General Shalikashvili

## Special Forces Deploy

Colonel Tangney's 10th Special Forces Group, alerted on 6 April, had deployed to Turkey in several increments. Colonel Florer's 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group, as well as Colonel Katz's 7th Special Operations Support Command, traveled from Germany and disembarked at Incirlik Air Base on the ninth. Tangney's headquarters in the United States reached Incirlik on the thirteenth, with his battle staff moving to and operating at Silopi as of the fifteenth and his remaining personnel arriving there two days later. His 2d and 3d Battalions, also deploying from the United States, soon followed. In no time Florer was ready to move his companies and teams into the mountain camps as soon as Potter and Tangney issued the order.<sup>11</sup>

Before deciding upon a specific course of action, Potter and Tangney flew several times over the mountainous border area. They noted four large concentrations of refugees and several small ones. Because the number of makeshift camps was divided almost evenly between two Turkish provinces, they decided to align a Special Forces battalion and its companies with each province (*see Figure 4*). A Special Forces company, with its organic six A Teams, would go into each of the four large camps and at least two A Teams from other companies into each of the four small camps.<sup>12</sup>





Colonel Tangney (*left*), Potter (*with rolled map*), Special Forces soldiers, and a Royal Marine near a refugee camp

Shortly after assembling at Incirlik, Colonel Florer's 1st Battalion received the initial mission of providing search and rescue support to General Hobson's Air Force Forces, given the ever-increasing number of air sorties over the border area. Florer, who during PROVEN FORCE had deployed his battalion headquarters and Company C in support of any Air Force aircraft disabled over Iraq, once again assigned Company C that task. Under the command of Maj. Daniel J. Wakeman, it immediately moved to Diyarbakir and linked up with the 39th SOW's 21st Special Operations Squadron. Throughout the early stages of PROVIDE COMFORT three of the 21st's MH-53J helicopters and part of Wakeman's company remained on 24-hour alert for emergency tasks. As the threat from Iraqi anti-air defenses proved negligible, only two A Teams were deemed necessary to sustain the search and rescue mission. Florer subsequently used Wakeman's remaining four A Teams for other tasks related to relief work in the mountain camps.<sup>13</sup>

When PROVIDE COMFORT was expanded to include assistance on the ground, Colonel Florer directed his Companies A and B to prepare to enter the camps. He also made arrangements to colocate his battalion headquarters at Silopi with Colonel Tangney's. The Special Forces soldiers were accustomed to deployments in austere environments, but the tasks assigned to them provided a new challenge.<sup>14</sup>

Each Army Special Forces group had a regional orientation, for which it received language training and area studies assistance, both academic and pragmatic. For example, the 5th Special Forces Group's specialty was the Middle East and the 10th Special Forces Group's was Europe. Most of Colonel Tangney's men spoke at least one European language, and most of the A Teams were specialized in the study of a specific European subregion or country. The 10th Group got the

mission for PROVIDE COMFORT because the 5th Group was unavailable, having earlier deployed to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait during the Persian Gulf War. Given its habitual relation with SOCEUR, the 10th Group was the obvious substitute. Yet none of Tangney's soldiers had studied Iraq and its Kurds, had a fluency in Arabic or Kurdish, or had any particular knowledge of the local culture.

The lack of a Middle Eastern regional proficiency did not dampen the enthusiasm of Colonel Tangney's men. Their area studies of other regions served them well as a generic model. Once in Turkey the Special Forces units went into seclusion—referred to as “isolation”—to prepare for their mission. They began a crash program on the region by utilizing available intelligence reports, aerial photographs, and any other material they could acquire. Their generic preparation for studying other areas was solid, and their instincts took them in the right direction to exploit the available information for Operation PROVIDE COMFORT. In the end, their flexible organization and training would make a difference as they met the challenges of their mission in a new environment.<sup>15</sup>

## From Airdrops to Helicopters

A key component of the Special Forces operations in the mountain camps was assisting the transition from parachute airdrops to the delivery of relief supplies by helicopters. If the airdrops were the fastest means to get supplies to the refugees at the beginning of PROVIDE COMFORT, they were also the most inefficient. As the operation expanded, helicopters were the obvious means for enhancing the capacity of the soldiers on the ground. Given the rugged steep mountains along the Turkish-Iraqi border and the high winds and changing weather patterns of the region, many of the parachute bundles had missed their intended landing areas. Water bottles had often ruptured, and occasionally the bundles struck the refugees, causing injuries and several fatalities. As soon as the Special Forces units entered the mountain camps, they set up landing zones and developed procedures for receiving helicopters.

Compared to the airdrops, helicopter deliveries proved far more effective. The helicopters could land at a precise location, bringing in supplies without damage or creating a hazard for those on the ground. Delivering them to a designated location also enhanced distribution. As more helicopter units joined the operation, the volume of relief supplies delivered safely increased.<sup>16</sup>

U.S. Navy heavy helicopters, CH-53 Sea Stallions, first appeared early in April to support Secretary of State Baker's inspection visit of a large refugee camp near Cukurca in eastern Hakkari Province. They had deployed from a temporary base in Egypt, used to support American naval forces that participated in DESERT STORM. After Baker's departure, they joined PROVIDE COMFORT and led the way for helicopter deliveries to the refugees. Other rotary-wing aircraft soon followed—U.S. Air Force MH-53J Pave Lows; U.S. Marine Corps CH-53E Super Stallions, CH-46 Sea Knights, UH-1H Iroquois, and AH-1 Sea Cobras; and U.S. Army UH-60 Black Hawks and CH-47 Chinooks. German and British military CH-47



Colonel Jones

Chinooks also arrived to work alongside the American aviation units, followed by similar aircraft from France, Italy, and Spain some days later.<sup>17</sup>

The squadron of U.S. Marine helicopters was the first aviation formation to set up with Colonel Tangney's operation at Silopi. In early April Marine Col. James L. Jones' 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), a cohesive Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) organization commonly referred to as MEU (SOC), was training in the western Mediterranean on its amphibious-ready group consisting of the USS *Guadalcanal* and other ships. Alerted to deploy to Turkey, Colonel Jones and his unit quickly moved to the Turkish port of Iskenderun, arriving on the thirteenth. Early the next day three

helicopter crews from the 24th MEU's Marine Medium Helicopter (HMM) Squadron 264 flew their CH-53Es 400 miles (640 kilometers) across Turkey. The squadron commander, Lt. Col. Joseph A. Brytus, dispatched the helicopters with ground support personnel to establish a base for sustaining the squadron, especially its refueling and rearming requirements.

Once at Silopi the Marine crews off-loaded the equipment and ground personnel. That same day they took on twenty-one thousand pounds of relief supplies that had just arrived by commercial trucks and flew them to the refugees at the mountain camp near Isikveren. The following day, 15 April, Brytus had the rest of his squadron fly from Iskenderun to Silopi. The transport helicopters began flying from sunrise to sunset in support of the 10th Special Forces Group's operations, putting in over one thousand hours in the air during the first two weeks. At the same time, General Potter and Colonel Tangney were deploying the Special Forces units into the mountain camps to assist the refugees.<sup>18</sup>

## The Mountain Camps

The Turkish soldiers working in the mountains had already begun the process of rounding up the scattered groups of refugees and consolidating them into several larger concentrations. As Operation PROVIDE COMFORT developed, the Special Forces units found the Kurds and other refugees clustered mainly at eight mountain camps known by the names of the nearby towns or villages. Seven were located along the Turkish side of the border—Camps Isikveren, Yekmal, and

Kayadibi in Sirnak Province; and, farther east, Camps Cukurca, Uzumlu, Pirinceken, and Yesilova in Hakkari Province. The remaining camp, Sinat, was situated on the Iraqi side of the border, across from Sirnak Province. Isikveren, Yekmal, Uzumlu, and Cukurca were the largest camps and warranted more attention and resources. As planned, General Potter and Colonel Tangney assigned Colonel Florer's 1st Battalion responsibility for the camps in Sirnak Province, as well as Sinat, and Lt. Col. John M. Bond's 2d Battalion responsibility for the camps in Hakkari Province.

Logistical support for the camps in both battalion sectors demanded attention. Silopi, as the main forward base, initially supplied all of the mountain camps. It was close to those under Colonel Florer in the western zone but far from those under Colonel Bond in the eastern zone. As a counterpart to Silopi, the coalition needed another base to support operations farther east. After a study of the area, the CTF staff negotiated with the Turks for a site at Yuksekova, near a Turkish Army garrison. The advantage of that site was a section of a nearby highway that could be used as a runway for incoming C-130s loaded with supplies. Once established as a base, Yuksekova became a transit point for fixed-wing transport aircraft, helicopters, and trucks.<sup>19</sup>

Special Forces companies soon entered the two large camps in the 1st Battalion sector. Colonel Florer assigned Maj. David R. "Randy" Bissell's Company A to Isikveren and Maj. Richard N. Helfer's Company B to Yekmal. Exceptionally steep terrain and extreme crowding at Isikveren led Major Bissell to adopt a centralized approach with his unit. More space at Yekmal and greater access to the nearby town allowed Major Helfer to develop a more decentralized method of operation. Florer later stated that the two models evolved in response to the conditions encountered in the mountains, more a product of expediency and innovation than planning or design. The companies and teams entering the other camps would follow some version of these models.<sup>20</sup>

### **Isikveren**

On 13 April General Potter, Colonel Florer, Major Bissell, Colonel Katz, and Lt. Col. Michael Hess, a civil affairs officer detailed from EUCOM, flew to Isikveren, a straight-line distance from Silopi of 25 air miles, to study the camp. There, at the Turkish border outpost, they coordinated with Turkish soldiers to insert Bissell's Company A into the camp. The visit gave Bissell an opportunity to observe the situation firsthand. He noted that a Turkish battalion was holding between eighty thousand and a hundred thousand refugees at a chokepoint at the bottom of a steep mountain valley. Turkish relief workers were already inside the camp, attempting to provide assistance. Turkish commercial trucks, loaded with bread and water, arrived at irregular intervals.<sup>21</sup>

Major Bissell could also see that the Turkish effort was inadequate for the large numbers of refugees in the valley. The soldiers were having difficulty maintaining control, and frustration and friction were mounting. Desperate refugees almost immediately mobbed the food trucks entering the camp. The Turks were



Isikveren

attempting to help, but the two ethnic groups had little affection for each other. The Turkish officers informed the Americans that they suspected a PKK presence in and about the camp, which added to the tense atmosphere.<sup>22</sup>

Bissell's mission was to take his company into the camp, make an assessment, establish helicopter landing zones and a food distribution system, provide medical assistance, and improve sanitation. To accomplish these tasks, he first needed to gain the trust of both the Turks and the refugees. Turkish concern over possible PKK activities made security a pressing issue to be addressed. Transportation was another problem. Bissell estimated that it might take several hours to walk from one end of the camp to the other, having no vehicles to move his men or the supplies they had to distribute. Since equipment and supplies had to be moved on helicopters, he looked for areas that could be used as landing zones. But he found little space, and what space there was had to be cleared of obstacles. With that assessment, Bissell returned to Incirlik to bring his unit forward.

The next day, 14 April, Bissell and thirty-four of his men, taking only the gear they could carry, boarded a C-130 and flew from Incirlik to Diyarbakir. Upon arrival, they left immediately for Isikveren on MH-53J helicopters. On the fifteenth the remaining thirty-five members of the company arrived by the same means. Half a dozen attached Air Force PJs and two Army civil affairs reserve captains soon joined Bissell's company. He divided the PJs among his A Teams, to exploit their medical skills, and later used them as air traffic controllers when air-lift operations intensified.<sup>23</sup>

On balance, Bissell's company maintained a personnel strength of about eighty, including those attached, throughout the operation. For short periods that number increased to one hundred through augmentation from U.S. Army Reserve

units. In addition to Colonel Hess, five other civil affairs officers detailed to EUCOM from the 353d Civil Affairs Command (Bronx, New York) during the Gulf War were pressed into service. The first two that joined Bissell were Capt. J. Larry Adrian and David S. Elmo. Captain Adrian, a sanitary engineer, used his civilian skills to improve the water supply and sanitation conditions in the camp; Captain Elmo worked with displaced persons and supplies in the camp. Both served at Isikveren for several weeks, and then went to other camps to provide similar services. Like the Special Forces personnel, they arrived with little more than their rucksacks and quickly learned to improvise in the austere environment. Other reservists came from the 20th Special Forces Group, located in the southeastern United States and headquartered in Birmingham, Alabama.<sup>24</sup>

Later a Luxembourg rifle platoon, led by a major, arrived unannounced at Isikveren. As Colonel Florer recalled, the infantrymen had several

2 1/2-ton trucks loaded with the best camping gear in Europe! They asked only to be put to work. They wanted no publicity or special treatment. They just bunked right in with Randy's company and worked their fannies off! Just as suddenly after 3 or 4 weeks they left; they quietly gave the trucks to A Company and hitched a ride back to Incirlik and flew back to Luxembourg. [They were] smart, hard-working, multilingual men . . . generous to a fault.<sup>25</sup>

For soldiers and relief workers, as well as the refugees, Isikveren's conditions posed a number of challenges. Melting snow and heavy rains flooded the mountain streams running near and through the camp, but the use of the water for drinking, cooking, and washing was often counterproductive. With sewage disposal nonexistent in the barren hills, standing and flowing water soon became contaminated and was a prime source of disease. Diarrhea and dysentery raged, exacerbating the sewage problem. The healthy adults and teenagers, living under difficult conditions and deprived of proper nourishment, lost weight and strength. The infants, the sick, and the elderly suffered far more from the effects of prolonged exposure and poor sanitation. Major Bissell estimated that thirty people from these vulnerable groups were dying daily.<sup>26</sup>

As soon as the Special Forces soldiers arrived, they established their own campsite between the Turkish outpost and the refugees. With the help of a Turkish tractor, they moved and eventually erected almost a dozen large but clumsy Army tents brought in by helicopters. At this stage, realizing how crucial it was to get the refugees to help themselves, Major Bissell's A Teams followed Colonel Tangney's instructions to identify the tribal or at least family heads, hoping to use them as leaders to put the refugees to work.<sup>27</sup>

The A Teams began by assessing in detail the population and their sanitation, food, and water requirements and, most important, finding a means of developing an efficient camp organization. Most of the adults were capable of physical labor and could be so exploited if organized effectively. Consequently, the A Teams tried to ascertain the existing authority structure, however embryonic, and harness it, first to provide a means for distributing supplies and later a basis for a more formal camp organization.



Major Bissell (*left*) and Colonel Florer (*center*) touring Isikveren. The battalion signal officer, Capt. Kent T. Woods, is on their right.

Major Bissell needed a depot and landing zone to receive, break down, and organize incoming supplies. Due to the restrictive terrain in the camp, he adopted a centralized approach for his company's efforts. He consolidated the specialists from each A Team and gave them appropriate engineering, medical, and security tasks. His engineers were to clear a landing zone and construct a depot for the supplies, as well as to begin tackling the sanitation, water, and transportation problems within the camp. Their tasks were management- and labor-intensive, requiring the assistance of able-bodied refugees.<sup>28</sup>

The tasks for the Special Forces medics were obvious but complicated, requiring management skills and more tact than might have been anticipated. Several relief agencies were already working with the refugees at Isikveren; others would follow, usually without advance notice. Most came from Turkey, Europe, and the United States, and were affiliated with half a dozen NGOs. Many, but not all, of them were focused on medical challenges and included some very talented professionals. Bissell assigned one of his Special Forces warrant officers, CW2 Richard J. Patrick, to coordinate with the NGOs. As Colonel Florer recalled, Patrick "was a marvel to behold." He charmed and won over the diverse people in the camp, and was "so competent at negotiation and coordination and conflict resolution that . . . [the personnel] from the various agencies worked in harmony."<sup>29</sup>

After the Turkish Red Crescent Society, one of the earliest and most visible NGOs was the *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF/"Doctors Without Borders"). Major Bissell's men found that the MSF's five French and Belgian doctors and the three Kurdish physicians in the camp had already put together a makeshift clinic, although they had to work in the open without support facilities. The MSF group

had experienced such situations before but exhibited some disdain for other relief agencies, believing many lacked adequate field experience for functioning in the austere environment. One of the challenges that soon confronted the Special Forces effort was finding that the NGOs were not all team players and did not always get along with each other, which in turn complicated their efforts.

Initially, the MSF doctors and some of the other NGOs displayed a negative attitude toward the Army and Air Force medics and openly avoided associating with the soldiers. One possible explanation was that many civilian doctors had a low opinion of military medics. The Special Forces medics took it in stride, rather than respond in kind. However, once the civilian workers, doctors, and others saw that Bissell's men were highly capable and prepared to provide significant medical assistance in the austere environment, prejudices began to break down. As the American medics gained acceptance working with their civilian counterparts, other alliances developed between the soldiers and the relief groups.<sup>30</sup>

With his engineers and medics completing their tasks, Major Bissell quickly addressed the issue of security. He assigned several A Teams, less their engineers and medics, to patrol the extreme limits of Isikveren and to determine the situation as far as the Iraqi border. As they moved through the camp population, the soldiers were well received. Often large bodies of refugees would simply stand up out of respect as the Americans passed by—perhaps grateful for the assistance they offered, perhaps impressed by what they knew of the recent U.S. military performance during DESERT STORM. If the weapons carried by Bissell's men tended to offend some of the relief workers at the camp, they served to reinforce the status of the American soldier in the eyes of the martial Kurds.<sup>31</sup>

## Yekmal

As Major Bissell's Company A moved into the Isikveren mountain camp, Major Helfer's Company B prepared to enter Yekmal farther east. The straight-line distance from Silopi to Yekmal was 40 air miles, but much of that route was over Iraq. If pilots chose to fly only over Turkey, the most direct route was 55 air miles and would take them by Isikveren. On 16 April Helfer and his entire company flew by C-130 from Incirlik to Diyarbakir, where they remained overnight. The next day, flying on MH-53Js, they continued on to their destination.<sup>32</sup>

Yekmal was situated on better ground than Isikveren, allowing Helfer more operational flexibility than Bissell. Located in a small river valley with reasonably flat terrain on gentle slopes, Yekmal had about thirty thousand refugees when Helfer's men arrived. The Turkish troops, eager to concentrate the refugees, had begun trucking them or otherwise encouraging them to move from nearby areas to Yekmal. The camp population soon grew to over seventy thousand.<sup>33</sup>

Major Helfer exploited the terrain and the opportunity to organize the incoming refugees. Rather than concentrating the specialists in his company, as Major Bissell had at Isikveren, Helfer took a different approach. He divided Yekmal into four subsectors, aligning each with one A Team and using his





Yekmal and its  
refugees; *below*,  
Major Helfer  
meeting with  
Kurdish leaders



remaining two teams for more general support. The flatter terrain allowed him to establish more landing zones for helicopters, one per subsector, thus reducing internal transportation of supplies arriving by air.<sup>34</sup>

Like Company A, Company B also found the Turkish Red Crescent and many NGOs hard at work. Other than the terrain the situation at Yekmal was very similar to that at Isikveren, with the ongoing relief effort needing more cohesion and an efficient supply delivery system. The Special Forces soldiers provided a focal point to coordinate much of the effort. The multiple landing zones and decentralized organization at Yekmal became the preferred model for organizing the mountain camps, which other Special Forces units would employ when possible.<sup>35</sup>

### **Sinat and Kayadibi**

To complement the air reconnaissance missions over the border area, General Potter had directed Colonel Tangney to have his Special Forces units begin patrolling operations beyond the mountain camps and eventually into northern Iraq. In Colonel Florer's 1st Battalion sector that task went to Company C's four A Teams that had been detailed for relief work. When other coalition elements assumed the patrolling mission later in April, Major Wakeman deployed them to the small camps in the western zone, Sinat and Kayadibi. Each was within 7 air miles of Isikveren—Sinat due south and just inside Iraq, Kayadibi due east of Isikveren and in Turkey.<sup>36</sup>

On 26 April three of Wakeman's A Teams arrived at Sinat and one went to Kayadibi, having six thousand and twelve thousand refugees respectively. Although Sinat was the smallest camp in the 1st Battalion sector, Florer had determined that more A Teams were needed there than at Kayadibi. First, Sinat was inside Iraq, thus potentially more dangerous, and was beyond the range of any Turkish assistance. Second, in the general vicinity a support infrastructure had to be organized along the route the refugees from the western zone camps would take on their way home to northern Iraq. Consequently, two of the three A Teams moved south of Sinat to establish two way stations, stocking them with medical supplies, food, and water.<sup>37</sup>

With Sinat well within Iraq proper, it had received little attention from the Turks. Allowing the Special Forces soldiers to move across the border to work with the refugees was a delicate issue at first, but the situation became less sensitive later in the month. At Kayadibi the atmosphere was tense. Some friction was apparent between the Turks and Kurds; the soldiers had tried to move the refugees to one of the large camps or return them to the Iraqi side of the border. Moreover, the Turkish Red Crescent had not reached either camp.<sup>38</sup>

At both camps Major Wakeman's men found the overall situations fairly stabilized, with the German Red Cross providing some assistance. The relatively small number of refugees and limited NGO presence did not require the same management effort as at Yekmal and Isikveren. One or two landing zones proved sufficient to sustain the supply effort, and the A Teams found an informal centralized approach satisfactory. Within a few days Colonel Florer had both camps

reinforced with an additional A Team, employing all of the 1st Battalion's A Teams as other units picked up the standby search and rescue mission.<sup>39</sup>

### **Cukurca**

As Colonel Florer's 1st Battalion occupied the last camps in Sirnak Province and the adjacent area in northern Iraq, Colonel Bond's 2d Battalion began deploying from Incirlik to the remaining camps in eastern Hakkari Province. Without knowing the final location of his battalion headquarters, Bond assigned his companies to individual camps. On 19 April he and his operations officer, Maj. William H. Harris, accompanied by General Potter, flew over the border area in the 2d Battalion sector. The next day they made a ground reconnaissance of Cukurca, which Secretary Baker had visited ten days earlier. Because Cukurca was the largest of the eastern camps, with over a hundred thousand refugees, Bond established a temporary battalion command post there; later the rest of his headquarters moved overland from Incirlik to Yuksekova, almost 600 miles (970 kilometers) by road.<sup>40</sup>

Colonel Bond assigned Cukurca to Company B, commanded by Maj. Carl W. Riester. In contrast to many in Colonel Florer's battalion, no one in Company B, including Major Riester, had deployed to Turkey during Operation PROVEN FORCE, and there was no opportunity for Riester to conduct a proper reconnaissance of Cukurca prior to his unit's arrival. Furthermore Cukurca was almost 100 air miles from Silopi, well over twice the distance of the camps in the 1st Battalion sector. On 19 April Major Riester moved his company headquarters, six A Teams, and an Air Force combat control team NCO, fifty-nine men altogether, from Incirlik to Diyarbakir on a C-130. The next day they flew to Cukurca on U.S. Army UH-60 Black Hawks and CH-47 Chinooks, which had just deployed to Turkey from Europe to support PROVIDE COMFORT. A few days later Bond reinforced Riester's company with an A Team from Maj. James Gilmore's Company C.<sup>41</sup>

From the standpoint of terrain, Cukurca was less favorable than Yekmal but not as difficult as the Isikveren site. Major Riester chose to follow the Yekmal model, decentralizing company efforts by giving each A Team its own subsector. Riester and his men had their work cut out for them. Almost immediately patrols from the teams operating on the perimeters of the subsectors began to run into the Peshmerga militia. One of their initial tasks became acting as a buffer between the Turkish soldiers and the armed Kurds in the vicinity of the camp.<sup>42</sup>

The most serious problem, however, was not the Peshmerga. General Potter had declared Cukurca one of the most desperate camps, with the rampant "odor of death, and feces, and urine, and rotting animals." Estimates of those dying in the camp in April ranged from fifty to over a hundred a day. Turkish efforts to assist the refugees had met with less success than in the other camps, and friction between the two ethnic groups was more pronounced. On 21 April the Kurds rioted over the distribution of bread, leading to the shooting of eight refugees as the Turks tried to restore order. A cautious investigation by the Special Forces soldiers



Cukurca

revealed that two had died and six were wounded. Riester had the wounded flown to Silopi for emergency medical attention. Despite Company B's best efforts with the Turks and the Kurds, the tension in the camp remained high.<sup>43</sup>

While working to keep the armed Kurds separate from the Turkish soldiers, Major Riester began efforts to organize the distribution of food and other relief supplies. Helicopter deliveries were essential, as there was no feasible way for finding and distributing the bundles airdropped erratically over the camp. Riester soon established a landing zone in each A Team subsector. Special Forces engineers cleared landing areas and set up supply depots as quickly as they could. Meanwhile each A Team attempted to identify leaders within the respective sector to organize labor details for the internal movement of supplies. In the beginning the Kurds were suspicious even of those attempting to help, and the real leaders often sent surrogate representatives to talk to the American soldiers. Without any American Kurdish speakers, English-speaking Kurds became the primary refugee representatives by default. As soon as the actual leaders of the various refugee groups were identified, cooperation among all parties visibly improved.<sup>44</sup>

When Riester arrived at Cukurca, the Turkish Red Crescent was already working with thirty-five MSF medical personnel and a nursing unit from the International Rescue Committee, an NGO. More nurses joined from an Irish NGO, Concern, which also sent in a team to create a clean water source, while the UNICEF provided another element to assist with immunizations. As in the other camps there was no natural cohesion among the NGOs. Four UNHCR workers tried to provide some guidance, but they had limited resources to offer and little experience in managing relief efforts of this nature. Their position suggested more competency than they demonstrated, and the NGOs paid little attention to them.<sup>45</sup>



Major Riester  
with General Powell  
in early May

The sheer size of Cukurca made the need for an internal administrative structure more pressing. Once again the ability of the American soldiers to establish landing zones and to control cargo helicopters thrust them into the leadership role on the ground. So too did the camp's severe sanitation problems, especially the lack of clean water. Medical teamwork was also critical, given the number of destitute refugees and the high death rate. The Special Forces medics and PJs tactfully began to gain the confidence of the MSF and other NGO medical workers, experiencing the same initial resistance as in the other camps.

In late April the specter of cholera presented itself at Cukurca, and the threat quickly attracted the attention of the media. Unable to confirm the initial reports, the MSF workers took specimens from several refugees and sent them to Paris for analysis. Eventually, several cases of cholera were identified, not in any of the camps but at a Turkish field hospital that helped service Cukurca and Uzumlu. Although the disease was contained, its mere presence continued to cause widespread concern at all levels of the relief effort.<sup>46</sup>

Major Riester began daily conferences with the NGO representatives, while his A Teams conducted meetings with the Kurds. Despite the usual reservations by the NGOs about cooperating with military personnel, Riester's company soon became the recognized management center for the relief operation in the camp. The Turks never competed for that role, and neither the UNHCR nor the NGOs were capable of assuming it. Nevertheless, everyone, including Riester, looked forward to the day when UNHCR personnel could take over that particular task.

Meetings with the Kurds not only provided a basis for organization but mitigated the pervasive unrest. The so-called sensing sessions were used to ease refugee relationships with the Turks, improve sanitation, obtain labor for the distribution of food and other supplies, and lay the groundwork for mutual trust and confidence. The latter would be pivotal when it came time to move the refugees back into Iraq.<sup>47</sup>

The desperate situation at Cukurca had attracted a large contingent of international news reporters from a number of the media organizations. Major Riester

noted camera crews from both “60 Minutes” and a French television station, as well as journalists from *Stars and Stripes*. The media personnel, eager to interview Riester’s men, caused some congestion initially, but as they began to appreciate the role played by the Special Forces and as the soldiers began to realize that the press coverage was more favorable than hostile, the relationship warmed considerably.<sup>48</sup>

During one of General Potter’s visits, he noted significant improvement in the camp situation and in relations with the Turks. He attributed this progress to the hard work by the Special Forces soldiers. Subsequently, Colonel Bond soon relocated his temporary command post from Cukurca to Yuksekova, from where he could better control and monitor the other battalion elements.<sup>49</sup>

## Uzumlu

While Company B moved into Cukurca, Colonel Bond assigned Maj. Robert Vasta’s Company A to the next large camp in the 2d Battalion sector, Uzumlu. Situated in a broad river valley 8 miles (13 kilometers) west of Cukurca, Uzumlu had an estimated sixty thousand refugees. The terrain was suitable for multiple helicopter landing zones. As at Yekmal, Major Vasta aligned his A Teams with separate subsectors. He divided the camp into three sections and allocated two A Teams to each. But the area was more remote than the other camps and the road access poor. Uzumlu had not been assisted to the same degree as the other camps before the arrival of the Special Forces soldiers. Some Turkish medical personnel had visited the camp, but had not established a permanent presence. The Americans found no NGOs upon their arrival and only a solitary Kurdish medical student running an improvised field clinic.<sup>50</sup>

Uzumlu shared most of the same problems encountered at the other camps and had a unique one due to its close proximity to the Iraqi border. The lack of clean water was serious, as was the friction between the Turks and the Kurds. But there the presence of land mines, sown by the Iraqi Army and covered by a thin layer of snow, added a very lethal threat. Many airdropped supplies had landed within the minefields, making their recovery impossible or extremely dangerous.<sup>51</sup>

Following the same deployment procedure as the other companies moving across Turkey, Major Vasta’s Company A arrived at Uzumlu on 21 April. The next day, while on patrol, Sfc. Todd W. Reed stepped on a land mine, losing his right foot. Nearby Capt. Daniel Cooper received shrapnel wounds in both legs. The two soldiers were evacuated by helicopter to a forward airfield and then to the hospital at Incirlik, on the latter stage riding in an aircraft with General Shalikhshvili. The CTF commander later stated that the experience was one of his first exposures to the important and dangerous work performed by the Special Forces soldiers on PROVIDE COMFORT.<sup>52</sup>

Moving more cautiously through the surrounding area, Special Forces engineers found a stream with clean water. They set up a pipeline to bring water from higher ground into the central camp area, providing an unpolluted water source at

Uzumlu. Adopting the subsector approach, A Teams constructed and operated multiple landing zones to accelerate helicopter resupply. Using techniques practiced at other camps, they worked with the Kurds and other refugees to develop an internal infrastructure to help themselves.

As the American soldiers set up operations at Uzumlu, civilian medical personnel from British, French, and Canadian NGOs and an Australian sanitation engineer joined them. The following week a medical trauma team from the International Red Cross arrived, soon followed by an element from a Canadian military field ambulance unit. One of Major Vasta's senior medics assumed the role of overall coordinator of the medical effort in the camp. Arriving first on the scene made it possible to assume the leadership role immediately, rather than having to finesse it as other Special Forces units had to do in the other camps.<sup>53</sup>

### **Pirinceken and Yesilova**

Pirinceken and Yesilova, each with an estimated six thousand refugees, were the small camps in the eastern zone. To support them, Colonel Bond adopted the same approach that Colonel Florer utilized in the western zone, sending A Teams into each camp. Bond gave the mission to Major Gilmore's Company C, which flew from Incirlik to a forward base and then by helicopter to the respective camps. On 20 April, with one A Team already reinforcing Major Riester's Company B at Cukurca, Gilmore sent three A Teams to Pirinceken and the remaining two to Yesilova.<sup>54</sup>

Pirinceken was located near the Iraqi border along a small river valley, with more favorable terrain than many of the other camps. A small Turkish population in the area had provided some assistance to the Kurds and other refugees, and made available a few old buildings for shelter. When the A Teams arrived, they found a small group of Turkish relief personnel busy at work and British helicopters delivering food supplies from Diyarbakir and Batman, the latter landing wherever there was space. A week later several NGO groups joined the effort, a civilian medical team from Save the Children on the twenty-ninth and a team from Food for Peace on the thirtieth.<sup>55</sup>

Many of the Kurdish refugees were from the northern Iraqi city of Dahuk, but the population also included about a thousand Iraqi Army deserters. As early reports indicated little friction between the two groups, Gilmore's A Teams were able to focus on accomplishing their relief tasks. They divided the camp into subsectors, one for each A Team, and established separate helicopter landing zones. Again polluted water was a greater concern than food. Shelter was also a problem, with tents an immediate supply priority.<sup>56</sup>

By comparison, Yesilova was situated farther north than any of the camps in the eastern zone. Because it was adjacent to a large Turkish Army garrison and had better road access, General Potter considered it to be the least destitute of all the camps. After visiting Yesilova on 16 April, Army Lt. Col. Michael H. Boyce of the U.S. Embassy Defense Attaché Office in Turkey reported the presence of a Turkish Red Crescent group of two doctors and two nurses assisting the refugees.



Colonel Bond (*left*) and Royal Marine Capt. Damien McKinney listening to Potter respond to Kurdish concerns

Although the group had departed shortly before the A Teams arrived on the twentieth, it had obviously performed some good work; refugee deaths at Yesilova were between twenty and twenty-five, proportionally low compared to the high death rate at other camps. But the refugee population was also more diverse than elsewhere, composed of Iraqi Kurds, Turkomans, Christians, and Iraqi Army deserters, with a greater potential for internal confusion.<sup>57</sup>

Another NGO medical team and, on the twenty-fifth, a British rifle platoon joined Major Gilmore's A Teams. The MSF's two workers addressed the medical requirements of the refugees, and the platoon from the battalion-size 40 Commando, Royal Marines, helped to distribute the relief supplies to them. Disagreements between the British and Turkish soldiers soon led to bouts of friction and controversy. As supplies were distributed, the Turkish soldiers tended to take some, particularly the blankets, for their own use.<sup>58</sup>

Well aware of the need to stay on good terms with the Turks, the Special Forces soldiers remained watchful to keep such pilferage at a manageable level. The Royal Marines, displaying less cultural awareness, were not as tolerant. The situation grew worse at the camp when a visiting Turkish senior official became engaged in an altercation with several of them; he subsequently accused a Royal Marine of pointing a weapon at him. The incident soon surfaced in both the Turkish and British press, causing some turmoil within the coalition before finally dying down.<sup>59</sup>

## Two Weeks on the Ground

Colonel Tangney's Special Forces soldiers encountered unique challenges during Operation PROVIDE COMFORT. They had deployed to Turkey on short notice,



with little preparation and no planning. With Europe as their operational specialty, they had no regional orientation to the Middle East, and the few who had participated in Operation PROVEN FORCE had little knowledge of the Kurds. Furthermore they did not possess any formal doctrine, organization, or equipment for humanitarian assistance operations. Their mission was time sensitive in the extreme. Quick adjustment and improvisation were essential.

In hindsight, one might ask if another type of formation was more suitable for the initial ground phase of PROVIDE COMFORT. Any list might include a number of possible candidates: a military medical facility to treat the sick, injured, and dying; an engineer battalion to find clean water, build shelters, and mark or clear minefields; an infantry or military police battalion to provide security; or a civil affairs battalion to establish administrative structure and coordination.

But none of those formations could achieve the same immediate results as the 10th Special Forces Group. No other type of battalion- or brigade-size unit could deploy as quickly with small teams of cohesively organized engineers, medics, and signalmen, all tied together by a tight command-and-control structure. Arriving in Turkey with little more than what they could carry in a helicopter, Colonel Tangney's soldiers were soon on the ground, ready to work with both the diverse coalition aviation units and the indigenous ethnic minorities.

Although the 10th Special Forces Group had no doctrinal mission for humanitarian assistance, no other type of unit in the U.S. Army or any other American service was so well prepared to take on the operation in the beginning. Its regional exercises with foreign armies and study of resistance movements in Europe were not wasted in Turkey and Iraq. The skill and discipline acquired by Colonel Tangney's men during training allowed them to adapt well to a new foreign culture and environment.

In the absence of any specific preparation for the unique demands of PROVIDE COMFORT, the 10th Special Forces Group was the most flexible organization available. Following a rapid deployment to Turkey, Colonel Florer's and Colonel Bond's companies and A Teams entered each camp ready to make detailed assessments of the situation on the ground; to establish the command-and-control base needed to manage the flow of relief supplies and personnel; and to provide the tact and understanding necessary to work effectively with a host of different organizations and ethnic groups that often had little in common.

Being the best unit available for the mission did not mean that the 10th Special Forces Group had all of the requisite skilled personnel and resources. Some augmentation was necessary to bring in the construction expertise, which was not common among the combat engineers on the A Teams who were trained and prepared to erect barriers for security, mark minefields, and work with explosives. In addition to these skills, those who could build shelters and develop clean water sources were critical in the mountain camps. Thus, a few civil affairs reservists with such construction skills were assigned to augment the A Teams.

Similarly, the Special Forces medics were skilled at dealing with battlefield casualties but less experienced at working with diverse refugee populations, especially the needs of the women, infants, and elderly of a foreign culture. The med-

ical problems in the mountain camps were mainly the illnesses associated with poor sanitation and rampant disease, not injuries due to combat. Thus, the NGO medical personnel, with their emergency relief experience, focused on medical assistance for the refugees while the Special Forces medics concentrated more on general support to the medical effort, especially access to coalition helicopters for bringing in medical supplies and evacuating the seriously ill or injured.

Finally, the communications sergeants could work with a variety of radios at extensive ranges, but they lacked the depth of equipment and personnel to sustain the number of communications nets ultimately required for the operation. Signal detachments from the United States soon augmented the A Teams. In all cases, the Special Forces soldiers provided a base upon which to add related skills.

Most striking was the strong leadership found at each level of Colonel Tangney's organization. Years of training had developed the management skills of his Special Forces soldiers. That leadership proved crucial during the humanitarian operation, when the UNHCR and the NGOs lacked not only organizational cohesion but effective coordination.

The 10th Special Forces Group was the right formation at the right time for Operation PROVIDE COMFORT. When conditions were at their worst, Colonel Tangney's men provided the appropriate organizational base for additional augmentation by other specialists. As the Special Forces stabilized the situation in the mountain camps, stopping the dying and reducing the suffering, other military formations began to engage the next operational tasks that would make it possible for the refugees to return home.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Interv, author with Peter Walker, 2 Jul 92; Kenneth Curin, Nebile Kemalyeri, and Peter Walker, "League Assistance to Iraqi Refugees Entering Turkey During the Spring of 1991: Programme Review," p. 4 (quotation).

<sup>2</sup>Curin et al., "League Assistance," pp. 6–7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 9–10, 45.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.; "Kurdistan: Helping an Abandoned People," *Alert* 1, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 1991–92): 1–4. The term *NGO* in this work includes any civilian relief organization not directly or formally connected to a particular government.

<sup>5</sup>William N. Farnen and Erwin F. Lessel III, "Forward Presence in Turkey: Case Study," *Parameters* 23, no. 2 (Autumn 1992): 19–28; Potter Interv, 13 Jul 91.

<sup>6</sup>"History of CTF PC," vol. 1, p. 127, USAFE HO files, Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 129, USAFE HO files.

<sup>8</sup>As quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 144–45, USAFE HO files. The thirty-day period was reflected in initial coalition planning and may have been the factor that restrained original projections for the operation.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 151–52, USAFE HO files.

<sup>10</sup>Getty, Potter Intervs, 14 Jul, 13 Jul 91.

<sup>11</sup>Op Sum, Opn PC, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 31 May 91, p. 1; E-mail, Col Hayward S. Florer, Jr., to author, 9 Apr 01.

<sup>12</sup>Op Sum, Opn PC, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 31 May 91, p. 1. Each A Team had twelve soldiers—a captain, a warrant officer, and ten sergeants (one NCO team sergeant, one intelligence NCO, two medics, two engineers, two communications specialists, and two weapons specialists, each

of whom cross-trained in the one or more of the other specialties). On Special Forces organization and functions, see FM 31–20, *Special Forces Operations*, March 1989, ch. 4.

<sup>13</sup>Intervs, author with Lt Col Hayward S. Florer, Jr., and with Col William P. Tangney, 12 Jul, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>14</sup>Florer Interv, 12 Jul 91.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.; Jamerson, Schwartz, Tangney, Potter Intervs, 1 Jul, 9 Jul, 5 Aug, 13 Jul 91.

<sup>17</sup>Telecon, author with Lt Comdr Larry J. Haynes, 5 Jan 93; Interv, author with Lt Col Joseph A. Brytus, 14 Jun 91; Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 24, 29 Apr 91. As part of the post–Gulf War USAREUR drawdown that led to a major realignment of units and the use of designations recognized within USAREUR but not Headquarters, Department of the Army, the 3d Infantry Division's Aviation Brigade became the 6th Brigade upon its return to Germany from Turkey. The useful chronology of its PROVIDE COMFORT participation also covers the activities of the 8th Infantry Division's Aviation Brigade that deployed first.

<sup>18</sup>Brytus Interv, 14 Jun 91.

<sup>19</sup>Weekly Sum 5–27 Apr 91, Opn PC, 10th SFG(A), pp. 6–9; Comdr's Comments, 10th SFG(A), 17 Apr 91; Telecons, author with Lt Col John M. Bond, 31 Jan, 9 Feb 93.

<sup>20</sup>Florer Interv, 12 Jul 91. Florer stated that the evolution of the two models was unplanned and a product of expediency and innovation.

<sup>21</sup>Florer E-mail, 9 Apr 01.

<sup>22</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Co A, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 5 Jun 91, pp. 1–2; Telecon, author with Maj David R. Bissell, 30 Jan 93.

<sup>23</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Co A, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 5 Jun 91, p. 2; Bissell Telecon, 30 Jan 93; Op Sum, Opn PC, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 31 May 91, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup>Bissell Telecon, 30 Jan 93; Briefing Slides, Opn PC, 20th SFG(A), n.d.; *Civil Affairs in the Persian Gulf War: A Symposium* (proceedings of the Civil Affairs Symposium at the U.S. Army JFK Special Warfare Center and School, Fort Bragg, N.C., 25–27 October 1991), pp. 333–41.

<sup>25</sup>Florer E-mail, 9 Apr 01.

<sup>26</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Camp Isikveren, OofSurg, CTF PC, 16–17 Apr 91, pp. 1–3; AAR, Opn PC, Co A, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 5 Jun 91, p. 1; Bissell Telecon, 30 Jan 93; Florer, Tangney, Potter Intervs, 12 Jul, 5 Aug, 13 Jul 91.

<sup>27</sup>Bissell Telecon, 30 Jan 93; Interv, author with Brig Gen Leslie L. Fuller, 12 Feb 01.

<sup>28</sup>"Kurdistan," *Alert*, pp. 1–4; Bissell Telecon, 30 Jan 93; Florer, Potter Intervs, 12 Jul, 13 Jul 91.

<sup>29</sup>Florer Interv, 12 Jul 91; Florer E-mail, 9 Apr 01 (quoted words).

<sup>30</sup>"Kurdistan," *Alert*, pp. 1–4; Bissell Telecon, 30 Jan 93; Florer, Potter Intervs, 12 Jul, 13 Jul 91. By the end of April the MSF had one hundred twenty personnel operating in the mountain camps and six hundred tons of supplies to distribute to the refugees.

<sup>31</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Co A, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 5 Jun 91, pp. 1–2; Florer Interv, 12 Jul 91; Bissell Telecon, 30 Jan 93.

<sup>32</sup>Op Sum, Opn PC, 1st Bn, 10 SFG(A), 31 May 91, pp. 1–2; Florer Interv, 12 Jul 91.

<sup>33</sup>Comdr's Comments, 10th SFG(A), 18 Apr 91.

<sup>34</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Camp Yekmal, OofSurg, CTF PC, 21 Apr 91, pp. 1–2; Florer Interv, 12 Jul 91.

<sup>35</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Camp Yekmal, OofSurg, CTF PC, 21 Apr 91, pp. 1–2; Comdr's Comments, 10th SFG(A), 18 Apr 91.

<sup>36</sup>Comdr's Comments, 10th SFG(A), 25 Apr 91; Florer, Tangney, Potter Intervs, 12 Jul, 5 Aug, 13 Jul 91.

<sup>37</sup>E-mail, Col Hayward S. Florer, Jr., to author, 12 Jun 01.

<sup>38</sup>Comdr's Comments, 10th SFG(A), 26 Apr 91.

<sup>39</sup>Op Sum, Opn PC, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 31 May 91, pp. 1–2; Florer Interv, 12 Jul 91.

<sup>40</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Camp Cukurca, OofSurg, CTF PC, 24 Apr 91, pp. 1–2; Bond Telecons, 31 Jan, 9 Feb 93.

<sup>41</sup>Comdr's Comments, 10th SFG(A), 20 Apr 91; Bond Telecons, 31 Jan, 9 Feb 93; Interv, author with Maj Carl W. Riester, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>42</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Camp Cukurca, OofSurg, CTF PC, 24 Apr 91, pp. 1–2; Bond Telecons, 31 Jan, 9 Feb 93; Riester, Potter Intervs, 5 Aug, 13 Jul 91; “History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 177–80, USAFE HO files.

<sup>43</sup>“History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 177–80 (quoted words on p. 178), USAFE HO files; Riester Interv, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>44</sup>“History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 180–82, USAFE HO files; Riester Interv, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>45</sup>“History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 184–86, USAFE HO files; Riester Interv, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>46</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Camp Uzumlu, OofSurg, CTF PC, 27 Apr 91, pp. 1–2; Riester Interv, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>47</sup>Riester Interv, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Weekly Sum 5–27 Apr 91, Opn PC, 10th SFG(A), pp. 2–7, 9; Potter Interv, 13 Jul 91; Bond Telecons, 31 Jan, 9 Feb 93.

<sup>50</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Camp Uzumlu, OofSurg, CTF PC, 27 Apr 91, pp. 1–2.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.; “History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 190–91, USAFE HO files.

<sup>52</sup>“History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 191–92, USAFE HO files; Comdr’s Comments, 10th SFG(A), 22 Apr 91; AAR, Opn PC, Camp Uzumlu, OofSurg, CTF PC, 27 Apr 91, pp. 1–2; Bond Telecons, 31 Jan, 9 Feb 93; Interv, author with Gen John M. Shalikhvili, 14 Jun 97.

<sup>53</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Camp Uzumlu, OofSurg, CTF PC, 27 Apr 91, pp. 1–2; “History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 192–93, USAFE HO files.

<sup>54</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Camp Pirinceken, OofSurg, CTF PC, 26 Apr 91, pp. 1–2; AAR, Opn PC, Camp Yesilova, OofSurg, CTF PC, 26 Apr 91, pp. 1–2; Bond Telecons, 31 Jan, 7 Feb 93; “History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 193 (but reporting 12,000 at Pirinceken) and 196, USAFE HO files.

<sup>55</sup>“History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 194–95, USAFE HO files; Bond Telecons, 31 Jan, 9 Feb 93.

<sup>56</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Camp Pirinceken, OofSurg, CTF PC, 26 Apr 91, pp. 1–2; “History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 194–95, USAFE HO files.

<sup>57</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Camp Yesilova, OofSurg, CTF PC, 26 Apr 91, pp. 1–2; “History of the CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 196–97, USAFE HO files.

<sup>58</sup>Weekly Sum 5–27 Apr 91, Opn PC, 10th SFG(A), pp. 6, 9; Weekly Sum 28 Apr–4 May 91, Opn PC, 10th SFG(A), p. 6; Comdr’s Comments, 10th SFG(A), 29 Apr 91; Bond Telecons, 31 Jan, 9 Feb 93.

<sup>59</sup>“History of CTF PC,” vol. 1., pp. 197–99, USAFE HO files; Bond Telecons, 31 Jan, 9 Feb 93.

# 5

## *Sustaining the Mountain Camps*

*If the journalist does not show the child dying, we cannot get money from donors.*

—UNDRO coordinator Sergio Piazza

The third week of April was a period of expansion, the PROVIDE COMFORT mission changing from humanitarian assistance to humanitarian intervention as the CTF organization grew in size under a new commander with an Army background. Generals Jamerson and Zinni remained in key positions on the CTF staff, and continuity was maintained as coalition forces prepared to enter northern Iraq to secure an area for the eventual return of the refugees.

But these changes had little impact on General Potter's JTF Alpha forces and their ongoing mission. By the end of April Colonel Tangney's 10th Special Forces Group had moved into all of the mountain camps and established command and control for relief operations. Potter had overseen the development of a distribution infrastructure for continuous logistical support from the forward bases at Diyarbakir, Batman, Silopi, and Yuksekova. Under CTF direction convoys of commercial trucks and buses were moving back and forth, transporting soldiers, equipment, and supplies from Incirlik Air Base and the port of Iskenderun to these bases and eventually right to the camps. Helicopter resupply began to replace airdrops, improving deliveries to the camps but initially causing some friction. Once the ability to provide the basic necessities of survival within the camps had been secured, the coalition was ready to address the other requirements of the refugees in accordance with the political and operational objectives.

To stop the suffering and dying in the mountain camps, the Special Forces soldiers immediately addressed the problems of water pollution, poor sanitation, and malnutrition. As food became more plentiful in the camps, the refugees exhibited their discriminating tastes based on their cultural preferences. Their need for shelter, blankets, and warm clothing was still critical but would abate as spring gave way to summer weather. With the arrival of additional civilian medical personnel and coalition units, those already onsite were able to provide more than just emergency care. This assistance notwithstanding, the relief effort required a more effective organization. Before substantial progress could be made, all participants—Turks and Kurds, coalition soldiers and civilian relief personnel—had to learn to work together. In time, as cooperation and respect developed, friction would give way to cohesion.

## Water and Sanitation

As soon as Operation PROVIDE COMFORT began, the coalition focused on supplying food and shelter for the refugees in the mountain camps. But shortly after the first Special Forces soldiers and NGOs entered the camps, it became obvious that clean water demanded priority. Polluted streams contributed to the filth, poor sanitation, and rampant sickness. The Turks attempted to deliver potable water by truck to as many of the camps as possible, while the coalition flew in cases of bottled water, first by parachute airdrops and then with helicopters. Nevertheless, other more efficient means were desperately needed.

Early in the operation the German Red Cross had anticipated the water requirement and made arrangements for German military helicopters to transport large aluminum water tanks to Turkey. Operating from a base area at Batman, the German helicopters airlifted the special water tanks to the largest refugee camps, first going to Isikveren and Yekmal in Sirnak Province and later to Cukurca and Uzumlu in Hakkari Province. Once the tanks were on the ground, the next task was to fill them with potable water. Because several of the German helicopters had internal bladders and pumps, they would stop at Turkish bases to take on fresh water, already treated with purification chemicals, and then continue on to the camps and pump it into the tanks on the ground.<sup>1</sup>

By the third week of April the coalition had achieved different levels of efficiency in delivering water. The airdrops of bottled water, which Air Force personnel deemed satisfactory so long as the parachutes opened over the target area, had the lowest level of success, for most of the plastic bottles ruptured upon hitting the ground. Helicopter delivery was somewhat better during the first weeks of the

operation. But the lack of suitable landing zones often forced aircrews to discharge the relief supplies while the helicopters hovered above the ground. The supplies were brought in close to the waiting refugees, but much of the load—especially the bottled water—shattered upon impact.<sup>2</sup>

The building of multiple landing zones at the mountain camps eventually mitigated but did not resolve the water delivery problem. Only the British helicopters that joined the coalition were equipped with sling-load equipment for hoisting heavy pallets of relief supplies. Other aircraft, to include American helicopters, lacked this type of equipment. Consequently, the aircrews had to load and off-load supplies manually, a labor-intensive and time-consuming task.



Burning organic wastes



CH-46s arriving with relief supplies

Often anxious to make additional trips, some merely pushed their pallets of supplies out the back of the aircraft, frequently causing the pallets to tip over. When the contents were plastic water bottles, they also ruptured.<sup>3</sup>

The deliveries of water by the Turkish water trucks and the German helicopters with the internal bladders were more effective. But there were too few of them. Making use of local water was the obvious answer. With the water in the immediate vicinity of the camps polluted, relief workers and soldiers went to higher elevations to tap into cleaner ground or surface water sources, which could then be routed into the camps by an improvised pipe system. The German Red Cross may have provided the first plastic pipes for this task, but they were soon augmented from other sources. Civilians from a British NGO known as Oxfam and some civil affairs officers working with Special Forces units developed this system in many of the camps. Specific techniques and solutions varied from camp to camp, but providing clean water to the refugees remained a critical task throughout the operation.<sup>4</sup>

PROVIDE COMFORT also had to address the root causes of water pollution. Improved sanitation within the camps depended on adequate latrine facilities and the proper disposal of garbage and organic waste. After bringing a degree of

administrative organization to the camps, the Special Forces A Teams found that the sanitation problems were relatively easy to solve with a little planning and common sense. In most cases the Kurds were willing to provide the labor and supervision to put the necessary preventive medicine measures into effect.<sup>5</sup>

## Food and Other Necessities

In addition to clean water, the refugees needed food. Although some had brought food with them from Iraq and some were able to purchase limited items in Turkish border towns, no one had enough to survive several months in the mountains. Food provided by the Turkish rural population, the Red Crescent, and military garrisons along the border helped, but it could hardly meet the requirements of almost half a million refugees.

The first coalition airdrops included quantities of American military rations, individually known as MRE (meal, ready to eat). Readily available, easy to palletize, and suitable to airdrop with little or no damage, the MRE rations staved off starvation during the early phase of the operation. Yet they had their drawbacks. They included a lot of packing material and, compared to bulk foods, were not the best means for sustaining large numbers of people. Furthermore they were not the preferred food for the Kurds. Some contained ham and pork ingredients, which were incompatible with the Moslem religion, and most contained other components foreign to the regional diet.<sup>6</sup>

But many of those who were truly hungry, having little or nothing to eat, overcame these objections in the first days of PROVIDE COMFORT. Later, as helicopters delivered more food to the mountain camps, the refugees' condition stabilized and MRE rations became less popular. What the Kurds wanted and could best use in the mountains were the staples common to their normal diet, which the Special Forces soldiers soon identified as rice, flour, cooking oil, tomato paste, tea, and sugar. Compared to the MRE rations with their individual packaging, these basic foods could be more efficiently delivered in bulk quantities and procured locally in Turkey, thus streamlining much of the logistical effort. Yet the need to shift from the military rations was more easily understood than achieved.<sup>7</sup>

PROVIDE COMFORT began and remained a logistical push system well into May. The zeal of governments and volunteer organizations all over the



Loading military rations





Delivering food to the refugees

world to send something, anything that might be of value to people suffering in the mountains, was overwhelming. Compounding factors were the complexity of the forward bases, the location of the camps, and the mode of transportation available in Turkey. Often unannounced, aircraft loaded with relief supplies arrived at Incirlik, Diyarbakir, Batman, and other airfields. Commercial trucks then moved the supplies forward to Silopi and later directly to some of the camps. But what was sent, where it was going, or when it would arrive was difficult for CTF logisticians and others to track.<sup>8</sup>

Supplies delivered by sea also complicated the situation. For example, several U.S. Navy supply ships returning from DESERT STORM were diverted to the port of Iskenderun. When detailed lists of the ships' stores could not be located, large quantities of the "excess" food and supplies were unloaded and then, with no identifying paperwork, sent forward to the camps. These items included corn, beans, cranberry sauce, and similar food, probably left over from American Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations in Saudi Arabia.

The refugees found much of the donated foods less than satisfactory. They tended to reject the corn because they considered it animal food. They also never



Rita Bhatia (*standing, right*) with Iraqi Kurdish women and children in 1995

developed a taste for American cranberry sauce and objected to American beans because they normally included pork. Several sources provided potatoes, ordinarily an ideal bulk food for the Kurds. They readily accepted potatoes if accompanied by cooking oil, preferring to eat them fried; however, even then they were not popular. Snack food also arrived in large amounts. Some, particularly candy, was popular with the children, but much was wasted. And stories abounded about an extraordinary amount of snack cheeseballs that piled up at several locations, which no one—neither Kurds nor American soldiers—would eat.<sup>9</sup>

The bulk foods were seemingly a panacea for the refugee population, but in most cases they had to be prepared with water, which only intensified the potable water requirement. Because of the contaminated water sources and other unsanitary conditions that existed in the mountain camps during the early phase of PROVIDE COMFORT, the refugees suffered some harsh consequences. Given the large number of infants dying because their sick mothers could not breast-feed them, it was not surprising that many donor groups sent powdered baby formula, which the Special Forces soldiers initially saw as one of the ultimate bulk foods for the operation.

Unfortunately, the mothers' inability to sterilize bottles properly and their use of polluted water brought on bouts of diarrhea and dehydration, from which many infants died. Food was of little value if it passed quickly through the bodies of the refugees without nourishing them. Rita Bhatia, an UNHCR nutritionist deployed early for the operation, was the first relief worker to identify the problem. She informed and then relied on the Special Forces soldiers to spread the word that only clean water was to be mixed with the powdered baby formula.<sup>10</sup>

Despite her shy manner, Bhatia was well respected. Both General Potter and the Special Forces soldiers held her in high regard as an experienced and capable relief worker. Never one to suffer inexperience or incompetence and frustrated with the general performance of the UNHCR, Potter was remarkably impressed by Bhatia's contributions during PROVIDE COMFORT. Her previous work on relief operations in Asia and Africa had enhanced her insights into the plight of the Kurdish refugees. She noted that in contrast to some of her experiences with destitute groups, notably in Ethiopia, the Kurds were a healthy people. They had been well fed before the crisis, and most had the resilience necessary to endure the initial food shortages in the camps. She defined a crucial difference between hunger and starvation. "When healthy people are hungry, they lose weight; when people are starving, they are no longer healthy and are close to dying." Except for the infants, the aged, and the sick, she felt most of the refugees were in the healthy-hungry category.<sup>11</sup>

The Kurdish refugees required other basic necessities of life. Those who had fled from the urban areas of Iraq were poorly dressed and ill prepared to subsist in a harsh mountainous environment. With extensive media coverage of shivering refugees, many donor groups from around the world responded zealously by sending tents, blankets, and clothes. Some of the material certainly helped to save lives, while some contributed to more problems in the camps.

In March and April, when exposure to the cold and rain caused severe suffering and sickness, the German Red Cross provided a valuable short-term solution when it had German military helicopters deliver large rolls of heavy plastic, ideal for the improvised construction of simple shelters. Other groups soon donated a variety of civilian and military tents. The Turkish Red Crescent Society, which operated a tent factory, contributed several thousand from its supply and distributed an additional thirty-six thousand from other sources. Large military tents could efficiently house more people, but they were difficult to move and to erect on the hilly terrain. They also clashed with a family's need for privacy.<sup>12</sup>

Families preferred small- and medium-size tents, which could be more easily handled. Many of the tents sent for the refugees were not large and generally met the shelter requirements in the camps by the end of April. As warmer days came and less rain fell, the requirement for shelter decreased. Nevertheless, the refugees valued the tents, later taking and using them as temporary shelter when they returned to northern Iraq and found many of their homes no longer habitable.

The Kurds and other refugees in the mountain camps were poorly dressed for the low temperatures, the rain, and the snow in the mountains. Most of them did not have the heavy boots or shoes appropriate for such conditions. Again donor

groups tried to help by sending donated apparel. Unfortunately, much of what they sent was secondhand. Many refugees seemed to resent being given used clothes, some not only very worn but also just as unsuitable as what they had already. An unexpected and somewhat ironic situation occurred when a shipment of Levi 505 jeans arrived. The refugees would not accept them. "Because Levi is a Jewish name," they "associated [the jeans] with a Jewish tribe. So instead they sold the jeans to the troops at \$5 a pair."<sup>13</sup>

Blankets were more useful, but distribution problems soon surfaced. Most of the blankets came from military sources and were either new or reasonably clean. The Germans sent a limited number of sleeping bags, which were extremely popular. As the weather warmed and sufficient supplies were distributed, the coalition found that the blanket flow was difficult to turn off. Much like the arbitrary body-count figures of the Vietnam era, a blanket count took on a similar political significance in Washington. Staffs had to monitor and report the number of blankets delivered long after the needs of the refugees were satisfied. Colonel Getty recalled the pressure from Washington, but he explained that "it was life in the fast lane. You've got to be able to take the heat off the politicians."<sup>14</sup>

The refugees sought more blankets than they needed, even after the weather turned warm. Easier to handle and move than tents and with more general utility than some clothing, blankets became a barter commodity. Even the Turkish soldiers wanted blankets provided by the coalition, and on at least one occasion they tried to take them from the Kurds during the resettlement phase.<sup>15</sup>

## Helicopter Operations

The massive air assets from America's four armed services and from half a dozen foreign nations that joined the relief effort in Turkey led to complexity and some friction. Whereas the deployment of fixed-wing military transports was simply a matter of flying them to Incirlik Air Base and the other airfields, the large numbers of rotary-wing aircraft required more coordination. Responding to the urgency of the crisis during the first weeks of PROVIDE COMFORT, the U.S. Navy dispatched two CH-53s from a temporary base in Egypt; the U.S. Air Force, using large C-5 transports, five MH-53Js from the 39th SOW's 21st Special Operations Squadron in Europe; and the U.S. Marine Corps, three CH-53s, nine CH-46s, two UH-1s, and three AH-1s from the 24th MEU's HMM Squadron 264 nearby in the Mediterranean.<sup>16</sup>

To augment these helicopter assets in Turkey, the U.S. Army ultimately committed two large aviation formations from Germany—first deploying the Aviation Brigade, 8th Infantry Division, under Col. Thomas R. Genetti and then later most of the Aviation Brigade, 3d Infantry Division, under Col. Erwin E. Whitehead. Once alerted of the mission in mid-April, Colonel Genetti formed a composite rotary-wing brigade of UH-60 and CH-47 units, obtaining the larger aircraft from USAREUR's nondivisional aviation formations. Genetti's deployment, like those from other countries, was complex in terms of coordination and execution.<sup>17</sup>

The problem lay in the routing. The most direct path from Germany to Turkey was over Switzerland, Austria, the Balkans, and Greece. But Austria and Switzerland would not allow NATO military aircraft to fly through their airspace, despite the humanitarian nature of the operation. Colonel Genetti's helicopter crews thus had to take a cumbersome and circuitous route from Germany through France, Italy, and Greece, with refueling stops along the way at Dijon, Marseilles, Pisa, Perugia, Amendola, Corfu, and Athens before crossing the Aegean Sea to Izmir, Turkey. From there they flew overland via Incirlik to Diyarbakir, arriving in less than a week after being alerted. The composite brigade had self-deployed across five countries, crossing large bodies of water, and on 19 April was conducting operations in Turkey and Iraq.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile the CTF and AFFOR commanders had worked out a unique command relationship for the composite brigade. Colonel Genetti and four of his officers had flown by commercial aircraft to Ankara and, because of a local airline strike, then traveled by bus to Incirlik. There, they met Generals Jamerson and Hobson. Genetti learned that his brigade's main mission would be to support Colonel Tangney's Special Forces within General Potter's JTF and that it would be stationed at the forward air base at Diyarbakir, from where it would ferry supplies into the mountain camps. Neither the 8th Infantry Division nor its higher headquarters, V Corps, had deployed a command element to Turkey, which presented an organizational dilemma. Jamerson was reluctant to attach the brigade to Potter's JTF or Tangney's 10th Special Forces Group headquarters, concerned about overloading them. Instead he placed Genetti's rotary-wing brigade under the control of Hobson's AFFOR headquarters that controlled the coalition's fixed-wing aircraft.<sup>19</sup>

The reasons for Jamerson's decision were practical. The driving force for aircraft allocation in PROVIDE COMFORT was the ATO system. Although it was uncommon for the Air Force to put Army helicopters on the Air Tasking Order, the lack of a higher conventional Army headquarters within the CTF when Genetti's brigade arrived in Turkey led to its attachment to Hobson's command. This arrangement, which Potter's JTF staff supported, worked well during the relief phase of the operation. But later, particularly when ground forces arrived in greater numbers, it would cause some friction.<sup>20</sup>

The participation of foreign aviation formations presented more complications. Just before the arrival of Genetti's brigade Germany self-deployed a composite aviation unit, which included eight German Army UH-1D and twelve German Air Force CH-53D helicopters, on a similar air route to Turkey. It arrived at Diyarbakir and then moved to the airfield at Batman, from where the aircrews began flying relief supplies to the Kurds. It operated with some autonomy from the coalition units and the CTF, mainly because the German government insisted on controlling any of its armed forces deployed outside of Germany. Political reasons also prevented the German aviation unit from flying its helicopters into Iraqi airspace, thus denying them access to refugees on the Iraqi side of the border. Nevertheless, it maintained a steady flow of supplies into the Turkish camps and provided a liaison officer to the CTF.<sup>21</sup>



Royal Air Force CH-47  
sling-loading fuel bladders

Joining the coalition early, the United Kingdom self-deployed a Royal Air Force detachment of CH-47s in mid-April. The unit began supporting General Potter's JTF on the twenty-first and grew to squadron size during May and June, augmented with several other types of aircraft. Initially working from the airfield at Diyarbakir, some elements later moved to the Yuksekova base to support Colonel Bond's 2d Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group. The British received high marks from Bond's men because they included riggers with their helicopter crews and had the only sling-load equipment available during the operation. Sling-load rigging saved a great deal of time and labor, making it unnecessary to land and manually unload the relief supplies. With loads carried underneath the helicopter rather than inside, pilots could easily set the cargo on the ground and then fly away to

undertake another mission. The American aviation units arrived in Turkey without such equipment and subsequently requested it. Sling-load procedures provided some of the most efficient rotary-wing support during late April and May.<sup>22</sup>

Combining the helicopters from the U.S. Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Army with those from Germany and the United Kingdom allowed the coalition to increase the magnitude of the relief operations. But the process was rife with challenges. With aircraft from so many different sources, equipment compatibility, maintenance, uniform operating procedures, and communications became complex.

For example, Colonel Brytus' HMM Squadron 264 self-deployed its air control and refueling element to Silopi, but could not deliver its own fuel from the Mediterranean and quickly became dependent upon Colonel Hicks' Prime BEEF service support element. Although the Marines continued to provide their own maintenance support, their 500-gallon fuel storage capacity was inadequate for the tempo of operations conducted by their aircraft. The Prime BEEF detachment soon had large 5,000-gallon fuel bladders installed at Silopi, and eventually achieved a 300,000-gallon storage capacity for aviation fuel. It also established a storage capacity for 100,000 gallons of gasoline and 200,000 gallons of diesel to sustain the CTF's vehicles during PROVIDE COMFORT.<sup>23</sup>

Helicopter maintenance had its own set of problems, complicated by the diverse types of aircraft involved and the variety of spare parts needed. Some commonality existed. The U.S. Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps, and the Germans used versions of the CH-53; the U.S. Army, the British, and later the Spanish, CH-47s; and

the U.S. Marines and the Germans, UH-1s. But only the Army had UH-60s and later AH-64 Apaches, and only the Marines had CH-46s and AH-1s. Other coalition participants also brought in several European helicopter models.

Mutual support for parts or maintenance was further strained by the different airfield locations. None of the units had a higher maintenance capability in Turkey than what each was able to bring for the mission, normally first- or second-echelon maintenance. The U.S. Marines drew on additional support from the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, while the other rotary-wing units depended on parent organizations in Europe for higher-level support, a critical issue given the many competing requirements for air cargo space.<sup>24</sup>

In the field the loading and unloading of helicopters became a high-priority matter. Few forklifts were available to the coalition in Turkey when the operation began, and it took some time and attention for the Air Force and Army to deploy such mundane equipment. Until sufficient numbers arrived, soldiers and relief workers had to unload most of the trucks and planes by hand and then manually reload the supplies on the helicopters. The zeal of those working at each base in part compensated for the shortage of forklifts.

Off-loading relief supplies from helicopters was also difficult, requiring manual labor within the camps. The needy refugees might have provided the necessary labor for this task, but their lack of discipline forced the American soldiers to handle most of the unloading themselves. When no one was available, helicopter crews often pushed their palletized cargo out the back of the aircraft. Few pallets escaped such treatment unscathed. If the helicopters were unable to land due to terrain or crowds, the same methods were used from the air. Some supplies sustained damage, but not of the magnitude that resulted from the airdrops. The ideal method of moving bulk supplies by helicopter was with sling-load equipment, and Colonel Tangney and many of his Special Forces soldiers considered the lack of such equipment a major deficiency of the operation. While most food, water, and other necessities were eventually delivered to the camps by contracted commercial trucks, the coalition's enormous military airlift effort provided the bulk of the early relief assistance and undoubtedly saved many lives.<sup>25</sup>

Transitioning from parachute airdrops to helicopter resupply was slow. Once the Special Forces A Teams were on the ground and the number of available helicopters increased, Colonel Tangney requested that the airdrops be halted. Yet it took another four days before he could convince those responsible at Incirlik that the airdrops were not only unnecessary but also undesirable.<sup>26</sup>

The two methods were not compatible if conducted concurrently at the same location following the CTF system—thirty-minute windows for resupply first by helicopters and then by airdrops. The system seemed simple enough but was hard to time effectively. Often incoming helicopters were diverted because of the danger posed by the low-flying transports or their discharged parachute bundles. According to Colonel Tangney, helicopters needed a four-hour window within which to operate at each camp, not several thirty-minute periods throughout the day. Within the camps the refugees exacerbated the delivery problem. As when the Turkish trucks brought supplies into the camps, the Kurds similarly rushed the

loaded helicopters, causing much confusion and some injuries. The Special Forces soldiers quickly established landing zones away from the population centers and erected barriers around them, which improved the delivery of the supplies and their control. But the airdropped supplies continued to land in random locations and generated fierce ground scrambles among the refugees for their contents.<sup>27</sup>

Why the parachute airdrops continued was a mystery to the Special Forces soldiers on the ground. Perhaps the momentum was too great. When it was clear that helicopters could reach the western zone camps controlled by Colonel Florer's 1st Battalion, the CTF directed that airdrops be restricted to the eastern zone camps controlled by Colonel Bond's 2d Battalion. But sporadic drops continued in the west for several days after that decision was made. Possibly some coalition pilots were never informed of the change, or perhaps some became disoriented and simply settled on the nearest refugee area in sight rather than return to Incirlik with a full load.<sup>28</sup>

Special Forces officers even objected to the parachute airdrops in the eastern zone. When British helicopters began operating from Yuksekova, Colonel Bond requested that all relief supplies delivered by air in his zone be sent by helicopter. General Potter and Colonel Tangney supported his request. Air Force officers at Incirlik, however, persisted in conducting the parachute drops, which annoyed ground commanders. As for the narrow windows for helicopter operations, General Potter characterized such scheduling as "dumb as dirt."<sup>29</sup>

## The ATO Issue

Along with parachute airdrops, which the CTF eventually halted, management of helicopter operations was an arduous chore. The allocation of helicopters became a complex task for air managers, aviation units, and the soldiers in the camps. General Hobson's AFFOR staff used the ATO system to centralize air support and coordinate the multitude of flights. Following ATO procedures, requests for aircraft had to be submitted forty-eight hours in advance. If the number of requests exceeded the number of available aircraft, then the staff assigned each a priority for processing—an approach sure to offend someone.<sup>30</sup>

And there were other problems. The 48-hour planning cycle was inflexible for rapidly changing situations, and Hobson's AFFOR staff at Incirlik was too remote to quickly grasp the problems and priorities of the forward areas requiring air support. Furthermore the priorities assigned to the requests for aircraft often seemed arbitrary to the ground commanders, particularly when theirs were denied to accommodate VIP and media visits. As competition for helicopters increased, many forward units wanted air support decentralized so that they could control their own aircraft. Some Army officers, knowing that ground commanders normally controlled rotary-wing support, particularly Army aircraft, expressed serious concern with the ATO system.<sup>31</sup>

Compared to the lack of sling-load equipment and the ongoing parachute airdrops, the ATO issue generated significant controversy. In the beginning



General Potter's staff officers supported the Air Tasking Order by forwarding requests for aircraft through what they called the "single source manager," a system used by the Special Forces soldiers when they worked with the 39th SOW's helicopters. But as more Army helicopters arrived at Diyarbakir and as the ground component grew in size, ground commanders yearned for the Army method of decentralized allocation.<sup>32</sup>

Intermediate-level commanders, Special Forces and others, wanted the helicopters for purely operational use. More senior commanders understood that VIP visits had to be integrated into the priority system. Frequently, General Potter had to escort VIPs to bases and the mountain camps, and as the operation progressed, more officials arrived and wanted to see the camps. These included senior military officers from Europe and United States; high-ranking civilians from the State Department and U.S. Congress; and senior representatives, civilian and military, of the coalition participants. UN and NGO personnel also requested rides on helicopters to get in and out of the camps. Continuation of the entire operation depended on collective support, and no contingent could be ignored.<sup>33</sup>

Nor could the media be overlooked. General Potter, as well as other senior coalition commanders, knew that a positive relationship with news reporters and photographers depended on providing them access to the camps, and he approved the use of helicopters for transporting them. But many of his subordinates were less understanding, and some criticism of such practices surfaced. Still, believing that the press coverage helped to sustain the operation, Potter refused to change his policies in that regard.

Most of the helicopter requests for visitors and the media went to the single source manager at Incirlik, who had to balance them against the requirements of the relief operations. But the single source manager controlled only the U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force helicopters at Diyarbakir, and not those belonging to the U.S. Marines, the British, and the Germans. As a result, the Special Forces soldiers received comparatively greater support from the Marine, British, and German units.

Such problems developed because of the high demand for helicopter support by many users, an inadequate communications system to assess priorities, and a tasking system too rigid for changing requirements. The schedules maintained by both Potter and Tangney reflected some of the difficulties. With their assessments in hand from daily tours of the camps, both returned to Silopi around 1700 and then had a meeting with the 10th Special Forces Group staff at 1800. The air support requirements were worked out and the requests sent to Diyarbakir by midnight, often for missions that had to be flown by 0600 the next day. But the process did not allow enough time for the Air Force's planning cycle to prepare for many of the missions, even though helicopters were often available.<sup>34</sup>

As a result, some requests could not be programmed in time to meet the needs of the soldiers in the camps. When they saw visitors flying in or around their areas, they questioned how priorities had been established. In the end, there was probably sufficient airlift to go around, but much of it operated on an ad hoc basis, with the Marines, British, and Germans picking up the slack.

At the same time, the CTF was funneling relief supplies by fixed-wing transports into Diyarbakir and by Turkish commercial trucks into Silopi. Moving all the helicopters to Silopi would help to centralize the rotary-wing operations, especially maintenance, refueling, and tasking, but would also eliminate Diyarbakir as a functional supply base. At CTF headquarters General Zinni reviewed the controversy and determined that the existing system was working better than most of the ground personnel realized.<sup>35</sup>

## Friction and Frustration

At the political level, the coalition governments came together to provide relief assistance for the dying and suffering refugees in the mountain camps. Despite the lack of planning and preparation for PROVIDE COMFORT, they quickly deployed military aircraft, ground forces, supplies, and equipment. On the ground, however, much depended on flexibility and improvisation to adapt to a fast-moving crisis in a foreign environment. Many unforeseen complications developed, some that tested the conventional doctrine and procedure used during the operation as well as the patience and tempers of those involved. The signs of friction and frustration soon became evident not only among the emerging task force organizations but also the NGO relief agencies, the Turkish authorities, and the refugee population itself. But the officers, soldiers, and NGO civilians worked hard to overcome these difficulties for the sake of the humanitarian effort. The military professionals in charge began to bond to achieve cohesion, providing the leadership and organizational structure that would make the operation a success.

## Nongovernmental Organizations

Many of the NGO personnel working in the refugee camps were doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals with a broad spectrum of skills. All were dedicated, altruistic, and eager. Some were worldly and toughened by experience; some were pacifists, who did not adjust easily to the presence of armed soldiers from any country; and some were naive and inexperienced. Though their participation received limited recognition as PROVIDE COMFORT grew in scale and duration, their individual zeal and contributions rivaled that of the military members. But from the beginning their activities lacked central direction from the Turkish government, the Turkish Red Crescent, the United Nations, the coalition powers, or even their own parent organizations. Their diverse national, cultural, and philosophical backgrounds complicated the integration required for a cohesive effort.

At the outset of the operation some controversy erupted over what the refugees needed immediately. In early April EUCOM dispatched medical officers to Turkey to assess the refugee situation in the mountain camps. They reported that water, food, shelter, and improved sanitation were more critical than field hospitals to stop the death and suffering. Their assessment that medical facilities were not needed



German Red Cross first aid station on the Turkish border near Yekmal



MSF workers with a civil affairs liaison officer near Yekmal

would result in a confused medical system and a lack of medical leadership for PROVIDE COMFORT, with EUCOM programming just one field hospital for the coalition forces and only two medical clearing companies for the refugees. Neither the many NGO groups nor the Special Forces soldiers agreed with this assessment. Consequently, the ground commanders directed the A Team medics to run the medical effort in those camps with a limited NGO presence and to assume more of a support role in camps where the NGOs were more numerous and established.<sup>36</sup>

Some sixty relief agencies eventually participated in PROVIDE COMFORT. However, none proved capable of providing the broad assessments necessary to prioritize supplies and tasks or of managing the overall effort. According to a report prepared by the League of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the NGOs could be grouped into three categories: those able to provide instantaneous relief action; those that sent small assessment teams, followed by personnel and supplies; and “the plethora of small agencies” whose workers “arrived with little clear understanding of the problem or how they could assist.” Even though the Turkish Red Crescent had established a coordination task force, called Kizilay, at Diyarbakir, it lacked the capacity and authority to control the disparate NGOs. Some participants, like the *Médecins Sans Frontières*, were experienced, robust, and well prepared to go into the mountains; others were not. Some simply assumed that their medical or other skills, combined with their good intentions, would ensure that some group already in the region would provide for their administrative and logistical support. That assumption caused considerable turmoil and frustration.<sup>37</sup>

Another source of frustration was the NGOs’ limited means of transportation for moving within Turkey, especially to the remote border camps. Yet that situation actually allowed the Special Forces soldiers to achieve a useful relationship with the NGOs. Avoiding an authoritative style of leadership, the A Teams used a soft-sell approach, demonstrating their finesse at coordinating the movement of supplies to the camps and their ability to calm and organize the refugees. Clearly, their access to military helicopters for the movement of supplies and the evacuation of the most seriously sick or injured gave them an important advantage in their relations with the NGOs.<sup>38</sup>



Susan Carroll at her Incirlik office

## United Nations

Susan E. Carroll, the UNHCR action officer assigned to PROVIDE COMFORT, was most candid about the interaction between the coalition forces and the NGOs. Carroll recalled her awestruck wonder while standing near the Incirlik airstrip on one occasion, when she observed the many incoming military transports loaded with relief supplies. She noted that the volume and scope of the operation exceeded anything that the United Nations could possibly manage. Like other UN personnel, long frustrated by adverse press accounts of the organization's performance, Carroll yearned for a broader understanding of the strengths and limitations of the United Nations.<sup>39</sup>

Although UN projections in the fall of 1990 of the impending crisis had been far from accurate, they were closer to reality than any other. The quarter-module pre-positioned by UNDRO in Cyprus and subsequently released by the UNHCR for the crisis in Turkey was among the first supplies to reach the refugees. Yet the UNHCR was too weak to provide effective direction for the relief effort. More a standing administrative staff than an operational agency, it was generally capable of predicting a crisis and performing some planning and preparation functions, but it was not equipped to respond quickly with trained and experienced personnel in significant numbers.<sup>40</sup>

The quality of UN personnel on the ground during PROVIDE COMFORT varied widely. Some came directly from UN staff sections; some were products of NGO short-term hire programs; and others were outside volunteers. They were intelligent and well meaning, but often lacked experience, training, and preparation. None of them appeared to have any military experience or an understanding of military operations and procedures. According to Major Riester, many of the American soldiers assumed that the United Nations and its personnel were the experts on relief operations. But his A Teams at Cukurca and those at the other camps quickly discovered that the majority of the UNHCR personnel were not only inexperienced in adapting to the crisis but also unprepared for the scale of assistance required.<sup>41</sup>

The lack of an obvious rank system within the United Nations caused the coalition leaders some difficulty in identifying the more capable UN personnel. Often the more experienced representatives were sent well forward to the refugee camps, while those more junior went to such intermediate locations as the CTF headquarters at Incirlik or the 10th Special Forces Group headquarters at Silopi to coordinate with senior coalition leaders. Rita Bhatia was a case in point. She was highly experienced

and useful in the mountains, and without question her contribution as a nutritionist on PROVIDE COMFORT saved lives. But she was fully employed with the requirements of her specialty, never serving as a senior field manager.

While fully appreciating UN specialists like Bhatia, Potter and Tangney found the lack of competent UNHCR managers particularly frustrating. In one case a young UNHCR representative working with Tangney's staff became exceptionally difficult and unreliable. For example, during one of Potter's meetings at the 10th Special Forces Group headquarters she barged in to demand helicopter support for the next day but then arrived late for the scheduled departure. Potter, who worked well with the press and other civilians during PROVIDE COMFORT, had little tolerance for anyone so disruptive and asked that she be removed as the UN representative. The UNHCR officials complied and sent a replacement, but that experience did not enhance relations between the United Nations and the military coalition.<sup>42</sup>

Political pressure, especially from the Turkish government, was building for the United Nations to assume operational control of the relief effort. Given this environment, the coalition leaders had to come to terms with their UN counterparts during the projected period of transition from military to civilian control. If the transition did not occur as planned, they realized that the coalition forces would have to remain longer in the operational arena to care for the repatriated refugees. Their objective was not to take the leadership role from the United Nations, but rather to create the positive conditions that supported a successful turnover within the time designated by Turkey. Despite occasional friction, concerted efforts were made to include UN personnel in appropriate meetings in each locale and to enhance their position with the NGOs, Turks, and Kurds.

## The Turks

Relations with Turkish authorities, military and political, were a constant concern for the coalition leaders. Turkey was in charge in terms of setting the parameters of PROVIDE COMFORT. General Jamerson, and later General Shalikashvili, made it clear to all coalition participants that good relations with the Turks were absolutely essential to sustain the relief effort. Similarly, General Potter made the same point to the key players in his JTF organization. To provide a means for maintaining a constant dialogue with the Turks as the operation progressed, Jamerson established a Turkish military liaison cell within his CTF headquarters at Incirlik.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, some episodes at the mountain camps produced an atmosphere of friction. The Special Forces soldiers had difficulty watching some Turkish soldiers occasionally abuse the refugees physically or otherwise exploit them. Despite occasional flare-ups, they adapted to the situation and frequently acted as a buffer between the Turks and refugees. With coalition forces assuming many of the relief tasks, Turkish soldiers were often content to let them work unimpeded.

At the time it was difficult for many of the coalition participants to appreciate the effort that the Turks had made on the behalf of the Kurds. Few knew of Turkey's previous assistance efforts prior to and during DESERT STORM, and even fewer had an



A Turkish soldier

understanding of the long history of conflict between the two ethnic groups. When coalition forces arrived in the mountain camps, the squalor and suffering obscured the Turkish contribution that had been made from the beginning of the crisis.

### **The Kurds**

The cultural differences between the Turkish soldiers and Western coalition members working in the most rural region of Turkey with a foreign refugee population accentuated the harsher conditions in the Middle East. The American soldiers tended to be extremely sympathetic with the refugees in the beginning, but their feelings slowly became less altruistic and more realistic as the operation progressed. Some of the social mores of the refugees, whose standards could appear quite primitive to an outsider, were eventually questioned. For example, the Special Forces medics were shocked that the Kurds did not take better care of their children, particularly the female infants. In a few notable cases they discovered that some families simply bundled up the female infants and put them in the back of a tent with no consistent care, which led to a number of unnecessary deaths. They also found that the Kurdish men would often sit idly by as their women did much of the physical labor necessary for all of them to survive. The men often refused to wait in line for supplies or would cut in on women who had been waiting patiently.<sup>44</sup>

Other problems were also evident. During the first weeks of PROVIDE COMFORT greed and corruption among some of the refugee groups had led to an



Potter and Tangney meeting with General Ali (*center*) and his Peshmerga. With Tangney are Colonel Bond (*standing behind*), Major Vasta (*standing right*), and CSM Georg Moskaluk (*seated*).

uneven distribution of supplies, favoring the strong at the expense of the weak. As the volume of supplies increased, such behavior became less frequent. Coalition soldiers continued to show a special concern for the children and a respect for those willing to work for the common good. As the operation in the mountains continued into May, many began to exhibit less sympathy for the refugees than they had in early April.<sup>45</sup>

In contrast, relations between the Peshmerga and the coalition forces in the mountains were generally positive. The Special Forces soldiers had been trained to work with indigenous paramilitary groups and were prepared to adapt to them as appropriate. During the course of PROVIDE COMFORT General Potter and Colonel Tangney met with Omar Aswan Ibrahim, the senior Peshmerga commander known as General Ali. From this encounter they were able to glean information on the guerrilla army and on how to establish a positive working relationship with its leaders. They determined that the Peshmerga had about thirty thousand full-time and part-time guerrillas, organized into lightly armed and foot-mobile companies and battalions, and that it had little capacity to control or sustain larger formations. Tangney, who had a master's degree in anthropology, was intrigued with the Peshmerga's potential for use against the Iraqi Army. But, to survive, the guerrillas had to remain in the mountains, where their loose organizational structure was an advantage. For operations south of the mountains they would require a much more sophisticated military structure and heavier equipment. The Peshmerga had neither,

and the political situation with Turkey prevented the coalition from providing them with any substantive military assistance.<sup>46</sup>

## The Media

In general, the media produced positive coverage of the military efforts during PROVIDE COMFORT. The humanitarian nature of the operation helped to ameliorate past difficulties between the media and deployed military formations during DESERT STORM, when each party had objectives that were often incompatible. News reporters and photographers had complained about their treatment, resenting the tight control of their movements and the limited access to decision makers on the operation.

The situation was different during PROVIDE COMFORT. Little information was classified, and the humanitarian activities were conducted in the open. The respective CTF and subordinate staffs issued information updates regularly as well as arranged for transportation to the field, while within the camps Special Forces soldiers offered news reporters and photographers food, shelter, and ready access to firsthand sources. Potter and Tangney found that when they needed more support from the Bush administration or the Pentagon on a logistical or operational issue, favorable coverage by the press enhanced their efforts. The political response, driven to some degree by such coverage from the beginning of PROVIDE COMFORT, fostered a more positive relationship among the media and the coalition forces.<sup>47</sup>



Reporter interviewing Shalikashvili, with public affairs officer Lt. Col. Robert A. Flocke nearby

New commitments would soon bring more international scrutiny, and coalition commanders would need the support of the media as they worked hard to solve the operational challenges that lay ahead. The focus of PROVIDE COMFORT was changing from humanitarian assistance to humanitarian intervention. The two phases of the operation appeared to be sequential, but in reality they overlapped. The intervention mission was well under way as the situation in the mountain camps became more stable. With additional coalition formations on board the fast-moving train, the CTF and senior commanders were ready to send an intervention force into northern Iraq to create a security zone for the soon-to-be-repatriated refugees.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup>“History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 80–81, USAFE HO files, Ramstein Air Base, Germany; AAR, Opn PC, Co A, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 5 Jun 91, p. 2; Bissell Telecon, 30 Jan 93; Interv, author with Capt Floyd Z. Light, 11 Jul 91; Florer Interv, 12 Jul 91.

<sup>2</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Co A, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 5 Jun 91, p. 2; Florer, Light, Tangney Inters, 12 Jul, 11 Jul, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>3</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Co A, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 5 Jun 91, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>“History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 182–84, 190–92, 197, USAFE HO files; Curin et al., “League Assistance,” p. 12; Tangney, Florer, Potter Inters, 5 Aug, 12 Jul, 13 Jul 91; Bond Telecons, 31 Jan, 11 Feb 93.

<sup>5</sup>Bissell Telecon, 30 Jan 93; Light, Riester Inters, 11 Jul, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>6</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Co A, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 5 Jun 91, p. 3; Potter, Tangney, Florer Inters, 13 Jul, 5 Aug, 12 Jul 91; Bond Telecons, 31 Jan, 11 Feb 93.

<sup>7</sup>Potter, Tangney, Florer Inters, 13 Jul, 5 Aug, 12 Jul 91; Bond Telecons, 31 Jan, 11 Feb 93. For many of the officers interviewed, the unpopularity of MRE rations had more to do with other factors than religion.

<sup>8</sup>Ferguson, “JTF-A Logistical Operations,” pp. 15–16; Florer, Light Inters, 12 Jul, 11 Jul 91.

<sup>9</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Co A, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 5 Jun 91, p. 3; Ferguson, “JTF-A Logistical Operations,” p. 16; Light Interv, 11 Jul 91.

<sup>10</sup>Interv, author with Rita Bhatia, 8 Jul 91.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. (quotation); Potter Interv, 13 Jul 91.

<sup>12</sup>Curin et al., “League Assistance,” p. 10; Light Interv, 11 Jul 91.

<sup>13</sup>Curin et al., “League Assistance,” p. 31; Light Interv, 11 Jul 91; Bond Telecons, 31 Jan, 9 Feb 93; Frank Best and Nancy Tomich, with contributions from U.S. Medicine staff, *Medicine in the Gulf War* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Medicine, 1991/1995), p. 118 (quoted words). Iran, which was also helping large numbers of Iraqi refugees, would not even accept used clothing to pass on to them.

<sup>14</sup>Light, Getty Inters, 11 Jul, 14 Jul 91 (quotation).

<sup>15</sup>Light Interv, 11 Jul 91.

<sup>16</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 24, 29 Apr 91; Haynes Telecon, 5 Jan 93; Brytus Interv, 14 Jun 91.

<sup>17</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 22, 29 Apr, 15 May 91.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Hobson Telecon, 21 Mar 97; Telecon, author with Col Thomas R. Genetti, 4 Apr 97.

<sup>20</sup>Getty, Schwartz Inters, 14 Jul, 9 Jul 91; Hobson, Genetti Telecons, 21 Mar, 4 Apr 97. For more details on the friction caused by the ATO system, see Chapter 7.

<sup>21</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Co A, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 5 Jun 91, p. 2; “History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 80–82, USAFE HO files.

<sup>22</sup>Comdr’s Comments, 10th SFG(A), 20 Apr 91; AAR, Opn PC, Co A, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 5 Jun 91, p. 2.; Bond Telecons, 31 Jan, 9 Feb 93.

<sup>23</sup>Hicks, Wisniewski Inters, 15 Jun, 9 Jul 91. Tangney, in his Comdr’s Comments, 10th SFG(A), 20–22 and 26 Apr 91, recorded his concern about the storage of aviation and vehicular fuel.

<sup>24</sup>Brytus, Schwartz Inters, 14 Jul, 9 Jul 91; Genetti, Haynes Telecons, 4 Apr 97, 5 Jan 93.

<sup>25</sup>Ltr, Col William P. Tangney to author, 11 Mar 92; AAR, Opn PC, Co A, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 5 Jun 91, pp. 1–3; AAR, Opn PC, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 22 May 91, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>Comdr’s Comments, 10th SFG(A), 20 Apr 91; Potter, Tangney, Getty Inters, 13 Jul, 5 Aug, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>27</sup>Comdr’s Comments, 10th SFG(A), 20 Apr 91; Tangney Interv, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>28</sup>Comdr’s Comments, 10th SFG(A), 22 Apr 91; “History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 82–83, USAFE HO files.

<sup>29</sup>“History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 84 (quoted words) and 85, USAFE HO files.

<sup>30</sup>Potter, Getty, Jamerson Inters, 13 Jul, 14 Jul, 1 Jul 91.

<sup>31</sup>AAR, Opn PC, Co A, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 5 Jun 91, pp. 3–4; Light Interv, 11 Jul 91.

<sup>32</sup>Getty Interv, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>33</sup>Curin et al., "League Assistance," p. 32. Even some of the NGOs objected to the press and VIPs having priority on the helicopters.

<sup>34</sup>Comdr's Comments, 10th SFG(A), 22 Apr 91; AAR, Opn PC, 1st Bn, 10th SFG(A), 22 May 91, p. 1; Getty Interv, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>35</sup>Ltr, Brig Gen Anthony C. Zinni to author, 16 Mar 92; Getty, Tangney Intervs, 14 Jul, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>36</sup>Comdr's Comments, 10th SFG(A), 20 Apr 91; Intervs, author with Col David M. Lam and with Col Robert M. O'Brien, 10 Jul, 10 Jul 91; Campbell, Potter, Florer, Tangney Intervs, 14 Jul, 13 Jul, 12 Jul, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>37</sup>Curin et al., "League Assistance," p. 12.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 11; Riester, Tangney, Potter Intervs, 5 Aug, 5 Aug, 13 Jul 91.

<sup>39</sup>Interv, author with Susan E. Carroll, 8 Jul 91.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.; Curin et al., "League Assistance," p. 18.

<sup>41</sup>Carroll, Riester Intervs, 8 Jul, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>42</sup>Getty, Tangney, Potter, Carroll Intervs, 14 Jul, 5 Aug, 13 Jul, 8 Jul 91.

<sup>43</sup>Jamerson, Potter, Getty Intervs, 1 Jul 91 and 3 Jan 01, 13 Jul, 14 Jul 91; Interv, author with Lt Gen John M. Shalikashvili, 29 Jun 91.

<sup>44</sup>Light Interv, 11 Jul 91.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Tangney Interv, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>47</sup>AAR, Opn PC, J-3, EUCOM, 29 Jan 92, pp. 16-17; Potter, Getty, Tangney, Florer Intervs, 13 Jul, 14 Jul, 5 Aug, 12 Jul 91; Bond Telecons, 31 Jan, 9 Feb 93.

## 6

# *Creating a Security Zone*

*There is a new term for this sort of operation: humanitarian intervention.*

—Brig. Gen. Anthony C. Zinni

By mid-April it had become obvious to senior civilian and military leaders on both sides of the Atlantic that merely improving the situation of the refugees in the mountain camps did not address the root causes of their problems. On the fifteenth President Bush determined that the time had come to create a security zone in Iraq to enable the refugees to leave the mountains safely. As a result, he issued the directive for American ground forces to enter northern Iraq, assuming the United Kingdom, France, and other nations would reinforce the effort. The decision led to a major shift in PROVIDE COMFORT, from humanitarian assistance to humanitarian intervention, an operational change that would require a large conventional ground force.<sup>1</sup>

Concomitant with the new mission would be a major increase in force structure, so General Galvin tasked General Shalikashvili, a senior ground officer then serving as the USAREUR deputy commander, to make an appropriate assessment of the requirements. Anticipating that some forces might come from USAREUR's largest ground component, V Corps, Shalikashvili requested that its deputy commander, Maj. Gen. Jay M. Garner, accompany him. Galvin agreed. Late on the afternoon of 16 April Shalikashvili called General Garner to tell him of Galvin's order that they depart the next day for Incirlik Air Base to assess the situation in both eastern Turkey and northern Iraq, estimating that the task would take about two days. As it turned out, neither of them would return to Germany for more than three months.<sup>2</sup>

Before they left for Turkey, the expanded scope of the mission became apparent. Early on 17 April General Shalikashvili flew to Stuttgart to be briefed by the EUCOM staff and to discuss the operation with the EUCOM commander. From General Galvin he learned that the task at hand was much larger than just an assessment, for he was to assume the role of CTF commander from General Jamerson, who had successfully overseen PROVIDE COMFORT during the initial phase of air operations. Galvin's guidance included three objectives: create a security zone of indeterminate size in northern Iraq for the repatriation of the refugees; maintain air superiority over northern Iraq while supporting the ongoing relief efforts in eastern Turkey; and rebuild some of the civil infrastructure, concur-

rently, as the refugees returned to their homes. Several phases would occur simultaneously, with hardly any planning or preparation. As one group prepared to move the refugees from the mountains, another would have to create a secure area for them as quickly as possible. Little precedent existed for such an undertaking. How the Turkish government, the Iraqi Army, the Peshmerga, or the refugees themselves would react were among the many unknowns.<sup>3</sup>

Coaxing the Kurds out of the mountain camps, without the use of force, required a credible incentive. Fear of the Iraqi Army had led them to abandon their homes and possessions. Although Baghdad had only four understrength divisions in the general border area near the mountain camps, they posed a major threat to the refugees. The Peshmerga guerrillas could provide some protection, but only in the most remote mountain areas. Since most of the refugees had come from the larger villages and towns, those areas had to be free of any Iraqi Army units and Baghdad's secret police. Their withdrawal was pivotal to the success of the repatriation effort and demanded attention.<sup>4</sup>

Turkish President Ozal was the first to use the term *safe haven* to refer to a proposed security zone for the refugees immediately inside Iraq's northern border. The term was quickly picked up by the allied coalition, notably the British who designated their participation in PROVIDE COMFORT as Operation SAFE HAVEN. The agreement among the Western coalition members to create such an area by military force followed almost immediately. Speed was needed to capitalize on the current military weakness of Baghdad and its regional isolation.<sup>5</sup>

## Command and Control

The last half of April and the month of May would be the key period of transition for the coalition. After the decision to intervene had been made, PROVIDE COMFORT expanded in scale and complexity. Given the significant military deployments under way, an immediate and thorough review of the operation's existing command-and-control system was warranted. General Galvin, as the principal American military commander in the region, thought the problem manageable, even if no precedents existed for this type of mission. In his mind a sound command structure to direct such an effort was paramount. Shortly after assuming his position as the EUCOM commander he had studied the 1983 allied intervention in Lebanon and the significant American casualties—a disaster he attributed to a lack of central authority and the presence of too many commanders charged with specific operational aspects. For PROVIDE COMFORT Galvin wanted a unified chain of command, with the CTF remaining in charge of the entire effort; he rejected any thought of creating a separate headquarters for the ground security mission. The CTF commander would continue to report directly to him and he in turn to General Powell in Washington.<sup>6</sup>

The EUCOM commander, realizing the importance of having the CTF organization reflect the larger ground security mission, had coordinated with the USAREUR commander, General Crosbie E. Saint. Based on General Saint's rec-

ommendation that his deputy was the ideal man to lead a more ground-centric PROVIDE COMFORT, Galvin decided to designate General Shalikashvili as the new CTF commander and to identify another senior-ranking Army officer as the intervention force commander. That officer would come from V Corps, the last remaining corps headquarters in Europe given the scheduled inactivation of VII Corps under way after DESERT STORM.

Within V Corps a small mobile tactical advance headquarters, commonly referred to as the TAC and consisting of about one hundred forty officers and soldiers, had been organized for corps missions. In many situations the deputy corps commander would run the TAC as the rest of the corps deployed or if the TAC was to control only a limited component of the corps. General Shalikashvili's choice of, and General Galvin's approval of, General Garner was logical—seemingly to assist with the original assessment but in reality to become the intervention force commander for the ground security mission.<sup>7</sup>

Following his brief visit to EUCOM on 17 April, General Shalikashvili, accompanied by two Army colonels (an aviator and an engineer) from his USAREUR staff, flew to Frankfurt and met General Garner. As Garner recalled, Shalikashvili told him as they left for Turkey: "I think I know what I am supposed to do. I am not sure what you are going to do." The accelerated pace of events soon cleared up any uncertainty. A number of EUCOM-directed command changes had already become effective that day. By the time they arrived at Incirlik Shalikashvili was the new CTF commander, with General Jamerson becoming his deputy and General Zinni his chief of staff; Garner would assume the role of the intervention force commander. With the coalition staff already at Incirlik, Shalikashvili was able to move in and go to work. The CTF commander immediately approved the redesignation of General Potter's JTF Express Care as JTF Alpha and, to oversee the new ground security mission, the establishment of JTF Bravo.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, General Garner found that his situation was more complicated. For reasons that were unclear to him at the time, the V Corps TAC did not deploy to Turkey. The corps commander, Lt. Gen. David M. Maddox, had loaned many of the corps' experienced officers to assist during DESERT STORM and those remaining were fully occupied with preparing the corps to assume most of the U.S. Army's tasks in Europe. Given the demands on his corps, he decided that it was too expensive to deploy a core component of his staff for PROVIDE COMFORT. Without the V Corps TAC, Garner soon realized that to staff JTF Bravo, he would have to rely initially on the five Army officers whom he had directed to follow him to conduct the original assessment.<sup>9</sup>

Of the five, three were from V Corps headquarters—Lt. Col. Donald G. "Gary" Goff, the deputy corps G-3; Lt. Col. John P. Cavanaugh, a communications officer; and Maj. Ted O. Kostich, also from the Operations Section. The remaining two officers were from the Corps Support Command—Lt. Col. Mackey and Maj. John C. Cooley. Garner later described Major Cooley, an infantryman, who had recently served as a logistical officer for an aviation brigade during DESERT STORM, as "the best scrounger in the Army," a role he would validate on PROVIDE COMFORT. They all departed Frankfurt late in the evening of



General Garner and Colonel Goff

17 April with, as Garner, only their personal gear.<sup>10</sup>

Unlike General Potter and his SOCEUR staff officers who had participated in Operation PROVEN FORCE, General Garner and his five officers had no prior experience in Turkey or northern Iraq. Except for a two-man single channel communications team brought along by Colonel Cavanaugh, they had no staff assistants, no drivers, and no vehicles, not even a tent from which to work. None of them would have much time on the ground before the military intervention kicked off.<sup>11</sup>

The pace of the first two days in Turkey was intense. Soon after arriving at the CTF headquarters on 17 April Generals Shalikashvili and Garner went through a series of briefings with Generals Jamerson and Zinni and the CTF staff, during which they obtained the latest information on the situation

in Turkey and Iraq. They also met with General Potter and Colonel Jones, who flew in from the Silopi base; Potter discussed the ongoing refugee effort in the mountains and Jones the status of his 24th MEU elements massing at Silopi. Garner stayed up until three o'clock the next morning, 18 April. He moved from staff section to staff section, all working night shifts, to explore a wide range of issues, including the CTF force structure, the Iraqi military situation in northern Iraq, the status of the Kurds and other refugees, and the arrangements being sorted out with Turkey to develop and sustain the operation. As soon as his five officers reported to the CTF headquarters, around two o'clock that morning, Garner passed on the information he had acquired and gave them guidance for working with the CTF staff.<sup>12</sup>

On the morning of the eighteenth General Shalikashvili continued to work with his CTF staff. He also prepared for the upcoming meeting with an Iraqi representative at a designated border location between Silopi and Zakho, which had been arranged under the auspices of the State Department. In the meantime, General Garner went forward to study the area of operations. He traveled on a C-130 from Incirlik to Diyarbakir. There he linked up with Colonel Genetti's deputy, Lt. Col. William Braddy, who was on standby in his UH-60 Black Hawk. As soon as Garner was onboard, Colonel Braddy flew to Silopi to take on fuel and then crossed the border into northern Iraq. They made an aerial reconnaissance of Zakho and the surrounding area, looking for potential helicopter landing zones and for any Iraqi forces nearby. South of Zakho, Garner spotted an artillery battery of four 122-mm. how-

itzers and what appeared to be an infantry battalion. Informed that contaminated water was a serious problem for the refugees in the mountains, he had Braddy land near a stream to collect a water sample. After returning to Silopi, the JTF Bravo commander proceeded to Incirlik, where he turned in the water sample for analysis. Later that evening he met with the CTF commander and reported the reconnaissance results. Surprised, Shalikashvili told Garner: "I am glad you did that, but I don't want you doing anything like that on your own again."<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, working steadfastly at the CTF headquarters on the eighteenth, Colonel Goff and the other officers had registered some initial confusion. Their uncertainty shifted focus when Goff learned that the original tasking to make a ground assessment had been "overtaken by events" and that he would become Garner's J-3 for a force of undetermined size with a loosely defined mission. As a first step Goff asked the CTF staff for an operations order to support the intervention mission, but he was told that there was none. He did, however, find a warning order from the CTF to the 24th MEU, directing Colonel Jones and his men to make preparations to move into northern Iraq. Based on a verbal discussion with Garner, Goff sat down with pen and paper and wrote a brief order for the 24th MEU to initiate the intervention. He did so without having met Jones or the MEU staff, without knowing much about the MEU's force structure or its situation at Silopi, without first conducting a reconnaissance of the operational area, and without receiving any formal order from the CTF staff giving Garner authority over the MEU. Goff soon learned that the United Kingdom was deploying the Royal Marines to support operations in Iraq, with perhaps other national forces soon to follow. But he would have no opportunity to meet the British marines to assess their capabilities or provide them any guidance until they arrived at Silopi, by which time the U.S. Marines would be operating in Iraq.<sup>14</sup>

Compared to Operation PROVEN FORCE, PROVIDE COMFORT lacked detailed planning and close coordination among the participants prior to execution. The initial leaders, Jamerson and Zinni, were able to rely on the same base infrastructure and some of the same units and staff that had been used during PROVEN FORCE. But Garner arrived in Turkey with an evolving mission. He had no opportunity for planning, no firsthand knowledge of the region, and no prior exposure to the units or leaders that would work for him in the beginning. Of even greater concern was conducting the intervention without the V Corps TAC. Unlike Potter's JTF Alpha, the organizational structure for Garner's JTF Bravo would come together in a very ad hoc manner as the operation unfolded.

On 19 April Shalikashvili, Garner, Jamerson, Zinni, Goff, and a few other officers flew to Diyarbakir and then by helicopter to Silopi. There Garner and Goff split off from the group and went to see Colonel Jones and his 24th MEU staff. By then MEU elements had been at the base for several days. Three helicopters from Colonel Brytus' HMM Squadron 264 had arrived on the fourteenth, with the crews shortly thereafter conducting an aerial reconnaissance of the border area. Marine Lt. Col. Tony L. Corwin's Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 2/8 followed a few days later. The BLT was a reinforced infantry formation organized around the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines. Additional BLT ele-



U.S. Marines staging at Silopi prior to the military intervention into northern Iraq



Colonel Corwin's BLT 2/8 members  
in a light armored vehicle

ments included an eight-gun artillery battery, a combat engineer platoon, and a number of light armored vehicles. For reconnaissance-type special operations, the MEU had a Navy SEAL (sea-air-land) platoon.<sup>15</sup>

The command-and-control structure within the Marine formation also played an important role at the beginning of JTF Bravo. In addition to the headquarters staff, each of the MEU's three subordinate components—the BLT 2/8, the HMM Squadron 264, and the MEU Service Support Group (MSSG) 24—had its own battalion-level staff and its own commander, a lieutenant colonel. With this configuration, the MEU staff was roughly equal to a U.S. Army brigade staff, although it was not as deep in personnel or communications equipment. When Colonel Jones graciously offered General Garner the use of the MEU staff to plan and conduct operations, the JTF Bravo commander agreed, temporarily integrating his five Army officers into the MEU headquarters. In effect, the MEU staff became the JTF Bravo staff until Garner could form a staff of his own. Garner later stated that a key element in his success was the use of the MEU staff as the JTF Bravo staff at the beginning of the military intervention.<sup>16</sup>

The MEU's logistics component, the MSSG 24, made up of detachments from the 2d Force Service Support Group, had been split between Silopi and the port of Iskenderun. At the port the MSSG was tied to the MEU's amphibious ready group designated Naval Task Force 61, which was part of the U.S. Sixth Fleet. Naval Task



Force 60, based around the aircraft carrier USS *Roosevelt*, also part of the Sixth Fleet, provided combat air and photoreconnaissance support. The Sixth Fleet had its two major operational components supporting PROVIDE COMFORT.<sup>17</sup>

Until the formation of JTF Bravo the MEU's rotary-wing squadron had supported JTF Alpha operations in the mountains without becoming a part of General Potter's command, even though the 24th MEU was under the CTF's operational control. The relationship was so close that once at Silopi Colonel Brytus thought his squadron was operationally attached to Potter. Colonel Jones later stated that the Marine helicopters remained under his command throughout PROVIDE COMFORT, functioning only in a support role to JTF Alpha. When the expanded ground security mission redirected much of the Marines' focus to northern Iraq on 20 April, Brytus' helicopters supported both the military intervention and the humanitarian relief effort. Colonel Tangney noted that JTF Alpha lost much of the helicopter support from the Marines as JTF Bravo began operations.<sup>18</sup>

Having arrived on short notice with only a few officers and a communications team to lead a ground-centric operation that would initially consist almost entirely of U.S. Marines, General Garner might have expected to encounter some confusion and friction. Instead the professionalism of all commanders and staff officers prevailed, and improvised command and staff relationships quickly formed. Garner later attributed much of the success of PROVIDE COMFORT to the character and personalities of key leaders such as Jones, Corwin, and Brytus. Indeed the interplay of contrasting personalities sometimes seemed remarkable, with all adjusting quickly to the requirements of their respective positions and missions. The same was true at higher levels. For example, Shalikashvili was less gregarious in style than Jamerson, but he was just as unpretentious and exercised great consideration and finesse with the other coalition commanders. Referring to Shalikashvili after the operation, Potter commented: "If there is a better three-star in the Army, I would like to meet him."<sup>19</sup>

During the operation Garner demonstrated as much energy, drive, and forcefulness as Potter, but with a more affable manner. His personal touch became critical for managing the broad mix of coalition forces eventually assigned to JTF Bravo and for mitigating the lack of a proper operational staff upon arrival in Turkey. Jones also rose to the occasion. Tall, trim, and ramrod straight, he fit the Marine image in bearing and appearance. He adapted effectively and smoothly to Garner and the other coalition commanders. The spirit of cooperation between Garner and Jones was central to JTF Bravo's success during the early period. The relationship was so positive that Garner would use Jones almost as a deputy, as well as a subordinate commander, as the intervention force grew in size.<sup>20</sup>

## Military Intervention

Colonel Jones, anticipating an intervention into northern Iraq with his 24th MEU, had already drafted a concept of operations prior to the arrival of the con-



Khabur Bridge

Shalikashvili meeting with  
General Nashwan

tingent from Incirlik on 19 April, and he made arrangements to review the intervention plan with General Garner shortly after his arrival at Silopi that morning. Concurrently, under the protection of a small Marine escort and without Garner, the CTF commander and his senior officers departed the Silopi base for the meeting at the designated border location, the Khabur Bridge, which they reached at noon.

As previously arranged by the State Department, Baghdad had dispatched an emissary, Brig. Gen. Nashwan Thanoon. General Nashwan, as he was known, was already waiting on the Iraqi side of the bridge. At the meeting, which was brief, Shalikashvili explained the coalition's objective of creating a security zone for the Kurds and then issued a vigorous demarche stressing that coalition forces would cross the Iraqi border and enter Zakho the next day. Given the intelligence on the Iraqi artillery, he insisted on the withdrawal of Iraqi military units some 19 miles (30 kilometers, the approximate range of medium artillery) south of Zakho to prevent a confrontation with coalition forces. At the same time, the State Department had sent another message to Iraqi diplomats, explaining the demarche and warning them not to interfere.<sup>21</sup>

As the meeting was taking place, Jones presented the intervention plan to Garner. The plan received Garner's approval, and the execution phase was scheduled to begin on 20 April. Early that morning Jones inserted the MEU's reconnaissance element into northern Iraq to monitor Iraqi activity and to secure a landing zone. At 1330 two of Corwin's rifle companies, an 81-mm. mortar platoon, an engineer element, and a component of his battalion staff conducted an air assault into Iraq, just south of Zakho. Both Garner and Goff went along, watching Corwin's marines fan out from the wheat field used as the landing zone to secure several hills east, west, and south of Zakho. The sprawling town was too large for the small infantry force to completely encircle, but from their positions the Americans could dominate much of the surrounding terrain and road approaches. The next day Corwin had his remaining rifle company, together with his light armor vehicles, support elements, and the rest of his battalion headquarters, join him in Iraq by road march. During the move his men secured and repaired the Khabur Bridge, establishing the first coalition ground link into northern Iraq.<sup>22</sup>

The Americans quickly found that the Iraqi soldiers had not withdrawn from either the town or the surrounding countryside. That would result in several touchy confrontations between the two forces during the following days, but the marines maintained their positions around Zakho without difficulty. The situation within the town was another matter.

General Nashwan, forced to acknowledge the demarche, protested the entry of coalition forces into Iraq. Although he did not agree to any Iraqi withdrawal, he never suggested that the Iraqis would resist the intervention. As a result, the local Iraqi commander in Zakho refused to withdraw his units from the area. With some effort, General Garner finally located him on 22 April. Sensing his lack of enthusiasm for engaging coalition forces, Garner directed him to pull out. Because the withdrawal would take several days, longer than originally anticipated by the coalition leaders, he made arrangements through Army Col. Richard M. Naab's Military Coordination Center (MCC) to meet with the Iraqi commander daily to ensure his full cooperation.<sup>23</sup>

The MCC was the CTF's vehicle for maintaining an open dialogue with Iraqi Army commanders or their representatives on coalition operations in Iraq. Under orders from EUCOM, Colonel Naab had departed Germany for Turkey and then moved to northern Iraq, establishing his office at Zakho. Although he had no previous experience in Turkey or the Middle East and did not speak Arabic or Kurdish, he was an experienced negotiator, having worked with Warsaw Pact countries prior to his PROVIDE COMFORT assignment. Naab would become one of the principal American participants on the operation and would remain in Iraq and Turkey long after many others had returned home.<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile additional coalition forces had arrived at Silopi to support the intervention. On 21 April elements of 45 Commando, Royal Marines, a battalion-size light infantry formation fresh from a tour in northern Ireland, crossed the border into Iraq. Specially trained for low-intensity warfare in urban settings, they provided General Garner the ideal unit to take on the Iraqi military forces in Zakho. Garner attached the British formation to Colonel Jones' 24th MEU and directed the com-



British (*top*) and Dutch (*bottom*) commandos in northern Iraq



mander, Lt. Col. Jonathan J. Thomson, Royal Marines, to have his troops conduct dismounted patrols in the town, supported by Colonel Corwin's armored vehicles.<sup>25</sup>

On 23 April four hundred Dutch marines under Lt. Col. Cees van Egmond joined JTF Bravo and were attached to Jones' 24th MEU. The formation was the main component of the Royal Netherlands Marines' 1 Amphibious Combat Group (ACG), a battalion-size force comparable to the British 45 Commando (*see*

*Figure 5*). The ACG normally had a personnel strength of about six hundred men, but for political reasons it was necessary to leave part of the force behind. The Dutch government had established a PROVIDE COMFORT manpower ceiling of one thousand troops: four hundred marines for intervention and, yet to arrive, six hundred medical personnel and construction engineers for humanitarian assistance. To obtain better control of the roads into Zakho and prevent another incursion by Iraqi forces, Garner had Colonel van Egmond's marines establish roadblocks around the town. Their mission was to ensure that the Iraqis departed and did not return.<sup>26</sup>

The coalition forces soon found that the task of ejecting all the Iraqi soldiers would not be so simple. On 23 April, before the Dutch marines could establish their checkpoints, about three hundred special police from Baghdad had slipped into Zakho. Garner described them as tough and arrogant, wearing distinctive uniforms and carrying new weapons. Essentially bullies, they intimidated the few civilians left in the town. Getting them out of town would be a challenge.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the growing strength of the coalition forces in and around Zakho, the Iraqi secret police stayed in the town and continued to be a problem. Although most of the population had fled in March, Garner estimated that fifteen hundred to two thousand civilians remained, mainly Kurds and some Iraqi Christians, both groups traditionally discriminated against by the Baghdad regime. The secret police demanded that the remaining townspeople stay clear of the coalition forces and avoid any appearance of cooperation. To impose their authority, they placed the town's central water source off limits, and, to make their point, one of them threw a grenade in the well's vicinity, killing several civilians.<sup>28</sup>

Other altercations followed. In one case, several Iraqi soldiers accosted Colonel Jones and his sergeant major as they drove through town. Although they managed to escape and reach their destination, the sergeant major stated that it was the one time during the operation that he prepared to draw and use his pistol. In another case, the Iraqis confronted Colonel Thomson as he attempted to take a wounded civilian to the hospital. At one point he had to shove an Iraqi's rifle away and threaten to use his own.<sup>29</sup>

Unhappy with the situation within Zakho, Garner directed Colonel Thomson to develop a plan to deal with all of the secret police and eliminate the menace. After studying both the layout of the town and the movements of the police, Thomson came up with a detailed plan, using force to achieve the objective. Proposing to begin in the morning, he projected that his forces could have all of the secret police "taken out" within twelve hours.<sup>30</sup>

General Galvin, who reviewed the plan while visiting Garner at Silopi, expressed some reservations. His hesitation emanated from a recent conversation he had had with General Powell, during which the JCS chairman had asked Galvin to avoid a serious confrontation with the Iraqis. The political dynamics sustaining the coalition were delicate. Some civilian leaders had doubts about entering Iraq and using military force, concerned that the operation might turn into another DESERT STORM. At a follow-up meeting Garner, with his key coalition leaders in attendance, briefed Galvin, who approved the plan.<sup>31</sup>

After the briefing Galvin authorized the buildup of coalition forces in and around Zakho, but he directed Garner to avoid an open conflict with the secret police. Determined to keep the pressure on, Garner sought out the senior Iraqi officer and told him to get the police out of town or there would be trouble. He eventually agreed to remove all but fifty by 26 April. Then on the twenty-seventh an incident—a grenade, allegedly thrown by a Kurd, killed and wounded several Iraqis in their police station—resolved the problem for Garner. The remaining police quickly left town.<sup>32</sup>

With the departure of the Iraqi units and the secret police, General Garner was ready to enlarge the security zone to accommodate the influx of refugees. Clearly, because of their enormous numbers, they required more room and facilities than could be offered by a single town. The JTF Bravo commander would soon have the capability and manpower to accomplish the task.<sup>33</sup>



Colonel Abizaid (*left*) with his executive officer Maj. John Kelly

## American, British, Dutch Forces

To provide a base for a larger formation, General Garner established his JTF Bravo headquarters at a deserted Iraqi Army garrison in Zakho and kept it there while he had forces in northern Iraq. On 26 April a major expansion of Garner's JTF Bravo began. A U.S. Army airborne battalion combat team (ABCT), organized around the 3d Battalion, 325th Infantry, from Vicenza, Italy, and commanded by Lt. Col. John P. Abizaid, arrived at Silopi and crossed into Iraq with its wheeled vehicles and antiarmor weapons.

The following day the 3 Commando Brigade commander, Brig. Andrew M. Keeling, Royal Marines, with his chief of staff, Maj. Robert Fry, Royal Marines, arrived at Silopi with part of his brigade headquarters staff and the lead elements of 40 Commando, a battalion-size formation under Lt. Col. C. Graham H. Dunlop, Royal Marines. At the same time, a rifle company from the French 3d Marine Parachute Infantry Regiment, 11th Parachute Division, entered northern Iraq.<sup>34</sup>

Garner attached Colonel Abizaid's 3-325 ABCT to Colonel Jones' 24th MEU. As a result, the MEU consisted of four infantry battalions, a helicopter squadron, and a support component—an unusually large and diverse formation for Jones' staff to support and control while still carrying out JTF Bravo requirements. With the arrival of Brigadier Keeling's brigade headquarters and 40 Commando, Garner realigned three battalions under the British command.<sup>35</sup>

The 3 Commando Brigade normally deployed with two of its three battalion-size commando units. For training operations, the brigade often picked up operational control of a battalion-size formation from the Royal Netherlands Marines. Thus, when the British and Dutch governments committed forces for PROVIDE COMFORT, it made sense to place the Dutch component under Brigadier Keeling's command. But General Shalikashvili, aware that the British government wanted its forces to



Brigadier Keeling (*right*) and Major Fry (*left*) with Garner

participate in both the intervention in Iraq and the relief assistance effort in the mountains, decided to attach Colonel Dunlop's 40 Commando to General Potter's JTF Alpha operations, specifically to support Colonel Tangney's 10th Special Forces Group. In turn, General Garner first realigned Colonel Thomson's 45 Commando and Colonel van Egmond's formation and later, on 2 May, most of Colonel Abizaid's 3-325 ABCT from Jones' headquarters to Keeling's. One of Abizaid's companies was posted at Zakho for a security detail.<sup>36</sup>

As General Garner's two main subordinate formations, the 24th MEU and the 3 Commando Brigade received specific missions. Colonel Jones' MEU was to secure Zakho itself, enlarge the security zone by shifting forces to the south and east, help establish a base for further operations, and provide assistance for the first refugee transit center to be built within Iraq. His headquarters continued double duty as a command-and-control staff for JTF Bravo; it would also become a temporary headquarters for any coalition units crossing into northern Iraq. Brigadier Keeling's brigade, controlling British, Dutch, and American units, was to secure the 45-mile (72-kilometer) zone eastward to Al Amadiyah. Reports of Iraqi abuses of civilians in the town of Batufa, just east of Zakho, concerned Garner, and he tasked Keeling to force the Iraqis from the town and secure it as his brigade moved in that direction. With American paratroopers and British marines, the brigade began its advance at 0300 in a driving rain on 3 May and pushed east.<sup>37</sup>

The 3 Commando Brigade's area of operations—what would become the central sector of the coalition security zone—was just south and adjacent to the area that General Potter and Colonel Tangney had assigned to Colonel Dunlop's 40 Commando along the Turkish border. That alignment worked well; Potter's limited ability to sustain a conventional battalion in the rugged mountains was eased by having 40 Commando's national headquarters and support base situated nearby. Later Dunlop's marines would help to manage the repatriation process in the JTF Alpha sector before rejoining 3 Commando Brigade and JTF Bravo.<sup>38</sup>

The buildup of forces in Iraq did not take place in a vacuum. Garner's staff had received reports that several civilians had been executed in Batufa on 24 April. Just beyond the designated security zone Iraqi Army units were withdrawing from the



Colonel Klop

border area and the surrounding countryside with great reluctance, warning the remaining civilians against cooperating with the coalition forces.

Further complicating the withdrawal were sporadic Iraqi skirmishes with Peshmerga militia elements in the countryside. The Peshmerga saw the withdrawal as a sign of weakness on the part of the Iraqis and wanted to exploit it. Seeking a solution to the problem, General Potter and Colonel Tangney arranged for a meeting between Generals Garner and Ali at Zakho on 29 April. The Kurdish general was asked to cooperate with the PROVIDE COMFORT process, interfering neither with the Iraqi military withdrawal nor with the eventual return of the refugees. Ali, who had been fighting the Iraqis most of his life, was friendly but noncommittal, asking to maintain Peshmerga checkpoints in the security zone to prevent the refugees from entering areas occupied by Iraqi

soldiers. Garner tentatively agreed to the checkpoints, but avoided a closer relationship with the Peshmerga.<sup>39</sup>

As multinational forces joined the coalition, their governments normally designated the senior officer as a national contingent commander. In the case of the larger contingents, with both ground and air formations, national commanders and small administrative staffs were established at Incirlik. As a rule, those commanders attended General Shalikashvili's daily command and staff meetings. The arrangement provided a basis for national representation not always possible within the subordinate command headquarters of PROVIDE COMFORT. It also reduced friction among the national groups and ensured that the objectives of each nation were represented at the senior command level of the CTF.

While Brigadier Keeling's forces moved east, another British headquarters was established at Incirlik. Maj. Gen. Robin J. Ross, Royal Marines, deployed to Turkey in mid-April as the national contingent commander of the United Kingdom's army, air force, marine, and naval forces directly supporting PROVIDE COMFORT. In this role General Ross noted that his Marine uniform was incidental to his position. General Ross' Dutch counterpart was Marine Col. Egbert C. Klop, who was the senior officer from the Netherlands. During PROVIDE COMFORT Colonel Klop also served as the deputy commander of Keeling's 3 Commando Brigade. Like the other national contingent commanders who would join the CTF, Ross and Klop exercised little tactical control over the British and Dutch forces.<sup>40</sup>



Royal Air Force assets joined several CTF commands. Fixed-wing aircraft went to General Hobson's Air Force Forces, and rotary-wing aircraft went first to support General Potter's JTF Alpha operations and then later Brigadier Keeling's brigade in JTF Bravo. When possible, the CTF staff arranged to have the United Kingdom's army, air force, and marine components support each other. Most Royal Navy elements that deployed on PROVIDE COMFORT were subordinate to Keeling's 3 Commando Brigade. Some, such as a field hospital that arrived later, supported not only the brigade but other coalition forces and refugees as appropriate.<sup>41</sup>

## French, Spanish, Italian Contingents

As Colonel Jones and Brigadier Keeling began to enlarge the security zone, a French Marine company arrived at Zakho, the lead element of what was to be a major ground contingent. Initially, the relationship between the French military forces and those of the CTF was unclear, which fostered a perception that the French company was determined to go its own way in northern Iraq. JTF Bravo did not force the issue, mindful that the regional situation often outpaced the political coordination needed to respond to it and that it took time to integrate some of the coalition forces into the overall effort. But as the situation evolved, it became clear that the French wanted to participate as full coalition members.

On 7 April the French government had declared its intention to provide appropriate military forces for any coalition effort that developed to assist the Kurds. Like the American response, early French support began with airdropped supplies and then transitioned to a ground commitment. On the fourteenth the deputy commander of the French 11th Parachute Division, Brig. Gen. Maurice Le Page, was briefed in Paris on the most probable role French ground units would play in PROVIDE COMFORT. The next day he flew to Incirlik and immediately went forward to Batman and Diyarbakir, from where he was taken on a flight over the refugee camps. Based on General Le Page's report, French officials assumed the immediate need to be primarily humanitarian and the appropriate contribution to be a military field hospital and a company from the division's 3d Marine Parachute Infantry Regiment (*Régiment Parachutiste d'Infanterie de Marine*/RPIMa). Le Page later noted that this particular company was selected because the 3d RPIMa had been trained in peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance tasks.<sup>42</sup>

The French company arrived at Silopi just after the American and British marines entered Iraq and quickly moved to Zakho on 26 April. Colonel Goff



General Le Page (*left*) and Colonel Thomann

noted that the French soldiers operated in and around Zakho without any formal ties with the coalition forces there. Occasionally, they came to General Garner's headquarters for fuel, food, or information. The French unit's relationship with the coalition formations was not adversarial, just undeveloped. To correct the confusion, General Le Page left Incirlik and flew forward, intending to formally align the French unit with JTF Bravo.<sup>43</sup>

The French general quickly reassessed the situation. A self-sustaining French force on the ground should be at least a battalion-size formation similar to those deployed by the Americans and British. On Le Page's recommendation, the French Army alerted the 8th Marine Parachute Infantry Regiment, 11th Parachute Division, to deploy. A conventional formation more suited for the intervention mission, the regiment resembled a reinforced infantry battalion on the American Army or Marine Corps model. Its first elements began arriving in Turkey on 3 May. The French also deployed the lead elements of a brigade headquarters, but soon recalled it when there was little to command beyond one battalion.<sup>44</sup>

While 3 Commando Brigade's commandos moved into what was to become the central sector of the security zone, the 8th RPIMa commander, Col. Jean-Claude Thomann, arrived at Silopi with his lead rifle company and assumed control of the 3d RPIMa company still at Zakho. As Thomann's forces grew to battalion size, Garner first considered deploying them on the southern edge of the security zone; he believed that the Iraqis might find the French less objectionable, given Baghdad's obvious suspicions of American and British intentions. But the need to enlarge the zone dictated a different mission. Garner ordered Thomann to conduct an airmobile operation in the vicinity of the Iraqi town of Suri, 65 air miles east of Zakho, as soon as possible.<sup>45</sup>

With coalition intelligence reporting the presence of Iraqi tanks in the region, the JTF Bravo commander reinforced Thomann's unit with an antiarmor platoon from Abizaid's 3-325 ABCT, which had more mobile antitank weapons (TOWs, with a 3,000-meter range, on HMMWVs) than those (man-portable MILANs, with a 2,000-meter range) later brought by the French. Subsequently, the French forces quickly secured what became the eastern sector of the security zone. As a result, Thomann was able to coordinate directly with Potter's JTF Alpha forces along the border to the north, where Lt. Col. Steve Philbrick's 3d Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group, was preparing to move the refugees south into Iraq.<sup>46</sup>

While the French secured the area east of the British, the Americans moved south toward the northeast side of the city of Dahuk, with the mission of expanding the security zone. In the process Garner detached Abizaid's battalion from 3 Commando Brigade, reassigning it to Jones, who had ordered Corwin's BLT to a position on the northwest side of Dahuk. The brigade and the MEU each had control of two infantry battalions.

As all of these movements were taking place, more reinforcements were on their way. Spanish and Italian combat formations soon followed the French unit to Silopi and Zakho. On 30 April Spain deployed an airborne contingent to Incirlik—Spain's first major overseas deployment since the Spanish-American War, this time on the American side. EUCOM had aggressively sought participation of other

European countries for PROVIDE COMFORT, but few Americans assumed that Spain, which often avoided NATO military entanglements, would answer the call. However, the humanitarian nature of the operation, together with the success of the coalition in the Gulf War, obviously gave it a broad appeal.<sup>47</sup>

Spanish officers approached the operation with a mix of caution and enthusiasm. The Spanish government refused to acknowledge any formal subordination of Spanish forces to the coalition headquarters, and Spanish officials frequently referred to their status as simply supporting General Garner's JTF Bravo. In practice, their command relationships with JTF Bravo differed little from those adopted by the other non-American coalition members.

General Garner and others used the term *tactical control* (TACON) to describe the relationship, which was narrower than *operational control* (OPCON). OPCON gave a commander the authority to designate objectives and to organize and employ forces, whereas TACON limited the authority to moving or maneuvering forces in performance of the mission. A commander normally exercised OPCON with units from his national armed forces under the control of his headquarters. The difference was significant because of the separate logistical lines, necessitated by the different weapons, vehicles, and equipment used by each national group, and because of the varied lines of legal authority affecting each. Operational cooperation through TACON during PROVIDE COMFORT was satisfactory, approaching that of OPCON mainly as a result of a mission that all identified with and the finesse of commanders like General Garner.<sup>48</sup>

The Spanish referred to their contingent under JTF Bravo as Tactical Group Alcalá. Commanded by Col. Javier de Ledesma Salgués, it was actually a battalion-size infantry formation with a small helicopter component, somewhat understrength by the standards of the other forces. Informally, the Spanish officers asked the coalition commanders to make allowances for their lack of experience in deployment and multinational operations when assigning



General Monticone (*front*) and one of his staff

them tasks. Nevertheless, their desire to participate in the operation was positive, with at least one officer claiming that the experience was more important for their officers than any staff college course. Due to their concern that they might be assigned tasks beyond their training or capabilities, Garner initially had them guard the Khabur Bridge and the road leading to his base at Zakho. Although a necessary and important task requiring armed force, it would not place the Spanish soldiers at the forward edge of conflict. As they gained confidence and experience, Garner assigned them other responsibilities. The Spanish, unlike the other coalition participants, did not establish a national contingent commander at Incirlik, and the senior Spanish position fell to Colonel Ledesma.<sup>49</sup>

Following the Spanish contingent by only a few days, the Italian Folgore Parachute Brigade arrived in eastern Turkey and joined JTF Bravo. Commanded by Brig. Gen. B. Franco Monticone, the infantry formation included an airborne battalion, a small logistics battalion, a special operations company, a medical company, an engineer company, and a military police platoon. With a full brigade staff and supporting components, the Italians had more depth than the Spanish contingent.<sup>50</sup>

As General Monticone's brigade joined Garner's command, the Italians established a national contingent headquarters at Incirlik under Maj. Gen. D. Mario Buscemi. Other Italian forces participating in PROVIDE COMFORT included a separate logistics unit, a helicopter company of light- and medium-lift aircraft, and an Italian Air Force detachment of two cargo aircraft. Like his contingent counterparts, General Buscemi did not exercise tactical control over the Italian forces, but he attended General Shalikashvili's daily staff meetings and represented Italian interests.<sup>51</sup>

With an east-west axis of over 80 miles (130 kilometers) isolated by mountains to the north and south, General Garner determined that he was most vulnerable in the west, where an Iraqi offensive could cut the coalition forces off from the main border crossing between Zakho and Silopi. He added depth to the western sector by placing the Italian Folgore Brigade between the 24th MEU and the Syrian border, securing the MEU's western flank. To keep his men involved in the refugee operation, General Monticone sent his special operations company and some of his support units to assist General Potter's forces. As the refugees began their trek to their homes in northern Iraq, the Italian, French, and British soldiers prepared to protect them in their respective sectors of the security zone—the Italians in the west, the British in the center, and the French in the east (*see Figure 6*).<sup>52</sup>

## JTF Bravo Structure

The buildup of forces necessitated a restructuring of JTF Bravo. The arrival of the Italian contingent gave General Garner seven battalion-size infantry formations from six countries and three brigade-level headquarters (under Colonel Jones, Brigadier Keeling, and General Monticone) from three nations. The lead elements of the French brigade headquarters returned to France when it became

clear they would not command more than Colonel Thomann's formation. In the number of combat maneuver units JTF Bravo began to resemble an infantry division, but one without the normal support structure. In most situations an infantry division would have a full division staff and three brigade headquarters, each with three maneuver battalions. The combat components of such a division would normally include three or more artillery battalions, a cavalry squadron, and an air defense artillery battalion. Eventually, Garner acquired a very lean staff and five artillery batteries but no ground cavalry or air defense units.<sup>53</sup>

Garner had used Jones' MEU staff to control operations during the early stage of the military intervention, bolstered only by the few Army officers he had brought with him in April. As the operation progressed, he was able to form his own JTF Bravo staff when additional personnel arrived to create the functional staff sections normally found within a division headquarters, releasing the MEU staff. Most of the new staff officers and enlisted personnel came from units and staffs within V Corps, supplemented by national contingent liaison officers assigned to Garner's J-3 Section. The JTF Bravo staff remained exceptionally small, less than a hundred personnel, not quite the corps TAC expected by Garner and very ad hoc in nature.

The JTF Bravo support elements were also sparse in the beginning. The combat support components of an infantry division normally would include a combat engineer battalion, a signal battalion, a military intelligence battalion, and a military police company. The division combat service support, organized as the division support command and commonly referred to as the DISCOM, would have medical, maintenance, transportation, administrative, ordnance, quartermaster, and finance elements to sustain the division's combat and combat support units. Other than engineers, Garner had limited combat support units in JTF Bravo and did not have direct control over the service support units sustaining him.<sup>54</sup>

Given the reluctance of the Iraqis to oppose the coalition directly, the organizational deficiencies did not prove critical. Should active combat operations develop against the Iraqi Army, both the staff and the combat support elements of JTF Bravo would have to be beefed up. The massive amount of air power that General Shalikashvili could project from Incirlik and from the U.S. Navy in the Mediterranean offset the need for some of the ground combat power. Still General Garner would require more support to sustain operations in Iraq. Part of that support would come from units retained under CTF control. Some units, many not normally associated with a division-size force, would be placed directly under JTF Bravo control. The resulting task organizations would be unusual, based on the situational requirements. They would also be successful, a result of the professionalism and innovation of all involved to get the job done.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Galvin, Powell Intervs, 20 Aug, 3 Sep 92.

<sup>2</sup>"History of CTF PC," vol. 1, pp. 239-40, USAFE HO files, Ramstein Air Base, Germany; Interv, author with Maj Gen Jay M. Garner, 26 Jun 91; Shalikashvili Interv, 14 Jun 97.

<sup>3</sup>Galvin and Shalikashvili Intervs, 20 Aug 92 and 29 Jun 91, 14 Jun 97.

<sup>4</sup>“History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 93, 250–52, USAFE HO files; Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>5</sup>“History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 239–40, USAFE HO files.

<sup>6</sup>Galvin Interv, 20 Aug 92.

<sup>7</sup>Shalikashvili, Garner, Galvin Intervs, 29 Jun 91, 26 Jun 91, 20 Aug 92.

<sup>8</sup>Galvin, Garner, Shalikashvili, Potter Intervs, 20 Aug 92, 26 Jun 91 (quoted words), 29 Jun 91, 13 Jul 91.

<sup>9</sup>Interv, Charles E. Kirkpatrick with Lt Gen David M. Maddox, 5 Jun 92, V Corps HO files, Heidelberg, Germany; Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>10</sup>Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.; Interv, author with Lt Col Donald G. Goff, 24 Jun 91.

<sup>12</sup>Garner, Goff Intervs, 26 Jun, 24 Jun 91; Interv, author with Lt Gen Jay M. Garner, 12 Apr 01.

<sup>13</sup>Shalikashvili, Garner Intervs, 29 Jun 91, 12 Apr 01.

<sup>14</sup>Goff Interv, 24 Jun 91 (quoted words); Interv, author with Col James L. Jones, 25 Jun 91. The Royal Marines, a much smaller and lighter force than the U.S. Marines, relied more on support from the other British services than their American counterparts, giving them a richer background in joint operations.

<sup>15</sup>Garner, Jones Intervs, 12 Apr 01, 25 Jun 91; Interv, author with Lt Col Tony L. Corwin, 13 Jun 91.

<sup>16</sup>Goff, Jones, Garner Intervs, 24 Jun, 25 Jun, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>17</sup>Garner, Jones, Corwin Intervs, 26 Jun, 25 Jun, 13 Jun 91.

<sup>18</sup>Brytus, Jones Intervs, 14 Jun, 25 Jun 91; Comdr’s Comments, 10th SFG(A), 20 Apr 91.

<sup>19</sup>Garner, Potter Intervs, 26 Jun, 13 Jul 91 (quoted words).

<sup>20</sup>Garner, Jones Intervs, 26 Jun, 25 Jun 91. Garner had some prior experience with the Marines, having begun his career as an enlisted marine and later, after being commissioned in the Army, attending the Marine Amphibious Warfare School at Quantico, Virginia; Jones had previously been assigned as the Marine liaison officer to the U.S. Senate, a position requiring diplomatic skills.

<sup>21</sup>Garner, Shalikashvili Intervs, 26 Jun, 29 Jun 91; “History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, p. 252, USAFE HO files.

<sup>22</sup>Goff, Jones, Corwin, Brytus, Garner Intervs, 24 Jun, 25 Jun, 13 Jun, 14 Jun, 26 Jun 91; Brown, *Marines in PROVIDE COMFORT*, pp. 55, 59–60.

<sup>23</sup>“History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 255–57, USAFE HO files; Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91; Intervs, author with Col Richard M. Naab, 20 Jun 91 and 29 Jun 92.

<sup>24</sup>“History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 255–57, USAFE HO files; Naab Intervs, 20 Jun 91 and 29 Jun 92.

<sup>25</sup>“History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 257–59, USAFE HO files; Corwin, Goff, Garner Intervs, 13 Jun, 24 Jun, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>26</sup>Interv, author with Col Egbert C. Klop, 24 Jun 91; Goff, Garner Intervs, 24 Jun, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>27</sup>Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91; “History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 257–59, USAFE HO files.

<sup>28</sup>Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91; “History of CTF PC,” vol. 1, pp. 257–59, USAFE HO files.

<sup>29</sup>Garner, Jones Intervs, 26 Jun, 25 Jun 91.

<sup>30</sup>Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>31</sup>Galvin, Powell Intervs, 20 Aug, 3 Sep 92; Garner, Shalikashvili Intervs, 26 Jun, 29 Jun 91.

<sup>32</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.; Garner, Goff Intervs, 26 Jun, 24 Jun 91; “History of CTF PC,” vol. 2, p. 57, USAFE HO files.

<sup>33</sup>Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>34</sup>Garner, Goff Intervs, 26 Jun, 24 Jun 91.

<sup>35</sup>John P. Abizaid, “Lessons for Peacekeepers,” *Military Review* 73, no. 3 (March 1993): 11–19.

<sup>36</sup>Interv, author with Brig Andrew M. Keeling, 16 Jun 91.

<sup>37</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.; Goff, Garner Intervs, 24 Jun, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>38</sup>Potter, Garner, Keeling Intervs, 13 Jul, 26 Jun, 16 Jun 91.

<sup>39</sup>Comdr’s Comments, 10th SFG(A), 29 Apr, 30 Apr, 6 May 91; Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>40</sup>Interv, author with Maj Gen Robin J. Ross, 2 Jul 91.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid. The Australian government requested that General Ross represent the Royal Australian Army’s medical contingent sent to PROVIDE COMFORT.

<sup>42</sup>Interv, author with Brig Gen Maurice Le Page, 30 Jun 91; In the French Army, regiments are composed of five or more companies, making them battalion size by American standards.

<sup>43</sup>Goff Interv, 24 Jun 91; Interv, author with Col Jean-Claude Thomann, 27 Jun 91.

<sup>44</sup>Goff, Garner, Le Page, Thomann Intervs, 24 Jun, 26 Jun, 30 Jun, 27 Jun 91.

<sup>45</sup>Donald G. Goff, "Building Coalitions for Humanitarian Operations: Operation PROVIDE COMFORT" (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, 1992), pp. 22–24; Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.; Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>46</sup>Le Page, Goff, Garner, Thomann Intervs, 30 Jun, 24 Jun, 26 Jun, 27 Jun 91.

<sup>47</sup>Interv, author with Capt Garcia Yaquero, 21 Jun 91.

<sup>48</sup>Goff, Garner, Ross Intervs, 24 Jun, 26 Jun, 2 Jul 91.

<sup>49</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.; Yaquero, Garner, Goff Intervs, 21 Jun, 26 Jun, 24 Jun 91.

<sup>50</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.; Interv, author with Brig Gen B. Franco Monticone, 21 Jun 91.

<sup>51</sup>Interv, author with Maj Gen D. Mario Buscemi, 1 Jul 91; Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.

<sup>52</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.

<sup>53</sup>Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91; DA Pam 10–1, *Organization of the United States Army*, October 1980, p. 18. The 24th MEU had a split battery of four 155-mm. M198 and four 105-mm. howitzers; the 3–325 ABCT, a six-gun 105-mm. battery that arrived in late May; and 3 Commando Brigade, a regiment of three 105-mm. batteries.

<sup>54</sup>DA Pam 10–1, *Organization of U.S. Army*, p. 18.

# 7

## *Expanding Coalition Support*

*Ad hoc is a hard way to do business.*

—Col. Kenneth W. Getty

While the soldiers of General Potter's JTF Alpha stabilized the refugee situation in the mountain camps along the Turkish-Iraqi border and those of General Garner's JTF Bravo enlarged the newly created security zone in northern Iraq, General Shalikashvili increased his CTF staff and had it bring together a larger support organization to sustain the expanded mission of PROVIDE COMFORT. Repatriating the refugees to northern Iraq and rebuilding some of the civil infrastructure there required additional types of military units, the resources to come from a variety of commands, locations, and nations. Once again professionalism and innovation, in the absence of doctrine and planning, would be required.

The ground-centric buildup and the participating national contingents underscored the need to strengthen the CTF's command-and-control capabilities. Arriving in Turkey without handpicked subordinates, General Shalikashvili assumed control of what was a U.S. Air Force-dominated CTF staff and chose to relegate day-to-day operations to General Jamerson now as his deputy and General Zinni as his chief of staff. As it turned out, Zinni spent a great deal of time with the staff, allowing Shalikashvili to focus on the field formations and the national contingent commanders. Wanting a CTF staff with more depth, Shalikashvili asked the national contingent commanders to designate respective ground officers to augment the staff sections. General Ross, for example, provided a British Army colonel to serve in a senior position as the CTF C-3, with the incumbent Air Force colonel becoming his deputy. Nevertheless, the American deputy continued to play a dominant role in the C-3 staff section. In many cases, especially on issues involving ground forces, Zinni acted as the CTF's senior operations officer. In contrast, the officers detailed by the other national contingent commanders functioned as assistants in the CTF staff sections. The CTF's supporting commands were mainly American (*see Figure 7*).<sup>1</sup>

Shalikashvili's early guidance to his staff and subordinate commanders provided the basis for some of PROVIDE COMFORT's policies regarding the issue of support. He urged all of them to adapt their efforts to the Kurdish culture, emphasizing that coalition assistance was to be temporary in nature so as not to supplant



the refugees' ability to take care of themselves once repatriated. The CTF was not to start or build something that the Turks, Kurds, NGOs, or other participants could not finish or maintain.<sup>2</sup>

Expanding the support base of PROVIDE COMFORT would be as complex as the deployment of maneuver units. The size and purpose of such elements varied. Some of these supporting organizations would fall under General Garner's JTF Bravo or General Potter's JTF Alpha control; others would remain under General Shalikashvili's CTF control. The determining factor was whether their work focused on one specific region of the operation or affected the entire Combined Task Force. Those elements in the latter category generally included units performing communications, service support, and civil affairs tasks.

## Communications

Command and control for a large organization conducting operations over a vast area required effective communications. During PROVIDE COMFORT the multiple base locations and the limited roadnets made establishing adequate radio links a priority. From CTF headquarters at Incirlik the distances were about 270 air miles northeast to Diyarbakir, the northernmost base; about 480 air miles east to Yuksekova, the easternmost base; and about 430 air miles southeast to Dahuk, the southernmost area of operations. The most direct route from Diyarbakir to Dahuk was almost 170 air miles. The land distances averaged 30 percent farther on roads that were rarely more than two lanes wide. Closer to the border many of the roads were unpaved and went over irregular and mountainous terrain, which only intensified communications problems for ground units.<sup>3</sup>

Communications in conventional tactical formations were normally by FM (frequency modulated) radio systems, which operate on line-of-sight principles with limited ranges. The radios best suited for the extensive distances involved with PROVIDE COMFORT were the tactical satellite (TACSAT) systems, which bounce their signals off satellites and could operate effectively over the terrain of Turkey and Iraq. However, except for Special Forces units, TACSAT systems were only available at corps level and higher. They were not on hand in the conventional brigades and battalions that deployed forces for PROVIDE COMFORT.<sup>4</sup>

Even Colonel Tangney's Special Forces units had only a limited TACSAT capability; their systems were not designed for the high volume of radio traffic that the teams required to direct the air and ground operations in the mountain camps. As soon as PROVIDE COMFORT began, General Potter requested communications support from the 112th Signal Battalion, a unit specifically designed to provide communications augmentation to Special Forces elements.<sup>5</sup>

For the Combined Task Force proper, the communications needs were more elaborate. Initially, EUCOM had deployed a signal staff officer from its J-6 (C<sup>3</sup> Systems) Section, Lt. Col. Edward O. Aymar, to become General Jamerson's C-6 in Turkey. Upon receiving a request from EUCOM, the Joint Communications Support Element (JCSE) at MacDill Air Force Base dispatched a planning cell as



Communications site at Dahuk

support for Aymar.<sup>6</sup> Later, when General Shalikashvili took charge of the expanded operation, another signal staff officer and former JCSE commander, Col. John J. Meyer III, arrived at Incirlik to assume the C-6 position, with Colonel Aymar remaining as his assistant.<sup>7</sup>

Together, Meyer and Aymar laid out several broad policies covering the CTF's entire signal operations. First, non-American coalition formations brigade size or lower would be responsible for their own internal communications, relying on their FM systems within their designated areas of operations. Second, to connect the separate battalions, brigades, and higher headquarters, Meyer adhered to the standard U.S. Army signal doctrine whereby the higher headquarters provided the requisite communications support to lower units. As a result, EUCOM tasked American signal staff officers and units supporting the CTF, JTF Alpha, and JTF Bravo to bring their subordinate formations within a workable communications net (*see Figure 8*).<sup>8</sup>

As the primary CTF signal officer, Colonel Meyer could establish policies, but he had no signal units of his own to execute them. To fill that gap, EUCOM looked to USAREUR for the appropriate communications support. USAREUR, in turn, ordered Col. John Beaver's 7th Signal Brigade to deploy a composite battalion to Turkey. Colonel Beaver directed that the unit be formed around Lt. Col. Thomas E. German's 72d Signal Battalion, augmented by other brigade elements—Headquarters and Headquarters Company personnel and equipment, and Companies A and D, 44th Signal Battalion. Beaver then flew to Incirlik with a detachment from his Operations Section. There, he and Colonel Meyer determined where and how to align the communications support. Their objective was to construct a system that linked the coalition brigades and battalions with not only Incirlik but their home bases in Europe or the United States, bypassing the

normal division or corps signal elements that would ordinarily handle such traffic. Beaver would use his brigade staff in Germany to help execute the plan that he and Meyer developed. To assist, Meyer requested and received additional assets from the JCSE, to include a 2-man command-and-control element, a 57-man communications detachment from JTF Company B, and two mobile satellite communications teams. All supported General Garner's JTF Bravo.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile Colonel German's battalion elements deployed to Incirlik with most of the 7th Signal Brigade's TACSAT equipment. As soon as they arrived, they went straight into the field to support the coalition brigades and battalions. Operating in teams and using their multichannel TACSAT equipment, with up to twenty trunk lines, they established a communications net similar to a long-distance telephone system. But the installation on the ground took time. Units that had only single-channel TACSAT capability had to make do until the appropriate systems were operational. Those that had no TACSAT equipment of their own found it nearly impossible to communicate far beyond their own unit areas.<sup>10</sup>

While the Army TACSAT teams conducted most of the CTF's long-range communications, a Marine element also made an important communications contribution. The 2d Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO), at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, deployed a detachment consisting of a headquarters element and four firepower control teams (FCT) to Incirlik. Upon arrival the detachment commander, Maj. Buddy R. Kooistra, identified the requirement for more teams to augment JTF Bravo and converted his detachment headquarters element into two additional FCTs. Each ANGLICO team, manned with four marines (one officer and three enlisted), was to serve as a forward fire observer party for the purpose of coordinating and directing American air and naval gunfire in support of U.S. and allied non-Marine formations. For PROVIDE COMFORT the FCTs were fully prepared to perform their crucial role of calling in coalition aircraft, normally A-10s, as a deterrent against threatening Iraqi forces, but the operational circumstances were such that they were not required to execute any fire missions.

To make the most of their availability, General Garner decided to use the ANGLICO teams in another critical capacity. He aligned each team with a JTF Bravo component to provide an extra communications channel to his forward units. FCT-1 was attached to the British 40 Commando; FCT-2, to the French 8th Marine Parachute Infantry Regiment; FCT-3, to the Italian Folgore Parachute Brigade; FCT-4, to the British 45 Commando; FCT-5, to the Dutch formation of the 1 Amphibious Combat Group; and FCT-6, to the American 3-325 ABCT. This arrangement proved particularly useful for those units in which English was not the primary language. Robust, innovative, and well received within the JTF Bravo sector, the ANGLICO teams provided more glue for coalition cohesion.<sup>11</sup>

The communications effort during PROVIDE COMFORT tackled a unique situation requiring support beyond that of division- and corps-level signal units. As a result, deployment delays occurred in establishing the entire signal package on the ground. Although communications support went remarkably well once in place, it required time and task organization. Fortunately, most of the units that deployed

were U.S. Army formations, sharing a common doctrine and equipment. They were able to adapt their operations to the needs and practices of other American and foreign military organizations that dealt with the refugees more directly.

## Logistics

The establishment of an adequate service support system proved more complex. During the month of April the base infrastructure at Incirlik Air Base, working with the logistics staffs of each of the deployed battalions and brigades, provided this support. Colonel Hicks used his Air Force Prime BEEF engineers to construct base facilities at Silopi, Batman, and Diyarbakir, to include water and electrical systems, storage for fuel and relief supplies, and base security services. At the same time, Colonel Wisniewski created a small ad hoc logistics element at Silopi to sustain the movement of relief supplies to General Potter's JTF Alpha sector. Major Cooley established a similar ad hoc organization at Zakho to move relief supplies into the security zone.<sup>12</sup>

As combat arms officers serving in logistics positions, both Colonel Wisniewski and Major Cooley made significant contributions during PROVIDE COMFORT. They easily identified with the needs of the forward units and had little reservation about circumventing normal logistics procedure, either by improvising support from nonsupport personnel or having them undertake tasks to which they were unaccustomed. They both had to contend with the local



Developing the water support system for HSSB Silopi

truck drivers, refugee leaders, civilian relief workers, and UNHCR personnel, as well as the inevitable arguments and confrontations that ensued among these diverse groups. Wisniewski and Cooley tried to diffuse these conflicts with a blend of humor and imagination. The crisis situation and the opportunity to save lives encouraged the use of unconventional means to produce practical solutions to everyday problems.

Colonel Wisniewski coordinated the support activities of the large detachment from the 66th Maintenance Battalion, which included a supply component sent by USAREUR to assist General Potter's JTF Alpha forces with the relief supplies. When PROVIDE COMFORT expanded from humanitarian assistance to humanitarian intervention, the question of adequate service support for General Garner's growing formation loomed large. Major Cooley attempted to have the detachment support JTF Bravo's requirements. He found that the 66th's soldiers were motivated to exceed their already high tempo, but it would not be enough. The ideal answer was to bring in a larger logistical organization to support the expanded operation. The need for such a formation was addressed after PROVIDE COMFORT began, but properly organizing and deploying it required time.<sup>13</sup>

Conceivably, such an organization might have come from several services and any combination of the coalition forces. USAREUR, because of its greater logistical depth compared to other formations in Europe, was best prepared to field the service support task, and the lion's share of logistical support for PROVIDE COMFORT came from its units. When EUCOM directed USAREUR to form a logistical unit to support the operation, the task might have gone to V Corps, with its corps support command (COSCOM), or to the corps' two heavy divisions, each with its own division support command (DISCOM). But USAREUR also had its own large logistics infrastructure, the 21st Theater Area Army Command (TAACOM). With V Corps assets stretched thin supporting VII Corps on DESERT STORM, USAREUR tasked the 21st TAACOM for most of the service support for PROVIDE COMFORT. The primary drawback to using TAACOM units was their unfamiliarity with working with tactical units directly or supporting relief operations in general.<sup>14</sup>

To mitigate this, the 21st TAACOM deputy commander, Brig. Gen. Harold E. Burch, was selected to become the commander of the CTF's Combined Support Command (CSC). General Burch was the logical choice because he knew the units that would fall under his control. Arriving in Turkey in late April, he pulled together a staff of Army logisticians largely from the 21st TAACOM to fill the primary staff positions he required: directors of personnel, base operations, material, health, and security/plans/operations. At this time, as directed by USAREUR, he also assumed the role of ARFOR commander from Colonel Katz. Katz continued to assist Burch for several weeks and then returned to Europe.<sup>15</sup>

With the establishment of his CSC headquarters and main logistical base at Silopi, Burch took control of Colonel Wisniewski's logistics operations, including the detachment from the 21st TAACOM's 66th Maintenance Battalion. To supplement the structure in place, Burch brought to Turkey other elements from the 21st TAACOM and its 29th Support Group—the 51st Maintenance Battalion,



General Burch addressing CSC personnel at Silopi

the 9th Materiel Management Center, the 5th Quartermaster Detachment, the 9th Finance Group, the 21st Personnel Group, and the 70th Transportation Battalion (an aviation maintenance unit). Each unit sent only what was required, and during PROVIDE COMFORT the Combined Support Command never exceeded seven hundred personnel.<sup>16</sup>

Burch also took control of three non-Army units. Colonel Hicks' Prime BEEF organization at Silopi was realigned, with control shifting from Colonel Tangney to Burch. The Air Force unit had grown in size, organized into sections for base engineering, fire, mail, mess halls, billeting (tents), laundry, mortuary affairs, post exchange, finance, fuel storage and handling, property accountability, and security police. Then on 27 April the 39th Tactical Group at Incirlik deployed its medical package to Silopi, where appropriate medical personnel linked up to form what became known as the 39th Air Transportable Hospital (ATH) by the end of the month. The 39th ATH, fully operational in early May under the command of Air Force Lt. Col. Stephen G. Jennings, was to provide medical support mainly to the coalition military personnel. Also at this time the III Marine Expeditionary Force on Okinawa formed and deployed Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force (CMAGTF) 1-91, made up of detachments from several Marine ground, aviation, and support units, to run supply operations at austere airfields. Commanded by Marine Lt. Col. Robert L. Bailey, the unit arrived at Silopi to carry out its basic tasks in Turkey. Part of the unit subsequently moved into northern Iraq to support operations in General Garner's JTF Bravo sector.<sup>17</sup>



Combined Support Command  
billeting, known as Tent City

From Silopi General Burch extended his logistics arm into General Garner's security zone to support his expanding formation, initially placing a forward base at Zakho and later at the Sirsenk airfield in Iraq. Colonel Hicks' Prime BEEF element established the base infrastructure at each location. The contingent of Colonel Bailey's marines at Silopi mainly assisted with helicopter operations, but they eventually helped to run fixed-wing operations at Sirsenk. The tempo of aviation activity had increased at Silopi with the conversion of the large wheat field across from the CSC headquarters into a helicopter airfield, used by many coalition helicopter units as a base. Silopi also became the base for Colonel German's composite signal battalion, which remained under CTF rather than CSC control.<sup>18</sup>

To establish cohesion among the support units at Silopi, Zakho, and Sirsenk, General Burch appointed an Army major to function as an installation "mayor" at each location. Each

mayor was responsible for coordinating the requisite service support that coalition units needed and adjudicating any squabbles over space, billets, and similar issues that inevitably developed. Those formations entering or departing the JTF Bravo sector often had personnel billeted at these bases, but at no time did they fall under the operational or tactical control of Burch or the installation mayor. As they temporarily passed through, they were required only to coordinate their activities with the respective mayors.<sup>19</sup>

By mid-May General Burch's Combined Support Command was operating at full capacity (see *Figure 9*). As a CTF component, it provided most of the service support to both JTF Alpha and JTF Bravo, including the coalition military forces aligned under them. Assuming the role held previously by Colonel Wisniewski, Burch's CSC staff directed the reception and storage of all relief supplies trucked to Silopi from Incirlik and Iskenderun. From Silopi those supplies were transported by helicopters to the mountain camps and by trucks into the security zone in northern Iraq.<sup>20</sup>

The logistical command arrangements did not change when General Potter's JTF Alpha stood down and redeployed from Turkey in early June. By then, the combat components of General Garner's JTF Bravo approached the size of an infantry division. With General Burch focusing most of his efforts on JTF Bravo,



Supply buildup at Silopi

his headquarters, in effect, assumed the role of a DISCOM, but with echelon-above-corps logistical units. Unlike a DISCOM, which would have fallen directly under the authority of a division commander or the equivalent, Garner and his staff had to deal with the CSC as a supporting unit rather than an organic unit, with overview by the CTF staff at Incirlik.

Many of Garner's JTF Bravo staff officers, frustrated at their limited control of CSC service support activities, strongly favored a more formal command relationship. Colonel Goff, the J-3, Major Cooley, Garner's free-agent "scrounger," and Army Lt. Col. Douglas M. Swingen, who later arrived from Germany to serve as Garner's J-4, all believed that the support provided by the Combined Support Command was lacking and that the organization ought to have been placed under Garner's direct control. But Garner, who focused more on operations within his sector, did not share their concerns. Neither did General Burch and most of his CSC staff. They viewed their organization to be above that of a DISCOM, given its composition of echelon-above-corps units and its additional support of those CTF elements not assigned to Garner.<sup>21</sup>

PROVIDE COMFORT's ad hoc logistics effort became more formal under General Burch. His command and staff were formed from conventional logistical units, which replaced the improvised organizations initially established by Colonel Wisniewski and Major Cooley. As Burch began to form his organization, Wisniewski was no longer needed and returned to Germany with JTF Alpha. But General Garner kept Cooley as his logistics troubleshooter, operating independently from both the CSC staff and his J-4.<sup>22</sup>



With the establishment of a more structured organization, many of the colorful situations encountered by Wisniewski and Cooley gave way to a more orderly routine. Most CSC officers were convinced that they had the right organization for the task. The one exception was General Burch's director of materiel, Army Maj. Mark S. Paun, who had inherited Wisniewski's transportation dilemma with the Turkish trucking system. Major Paun had reservations about relying on commercial trucks for the movement of coalition equipment and relief supplies, believing that the logistics effort required at least an Army medium truck battalion. Although noting that the commercial trucks had met the essential requirements, Paun pointed out that the practice could prove inadequate if JTF Bravo were forced into a conventional combat situation. The constant problems that surfaced during efforts to make the improvised trucking system work underlined his warning.<sup>23</sup>

Neither General Burch nor General Shalikashvili shared Major Paun's concern over the trucking issue. Both viewed the use of the Turkish commercial trucks and their Kurdish and Iraqi drivers inside Iraq as one of the more innovative aspects of the operation. The adaptation not only offset the requirement to deploy a transportation battalion into the region but ensured having a tested system in place for use by the relief organizations that took over after the military coalition had withdrawn.<sup>24</sup>

Major Paun also expressed reservations about using echelon-above-corps logistical units, normally equipped for supporting noncombat units, to support JTF Bravo's tactical formations, some of which had TOW missiles normally serviced by missile maintenance detachments found only in support units at corps and below. In his opinion, the 21st TAACOM's units had to make considerable adjustments because they did not normally stock or service the parts and supplies unique to combat units, which would have been critical under combat conditions. Paun conceded that the Combined Support Command accomplished its support tasks in a satisfactory manner but with significant risk, given its inability to provide the appropriate support that was otherwise available from those DISCOM or COSCOM units organized and trained to sustain combat operations. General Garner, on the other hand, apparently was not as concerned, later stating that the requisite service support units could have been quickly deployed from Europe had the situation warranted it.<sup>25</sup>

## Civil Affairs

The task of working with the refugee groups resettled in northern Iraq fell to the Army's civil affairs (CA) units, whose primary mission was the control and administration of civilians and the identification of resources to be used during crisis situations that involved military forces. Those employed on PROVIDE COMFORT came mainly from the U.S. Army Reserve. The CA reservists often worked in civilian professions that had some application to their military duties, such as civil administration, public health, and public safety. The Army had only one active-duty CA unit, the 96th Civil Affairs Battalion at Fort Bragg. Although the 96th's per-

sonnel did not possess the same depth of skills as developed by their reservist counterparts in civilian life, their active-duty status made the battalion more deployable and, arguably, more robust than the reserve units. Because Colonel Tangney's Special Forces were the first units to deploy into General Potter's JTF Alpha sector, they essentially assumed most CA tasks in the mountain camps. Realizing that skilled individuals from the civil affairs community were needed to augment that effort, General Potter requested support.<sup>26</sup>

A number of CA officers, mainly reservists, soon reported for duty. Their tasks involved the administrative processing of the refugees, which entailed recording pertinent demographic and medical information; managing the distribution of food and water; and improving camp conditions, especially sanitation. Once the situation in the mountains stabilized, they would relocate to the JTF Bravo sector in northern Iraq, joining newly arrived CA units, and apply the same talents and skills to support General Garner's formations. Because of their experience and temperament, the CA officers also served as the coalition's link with UNHCR and NGO relief personnel at Incirlik, Diyabakir, and Silopi.<sup>27</sup>

Deploying the CA units in a timely manner for PROVIDE COMFORT proved difficult for a number of reasons. During the Gulf War most of the reserve CA units had deployed and participated in the refugee operations in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, often working with psychological operations (PSYOP) units. At the same time, to support several projects related to the deployment of VII Corps for DESERT STORM and other units for PROVEN FORCE, EUCOM had augmented its staff with nineteen CA reservists and retained them when the decision was made to initiate PROVIDE COMFORT. However, neither these reservists nor the 96th's regulars would be able to fulfill all of the CA tasks when the operational focus changed from humanitarian assistance to humanitarian intervention.<sup>28</sup>

As a step to filling this void, the commander of the 353d Civil Affairs Command, Army Reserve Brig. Gen. Donald F. Campbell, who in civilian life was superior court judge for Ocean County, New Jersey, was put in charge of the civil affairs effort for PROVIDE COMFORT. General Campbell had worked with the EUCOM staff in the past and was familiar with many of those involved with PROVIDE COMFORT, including General Galvin. On 11 April, after attending briefings at EUCOM on the operation, Campbell deployed to Incirlik. There he established the Civil Affairs Command (CAC) and made arrangements to deploy CA personnel and units into the region (*see Figure 10*).<sup>29</sup>

In its final form the CAC staff consisted of personnel from the headquarters of General Campbell's 353d Civil Affairs Command and Col. Robert H. Beahm's 354th Civil Affairs Brigade. The working units assigned to the operation were the Army Reserve 418th, 431st, and 432d Civil Affairs Companies, which had recently served in the Persian Gulf, and a detachment from the 96th Civil Affairs Battalion. The CA strength, at its peak, reached four hundred forty-seven soldiers. Ten Marine reservists from the 4th Civil Affairs Group augmented the effort. Company A, 6th Psychological Operations Battalion, an active-duty unit from Fort Bragg, worked closely with these units, PSYOP strength never exceeding fifty personnel.<sup>30</sup>



General Campbell with a Kurdish leader

The three reserve CA companies and the active-duty detachment, each commanded by a lieutenant colonel, were roughly the same size—90 from the 418th, 86 from the 431st, 110 from the 432d, and 65 from the 96th. They were aligned administratively under General Campbell's Civil Affairs Command, but operationally, when supporting JTF Alpha or JTF Bravo, they came under the direct control of either General Potter or General Garner. Campbell's role was to "communicate with them, guide them on how to perform CA tasks, take care of their individual needs, and solve problems."<sup>31</sup>

Deploying to Turkey was a frustrating task for these units. Initially, those in the Persian Gulf that received the follow-on mission in the wake of DESERT STORM were disappointed, for most of the regular units were rapidly

returning to the United States. Furthermore the intense competition for airlift space to redeploy soldiers from DESERT STORM and to move relief supplies and other units to PROVIDE COMFORT resulted in a low priority for the movement of the CA units. PSYOP personnel also encountered similar delays but for a different reason. Their deployment from Fort Bragg was held up because of a requirement for presidential approval, often the case for any overseas PSYOP mission.

When aircraft became available, the CA companies found that they could not deploy with their full complement of vehicles and equipment because of insufficient space. As a result, they arrived in Turkey piecemeal. Upon reaching Incirlik, General Campbell immediately sent them forward. To adapt to the remote mountain camps, they were organized into small teams to provide multipurpose support to the Special Forces effort already under way.<sup>32</sup>

Because the few CA officers assigned early to PROVIDE COMFORT had skills that could be immediately put to use, they went into the mountains individually, such as Captains Adrian and Elmo who joined Major Bissell's Special Forces company at Isikveren and then moved on to other camps. Adrian used his engineering skills to set up a freshwater source for the refugees and Elmo helped manage the movement and distribution of relief supplies. Another CA officer, Colonel Hess, became one of General Campbell's key troubleshooters, identifying the best use for CA personnel and aligning them with the most appropriate coalition element.<sup>33</sup>

The 432d Civil Affairs Company was the first CA unit to reach Turkey. General Campbell sent the first half of the company, and the PSYOP unit when it arrived, to JTF Alpha. Faced with the difficulty of exercising central control over



Captain Elmo (*left*) with Bissell

the CA and PSYOP personnel and moving them from camp to camp, General Potter and Colonel Tangney divided the soldiers into teams under the control of the Special Forces companies operating in the camps.<sup>34</sup>

General Campbell sent the other half of the 432d to JTF Bravo. By the end of May the 418th, 431st, and the 96th's detachment joined the civil affairs effort in northern Iraq. The PSYOP personnel supporting JTF Alpha were subsequently reassigned to JTF Bravo. The eventual arrival of the CA units' equipment and vehicles allowed them to operate in their accustomed manner within the limitations imposed by the terrain and weather.<sup>35</sup>

As his CAC organization came together in early May, General Campbell directed Colonel Beahm and his 354th Civil Affairs Brigade headquarters to set up a coordination element at Zakho. Once operational, the Zakho staff worked directly with General Garner's JTF Bravo and controlled CA activities within the sector. At the same time, Campbell split the staff of the 353d Civil Affairs Command into three detachments and tasked one each to supervise the respective civil affairs effort at Zakho, Silopi, and Diyarbakir. Beahm based his own command group at Incirlik and, with personnel from both the 353d and 354th, established the Civil-Military Operations Center, known as the CMOC, to coordinate humanitarian relief assistance with the civilian relief agencies and the United Nations. As PROVIDE COMFORT progressed, General Campbell became the coalition representative to the NGOs and the UNHCR.<sup>36</sup>

Once the CA units arrived in northern Iraq, JTF Bravo tasked them with establishing temporary transit centers within the security zone and processing the



418th Civil Affairs Company personnel working with the repatriated refugees in northern Iraq



refugees as they arrived. In addition, they were to make the requisite preparations for the refugees to be resettled in their own homes and, hopefully, reinstated in their former occupations. For both tasks CA personnel had to integrate the efforts of coalition military police, engineer, and medical personnel with those of the NGOs. In the process they took over the management of water, food, shelter, and other relief supplies for the refugees.

Despite initial difficulties, the CA commanders later reported their great satisfaction with the mission. However, they were critical of certain aspects of PROVIDE COMFORT. Obviously, the delayed and incremental deployments and the separation of soldiers from equipment were problems, which was not the fault of the CTF. The low movement priority given to the CA units was responsible for not only their piecemeal deployment but their ad hoc apportionment as they arrived.<sup>37</sup>

Some CA personnel felt that they had been poorly represented on the JTF Alpha and JTF Bravo staffs. Yet the CA presence in the CTF staff process was probably more effective than many realized. Operating from his CAC headquarters, General Campbell aggressively monitored CA issues within the CTF. To help manage civil affairs operations in the field, Campbell also established and staffed other offices at Diyarbakir and Silopi.

A few CA commanders noted some friction between the reservists and regulars. One charged that the Department of the Army staff in Washington wanted all CA reservists placed under the control of the 96th Civil Affairs Battalion; another suggested that the regulars had concerns about having an Army Reserve general officer in charge of the Civil Affairs Command. Finally, several complained that the predeployment training conducted at Fort Bragg overemphasized physical training with forced marches and fifty-pound rucksacks. Perhaps some friction was inevitable. The reservists and regulars probably could have worked out these issues more smoothly if there had been more time for planning and a cohesive deployment schedule.<sup>38</sup>

Although General Potter and Colonel Tangney wanted the civil affairs support as early as possible, the CA units were not as well prepared or conditioned as the Special Forces companies for the austere conditions in the mountains. A UNHCR action officer who worked with both types of units felt that once on the ground the Special Forces soldiers adapted well to the primitive conditions and the culture of the Kurds. On the other hand, many of the CA soldiers working in the mountains appeared more naive about what could be accomplished and required more time to adjust to the local environment.<sup>39</sup>

In contrast, those CA soldiers working under General Garner in northern Iraq, where some civil infrastructure was in place, found their mission more suited to their civilian backgrounds and military training. The effort in the mountains was to stop the suffering and dying, which no one could do better than the well-trained Special Forces units. The effort in the security zone was to manage the orderly repatriation of the refugees, resettling them in their homes and reinstating them in their former occupations, which the CA units achieved by effectively working with the coalition military police, engineer, and medical personnel and with the NGOs.

## Organizational Differences

The communications, logistics, and civil affairs requirements for PROVIDE COMFORT were important for the operation's success. The signal, service support, and civil affairs units employed by the Combined Task Force were improvised task organizations. They were formed along different lines, were influenced by different factors and leaders, and had different missions and goals.

During the operation the JCSE elements from MacDill made it possible for the Combined Task Force to achieve a communications depth and expertise far greater than it would have had otherwise. And with the deployment of the Special Forces, additional dedicated communications support followed. For the JTF Alpha sector General Potter requested the 112th Signal Battalion, designed to support units from the special operations community. But when the CTF expanded to include more American and coalition ground formations under General Garner's JTF Bravo headquarters, a larger communications component was required.

The signal officers who filled that void did not have a normal command headquarters around which to structure their units during PROVIDE COMFORT. Colonel Beaver's 7th Signal Brigade never deployed as a unit or a staff. But Beaver was able to use the C-6 cell on the CTF staff as a base for assessments and to add to the signal units deployed on PROVIDE COMFORT. The main communications support was in the form of a composite battalion, built around Colonel German's 72d Signal Battalion and augmented by other brigade elements. After organizing the signal effort in Turkey, Beaver returned to Germany on 1 June, six weeks before the operational objective shifted. At that juncture, the composite battalion became the CTF's main signal formation, with German reporting directly to the CTF C-6, Colonel Meyer. The coalition forces that had never used TACSAT systems before had come to rely on them during the course of the operation, which became somewhat problematic for German. He found that the supported units were reluctant to give up his TACSAT teams when it was time for his battalion to redeploy from Iraq and Turkey.<sup>40</sup>

As the communications architecture was expanded, the Marine ANGLICO elements, designed mainly to integrate fire support for the operation, functioned as a secondary communications link. They tied the coalition together within the JTF Bravo sector, which was particularly useful for those units that were not primarily English speaking.

For service support, General Burch formed his Combined Support Command around the existing logistics effort at Silopi. In the process Burch expanded upon and added significant structure to the improvised system set up earlier by Colonel Wisniewski and Major Cooley. The CSC staff, mainly composed of U.S. Army officers who had common backgrounds and an in-depth knowledge of logistical procedures, came together as the command grew. Most of the CSC's support units were from the 21st TAACOM, which Burch knew well. The PROVIDE COMFORT logistics system was in large measure a success story. Deploying twenty thousand coalition members with their equipment and the relief supplies across Turkey and

into Iraq mainly by commercial buses and trucks was a remarkable achievement. There was risk involved, but the coalition leaders' judgment proved sound and the system worked. One overriding concern was that the Combined Support Command was a very lean organization, having little depth and relying heavily on contract support; it would have been under severe pressure to sustain JTF Bravo forces had serious combat broken out. On balance, it had the virtue of economy, as well as General Shalikhshvili's commitment to provide the basis of a civil supply system once the military departed.

Civil affairs support was a central feature of the operation, given its humanitarian focus, with the CA units employed in a decentralized manner. Some automatically assumed that working with large refugee populations was a CA task, yet the situation in the JTF Alpha sector required the kind of versatility that was more unique to the Special Forces, whose robust battalions could deploy quickly with limited assets. While General Campbell's CA units had the requisite training to deal with refugee populations, their low movement priority complicated their employment in Turkey. As a result, they arrived piecemeal, with reduced unit cohesion. Although it was difficult for them to play more than a supporting role in the mountain camps, when the crisis was most difficult, they made a greater contribution in northern Iraq working with regular forces in a more structured environment.

The communications, logistics, and civil affairs experience in PROVIDE COMFORT tested the flexibility, initiative, and perseverance of the American soldier, regular and reserve alike. The signal, service support, and civil affairs units were primarily, if not exclusively, from the U.S. Army, which allowed some cohesion. The supporting formations assigned directly to General Garner and his JTF Bravo headquarters would share many of these characteristics.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Shalikhshvili and Jamerson, Zinni Intervs, 14 Jan 97 and 3 Jan, 5 Jul 01.

<sup>2</sup>Shalikhshvili Interv, 29 Jun 91.

<sup>3</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, EUCOM, 26 Jun 91 (one showed the state of Kansas superimposed over Turkey to illustrate the distances involved); U.S. European Command, *Operation PROVIDE COMFORT: A Communications Perspective* (Stuttgart, Germany: J-6 Section, EUCOM, 1992), pp. 4-5, 27-29.

<sup>4</sup>Interv, author with Lt Col John B. McDougale, 23 Jun 91; DA FM 11-50, *Combat Communications Within the Division*, 4 Apr 91, pp. 4-24; DA FM 11-92, *Combat Communications Within the Corps*, 1 Nov 78, pp. D-1 to D-3.

<sup>5</sup>Telecon, author with Lt Col Donald Kropp, 5 Aug 93; E-mail, Robert Milburn to CMH, 8 Apr 03 2:08 PM.

<sup>6</sup>The JCSE, attached to the U.S. Central Command but operationally under the control of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had the mission of providing communications support to ad hoc JTF headquarters like those controlling Operation PROVIDE COMFORT. The JCSE's JTF Company B detachment, under Army Capt. Robert L. Milburn, supported JTF Bravo. See Milburn E-mail, 7 Apr 03 4:09 PM and 8 Apr 03 12:05 PM.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 7 Apr 03 4:09 PM; EUCOM, *Communications Perspective*, pp. 35-53; Telecons, author with Col John J. Meyer, 5 Aug 93, and with Maj Karen M. Sielski, 2 Aug 93.



<sup>8</sup>EUCOM, *Communications Perspective*, pp. 45–51; Meyer Telecon, 5 Aug 93.

<sup>9</sup>Meyer Telecon, 5 Aug 93; EUCOM, *Communications Perspective*, pp. 35–41; Milburn E-mail, 7 Apr 03 4:09 PM.

<sup>10</sup>Meyer Telecon, 5 Aug 93; McDougle, Sielski Intervs, 23 Jun 91, 2 Aug 93; Interv, author with Lt Col Thomas E. German, 20 Jun 91; EUCOM, *Communications Perspective*, pp. 52, 125.

<sup>11</sup>Interv, author with Maj Buddy R. Kooistra, 20 Jun 91; Brown, *Marines in PROVIDE COMFORT*, p. 76.

<sup>12</sup>Hicks, Wisniewski Intervs, 15 Jun, 9 Jul 91; Interv, author with Maj John C. Cooley, 23 Jun 91.

<sup>13</sup>Wisniewski, Cooley Intervs, 9 Jul, 23 Jun 91.

<sup>14</sup>The 21st TAACOM, working with USAREUR's logistics staff section, normally supported echelon-above-corps units rather than V Corps' combat and combat support units.

<sup>15</sup>Interv, author with Brig Gen Harold E. Burch, 14 Jun 91; Briefing Slides, Opn PC, CSC, n.d.; E-mail, Col Darrell W. Katz to author, 14 Jun 01.

<sup>16</sup>Burch Interv, 14 Jun 91; Briefing Slides, Opn PC, CSC, n.d.

<sup>17</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, CSC, n.d.; Hicks Interv, 15 Jun 91; Interv, author with Lt Col Stephen G. Jennings, 26 Jun 91; Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force (CMAGTF) 1–91 Rpt, pp. 1–2.

<sup>18</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, CSC, n.d.; German Interv, 20 Jun 91.

<sup>19</sup>Interv, author with Maj Wayne L. Garcia, 16 Jun 91.

<sup>20</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, CSC, n.d. Although the foreign military formations were responsible for their own service support, they received water, fuel, and much of their food from American support units when collocated with them.

<sup>21</sup>Garner, Goff, Cooley Intervs, 26 Jun, 24 Jun, 23 Jun 91; Interv, author with Lt Col Douglas M. Swingen, 20 Jun 91.

<sup>22</sup>Garner, Goff, Swingen, Wisniewski, Cooley Intervs, 26 Jun, 24 Jun, 20 Jun, 9 Jul, 23 Jun 91.

<sup>23</sup>Interv, author with Maj Mark S. Paun, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>24</sup>Burch, Shalikhshvili Intervs, 14 Jun, 29 Jun 91.

<sup>25</sup>Paun, Garner Intervs, 26 Jun, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>26</sup>Potter, Getty, Tangney Intervs, 13 Jul, 14 Jul, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>27</sup>Potter, Getty, Tangney Intervs, 13 Jul, 14 Jul, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>28</sup>*Civil Affairs in Gulf War*, pp. 145, 196–97, 333–41.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 333–41, 347–54, 533–35; Interv, author with Brig Gen Donald F. Campbell, 28 Jun 91.

<sup>30</sup>*Civil Affairs in Gulf War*, pp. 113–15, 197–98, 349–51, 441–46; Brown, *Marines in PROVIDE COMFORT*, pp. 3, 9, 53, 89.

<sup>31</sup>*Civil Affairs in Gulf War*, pp. 199 (quotation), 350, 441–46.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 198–99, 224.

<sup>33</sup>Bissell Telecon, 30 Jan 93.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*; Briefing Slides, Opn PC, CAC, 7 Jun 91; *Civil Affairs in Gulf War*, pp. 533–35.

<sup>35</sup>Ltr, James A. Ahrens, Comdr, 418th CA Co, to author, 25 Jun 92; *Civil Affairs in Gulf War*, pp. 518–21, 528, 533–35.

<sup>36</sup>Ltr, Ahrens to author, 25 Jun 92; *Civil Affairs in Gulf War*, pp. 337–38, 350.

<sup>37</sup>*Civil Affairs in Gulf War*, pp. 505–15, 527–29, 531–35.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup>Carroll Interv, 8 Jul 91.

<sup>40</sup>Meyer Telecon, 5 Aug 93; German Interv, 20 Jun 91.

## 8

# *Expanding JTF Bravo Support*

*It's been nineteen years since I left the war in Vietnam; it's been a short step back.*

—CW4 Dennis McCormack

As General Garner's ground forces rolled across northern Iraq, three additional organizations joined JTF Bravo: an aviation brigade, a military police brigade, and an engineer brigade. All were task-organized formations made from components of many units. Coalition medical units and hospitals also entered northern Iraq as part of PROVIDE COMFORT, but they were not consolidated under the control of a brigade-level headquarters. All would make critical contributions to the operation.

### Aviation

The deployment of rotary-wing aviation units added depth to General Garner's forces in lift and firepower, furnishing him a significant boost in combat support. But once again the movement of such units to the area of operations was complicated. Although helicopters could be disassembled and moved efficiently by transport aircraft for long distances, competition for airlift space was intense during April and May 1991. The first Army aviation unit to arrive at Incirlik Air Base was Colonel Genetti's composite rotary-wing brigade, which had self-deployed to Turkey. The helicopter crews flew their aircraft across Europe rather than having them disassembled and moved on Air Force transports.<sup>1</sup>

Obtaining additional rotary-wing aviation units from USAREUR was difficult. Of the two corps- and four division-level aviation brigades based in Europe, four were in the Persian Gulf and one was in eastern Turkey, which left only the 3d Infantry Division's available to move to northern Iraq. Moreover, the commander, Colonel Whitehead, had recently provided six of his Aviation Brigade's nine UH-60s to Colonel Genetti's composite brigade when it deployed to support JTF Alpha. The core of Whitehead's formation—the 6th Squadron, 6th Cavalry, with its eighteen AH-64 helicopter gunships—appeared to be just what General Garner needed to bolster the coalition's combat power in northern Iraq (*see Figure 11*).<sup>2</sup>



Aviation Brigade, 3d Infantry Division, at Zakho

Like Genetti's, Whitehead's helicopter crews took a similar air route to Turkey, flying over France, Italy, the Adriatic Sea, Greece, and the Aegean. For safety, flight economy, and political reasons, the Apaches deployed unarmed. On 24 April Whitehead, who had taken command of the Aviation Brigade on the fifth, left Germany with most of his pilots, a few crew chiefs, and some maintenance personnel and arrived at Incirlik on the twenty-eighth. The rest of the brigade's one hundred fifty-three vehicles and six hundred fifty personnel would follow as soon as Air Force transports became available, which turned out to be in mid-May. While flying to Turkey, Whitehead reviewed his brigade SOP and rewrote part of it to reflect changing aviation doctrine. Upon reporting to the CTF headquarters, he and his officers received a briefing from General Shalikashvili's staff.<sup>3</sup>

The next morning, 29 April, Whitehead and his operations officer flew to Diyarbakir, where Colonel Genetti had set up his headquarters. The two aviation brigade commanders discussed the situation and operational procedures. From Genetti, Whitehead learned about the operation's aircraft allocation under the ATO system, which centralized all requests for airlift two days in advance and allocated them on a priority basis. Although Genetti's force supported General Potter's JTF Alpha, his air missions emanated from General Hobson's AFFOR staff that planned and executed the movement of aircraft through the ATO system. Whitehead also discovered that the UH-60s, including his detachment of six under the command of Capt. William H. Morris, were often used for the movement of VIPs and the press, while the coalition's heavier CH-46s, CH-47s, and

CH-53s were dedicated for the movement of relief supplies. None of the helicopters, while under Genetti's control, had been exposed to hostile fire.

Later that day, 29 April, Whitehead flew to Zakho and reported to the JTF Bravo headquarters. Briefing General Garner, he explained that he had ordered his Apaches to wait at Incirlik for their HELLFIRE and 30-mm. chain gun ammunition and that his other aircraft consisted of only three UH-60s. During the meeting he found that Garner was frustrated with the helicopter arrangements for PROVIDE COMFORT.<sup>4</sup>

The Army used a decentralized method to allocate helicopters to subordinate commanders, who in turn controlled their employment. Army officers like Garner understandably were not enthusiastic about extending the ATO system to Army helicopters or JTF Bravo. With Genetti's UH-60s supporting VIPs and the press, defined by the ATO as high-priority missions, and the rest of the Army helicopters supporting the movement of relief supplies from Diyarbakir to the mountain camps, few had been available to support Garner's developing operations.<sup>5</sup>

Colonel Brytus' HMM Squadron 264 helicopters, however, were at General Garner's disposal in an emergency. They had remained under the 24th MEU's control and were not subject to the ATO system. They were also the only rotary-wing aircraft stationed at Silopi, and as relief supplies began to arrive there by truck, they had become extremely busy moving supplies to the mountain camps. As a result, Colonel Genetti concentrated on having his aircraft handle the supplies pouring in to Diyarbakir and Batman. In order to sustain the intervention mission in northern Iraq Garner needed not only attack AH-64s to complement the close air support provided by the Air Force and Navy jets but assault UH-60s to deploy his light infantry units within the security zone.<sup>6</sup>

As ground forces arrived and were sent farther east, General Garner's span of control grew concomitantly. He had used the Marines' CH-46s and CH-53s to move the initial troops into Iraq, but these large helicopters were not as versatile as the Army's UH-60s, which were newer and specifically designed for conducting air assaults with infantry forces.

Colonel Whitehead grasped the problem immediately. He also determined that General Garner needed an airmobile ready-reaction force for any emergency that might arise in his sector and proposed a package of six UH-60s, two CH-47s, and two AH-64s. This type of dedicated force could move a reinforced infantry platoon, with a mortar section (two 81-mm. tubes), and two TOW-equipped HMMWVs. The UH-60s could be used to transport the dismounted soldiers and mortars; the CH-47s, to carry the TOW vehicles; and the AH-64s, to provide close air support.<sup>7</sup>

But Whitehead had only three UH-60s when he arrived and no CH-47s. He and General Garner approached both the CTF staff and Colonel Genetti, requesting the appropriate aircraft be attached to them. Although providing JTF Bravo with the requested machines would obviously reduce the support available to General Potter's JTF Alpha, Garner and Whitehead were adamant that the transfer was necessary. Subsequently, General Shalikashvili agreed, and Genetti



The U.S. Army's versatile UH-60

released Captain Morris' detachment of six Black Hawks and made arrangements to have two Chinooks stationed at Zakho each day.<sup>8</sup>

Forcing the issue achieved General Garner's requirements but strained relationships between the two aviation brigade commanders. Whitehead, Garner, and some Army officers believed that Genetti had given in too easily to the ATO system, which conflicted with the Army's decentralized doctrine. The Marines, they might have pointed out, had not surrendered control of their aviation squadron to the ATO system. It was Potter's staff that had supported the single-manager approach to the allocation of helicopters for JTF Alpha. At the CTF level, General Shalikashvili determined that the ATO route was the right approach for Genetti but not for Whitehead.<sup>9</sup>

Colonel Whitehead's next task was building an aviation force in northern Iraq. He had to establish his own base and obtain support from General Burch's new Combined Support Command. He also needed to gain control of the airspace within the JTF Bravo sector. At Zakho General Garner's staff allocated Whitehead some Iraqi military barracks, but few other facilities were available. One of Whitehead's aviators, CW4 Dennis McCormack, recorded a graphic view of Zakho:

This town is a disaster area. Most of the buildings have been razed and gutted—no water, electricity, sewage, or anything else. Our baggage, trucks, and the rest of our people and equipment have not even left Germany yet, so we're living off MREs, bottled water, and what we brought on the helicopter. . . . The village was mostly deserted when we arrived, but with all of the troops here the Kurds are starting to come back in. Some of them are in pretty sorry shape. . . . Dysentery is rampant. . . . Rubble and twisted vehicles are lying everywhere. It's been nineteen years since I left the war in Vietnam; it's been a short step back.<sup>10</sup>

Whitehead's aviators had to borrow radios, generators, and other equipment and supplies to set up their operations until their own reached Turkey. The last of the brigade's personnel, vehicles, and equipment would not close at Zakho until 19 May. In the meantime, Whitehead's men had to begin air operations.

A number of important support issues had to be sorted out to sustain the helicopters. Fuel and maintenance facilities were vital to all aviation units, including those of Colonel Whitehead. As part of the expanding capabilities of the Combined Support Command, still based on the Turkish side of the border at Silopi, Colonel Hicks' Prime BEEF teams had begun establishing some installation support for the aviation units at Zakho. But Whitehead determined that it was inadequate and inefficient for his projected operations. To sustain his aircraft, he needed adequate refueling facilities most of all. The two refueling points at the Silopi fuel storage site were sufficient for the seventeen Marine helicopters based there. But as soon as Whitehead had his full complement of nine Black Hawks and eighteen Apaches in early May, the number of helicopters refueling at Silopi more than doubled, causing bottlenecks and delays. Moreover, when the Marine helicopters had to wait for fuel they did so at Silopi. Whitehead's helicopters, on the other hand, were based at Zakho—ten minutes' flight time forward of Silopi. The situation became even more contentious when the officer operating the refueling points declared the armed Apaches a safety hazard.<sup>12</sup>

To resolve the situation, Colonel Whitehead visited General Burch at Silopi and requested that giant fuel bladders be positioned at Zakho—and later at the Sirsenk airfield—so that the Army helicopters could refuel without returning to Silopi. Burch agreed and had his Prime BEEF teams install the bladders and had fuel transported to Iraq to keep them full. As the support personnel from his brigade arrived, Whitehead had them establish multiple fueling points to allow continuous operations.<sup>13</sup>

Another chore revolved around control of the airspace in the JTF Bravo sector. Although the Marine helicopters were based in Silopi, they often entered Iraqi airspace to support Colonel Jones' 24th MEU elements working there. Jones made every effort to have his marines and aircraft support other organizations, but he was determined to maintain the MAGTF (Marine air-ground task force) configuration of his unit. That meant that when his ground forces working in Iraq required helicopter support, he used Marine aircraft before going to any other source. The presence of helicopters from other coalition elements crowded the airspace of JTF Bravo even further.<sup>14</sup>

With an aviation brigade commander under his command, General Garner might have put all of the helicopters supporting JTF Bravo under Colonel Whitehead's control. Such a mix would have included not only the Marine squadron but aircraft from the British, French, Italian, Dutch, and Spanish forces that joined JTF Bravo. At its peak JTF Bravo had over one hundred helicopters of a dozen different makes and models. Instead Garner stuck with Army doctrine and left rotary-wing aircraft under the control of the ground commanders who brought them, believing that those commanders knew best how to employ their own aircraft as part of their overall formations.<sup>15</sup>

Colonel Whitehead, the ranking aviator in JTF Bravo, thus had to share airspace with helicopters from five other national units and the Marine squadron. Acknowledging that he could not control all of the aircraft in the JTF Bravo area, he tried at least to regulate them with an airspace management system that established a common approach to flight patterns, safety, communications, and contingency operations. The success of the coordinated and cooperative relationship that followed was due to Whitehead's initiative and the goodwill among the aviation commanders and their aviators.<sup>16</sup>

Whitehead's brigade developed a working relationship with Colonel Jones' Navy SEAL platoon. After first establishing the quick-reaction force (code-named SPARROW HAWK) under Captain Morris, Whitehead started work on a search-and-rescue element to assist any aircraft that went down in Iraq. The Air Force normally performed such roles with its MH-53J helicopters, but those belonging to the 39th SOW's 21st Special Operations Squadron were supporting General Potter's JTF Alpha. Based in Diyarbakir and focused on the difficult missions undertaken in the mountains, they could not provide the rapid response that General Garner believed was necessary for such missions in his area. Instead, using aircraft under his control and the MEU's SEAL detachment, Whitehead conducted search-and-rescue training to provide the appropriate support within the JTF Bravo security zone.<sup>17</sup>

Another issue that concerned Whitehead was the integration of developing Army aviation doctrine into current operations. He made every effort to adapt to PROVIDE COMFORT's requirements as well as to General Garner's preferences on the use of aircraft. Nevertheless, he maintained some reservations in these matters. During the Vietnam War helicopters had become an important Army asset, providing an airmobility advantage. For combat operations, divisional helicopters were split between aviation and cavalry units—the former commanded by aviators from any branch and the latter often by combat arms officers. For support operations, aviation units with larger helicopters were often under the command of aviation-qualified transportation officers. Since Vietnam, Army aviation matured considerably. In the 1980s the Department of the Army established a separate aviation branch, with its own officer corps. The Army flight schools were centralized at Fort Rucker, Alabama, and the Army Aviation School and Center was established with proponency for aviation doctrine.

As the Army developed its aviation doctrine, significant changes occurred. A separate aviation brigade, commanded by a full colonel, was created to consolidate all divisional aviation and cavalry units—the assault battalion(s), attack battalion(s), and cavalry squadron. The new headquarters gave the aviation and cavalry units an organization comparable to infantry and armor brigades. The aviation community soon began promoting itself as a maneuver, or combat, arm like infantry and armor rather than as a supporting arm like transportation. With the three infantry or armor brigades of a division numbered 1st, 2d, and 3d, the divisional aviation brigade became unofficially known as the 4th. Not surprisingly, the rest of the Army was slow to appreciate the significance of such organizational changes and their potential doctrinal ramifications. As operations in General

Garner's JTF Bravo sector progressed in May and June, the issues involving the evolution of Army aviation doctrine would surface several times. Colonel Whitehead had taken several aviation field manuals to study as well as a copy of his brigade's SOP, which he began updating based on changing aviation doctrine. While he searched for a means to implement the new aviation doctrine, another commander was just as intent upon implementing his version of military police doctrine.<sup>18</sup>

## Military Police

Before departing for Turkey, General Garner visited the V Corps' 18th Military Police (MP) Brigade in Frankfurt. There, he informed the brigade commander, Col. Lucius E. Delk, of the developing situation regarding PROVIDE COMFORT and the requirement for MP forces, directing him to prepare two companies for deployment and to anticipate official notification.<sup>19</sup>

Within three days Colonel Delk had in hand a formal tasking from EUCOM through USAREUR and V Corps as Garner had indicated. The MP tasks for PROVIDE COMFORT would include securing the extensive road network within the security zone; assisting the movement of refugees; controlling refugee conflicts; and, if required, participating in combat operations. The specific command-and-control structure for the military police was unspecified, allowing Delk to play a crucial role in the operation—a role for which he was well prepared.<sup>20</sup>

Colonel Delk's military career made him well suited for a role in PROVIDE COMFORT. An infantry officer through the rank of major, he had also served in the Army's Special Forces during the Vietnam War. He had all the self-confidence of any combat arms commander. After transferring to the Military Police Corps, he commanded an MP battalion before being selected to take command of the 18th Military Police Brigade. The Special Forces experience prepared him for the kinds of unorthodox problems that could be expected during PROVIDE COMFORT, while his infantry background gave him insights into the perspectives of the combat arms officers with whom he would work. From the beginning, he suspected that the military police contribution to the effort might become more significant than anyone realized. Thus, while alerting two companies for deployment, he and his staff began working out details for a command-and-control MP element to go with them.<sup>21</sup>

Delk knew that most combat arms officers tended to associate MPs with simple security duties and law enforcement on military installations. Few knew much about their tactical utility and capabilities in the field. In this realm their experience was mainly limited to the divisional MP platoons attached to maneuver brigades, which controlled traffic in the rear areas and provided security for command-and-control sites and convoys. If combat arms officers thought at all about the MP battalions at corps level, they probably assumed such units would be broken up and used in a decentralized manner. Few had any appreciation of the functions performed by MP battalion and brigade headquarters. When Delk received



the mission to deploy two companies, he immediately saw a larger opportunity to make a contribution. Rather than seeing his MPs detached to support other units, he wanted to keep them under MP control. To make that work, he would have to fine-tune the MP force structure deployed on PROVIDE COMFORT.<sup>22</sup>

Delk alerted Lt. Col. N. Wayne Ruthven's 709th Military Police Battalion to deploy two of its five subordinate units—the 284th and 527th Military Police Companies—and a battalion headquarters detachment. He also directed his brigade headquarters to form a command-and-control element from the Operations Section. Although the military police component for PROVIDE COMFORT would not exceed the strength of a battalion, Delk wanted it controlled by his Operations Section under his personal supervision.<sup>23</sup>

Not surprisingly, the military police also had to compete for airlift space along with the other units deploying for PROVIDE COMFORT, and they experienced many of the same movement frustrations. Delk managed to deploy in late April, taking his brigade operations element with him. By early May he began to form his MPs in northern Iraq (*see Figure 12*). Prior to the arrival of his remaining soldiers, he was able to convince General Garner and Colonel Goff that the MPs could make a greater contribution if left under his centralized control.<sup>24</sup>

In meeting with Garner and Goff, Delk stressed the benefits of having his operations staff and subordinate commanders control military police throughout the rear area of JTF Bravo, which was quite large. The alternative of detaching the MP platoons from their companies and placing them under the control of the infantry brigades and battalions had consequences, he explained, essentially reducing the MP battalion and companies to providing distant administrative support to the junior MPs working for infantry commanders. Under his centralized concept the MP leadership would have a more operational role to better secure the JTF Bravo rear area, making it possible for the infantry units to focus their attention forward.<sup>25</sup>

Delk also made a compelling argument that the MPs under his command and control were better prepared for dealing with the refugees than infantrymen under certain circumstances. He suggested that the refugees would become angry and unmanageable upon returning to find their villages, homes, livestock, and fields ravaged by the Iraqi Army. Rioting and incidents with non-Kurdish Iraqis, not only civilians but those in uniform, might well ensue with both local and international consequences. In the absence of civil police to restrain such acts General Garner's military forces would inevitably become involved. In Delk's opinion, it made far more sense to use trained MP units rather than infantry units to confront any mob or its agitators.

Furthermore Delk wanted to exploit the leadership of his experienced officers. Dealing with demonstrations and riots required restrained force and mature judgment. The senior member of an MP platoon, normally a lieutenant, would be trained as an MP but with limited experience. If attached to an infantry battalion or brigade, he or she would work for an experienced commander or staff officer but probably one unfamiliar with MP skills or limitations. Under Delk's centralized concept, any MP platoon encountering a challenging situation would be under the control of its respective MP company commander or, in some situations,



JTF Bravo MPs patrolling the outskirts of Zakho and standing guard at the Zakho hospital



a more senior officer from the MP battalion or brigade staff section. Using experienced MP officers in supervisory roles would ensure the most effective MP employment.<sup>26</sup>

Delk's concept worked. One officer who encountered challenging situations frequently in northern Iraq was the 527th Military Police Company commander, Capt. Louise P. Lewis. A diminutive and soft-spoken soldier, Captain Lewis often found herself wading into the middle of riots and holding up her hand to quell the furor. General Garner later commented that she always seemed to know just how to handle a demonstration and could do so without resorting to force.<sup>27</sup>

Delk did not focus on installation security, a role most combat arms officers often associated with MPs. Although such security was critical for each installation, it was handled either by soldiers stationed there or by the Air Force security police assigned to Colonel Hicks' Prime BEEF teams and later by nonmilitary police contracted by the United Nations. In those instances where Hicks' security personnel were unavailable or limited in number, the military units assigned at each installation provided their own security.<sup>28</sup>

General Garner had considered the option of assigning the Air Force security police serving in the JTF Bravo sector to Colonel Delk, who indicated that he was prepared to assume control of them. But Garner soon realized that doing so would add another administrative layer, which was unnecessary. The fact that Hicks' teams worked for General Burch's Combined Support Command facilitated the working relationship of the Air Force security personnel with the installation mayors. Thus, retaining installation security as a support function in both eastern Turkey and northern Iraq allowed Delk's commanders and staff to focus on more critical problems in the security zone. If Delk's control did not exceed the command of the units he brought with him, the engineer commander in JTF Bravo experienced a much different situation.

## Engineers

In mid-April EUCOM had sent an engineering assessment team to Turkey to identify the appropriate type of units for participation on PROVIDE COMFORT. The engineers recommended that a U.S. Army engineer brigade and two construction battalions support the operation and form a base for other coalition engineer units. On the eighteenth the 18th Engineer Brigade, commanded by Col. Stephen A. Winsor, received a tasking from EUCOM through USAREUR to deploy to Turkey. From there, it was to be assigned directly to JTF Bravo.

The engineering assessment called for construction units rather than combat engineers based on two requirements: erecting ten transit centers, each capable of housing twenty-one thousand refugees, and rebuilding some of the civil infrastructure so that the refugees could relocate from the transit centers to their own homes. The assessment placed less emphasis on the needs of JTF Bravo's intervention force, which would push back Iraqi units in order to establish a security zone suitable for those centers.<sup>29</sup>

Placing the engineers under General Garner initially raised some objections. The assignment suited Garner, Winsor, and their respective staffs, but General Burch questioned the arrangement. Burch believed that the 18th Engineer Brigade should be attached to his Combined Support Command. The CTF staff engineer, Army Col. John D. Glass, agreed, noting that Winsor's formation supported the entire coalition force, including port operations at Iskenderun. However, as most of the work subsequently performed by the 18th Engineer Brigade was in the JTF Bravo sector, the initial command-and-control decision was not seriously challenged.<sup>30</sup>

Colonel Winsor arrived at Incirlik on 23 April and reported to the CTF headquarters. General Shalikashvili gave Winsor the same guidance that he had given to other subordinates: adapt to the Kurdish culture, construct shelters in northern Iraq as temporary accommodations for the refugees, and avoid initiating projects that could not be completed or maintained by the Kurds after the coalition's departure. In addition, Winsor learned that his brigade was to provide sustainment engineering support for the coalition forces. The initial assessment had estimated that the latter task would consume around 10 percent of the brigade's time and resources, but events would prove otherwise. After the meeting with the CTF commander, Winsor immediately went by way of Diyarbakir to Zakhō, arriving on the twenty-fourth. Three days later part of his brigade staff joined him there.<sup>31</sup>

Colonel Winsor's first task was to quickly move the engineers assigned or attached to him into northern Iraq (*see Figure 13*). His brigade, which he defined as an echelon-above-corps unit and the only one in USAREUR with purely construction organization and equipment, had four construction battalions, one topographical battalion, and a German civilian construction unit. Only one of the brigade's units deployed to Turkey, the 94th Engineer Battalion under Lt. Col. Comadora M. Ferguson, Jr. Another American unit came from the U.S. Navy Seabees, the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 133 under Comdr. Donald B. Hutchins. Both battalions had similar capabilities and assets, but they differed in their internal organization. The 94th was configured for greater decentralization over a large tactical area, while the 133 was geared primarily for the construction of large port and related facilities. If the nature of PROVIDE



Engineer commanders—*left to right*,  
Commander Hutchins, Colonel  
Winsor, and Colonel Ferguson



Company B, 94th Engineer Battalion, at work in Zakho

COMFORT seemed to require Army over Navy engineers, with the former more adapted to field operations over a large area, the Seabee unit was faster to deploy.<sup>32</sup>

The two construction battalions moved to Turkey by air and sea. The competition for airlift space also affected them, and the movement of their heavy equipment was challenging. In order to put some engineer assets forward immediately, each battalion deployed an element by air. The NMCB 133 had such a unit in its Air Detachment, and the 94th created a similar unit for PROVIDE COMFORT within its Company B. Each reached Incirlik with limited equipment, traveled overland across Turkey, and arrived at Zakho on 28 April. With a commander, a skeleton staff, and two subordinate formations, the brigade became operational on that date.<sup>33</sup>

Moving the rest of the 94th Engineer Battalion from its base at Darmstadt was more complex. At first, Colonel Ferguson attempted to convince Army transportation officials that his unit should move by rail to Italy and then by ship. But loading the unit at the nearest port seemed to be the simplest solution. The battalion thus moved by rail to Bremerhaven, where the soldiers prepared their gear and unit equipment for embarkation, a new experience. But the unit embarked on the wrong ship and had to reload on another, only to find that the new ship could not depart for almost a week. In retrospect, given the crowding at the northern European ports, a rail move to a less busy port in the Mediterranean might have worked much better.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast, the Seabees were better prepared and had an easier deployment. Several months earlier the NMCB 133 had left its home base in Gulfport, Mississippi, for a seven-month tour in Rota, Spain, and had its own designated

ship and far more loading experience than the Army unit. It loaded and departed for Turkey almost immediately. Although farther away by air than the 94th, the Seabees were much closer by sea and arrived at the port of Iskenderun several weeks before the main body of the 94th.<sup>35</sup>

As the Seabee battalion moved overland across Turkey, other American and coalition engineers joined Winsor's brigade in northern Iraq. Colonel Hicks had an engineer team already operating at Zakho, which then fell operationally under Winsor; the rest of the Prime BEEF engineers remained under Hick's control and, as required, worked with the brigade in a supporting role. Winsor made no attempt to control any combat engineer elements that arrived with combat battalions and brigades, including the 24th MEU engineer platoon, the two 3-325 ABCT platoons, and others from coalition formations.<sup>36</sup>

When the 11 Engineer Relief Battalion of the Royal Netherlands Army reached Zakho, it was attached to Colonel Winsor's brigade. Following the Dutch, three British Army units joined the engineer formation: the 51 Field Squadron, Royal Engineers, a large construction company; a supply detachment from the 6 Field Squadron, Royal Engineers; and the 524 Specialist Team, Royal Engineers, consisting of nine specialists in water and electrical engineering design. Winsor also assumed control of three explosive ordnance disposal detachments: the Air Force's 39th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Flight, which belonged to a subordinate unit of the 39th Tactical Group; the Army's 72d Ordnance Detachment; and a similar unit from the Dutch engineer battalion.

By the time the main body of Colonel Ferguson's battalion arrived in Turkey, Colonel Winsor had enough engineers in northern Iraq to accomplish his assigned tasks, and most of the 94th's engineers remained at Iskenderun to assist with port operations, a task normally performed by the Seabees. The professionalism and innovation of the Army and Navy engineer battalions were demonstrated as the needs of the situation essentially reversed their more conventional roles. The total forces under Winsor's control reached two thousand men, making the 18th one the largest brigade formations on PROVIDE COMFORT.<sup>37</sup>

After reviewing the original engineer assessment and General Shalikashvili's guidance, Colonel Winsor identified four major tasks and four operating guidelines for the engineer effort. The tasks involved constructing the transit centers in northern Iraq; providing sustainment engineering support for the coalition forces in northern Iraq; managing real estate allocation, mainly in the Zakho area, where the bulk of the JTF Bravo forces were located; and improving the roadnets. The construction guidelines required that the projects be adaptable to Kurdish culture; easily taken over by civilian relief organizations; temporary in nature; and easily constructed. All of the engineers, regardless of service or nationality, found these policies acceptable and appropriate. Although some relief agencies objected to the temporary-in-nature concept, the engineers were able to find a middle ground that accommodated all parties.

In the performance his tasks Colonel Winsor faced two hurdles: timely funding for construction materials and a limited sustainment engineering capability. Large quantities of building supplies were needed to construct the transit cen-

ters and to make repairs of the civil infrastructure in northern Iraq. Army personnel who could authorize large purchases for supplies did not deploy on the operation, and requests for funding had to be routed back to Germany. The lengthy process caused delays in the movement of supplies to the area of operations, which continually frustrated the engineers responsible for the construction projects.<sup>38</sup>

The need for sustainment engineering support during PROVIDE COMFORT had not been fully anticipated, the original engineering assessment minimizing the requirement. But as the operation unfolded, military engineers were called upon to clear minefields, build defensive positions, and improve the roads for use by the combat formations. Colonel Glass expressed some concern about the limited sustainment engineering and lack of a bridging capability. Because General Garner's combat brigades and battalions had their own combat engineer platoons, Colonel Winsor had assumed that these tasks would fall to them. But they proved more extensive, leading Winsor to revise the assessment's 90:10 engineering ratio (90 percent humanitarian tasks and 10 percent unit sustainment engineering tasks) to 60:40 by mid-June. In the end, the engineer diversity that existed within the brigade task force enabled it to handle the work load. The ability of Winsor's engineers to adjust was a function of a number of factors: the prior service of many as combat engineers, exposure to both areas at military engineering schools, and good leadership and staff work at all levels.<sup>39</sup>

No brigade task force formed to support PROVIDE COMFORT was more joint and multinational than the 18th Engineer Brigade. That detracted little from the cohesion achieved by Colonel Winsor's engineers. This was due to their focus on the mission in Iraq and their developing cohesion locally. Except for the 94th at Iskenderun, Winsor's engineers were located at Zakho. They accomplished many of their construction tasks there. To complete projects in other areas, they simply left Zakho during the day and returned at night.

There was also something special about the engineers, and perhaps about Colonel Winsor himself, that allowed the very nature of their work to overcome service or national differences. Winsor conducted command and staff meetings in the evening after most of the engineer labor had ended for the day. All service and national commanders with their staffs participated. Few meetings during PROVIDE COMFORT could match the intensity of those at the 18th Engineer Brigade's headquarters. To an observer these were serious affairs, dominated by the commander. Winsor had a habit of chewing gum with an intense forcefulness. After each soldier, sailor, or airman completed his part of the briefing, a long pause would follow and the only movement in the room seemed to be Winsor's jaws hammering at his gum. Virtually everyone present leaned forward, waiting for some comment. A question usually came from Winsor, almost always focused on some technical or managerial aspect of the engineering effort. A rush to provide the appropriate answer would follow, heads would nod, guidance would ensue, and the next briefer took over.<sup>40</sup>

An observer would realize that everyone in the meeting was truly interested in each project. Such issues as the nature of the task, the type of equipment and materials required, the distance to be covered, the cost, or any technical variable

that might apply, seemed to be racing through everyone's mind as a test question being formulated and solved. Despite the diversity of armed services and nations represented, they were all engineers. Differences in approach or solution were not a service or national issue, and had little relevance to doctrine. Differences seemed to intrigue, to challenge, to offer new options, rather than cause friction or discord.<sup>41</sup>

Another aspect of the engineer effort was Colonel Winsor's decision not to form a joint or a multinational staff. The 18th Engineer Brigade retained its U.S. Army staff. As military engineering was the real common denominator, having a staff already accustomed to working together made more sense than forming a new one just to have each participating element represented. Any differences between the Army and the Seabees, Winsor's largest subordinate unit, were limited and required little effort to overcome. The Army engineer battalions had a more decentralized structure than the Seabee battalions, but the Seabees task-organized for the missions on PROVIDE COMFORT. Furthermore Winsor was a graduate of the U.S. Naval War College, and Commander Hutchins, as well as many of his officers and men, had attended several courses at the U.S. Army Engineer School. But Winsor felt that his Naval War College background had little to do with his ability to work well with Hutchins.<sup>42</sup> If engineers from diverse groups were brought together efficiently due to the nature of engineering, this would not be the case for the diverse medical groups that joined JTF Bravo.

## Medical

The experience of the military medical community supporting JTF Bravo during PROVIDE COMFORT differed from that of other formations because of a lack of centralized command and control. Although EUCOM through USAREUR had a medical brigade and medical groups, each capable of managing the medical effort, no such headquarters was committed for PROVIDE COMFORT. Furthermore medical doctrine for military units on relief operations was nonexistent.

Despite the shortcomings, the intent had been to establish a medical support organization for PROVIDE COMFORT. At the beginning of the operation General Galvin had considered deploying an American military field hospital to assist the refugees, and EUCOM dispatched a medical assessment team from its surgeon's office on 9 April. Led by Army Col. Michael W. Benenson, the team spent several weeks evaluating projected medical needs for assisting the refugees—from facilities that might be established at places like Incirlik to those needed in the makeshift mountain camps.<sup>43</sup>

Colonel Benenson's team determined that hospital facilities were inappropriate for the mountain camps, as the lack of a supporting infrastructure (water, sewage, electricity) and the primitive to nonexistent roads made such a proposition exceedingly difficult. Moreover, the team quickly recognized that what the refugees needed was clean water, food, shelter, and some outpatient care, but not hospital support. Although medical personnel were necessary, their focus would be



examining patients, providing on-the-spot attention, explaining proper sanitation requirements, assessing medical problems, and dispensing appropriate medicine. Cases requiring medical treatment available only in more sophisticated facilities would be evacuated to rear locations.<sup>44</sup>

The assessment was positive about the initial work of the Special Forces medics and, to a lesser degree, that of the civilian relief agencies serving in the camps. Two of the team's recommendations involved assigning a surgeon to General Shalikashvili's CTF staff as the medical staff officer and deploying several medical clearing companies to augment the medical effort within the camps. Subsequently, Colonel Benenson became the CTF staff surgeon, and EUCOM tasked appropriate medical units for deployment. As the coalition military forces grew, the medical support was expanded to cover them as well as the refugees (*see Figure 14*).<sup>45</sup>

The American and Canadian medical support for PROVIDE COMFORT came from Europe. There were several American medical units, notably two Army medical clearing companies from Germany. One was from the 3d Infantry Division's 3d Support Battalion and the other from the 1st Armored Division's 501st Support Battalion, each consisting of one hundred thirty medical personnel. Each of the companies was designated Company C by their respective battalions, and each deployed with only two ambulances. Once at Incirlik the companies broke up into small teams to provide outpatient assistance to the refugees. Their tasks were clearly defined: receiving, sorting, and providing emergency or resuscitative treatment for patients until evacuated; furnishing definitive treatment for patients with minor illnesses or injuries; and operating facilities with a maximum capacity of two hundred forty patients (or three facilities for eighty patients). As part of a larger medical effort, the clearing companies provided an efficient intermediate service between emergency medical assistance in the field and more sophisticated hospital care in the rear. In addition, other medical elements were committed. The 99th Medical Detachment, a veterinary unit from Baumholder, Germany, sent a nine-member team to inspect the food used by coalition forces and the refugees. The 159th Medical Company, an air ambulance unit from Darmstadt self-deployed eight UH-60 helicopters configured for medical evacuation operations; these aircraft would provide transportation between the field and the rear. Finally, Air Force medical personnel came from RAF Lakenheath, United Kingdom, to fall in on the Incirlik medical package sent forward to Silopi, together forming the 39th ATH.<sup>46</sup>

The Canadian forces serving with NATO in Germany deployed the company-size 4 Field Ambulance, then under EUCOM control. Consisting of sixty-five medical and support personnel and equipped with twenty-five vehicles, it was the only ground ambulance formation committed on the operation. The unit arrived at Incirlik in late April via U.S. Air Force C-5 transports, and the CTF moved it to Silopi. From there, its vehicles and personnel supported both JTF Alpha and JTF Bravo with outpatient care.<sup>47</sup>

Canada's presence was evident elsewhere. Major Campbell, the Canadian liaison officer at EUCOM, was sent to Turkey to join the medical effort. When Colonel Benenson became the CTF staff surgeon at Incirlik, he sent Campbell forward to Silopi as his representative. Arriving there just as General Garner's

forces went into northern Iraq, Campbell devoted his attention to the growing medical requirements of the coalition military forces.<sup>48</sup>

Campbell, an ex-infantryman with special operations and peacekeeping experience, understood the Special Forces tasks in the mountains and the potential needs of the intervention force in northern Iraq. He immediately noted that the numerous medical aid stations supporting the operation had no field hospital with a developed surgical capability. Such a facility might well be critical to General Garner's JTF Bravo forces, especially if they encountered Iraqi resistance, and Campbell wanted to establish a military hospital as quickly as possible. With the formation of the 39th ATH at Silopi on 30 April, he finally had the right unit for the task.<sup>49</sup>



Lieutenant Colonel Campbell  
(Rank as of 1 January 1996)

Major Campbell soon found that General Potter had other priorities for the 39th ATH. Anxious to start moving the refugees from the camps to the security zone in northern Iraq, Potter needed medical personnel at the way stations he was trying to establish. The trek south, he believed, might be difficult, and he wanted the hospital deployed to a forward location to provide direct support for the move. Campbell objected, explaining that hospitals generally were not sited at primitive field locations, especially when aid stations were already available. The ATH's first priority was to support JTF Bravo. To do this, the infrastructure of an installation supported by a Prime BEEF team was essential because the Air Force ATH lacked the equipment and manpower that made an Army combat support hospital capable of deploying into a field environment. As Colonel Jennings, the 39th ATH commander, stated, "The Air Force is prepared to go to a forward airfield; it is not prepared to go to the field."<sup>50</sup>

General Potter was unimpressed with Major Campbell's arguments. As he later explained, "We don't want people dying on the way home." Aware that the American general was not about to give in on the issue, Campbell referred the issue to Colonel Benenson at Incirlik. Finding that the CTF operations officer sided with Potter's position and convinced that deploying the ATH forward of Silopi would be a serious error, Benenson turned to the EUCOM surgeon, who then appealed directly to General Shalikashvili. Deferring to his medical experts, Shalikashvili directed that the hospital remain at Silopi and focus its support on the coalition forces. Major Campbell thus won the first round, but his problems with the PROVIDE COMFORT medical units were only beginning.<sup>51</sup>

Like others, the Air Force medical personnel found some aspects of their deployment frustrating. When notified of the move, they had taken care to inventory and reinforce their own ATH package at RAF Lakenheath. But with airlift space limited and a similar package available in Turkey, EUCOM had directed



39th Air Transportable Hospital at Silopi

them to leave their equipment and supplies behind and utilize the medical package at Incirlik. They were not pleased. In the language of an infantryman, Major Campbell reported that it was “like two rucksacks with the same equipment in it. If one is yours, somehow you are convinced it fits you better. You don’t want someone else’s.” Matters were not helped by the fact that the Incirlik package, which had supported PROVEN FORCE, had an incomplete inventory, with some expired drugs, and had not been properly cleaned since the previous operation.<sup>52</sup>

At Silopi the 39th ATH worked hard to become fully operational, setting up tents and unpacking equipment. The first surgical procedures were performed on 3 May. Unaware of how fast General Garner’s JTF Bravo was growing or how much support it might require, ATH personnel were eager to contribute to the relief effort that had received so much press coverage. Because they insisted on doing some field work, Major Campbell arranged for a group of nurses and medical technicians to help a Canadian 4 Field Ambulance element and a French surgical team in their efforts to make the Iraqi hospital at Zakho operational again. The facility would resume its role as a local hospital only when the coalition forces departed. Because it had been gutted during the revolt, it had to be cleaned up before that could take place.<sup>53</sup>

The ATH nurses and medical technicians sent to Zakho were supposed to stay for three days but returned after only a few hours, complaining that the hospital conditions were unsanitary and otherwise inadequate. Campbell was infuriated. He told them that the hospital had to be cleaned up and made operational at the same time and that they had to accept difficult situations, such as

those the Special Forces teams experienced in the mountains, if they wanted to work with the refugees. The objective, he emphasized, was to reestablish the original medical facility, not remake it in a western image, a theme that General Shalikashvili and other military leaders had stressed continually. But it proved difficult for medical personnel, conditioned to provide the best medical care possible, to accept other standards.<sup>54</sup>

The most significant organizational problem that medical personnel encountered was inadequate command and control for their units. The Special Forces' Department of Evaluations and Standardization reported in its study of PROVIDE COMFORT medical support that "the U.S. Army medical force is not optimally configured for [relief] operations . . . [and will] need to develop doctrine and force plans to respond to future [relief] operations." The most significant point was that "the medical plan [for the operation] was not comprehensive." Others who worked in or with the medical units confirmed these findings in more colorful language.<sup>55</sup>

The absence of centralized guidance was apparent. The CTF surgeon had neither the status nor the assets of the brigade commanders on the operation. Although the same rank as the brigade commanders, Colonel Benenson lacked a full complement of staff personnel and command status. Most important, he had no communications resources and few vehicles. The same was true for the 39th ATH. When JTF Bravo staff aligned the 159th's helicopter detachment with the Air Force hospital, neither could satisfactorily communicate with one another because the hospital had no radios and the Army air ambulance unit had only the radios in the UH-60s. Major Campbell knew that without radios and operators dedicated to the medical units, they would have difficulty reacting to emergencies. Nevertheless, he was unable to acquire the necessary equipment; tactical radios were in short supply. As the operation progressed and the medevac aircraft came into great demand, the lack of an adequate communications plan and a scarcity of radios in medical units led to difficulties and dissatisfaction with medical support.

Medical units and hospitals from eight national contingents arrived in late April and early May to support PROVIDE COMFORT, and there were close to fifty NGO medical elements, normally very small, scattered throughout Turkey and northern Iraq. Their medical procedures, training, equipment, and resources, often driven by differing national backgrounds and standards, varied greatly, causing some problems. Without a medical headquarters to provide guidance and coordination, these difficulties were often magnified and the distribution of work was often haphazard and inefficient. The medical assessment had failed to identify the need for such a headquarters, and no one on the EUCOM or CTF staffs requested one. General Garner later stated that its absence represented a major planning deficiency of PROVIDE COMFORT. As a result, making the vast medical assets committed on the operation mesh with mission requirements in May and June required considerable patience and constant improvisation. It was fortunate that the Special Forces efforts in the mountains reduced the medical requirements and that the intervention force did not have to engage the Iraqi Army in combat operations.<sup>56</sup>

## Organizational Differences

Each of the brigade-level formations that deployed and formed on PROVIDE COMFORT had to hit the ground running. None of them anticipated the operation, but all established interesting models of how task forces, some joint and multinational, could form and operate. None began with contingency plans for such an operation, with each having to work out details and procedures once in Turkey.

Command and control, personality and leadership, communications and transportation, adequate or inadequate in each formation, were critical. None of the aviation, military police, engineer, or medical units had a doctrine designed for humanitarian relief operations. Having only doctrine for its respective specialty, each adapted it for PROVIDE COMFORT. Consequently, each unit had a different experience bringing it to bear.

Colonel Whitehead deployed his Aviation Brigade quickly. His attack helicopters self-deployed and were ready for combat operations within a week of their departure from Germany. Much of his brigade would take several weeks to catch up with him, but that did not prevent him from providing combat power to JTF Bravo from the beginning. The Aviation Brigade did not become a base for consolidation of other rotary-wing aircraft in northern Iraq. If General Garner objected to centralized control of aircraft under that ATO system, he was not going to impose something similar under his command when he believed ground commanders knew how to control and use their own aircraft. This meant that Whitehead had to use his brigade to coordinate airspace but otherwise allow the autonomy of other commanders in the use of their aircraft. Thinking as a brigade commander, Whitehead put together an air-ground ready-reaction force for contingencies, which remained under his control. He also brought in the SEALs to form a search-and-rescue capability for JTF Bravo. His aviators were thinking as maneuver commanders and making a difference.

Colonel Delk had a vision for the military police effort based on a centralized approach that took advantage of the mobility and communications within the MP units. He successfully implemented his concepts with other commanders and staffs that had limited experience with military police. In the process he allowed ground commanders to focus on their fronts, while the MPs under Delk's centralized control protected the rear areas. It was an approach that would allow the MPs to make other contributions to the operation.

The two largest formations, the engineer and medical units, seemed to have the most in common. They were both joint and multinational, and their officers and enlisted ranks shared a professional base beyond military service. Both also had the benefit of assessments made early in the operation. Yet no two formations came together so differently. The primary difference was command and control. When it was apparent that a large number of engineers would be required, a brigade commander and staff were committed and provided standard operating procedures and a communications base. Strong leadership and proper staff structure were the key factors. Colonel Winsor conducted frequent meetings, managed his assets well, and kept all of his subordinates focused on their mission as he defined it. He made it

clear that they had to adapt their efforts to the Kurdish culture and that their work was of a temporary nature. The very nature of engineering transcended service and national differences.

The medical effort might have developed in much the same manner. But failure to commit a brigade-level command-and-control element crippled the effort from the start. The lack of a recognized commander and staff, supported with common procedures and adequate communications and transportation, quickly led to inefficiency and frustration. Had open hostilities broken out between any of the heavily armed military forces in the PROVIDE COMFORT arena, the coalition would have been hard-pressed to handle the medical demands of the situation adequately.

In just a few weeks in late April and early May these aviation, military police, engineer, and medical units deployed to Turkey and northern Iraq. Focused almost entirely on the practical problems of moving to the region and setting up, in the process they created interesting examples of task organization and improvisation. During the rest of May, June, and part of July they supported the combat formations and the refugees they sought to save, activities that would ultimately yield a rich experience in humanitarian intervention.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 16–17 and 22 Apr 91.

<sup>2</sup>Notes, Col Erwin E. Whitehead, Comdr, Avn Bde, 3d Inf Div, pp. 2–3 (hereafter cited as Whitehead Notes); Jnl, CW4 Dennis McCormack, Flight Standardization Off, Avn Bde, 3d Inf Div, pp. 15–17 (hereafter cited as McCormack Jnl); Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 16–17 and 22 Apr 91; Intervs, author with Col Erwin E. Whitehead, 18 Jun 91, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>3</sup>Whitehead Notes, pp. 6–8; Whitehead Intervs, 18 Jun 91, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>4</sup>Whitehead Intervs, 18 Jun 91, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.; Garner, Goff Intervs, 26 Jun, 24 Jun 91.

<sup>6</sup>Garner Intervs, 26 Jun 91, 7 Jun 92.

<sup>7</sup>Whitehead Notes, pp. 7–8; Whitehead Intervs, 18 Jun 91, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>8</sup>Whitehead Intervs, 18 Jun 91, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.; Whitehead Notes, pp. 6–8; Garner, Goff, Shalikashvili Intervs, 26 Jun, 24 Jun, 29 Jun 91.

<sup>10</sup>McCormack Jnl, 1 May 91.

<sup>11</sup>Whitehead Intervs, 18 Jun 91, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.; Hicks, Brytus Intervs, 15 Jun, 14 Jun 91; Whitehead Notes, pp. 13–15.

<sup>13</sup>Whitehead Notes, pp. 13–15; Whitehead Intervs, 18 Jun 91, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>14</sup>Whitehead Notes, pp. 13–15; Jones and Whitehead Intervs, 25 Jun 91 and 18 Jun 91, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>15</sup>Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91. The breakdown of JTF Bravo helicopters was 61 American (17 Marine, 44 Army) and 58 non-American.

<sup>16</sup>Whitehead Intervs, 18 Jun 91, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.; Whitehead Notes, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup>Whitehead Intervs, 18 Jun 91, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>19</sup>Interv, author with Col Lucius E. Delk, 7 Jul 92.

<sup>20</sup>Memo, Navy Capt James J. Harnes, Dir PubAffs, EUCOM, for Asst SecDef(PubAffs), 22 Apr 91, sub: CTF PROVIDE COMFORT Summary, which lists units alerted and deployed for PROVIDE COMFORT.

<sup>21</sup>Delk Interv, 7 Jul 92.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. Under existing V Corps war plans, if war broke out in Europe, Delk's brigade would be responsible for the V Corps rear area security. In January 1991 Delk had begun work on a plan to enlarge the brigade's role in that task, reinforcing it with aviation and reserve infantry units.

<sup>23</sup>See Briefing Slides, Opn PC, 18th MP Bde and JTF Bravo, n.d.

<sup>24</sup>Delk Interv, 7 Jul 92.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.; Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>26</sup>Delk Interv, 7 Jul 92.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.; Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91; Telecon, author with Capt Louise P. Lewis, 17 Jul 93.

<sup>28</sup>Delk Interv, 7 Jul 92.

<sup>29</sup>Interv, author with Col Stephen A. Winsor, 10 Jun 91; AAR, Opn PC, CEEUD-TU, 30 Apr 91, p. 2, in Engineering Assessments, Fisher files, USA Engr Div, Transatlantic, Winchester, Va., copy in Rudd PC Collection, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

<sup>30</sup>Winsor, Burch, Glass Intervs, 10 Jun, 14 Jun, 1 Jul 91.

<sup>31</sup>Shalikhshvili, Winsor Intervs, 29 Jun, 10 Jun 91.

<sup>32</sup>Stephen A. Winsor and Stephen D. Austin, "The Engineer Role in Helping the Kurdish People," *Engineer* 21 (October 1991): 2-8; AAR, Opn PC, NMCB 133, 29 Aug 91, pp. 2-4; Winsor Interv, 10 Jun 91; Interv, author with Comdr Donald B. Hutchins, 9 Jun 91.

<sup>33</sup>Winsor and Austin, "Engineer Role," pp. 2-3; Winsor Interv, 10 Jun 91; AAR, Opn PC, NMCB 133, 29 Aug 91, pp. 2-4.

<sup>34</sup>Winsor Interv, 10 Jun 91; Winsor and Austin, "Engineer Role," pp. 3-4.

<sup>35</sup>AAR, Opn PC, NMCB 133, 29 Aug 91, pp. 2-4.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.; Winsor and Austin, "Engineer Role," p. 4; Winsor, Hicks Intervs, 10 Jun, 15 Jun 91.

<sup>37</sup>Winsor and Austin, "Engineer Role," pp. 2-3; Winsor Interv, 10 Jun 91; AAR, Opn PC, NMCB 133, 29 Aug 91, pp. 2-3.

<sup>38</sup>Winsor and Austin, "Engineer Role," pp. 2-3; Winsor Interv, 10 Jun 91; AAR, Opn PC, NMCB 133, 29 Aug 91, pp. 2-4.

<sup>39</sup>Winsor, Glass Intervs, 10 Jun, 30 Jun 91.

<sup>40</sup>Author Observations, Opn PC, 18th Engr Bde HQ Staff Mtgs.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Winsor, Hutchins Intervs, 10 Jun, 9 Jun 91.

<sup>43</sup>Interv, author with Col Michael W. Benenson, 30 Jun 91; Campbell Interv, 14 Jul 91. The others on the medical assessment team were Maj. Joseph M. Harmon, Capt. Jeffrey M. Unger, Sgt. John M. Calvey, Sgt. James R. Garrett, and WO3 Danny Bruce from USAREUR and Comdr. Donald R. Thurston and Lt. Comdr. Truman W. Sharp from a naval medical facility in Naples. For background on the medical effort, see EUCOM surgeon's consolidated papers and message traffic.

<sup>44</sup>Lam, O'Brien, Campbell Intervs, 10 Jul, 10 Jul, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>45</sup>AAR, Opn PC, OofSurg, CTF PC, n.d., pp. 1-2; Campbell Interv, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>46</sup>See Memo, Harnes for Asst SecDef(PubAffs), 22 Apr 91, sub: CTF PROVIDE COMFORT Summary; Briefing Slides, Opn PC, OofSurg, EUCOM, n.d.

<sup>47</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, OofSurg, EUCOM, n.d.; Campbell Interv, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>48</sup>Campbell Interv, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.; Jennings Interv, 26 Jun 91 (quotation).

<sup>51</sup>Potter Interv, 13 Jul 91 (quotation); Campbell, Benenson Intervs, 14 Jul, 30 Jun 91.

<sup>52</sup>AAR, Opn PC, OofSurg, CTF PC, n.d., pp. 5-6; Campbell Interv, 14 Jul 91 (quotation).

<sup>53</sup>AAR, Opn PC, OofSurg, CTF PC, n.d., pp. 5-6; Campbell Interv, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>54</sup>AAR, Opn PC, OofSurg, CTF PC, n.d., pp. 5-6; Campbell Interv, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>55</sup>Department of Evaluations and Standardization, U.S. Army JFK Special Warfare Center and School, "Operation PROVIDE COMFORT Lessons Learned, Observations," n.d. [1992], pp. 8-9, JFK Special Warfare Center and School files, Fort Bragg, N.C. See also Campbell Interv, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>56</sup>AAR, Opn PC, OofSurg, CTF PC, n.d., pp. 1-4; Garner, Benenson, Lam, O'Brien, Campbell Intervs, 26 Jun, 30 Jun, 10 Jul, 10 Jul, 14 Jul 91.

# 9

## *Resettling the Kurds*

*We don't want them dying on the way home.*

—Brig. Gen. Richard W. Potter

The objective of General Shalikashvili's Combined Task Force was to move the Kurds from the mountain camps and resettle them in northern Iraq. By late April General Potter's JTF Alpha, consisting mainly of special operations personnel, had stopped the dying and reduced the suffering in the mountains. General Garner's JTF Bravo, formed with conventional forces, had entered Iraq and created a security zone. Starting at the Tigris River, the security zone measured almost 90 miles (144 kilometers) on an east-west axis and over 20 miles (32 kilometers) on a north-south axis.<sup>1</sup>

The next phase was to move the refugees from Potter's sector to Garner's. Several brigade-size commands had formed to assist this effort, coming under Garner's direct control or providing him with direct support. By late May the coalition forces serving in northern Iraq numbered over thirteen thousand, exceeding the twenty-seven hundred under Potter by almost a factor of five. Moreover, the bulk of JTF Alpha was made up of the 10th Special Forces Group and the 39th Special Operations Wing, two American formations accustomed to working together, while JTF Bravo had a much more diverse and polyglot organization. If Potter had accomplished the most immediate task of the operation, Garner had to tackle the most complex.<sup>2</sup>

### From the Mountains to Zakho

The CTF staff initially planned to establish ten transit centers in the JTF Bravo sector for supporting twenty-one thousand refugees each, with the first to be at Zakho. To assess and assist with the resettlement of the Kurds, the U.S. State Department hired a consultant on disaster relief operations, Frederick C. Cuny, in early April. Cuny, who was president of INTERTECT Relief and Reconstruction Corporation in Dallas, Texas, had extensive experience throughout the world and had written several articles and books on the topic. Upon his arrival in Turkey he first visited the JTF Alpha sector, where General Potter had



Fred Cuny in northern Iraq, helping to erect tents and meeting  
with Kurdish representatives

him meet with selected Kurdish elders in the mountain camps. Specific issues that would affect the layout of the transit centers soon surfaced. Subsequently joined by a ten-man disaster assistance response team (DART) from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the only nonmilitary U.S. government assistance sent to General Garner's sector, Cuny linked up with several of General Campbell's CA officers to complete a design that was compatible with the Kurdish culture.<sup>3</sup>

Having the design layout in hand, Cuny's small planning group entered Iraq with a contingent of Colonel Jones' 24th MEU on 20 April. Once at Zakho all focused their efforts on creating the first transit center. Under Cuny's guidance a MEU engineer platoon erected thirty-five white-topped civilian tents the first night; eventually, the number would grow to four thousand. Other requirements included eleven water tanks, each holding six thousand gallons; nine hundred sixty latrines, single enclosed models; graded roads; and security lighting. The task of procuring the requisite materials and constructing the facilities went to Colonel Winsor's 18th Engineer Brigade. General Campbell's CA personnel were designated to operate the transit center. They coordinated with the engineer, supply, medical, and military police units that were forming at Zakho to provide the support required to sustain the facility.

Cuny helped these units adjust to the needs of the Kurds. For example, when the MEU engineers began putting up the tents, they wanted to align them in an efficient checkerboard pattern similar to that of a military encampment. But Cuny recommended that they be arranged in clusters that allowed families and extended groups some autonomy. In another case, while trying to conserve building material for the maximum benefit, the engineers favored latrines known as three-holers, which could accommodate several people at the same time. Again Cuny explained that the Kurds would not share latrines, making the single enclosed models more useful.<sup>4</sup>

As work progressed, other matters arose. A few days after construction began, a band of Kurdish Peshmerga arrived at Zakho and requested a meeting with coalition representatives. Cuny and a CA officer, Colonel Hess, talked with the Kurds, finding them friendly but potentially troublesome. The Peshmerga leaders wanted to work with the coalition forces, but they demanded guarantees of protection from the Iraqis before they would encourage the refugees to return to northern Iraq. Subsequently, General Garner met with them and explained that he intended to remove the Iraqi Army and secret police from the security zone, but he also stated that his mission was temporary and that he could make no long-term promises. Meanwhile General Potter had helicopters fly the Kurdish family leaders from the mountain camps to Zakho, making it possible for them to see for themselves that military personnel had secured the surrounding area and were preparing a transit center with clean water, proper sanitation, and better shelter. The visits seemed to reassure the refugees, and the movement south started.<sup>5</sup>

Transit centers near Zakho

### **UNHCR Objections**

Almost immediately, the CTF staff received a legal challenge on the repatriation of the Kurds from Izumi Nakamitsu, the UNHCR's representative at Incirlik. Nakamitsu, who had been UNHCR's legal officer in Ankara when PROVIDE COMFORT began, became the second UN liaison officer assigned to the CTF headquarters at Incirlik. Attractive, well dressed, and with a pleasant demeanor, she stood out at General Shalikashvili's command and staff meetings that she attended daily. Her assignment was predicated on the recommendation of UNHCR's Susan Carroll. Because of difficulties experienced earlier by some UNHCR workers in their dealings with coalition military personnel, Carroll recommended that future UN liaison officers to military headquarters be women as they seemed to be better received than their male counterparts.

Nakamitsu formalized the objections of the UNHCR personnel who had established a presence in the security zone just as they had done in the mountains. They had expressed reservations about the methods used by the coalition to motivate the refugees to return, pointing out that under international law political refugees could not be forced to return to the country from which they had fled. The exodus of the Kurds from Iraq, according to the UNHCR, gave them the status and rights accorded to political refugees.<sup>6</sup>

In particular, the UNHCR had objected to the coalition's use of PSYOP units to convince the refugees that it was safe to return to Iraq. Nakamitsu claimed that the PSYOP personnel had disseminated leaflets with slogans, such as "We Will Never Abandon You," although that specific one could not be confirmed. As a result, the coalition was accused of *refoulement*—illegally using force or misleading means to return the refugees to the country from which they had fled. Regarding the PSYOP effort as propaganda, the UNHCR urged General Shalikashvili to slow down the repatriation process to ensure that the refugees properly understood the situation. In contrast, General Potter, Cuny, and the CA officers were sanguine about the move to Iraq as being in the best interests of the refugees, whom they believed would be happy to relocate once they learned the details. They also maintained that their efforts to portray the new transit center at Zakho as better than what the refugees had in the mountains, to include security, was not propaganda but a matter of fact. Investigating the legal situation of each individual refugee, even if possible, would only cause confusion and delay the return home. Cuny and others saw little substance to any notion that the refugees were being forced back to Iraq.<sup>7</sup>

Izumi Nakamitsu with UNHCR logistician Stafford Clarry

In the end the Kurdish men, women, and children in the mountain camps proved that they were eager to return home, voting with their feet. The first refugees arrived at what was called Transit Center 1 on 27 April, and the flow became a steady stream. On 11 May, with the facility soon exceeding its intended capacity, JTF Bravo engineers began construction at adjacent sites, eventually erecting Transit Centers 2 and 3. Another stage of PROVIDE COMFORT was in motion.<sup>8</sup>

### Way Stations

Many of the first refugees that arrived at Zakho had traveled on their own from the western mountain camps. As most were originally from the Zakho area, their movement was not particularly difficult. But those in the eastern mountain camps were farther away and required more assistance moving south. Generals Potter and Garner planned to establish way stations along the north-south routes from the mountains into northern Iraq. Camps Isikveren, Yekmel, Sinat, and Kayadibi in Colonel Florer's sector were reasonably close to Zakho, whereas Camps Cukurca, Uzumlu, Pirinceken, and Yesilova in Colonel Bond's sector to the east were more

#### Refugee convoy to northern Iraq

remote and thus posed more challenges. While Florer and Bond had their units committed in the camps, Colonel Philbrick's 3d Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group, was actively involved in setting up the way stations.<sup>9</sup>

To ease the migration south, the CTF staff shifted the JTF Alpha boundary along the Turkish border some 5–10 miles (8–16 kilometers) south into Iraq. General Potter placed Colonel Dunlop's 40 Commando, Royal Marines, in the central sector above Brigadier Keeling's 3 Commando Brigade, Royal Marines, and assigned Colonel Philbrick's battalion responsibility for the area farther east above Colonel Thomann's 8th Marine Parachute Infantry Regiment. Although General Garner kept his JTF Bravo combat units oriented south toward the Iraqis, many of his service support elements focused their efforts northward to support the way stations as the refugees began their trek from the mountains.

The length and difficulty of each route from the mountains to Zakho determined the number and location of the way stations. Some routes had none, while others had as many as four. As JTF Alpha forces secured sites for the way stations, they were reinforced with coalition medical units, particularly the two Army medical clearing companies. At the same time, Colonel Winsor's engineers constructed shelters, latrines, and other facilities at the way stations; Colonel Delk's military police arranged for convoy security and crowd control; and General Burch's CSC staff pushed forward food, water, and other supplies. Coordinating with JTF Alpha and

JTF Bravo, General Campbell's CAC staff moved two CA units from the Zakho transit center to the British and French sectors, attaching the 96th Civil Affairs Battalion's detachment to Brigadier Keeling and the 431st Civil Affairs Company to Colonel Thomann. The other two civil affairs companies, the 418th and 432d, continued working at the center until UNHCR personnel could take over.<sup>10</sup>

Transportation was critical. Refugees were encouraged to recover those vehicles that they had earlier abandoned during their flight to the mountains, and the coalition formed maintenance teams to provide fuel, oil, and mechanical assistance to help put them back on the road. To move other refugees, the CSC staff let contracts to Turkish and Iraqi drivers with trucks and buses of many types, and was prepared to assist any that might break down. There was limited planning for the way stations, but the units in both JTF Alpha and JTF Bravo pooled appropriate resources to accomplish a task requiring significant coordination and innovation.<sup>11</sup>

## The Sirsenk Base

A collateral dimension to moving thousands of refugees from the mountain camps was sustaining them in northern Iraq. CTF logisticians realized that a vast amount of supplies had to be moved deep into the JTF Bravo sector. If the coalition had few trucks available to cross the Iraqi border, it was rich in fixed-wing transports at Incirlik and Diyarbakir since the airdrops had stopped. Coalition leaders wanted another option that would allow them to exploit their depth in airlift. The only missing component was an accessible airfield in Iraq.

Once Silopi had opened as a forward base, CTF engineers determined that building an airfield there capable of handling fixed-wing transports would be both expensive and time-consuming. As a result, the relief supplies were trucked to Silopi. From Silopi delivery to the mountain camps in the JTF Alpha sector was by helicopters and trucks and, later, to the JTF Bravo sector only by trucks. But with the resettlement of the refugees under way, such an arrangement was inadequate to support the needs of the several hundred thousand returning to northern Iraq. An airfield inside the security zone would allow transport aircraft from Incirlik, Diyarbakir, or elsewhere to fly supplies directly into the JTF Bravo sector.<sup>12</sup>

Before DESERT STORM the Iraqis had been building an airport at Sirsenk, a town 31 miles (50 kilometers) east of Zakho, right in the center of General Garner's security zone. Still under construction when the war began, American aircraft had bombed it to prevent the Iraqi Air Force from using it. When JTF Bravo forces secured Sirsenk on 2 May, they found the runway cratered and many of the facilities unfinished, although the walls and ceiling of what had been constructed were solid and undisturbed by the bombing. With engineer units forming at Zakho, Garner asked Colonel Winsor to make the airfield operational.<sup>13</sup>

In early May Colonel Whitehead personally flew Colonel Winsor out to survey the airstrip. Although his heavy equipment had not yet arrived, the engineer commander tasked a Company B earth-moving platoon from Colonel Ferguson's 94th Engineer Battalion and the Air Detachment from Commander Hutchins'

Coalition base at Sirsenk airfield

Major Garcia listening to Kurdish leaders at Sirsenk

NMCMC 133 to upgrade the uncompleted and damaged airfield to make it capable of handling C-130s. The CTF staff engineer, Colonel Glass, assisted with the necessary plans. The construction work began on the tenth and proceeded quickly. Using abandoned Iraqi bulldozers and other equipment, Army and Navy engineers increased the length of the airfield to 6,000 feet and had it sufficiently repaired to receive fixed-wing aircraft on the fifteenth.<sup>14</sup>

Concurrently, under General Burch's orders, Colonel Hicks sent an element of his Prime BEEF and Prime RIBS teams to Sirsenk to establish the base infrastructure and service facilities. Sirsenk soon had a fuel storage area, a fueling point, electricity, security police, a small base exchange, a laundry, a mess hall, and billeting for JTF Bravo soldiers working in the vicinity or just passing through. The Prime RIBS team set up a tent with portable flush toilets, a popular feature with Garner's soldiers, rivaled only by the laundry and the exchange.<sup>15</sup>

General Burch reassigned part of Colonel Bailey's logistical detachment of marines to run supply operations at the Sirsenk airfield. He also picked Army Maj. Wayne L. Garcia to serve as the mayor of the installation, later renamed the Sirsenk Forward Support Base. Colonel Delk based a reinforced MP platoon at Sirsenk to control the roadnets in the area. The MPs, who remained under Delk's operational control, followed Garcia's base administration procedures. Sirsenk had no medical facility, but the 3 Commando Brigade compound, just north of the airfield, had a medical squadron available for emergencies and outpatient care.

During much of May, June, and July American, British, French, and Italian transport aircraft flew into Sirsenk almost continuously. Although no one discussed it openly, the airfield became particularly valuable when Turkish customs agents established operations at the border, slowing the ground movement of coalition forces into and out of Iraq.<sup>16</sup> Sirsenk was the second of three forward bases established in northern Iraq. The next base was just as important, but for different reasons.

## The Dahuk Dilemma

With the resettlement of the refugees under way, it became apparent to the coalition leaders that many wanted to return directly to their own homes, regardless of the condition. Of particular interest were those originally from the city of Dahuk and its environs. Coalition estimates indicated that over a third of the refugees had come from this area, the province seat, with a prewar population exceeding two hundred thousand—mostly Kurds. Moving them directly into Dahuk would not only speed the repatriation process but perhaps reduce the number of transit centers that had to be constructed. With construction averaging US\$2 million per center, not to mention operating expenses, the Dahuk option would decrease overall coalition costs markedly.<sup>17</sup>

From a tactical point of view, General Garner thought that Dahuk could be taken. Despite some resistance, Iraqi soldiers had backed down every time his forces had pushed them. From the JTF Bravo security zone two roads con-



Abizaid confronting Iraqi officers  
en route to Dahuk

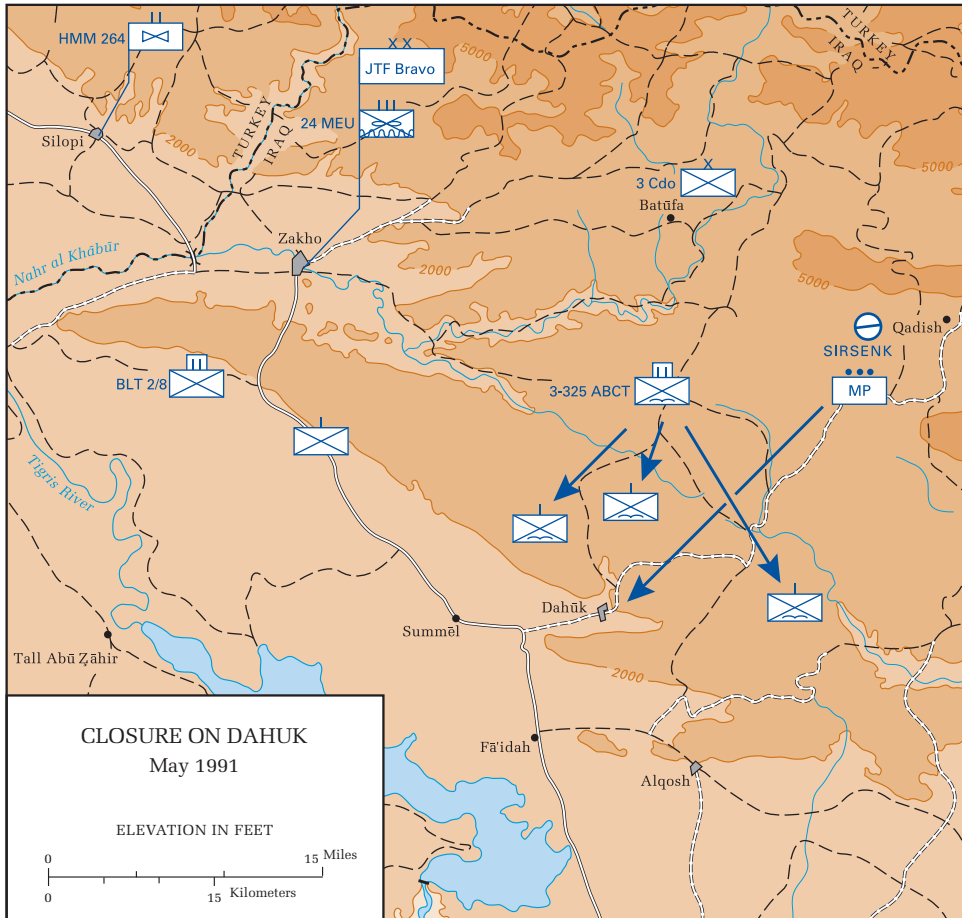
High ground above Dahuk, showing  
3-325 ABCT observation post and flag

verged on Dahuk. The one from the northwest was in Colonel Jones' 24th MEU sector; the other from the northeast was in Brigadier Keeling's 3 Commando Brigade sector. Colonel Corwin's BLT 2/8, positioned south of Zakho, could move on the route from the northwest; Colonel Abizaid's 3-325 ABCT, attached to Keeling and situated east of the marines, could take the approach from the northeast. Few Iraqi forces appeared to be in the area. Coalition aircraft could easily cover the only highway into the city from the south. Garner's subordinate commanders were convinced that they could seize Dahuk and were eager to do so.<sup>18</sup>

On 1 May General Garner had Colonel Jones order Colonel Corwin's marines to begin probing the 31-mile (50-kilometer) highway from Zakho to Dahuk. Just south of Zakho they quickly secured a mountain pass, which became their jump-off point for their advance. During the next week Corwin cautiously leapfrogged his infantry companies forward until two were dug in within 15 miles (25 kilometers) of Dahuk. Colonel Ledesma's Tactical Group Alcalá moved in behind the Americans, assumed control of the pass, and then secured Zakho, allowing Corwin to keep part of his battalion in reserve at Zakho but not committed to holding it.<sup>19</sup>

Concurrently, General Garner had Brigadier Keeling push Colonel Abizaid's 3-325 ABCT toward Dahuk along the road from Sirsenk. The Army paratroopers began moving south on 2 May. On the fifth Garner joined Abizaid, telling him "to make sure no vacuum was left between the retreating Iraqis and allied forces." That day the paratroopers secured high ground two ridgelines above Dahuk. During the advance one of the mounted antiarmor platoons from Capt. Chad A. Snyder's Combat Support Company had actually bypassed defending Iraqi units and entered Dahuk, but then quickly withdrew to the battalion positions in the hills. Abizaid cautiously maneuvered his companies closer to Dahuk, and by the seventh the two American battalions were closing on the town (*Map 3*). With the full confidence of Jones, Corwin, Keeling, and Abizaid, Garner wanted to occupy the city as soon as possible.<sup>20</sup>

At Incirlik General Shalikashvili understood the tactical and operational opportunities General Garner wanted to exploit, but he had to consider the broader strategic implications as well. Dahuk was neither a mountain enclave nor a bor-



Map 3

der town like Zakho, but a large regional capital with greater political significance. Seeking to coordinate with General Nashwan, the CTF commander had his MCC chief, Colonel Naab, take up the Dahuk issue on his behalf in late April. Naab's ensuing services as coalition negotiator would play a crucial role in the Dahuk operation.<sup>21</sup>

Although Colonel Naab had no prior experience in the Middle East, he had handled military transactions with Soviet bloc countries for EUCom while serving with the U.S. Army's Berlin Brigade. He would prove to be an able diplomat in northern Iraq. A large, gregarious, and confident officer, Naab exhibited a disarming demeanor that belied his skills as a shrewd negotiator. As the MCC chief and the coalition's direct link with the Iraqi Army, he immediately put his abilities to use.<sup>22</sup>

Naab's objectives in dealing with the Iraqis were to be open, consistent, and predictable. Neither the coalition nor the Iraqis wanted the situation to erupt into violence. Naab quickly discerned that what the Iraqi government wanted most was

to get the coalition forces out of Iraq. He believed that if he kept the Iraqis informed of the coalition's intent, the Iraqis would not interfere if it would eventually lead to a withdrawal.<sup>23</sup>

As General Garner expanded the JTF Bravo security zone, Naab kept General Nashwan informed of coalition movements so that the local Iraqi commanders could withdraw their units to prevent an open confrontation. According to Naab, once Air Force A-10s began circling over Dahuk on 2 May and the marines and paratroopers began pushing south, Nashwan fully expected the coalition forces to take the city and ordered the Iraqis to retreat from the area.<sup>24</sup>

General Shalikashvili discussed taking Dahuk with General Galvin on 6 May, who in turn brought it up with General Powell in Washington. Although the JCS chairman had kept abreast of the current situation through daily conversations with Galvin, senior State Department and National Security Council officials relied on their own assessments. When they realized how much territory Garner had secured and his ultimate intent, they expressed their concern that the operation was getting out of hand and questioned the soundness of pushing any farther south into Iraq. Powell felt that the civilian leadership had failed to grasp the implications of the Dahuk operation, but he put Garner on hold.<sup>25</sup>

The situation soon became somewhat precarious. When JTF Bravo troops did not move into Dahuk itself, the Iraqis sensed indecision. On 8 May General Nashwan handed Colonel Naab a note proclaiming that the Iraqi government would view any effort to enter Dahuk as dangerous and a threat to Iraqi authority. On the ninth the Iraqis sent a message through Naab to General Shalikashvili, stating flatly that they would not accept coalition military forces in Dahuk. On the tenth the Iraqi Army reoccupied the city and began to reinforce positions outside the town. Saddam Hussein went on Iraqi television, asserting that Iraq would fight to keep Dahuk. Baghdad's action made many in Washington even more uncomfortable, and some officials felt that JTF Bravo had gone far enough. For the moment, the coalition had lost its momentum.<sup>26</sup>

Then it was Colonel Naab's turn. The MCC chief understood the value of Dahuk for the returning refugees. He also knew that Garner had not only the military capability to take the city but the full support of his subordinate commanders. But Naab thought that he could convince the Iraqis that it was in their interest to compromise on Dahuk, even though Saddam Hussein had made a commitment to hold it. Playing on Iraqi desire for the coalition's departure, the Army negotiator explained to Nashwan that the coalition forces were going to resettle the Kurds with or without Iraq's cooperation and, lacking Dahuk as an option, that they would simply take more time to build more transit centers. The end result, according to Naab, would be a delayed withdrawal.<sup>27</sup>

Nashwan understood, but Saddam Hussein's public statement complicated the matter. Precipitously backing down in the face of verbal demands would seriously weaken his internal authority. Naab offered a solution. As the Iraqi president's statement had referred only to coalition combat forces coming into the city, he suggested that the Iraqis invite coalition noncombat forces into Dahuk to help put it back into operation. Nashwan agreed and convinced the Iraqi government to go

Colonel Naab, with the aid of his interpreter Lance Cpl. Nabil Erean, preparing General Saber for the rendezvous with the CTF commander on the Dahuk issue

along with the concept. On the coalition side, General Shalikashvili recommended exploiting the opportunity. General Galvin discussed it with General Powell, who had to push others in Washington to agree. Powell's prestige and confidence eventually overcame their reluctance.<sup>28</sup>

On 19 May, seeking a solution to the Dahuk impasse, General Shalikashvili went to northern Iraq to meet with General Nashwan's superior, Lt. Gen. Fariq Saber, and iron out the details. General Saber agreed to withdraw Iraqi military forces from Dahuk, but insisted on retaining a police force. He then specified that the coalition could bring in no more than eighty noncombat soldiers at a time and that some civilian relief workers would also be acceptable. With the concurrence of his superiors, the CTF commander approved the conditions.<sup>29</sup>

A coalition assessment team entered Dahuk on 20 May. As a precaution, Colonel Corwin had helicopters fly a Marine rifle company to high ground to overwatch the town from the north. An MP platoon, personally accompanied by Colonel Delk, led the convoy that went into the Dahuk, passing all infantry units. This employment of the MPs, noncombat soldiers in General Garner's view, conformed with the CTF-Iraqi agreement. Ironically, it also fit the spirit of the combat-oriented role espoused by Delk.<sup>30</sup>

Operationally, General Garner's JTF Bravo took Dahuk without significant assistance from the other CTF commands, but the other commands were affected by the result. Securing Dahuk allowed General Potter's JTF Alpha to accelerate the movement of the refugees south into northern Iraq, and it reduced and altered the support provided by the Civil Affairs and Combined Support Commands.

### JTF Bravo Planning

During May General Garner developed two plans to take Dahuk with combat forces. Although neither was put into effect, their development and substance suggested subtle differences in service doctrine and the uneven development of tactical doctrine within the Army.

At the beginning of May, when Garner believed that the Iraqis would withdraw in the face of coalition forces, he directed Colonel Jones to develop a plan using his marines and other coalition forces to secure Dahuk. Jones' 24th MEU staff put together a plan that had Colonel Abizaid's paratroopers secure the high ground north and east of Dahuk, while Colonel Corwin's marines moved on the town from the northwest. In addition, Colonel Brytus' HMM Squadron 264 was to deploy two rifle companies by air assault: one to the high ground south of Dahuk, cutting it off from any Iraqi reinforcement from the south, and one to secure a base and the approaches from the northwest. The third rifle company, mounted in armored amphibious vehicles, would bypass the town and establish blocking positions 6 miles (10 kilometers) south of Dahuk on the highway to Mosul.<sup>31</sup>

Once Dahuk was surrounded and all routes were secured, Brigadier Keeling would order Colonel Thomson's and Colonel van Egmond's British and Dutch marines to move south through Colonel Abizaid's sector and enter the city proper. To avoid provoking a fight, fire support would not precede the movement of the infantry units and would only be used if the Iraqis offered active resistance. With no heavy units in the area, Iraqi options would be limited, and air power could always be brought to bear on any hostile reinforcements moving up from the south. The 24th MEU, in addition to its organic air and service support components, would control four infantry battalions during the operation.<sup>32</sup>

When Garner's move south was put on hold and the Iraqis reoccupied Dahuk, Colonel Jones' plan was still workable. A major consideration, however, was that it relied primarily on infantry forces to defeat the Iraqis. None of Garner's commanders doubted their ability to succeed, but by that time the risk of open opposition had become greater. When the Iraqis placed armor, artillery, and air defense weapons in and around Dahuk, Garner called for an alternative plan. After a discussion with Colonel Whitehead, a former artilleryman, he directed the Aviation Brigade commander to develop a plan that relied more on firepower than infantry.<sup>33</sup>

Whitehead and his staff developed a plan that placed all coalition artillery, five batteries, and fixed-wing combat aircraft (mainly A-10s) under his Aviation Brigade's control. Coalition artillery would suppress Iraqi air defense weapons, as Air Force fixed-wing combat aircraft engaged all ground targets south and east of the town and the Apache helicopter gunships dealt with tanks and enemy concentrations within Dahuk. Whitehead estimated that within forty-five minutes the firepower under his control would render the Iraqi force 80 percent ineffective. Based on the results of DESERT STORM, any remaining Iraqi units in the vicinity would probably offer little resistance as coalition infantry forces advanced to take control of the town.<sup>34</sup>

This concept did not place any infantry forces under Whitehead's command. He realized that most ground combat commanders were unprepared to have avi-

ators assume control of their units. But the new aviation doctrine, designed for fast-moving and flexible operations, allowed aviators to do just that. Under that doctrine Whitehead could have had under his control one or more infantry battalions that he could deploy by helicopter to the Dahuk area once the Iraqis had been rendered ineffective.<sup>35</sup>

Later General Garner stated that he understood the essence of the new aviation doctrine but that he had grown up with the more traditional approach of having aviators support, rather than control, ground combat forces.<sup>36</sup> The same was true for the U.S. Marines who participated in PROVIDE COMFORT. Colonel Whitehead wisely chose not to force the issue, satisfied that under his plan his Aviation Brigade would control the artillery and fixed-wing assets. Fortunately, particularly for the Iraqis, negotiations by General Shalikashvili and Colonel Naab precluded the execution of either plan.

### Rebuilding Dahuk

When General Garner's assessment team entered Dahuk to "check the streets and rubble, electricity, schools, police, hospitals, sanitation, food, and [the situation for] refugee reception," it determined that a lot of work had to be done to rebuild the city. With the refugees anxious to return and with many trying to do so, the first concern was safety. Two days later, on 22 May, Garner sent a larger contingent into Dahuk to begin the various tasks of restoring the basic facilities. Shortly after arrival, an engineer sergeant about to clear some rubble in one of the housing areas saw something suspicious and dismounted his earthmover to investigate. He found that the rubble had been booby-trapped. The MPs arrived to cordon off the area, and the EOD teams began to clear the booby traps.<sup>37</sup>

Other concerns were quickly addressed. With no electricity in the city, Colonel Winsor sent two Army power plant specialists to Dahuk. The Iraqi government did not want the coalition to get all of the credit for rebuilding Dahuk and sent Iraqi civilians to Dahuk to help the effort. Iraqi technicians familiar with the city's electrical system joined Winsor's engineers to turn the power on. Other Iraqis worked with the military engineers to get the city's water system operating.<sup>38</sup>

As the largest population center in northern Iraq, Dahuk had the most developed medical facilities in the region. The assessment team found that the city's hospital and four clinics had been looted and some medical equipment had been stolen or damaged. Medical personnel from several NGOs and a French field hospital, which had recently arrived, went to Dahuk to restore these facilities and make them operational. Within a few weeks the hospital had a bed capacity for four hundred patients, most of the medical equipment was repaired or replaced, and both the hospital and the clinics were restocked with medical supplies.<sup>39</sup>

When Kurdish and Iraqi doctors joined the ongoing effort, their participation caused some tension among the coalition medical personnel. General Garner felt that the Iraqi doctors made the work harder than it needed to be. Soon the Dahuk hospital was receiving and treating large numbers of patients as the refugees returned

from the mountains, which reduced the coalition and NGO medical personnel's work load and was illustrative of General Shalikashvili's guidance of helping the people help themselves.<sup>40</sup>

Garner estimated that around twenty-five thousand people were residing in Dahuk when the coalition arrived, many hardy refugees who had returned home early. With the coalition securing the area around the city and operating within, the process quickly accelerated. Military checkpoints out-

Dahuk police station after the bombing

side Dahuk began counting an average of seven thousand refugees returning each day, with a high of thirteen thousand in one 24-hour period. General Campbell's CA personnel, at their best in an urban environment, helped manage and integrate the work of the coalition and NGOs with the needs of the refugees.<sup>41</sup>

The effort to rebuild Dahuk was not without problems. The presence of Iraqi police fueled an atmosphere of tension. The Kurds had no love for the police and suspected them of malicious acts. On 25 May a crowd of Kurds converged on the Iraqi police station to demand the release of some prisoners. Shots were fired from a building across the street, apparently a Ba'ath party headquarters. The Peshmerga in the crowd returned fire, and the crowd rushed the building. Several people were killed, and the building was burned.<sup>42</sup>

The small coalition element and the forty-seven NGO workers were staying nearby in the Dahuk Hotel. The size of the crowd and the violence made it clear that the conflict was not over. There would be other incidents in Dahuk, but the coalition's presence seemed to restrain the Iraqis. Eventually, JTF Bravo leaders convinced the Kurds to settle down and cooperate. Other than the conflicts between the Kurds and the Iraqi police, the effort to rebuild Dahuk and its facilities worked well. By the time the coalition forces withdrew three weeks later the number of those resettled in their homes had grown to almost two hundred thousand. Taking the town had been a success, but the delays there and elsewhere had caused problems among the refugees.<sup>43</sup>

## Refugee Confrontations

The Kurdish refugees had begun to arrive in the security zone faster and in greater numbers than could be easily accommodated. They were exhausted from their experience in the mountains and distressed by the ongoing disruption in their lives, often venting their frustration at the coalition forces that were trying to assist them. The specter of internal dissension and confrontations flaring up among the masses loomed large. Requests made by CA officers and others to slow down the flow of refugees seemed to fall on deaf ears. The CA units wanted the refugees to

arrive in an orderly manner so that they could receive them in a structured environment, but General Potter and his commanders were unsympathetic with the complaints because they believed that the situation at Zakho was not as bad as it was in the mountain camps. Furthermore Potter was concerned that the ground water his engineers had developed in his area would dry up through overuse in the hot summer weather.<sup>44</sup>

By mid-May General Garner had his hands full with the masses of refugees returning from the mountains, having only one transit center at Zakho completed but overflowing and another two under construction. Zakho had over forty thousand refugees—exceeding center capacity by almost a factor of two; five thousand more were at nearby way stations, and another thirty-five thousand were en route. As a temporary remedy, Garner instructed those running the Zakho transit center to create an adjacent compound to house the overflow. Those in charge of the construction wanted more orderly expansion, but Garner understood the need to receive the refugees as fast as Potter could send them. Among all parties frustrations mounted.<sup>45</sup>

On 13 May dissatisfaction with overcrowding at the Zakho transit center led to a demonstration, and a riot erupted at the Zakho police station. Colonel Delk's MPs were busy regaining control, but eventually they restrained the refugees. Tensions continued. On the twenty-first, after a meeting with Colonel Naab, General Nashwan departed the area in his car, which a crowd of refugees soon stopped. The Iraqi driver was severely beaten, Nashwan roughed up, and the car damaged. The MPs had to fire shots in the air to contain the crowd and protect the Iraqi general, who later asked the Americans to reimburse him for the damages. An observer noted Kuwaiti license plates on the car, suggesting that the Iraqis might have confiscated it in Kuwait before DESERT STORM.<sup>46</sup>

As the Iraqi forces backed out of northern Iraq, the Peshmerga began to move south. In April General Potter and Colonel Tangney had relied upon the Peshmerga for assistance in working with the refugees, developing a relationship that the latter group obviously hoped would continue. To some degree, the two American commanders believed that "the Pesh," as they called them, had acted as a tripwire for any Iraqi forces trying to follow the Kurds into the mountains. They had also used the



hardy mountain soldiers to help control the refugees and as a source of information on Iraqi minefields and troop movements just across the border.<sup>47</sup>

In the JTF Bravo sector the Peshmerga found their presence less welcome. They constituted a danger to the PROVIDE COMFORT mission. As early as 26 April General Garner, upon discovering that the Peshmerga were establishing checkpoints in his security zone, became understandably alarmed. Although they professed friendship toward the coalition forces, their armed presence obviously threatened the delicate situation faced by Garner as he expanded the security zone. Open fighting between the Peshmerga and the Iraqis could easily spread, involving coalition forces and bringing the refugee movement south to an abrupt halt.

Perhaps no group had more close calls with the Peshmerga than Colonel Abizaid's paratroopers as they advanced to Dahuk. With the Iraqis still withdrawing as coalition forces moved south, Garner instructed Abizaid to maintain contact with the armed Kurds to prevent them from exploiting any opportunity. But the irregular terrain in the mountainous area made the mission difficult. In one case, Abizaid ordered Captain Synder to move his mounted elements forward to maintain contact. As the Americans closed on the retreating Iraqis, Peshmerga in pickup trucks suddenly surrounded them.<sup>48</sup>

Colonel Abizaid, the only officer in the battalion who could speak Arabic, went forward and tried unsuccessfully to get the Peshmerga to move north away from the Iraqis. They began yelling "On to Dahuk" and "Death to Saddam" in Arabic and Kurdish. Abizaid contacted General Garner, who was nearby at Sirsenk. Garner again instructed him to maintain contact with the Iraqis. Abizaid ordered Captain Snyder to move another 6 miles (10 kilometers) down the road toward Dahuk. Synder found that he could not advance fast enough to regain contact and at the same time clear the high ground on either side of the road. Both Abizaid and Snyder had taken a calculated risk to stay with the Iraqis and keep the Kurds from getting in between.<sup>49</sup>

The paratroopers finally caught up with the Iraqis, having passed several enemy positions on the hills. Once stopped, Synder realized that he was boxed in, surrounded by the Iraqis on three sides and by the Peshmerga to his rear. With one of his companies caught between the Iraqis and the Peshmerga, Abizaid felt that a fight was imminent. He quickly had Capt. Gregory A. Brouillette, commanding Company A, move up to provide support. Abizaid went to the Peshmerga and finally convinced them to proceed north away from the Iraqis. Cool decisive action by Abizaid and his company commanders and the discipline of their men had again prevented a firefight. During May and June the armed Kurds remained a constant source of concern to Abizaid. In an effort to contain and stay on top of their activities Abizaid had his intelligence officer meet with them frequently.<sup>50</sup>

In mid-May Abizaid reported a firefight between the PUK and KDP factions in the village of Zawita in his sector. His soldiers were manning a checkpoint close to where one Kurd was shot and a second was executed. When questioned about the shooting, villagers simply said that a weapon had discharged accidentally. The paratroopers were never attacked, but Abizaid remained alert

with so many Peshmerga in his sector. As a precaution, he had armed vehicles accompany all of his unit's convoys.<sup>51</sup>

The French marines also had problems with the Kurds. Colonel Thomann's sector in the eastern portion of the security zone was just as rugged and mountainous as Abizaid's, and Thomann had regularly sent out dismounted security patrols. On several occasions they reported either receiving gunfire from armed Kurdish elements or getting caught between warring factions. To try to stay on good terms with the Kurds, Thomann allowed them to establish checkpoints in his sector. But like Abizaid and the other conventional soldiers in JTF Bravo, he considered the armed Kurds to be more of a liability than an asset.<sup>52</sup>

In contrast, the more stable tactical conditions in the JTF Alpha sector to the north allowed General Potter's special operations soldiers to view the Peshmerga more positively. They developed a cooperative relationship with them, making use of their capabilities. By temperament and training Colonel Tangney's Special Forces were more comfortable working with indigenous guerrillas than General Garner's conventional forces. The successful nature of the cooperative interaction with the coalition may have encouraged the Peshmerga to believe that it would continue. But the more volatile situation in the security zone made such ties less practical. Nevertheless, the mere presence of the Peshmerga may have explained why Baghdad accepted the coalition's short-term objectives.

## Coalition Incidents

By early May General Garner's soldiers, sensing a variety of dangers, had begun referring to everything east of Zakho as Indian country. The terrain was rugged and irregular, making it easy for an observer to understand how the Kurds had been able to evade the Iraqis in the past. From the air the ground was so undulating that it seemed as if any fold in the landscape could hide small groups. The land also hid other hazards.

After the Iraqis and Peshmerga, land mines posed the greatest danger to the coalition soldiers. For years, at the behest of Saddam Hussein, the border regions had been laced with mines, with many of the minefields left uncharted. The Special Forces had found some in the mountain camps, as had many unsuspecting children at play. Most of these devices were small, plastic, antipersonnel mines, difficult to detect and disarm. Without an extensive combat engineering capability, the coalition had few mine detectors or personnel skilled in their use; the EOD specialists were trained to destroy the mines, not to find them. Garner's policy was to mark the minefields when they were discovered, but generally not to clear them.<sup>53</sup>

The coalition soldiers encountered land mines as they carried out their respective missions. Colonel Thomann had tasked his French marines to clear a minefield near a way station. On 25 May, working the designated area, Pvt. Mouloud Meddjadba stepped on a mine; blown into the air, he fell to the ground and landed on yet another mine, which killed him. Some of his fellow marines sustained injuries from such devices. Mines also took a toll on the Americans in the JTF Bravo sector.<sup>54</sup>

The Iraqis had left numerous minefields behind in the sector occupied by Colonel Abizaid's paratroopers, several of whom were seriously injured. On 4 May, while patrolling near Zawita, Spc. Jay Humphries stepped on a land mine that severed his left leg below the knee, and nearby Pfc. Mark A. Potter and Cpl. Loren Yeager were wounded. On the twenty-fourth Pfc. Lars P. Chew led a group of other soldiers through a minefield, making use of a path that had already been cleared. In an unfortunate moment he strayed off the path and stepped on a mine, losing both legs. His squad leader immediately requested a medevac helicopter, which transported Chew to Brigadier Keeling's compound near Sirsenk. The British medical personnel stabilized Chew, but he died early the next morning.<sup>55</sup>

The loss of Private Chew had a powerful impact on the JTF Bravo commander and many others. On 26 May Colonel Abizaid held a memorial service for Chew in the field, allowing every possible paratrooper to attend. Colonel Jones and General Garner flew to the battalion's sector for the memorial.<sup>56</sup>

Corporal Yeager (*left*) and  
Specialist Humphries

The service called for the battalion chaplain to begin with a eulogy, to be followed by remarks from several of Private Chew's closest friends. Then a sergeant was to sing "Amazing Grace." The plan was executed only in part. The chaplain, Capt. Scott H. Kaminsky, could not complete the eulogy, overcome by emotion, and had to retire; each of Chew's friends, too, could not finish what they had to say; and when the sergeant began to sing, his voice faltered with emotion. Garner looked at over four hundred paratroopers with heads bowed, not in prayer, but in mourning.

After the memorial service General Garner departed the sector to meet with a local Iraqi commander, Brig. Gen. Taher, to discuss several incidents in which an Iraqi gun position had fired—although ineffectively—at coalition aircraft. At the meeting Garner expressed his outrage, stating emphatically that if the firings continued he would personally send his Apache gunships to return fire and that American fire would be effective. Taher blamed the shootings on careless fire discipline and, to appease Garner, offered to summarily execute the soldiers responsible in front of him. Appalled, the JTF Bravo commander turned down the offer. Privately he reflected on the psychology that would allow the officer to make such

a proposal. Only that morning he had observed American commanders and paratroopers mourn the loss of one of their own and that afternoon he had heard an Iraqi commander heedlessly suggest the execution of three soldiers to set a precedent. To Garner there was a profound difference in the way the two armies regarded their soldiers.<sup>57</sup>

JTF Bravo soldiers had a significant edge over their Iraqi counterparts in the matter of discipline. While the Iraqi soldiers were prone to fire at most any objective if they thought that they could get away with it, coalition soldiers uniformly demonstrated restraint. In a 13 May report to his U.S. Army Southern European Task Force headquarters in Italy Colonel Abizaid wrote, "The performance and discipline of our soldiers has been magnificent. There have been numerous incidents where an honest mistake would have started shooting."<sup>58</sup> Although outside observers would view discipline as an integral part of any military unit, it was critical for humanitarian missions that had a strong peace operations component.

Another incident in May further highlighted the discipline issue. On the ninth Captain Brouillette and his Company A paratroopers, while advancing on the road to Dahuk, received fire from an Iraqi position. Although ready to respond with force, his men waited for Brouillette's command. Instead he cautiously went forward to investigate and found that the Iraqis had fired to halt a taxi carrying

Private Chew

Dutch reporters, attempting to force their checkpoint. The Iraqis had not intended to engage the paratroopers at all, although they fired in their direction. The detained reporters urged the Americans to fire on the Iraqis, forcing both sides to prepare for a firefight. But Brouillette remained cool and again held back. The situation calmed eventually, and the reporters were released. Brouillette's judgment and the discipline of his soldiers averted an unnecessary engagement.<sup>59</sup>

During April and May coalition forces encountered other such situations. Only on one occasion did they return fire—nearby Saddam Hussein’s summer palace, situated just south of Sirsenk in Brigadier Keeling’s sector. When General Nashwan agreed to the withdrawal of Iraqi Army units from the security zone, he requested that a small group of soldiers be allowed to remain behind to protect the palace from vandalism by the Kurds. Colonel Naab concurred. He understood that any damages to the palace would only worsen the already strained relations between the Kurds and Saddam Hussein and that the arrangement had inherent advantages, freeing the coalition from having to secure it and perhaps giving his side some additional leverage in any future negotiations.<sup>60</sup>

Accordingly, with a known Iraqi position in their sector, the British marines kept the palace under close surveillance. On 13 May the Iraqi guards intentionally fired at the British patrol operating several hundred meters away, causing the marines to return fire but without hitting anyone. The Iraqis then brought out a heavy machine gun. Anticipating a second round, the marines again fired back, this time killing two Iraqis. Coalition officers viewed the incident from differing perspectives. Colonel Naab believed that the British response was provocative, whereas General Garner believed their response was justified. According to the JTF Bravo commander, completely ignoring the Iraqi outpost was out of the question and keeping it under observation almost a mandatory requirement.<sup>61</sup>

During the various incidents the judgment of the coalition commanders and the discipline of their soldiers prevented unnecessary violence. The Iraqis fired on or in the vicinity of Garner’s forces and aircraft on many occasions, but they never inflicted any casualties. During PROVIDE COMFORT the coalition recorded seven fatalities: Privates Chew and Meddjadba succumbed to land mines; Marine Lance Cpl. Gary D. Haisman, to a weapon misfire; and Marine Sgt. John W. Denton, Army engineer Spc. Scott Collins, and French Marine Lance Cpls. Pascal Couci and Pascal de la Tour, to vehicular accidents. For those sustaining treatable injuries, responsible coalition commanders made every effort to ensure that their soldiers received prompt and adequate medical care.<sup>62</sup>

## The Medical Challenge

From late April to the end of May military medical units from eight coalition nations entered the JTF Bravo sector in northern Iraq (*see Figure 14*). Medical personnel from about twenty NGO agencies also joined them, while others remained in the JTF Alpha sector in the mountains. As a result of their cooperative efforts, the Zakho and Dahuk hospitals as well as many clinics throughout the region became operational. Despite the abundance of medical facilities, Garner’s subordinate commanders repeatedly expressed concern about the availability of medical care.

Problems with command, control, and communications persisted. Medical representation existed at three locations—Colonel Benenson at Incirlik, Major Campbell at Silopi, and several recently assigned medical officers at Zakho. General Garner recalled that they were all good officers, but without the senior

command experience to guide the medical effort. A brigade-level headquarters for medical services was lacking. Benenson, even as the CTF surgeon, did not have the comparable status and authority that Colonel Winsor, the ranking engineer, had over the engineer effort. Moreover, while Winsor positioned himself forward near the areas where his engineers were performing their tasks, Benenson remained at Incirlik far from the center of medical activities.<sup>63</sup>

If the lack of a medical commander denied the medical effort the element of command, the lack of a proper medical staff denied it the element of control. While field-grade and general officers used their leadership and decision-making authority to command their units, they controlled them through the functional staff sections that managed and coordinated such matters as personnel administration, operations, logistics, and communications. Colonel Benenson, Major Campbell, and the other officers were only medical staff representatives and the larger medical units, specifically the hospitals, were just that and not headquarters organizations. What was missing was a cohesive medical staff with the appropriate staff sections to manage and coordinate the PROVIDE COMFORT medical units.<sup>64</sup>

The final component missing in the medical effort was communications. Major Campbell identified the deficiency upon his arrival at Silopi, but was unable to remedy it. And even if he had somehow obtained all the TACSAT radios he wanted, the brigade-level organization that would have included a signal platoon to operate and maintain them would have been missing. The PROVIDE COMFORT medical community never had that kind of organization at Silopi or in northern Iraq.<sup>65</sup>

When medical units entered General Garner's sector, they coordinated directly with his JTF Bravo staff. But Colonel Goff, the J-3, never knew when a particular medical unit would arrive until its representative showed up and asked him where the unit should set up in the JTF Bravo sector. With no overall medical plan, Goff improvised by first asking a few questions about the unit's size, capabilities, and limitations, and then assigning a sector based on what seemed logical at the time. In the process he kept Garner informed of the situation, but neither relied on a medical command element to assist or provide guidance.<sup>66</sup>

Other than General Potter, the coalition commanders concurred with the decision to keep the 39th ATH at Silopi. With the unit serving as a combat support hospital, Silopi was a suitable location when General Garner's forces began moving on Dahuk. Had it been at Suri, in the extreme eastern portion of the security zone, where Potter wanted it to support the refugees, it would have been far from the Dahuk operation. As Major Campbell had predicted, the two Army medical clearing companies were more appropriate for assisting the refugees in the mountains.

Political considerations also complicated Colonel Goff's attempts to assign field hospitals to areas occupied by their national contingents. Because the French government had restricted its large military field hospital that arrived in May to supporting only the refugees, Goff had the unit set up at the Zahko facility rather than with Colonel Thomann's regiment at the other end of the security zone. But he soon found that Thomann's regimental aid station had a limited capacity, given reports of several French casualties. To add more medical depth, Goff assigned the Spanish field hospital, restricted by its government to support only coalition

forces, to the French sector, even though Colonel Ledesma's Spanish formation was stationed at Zakho. General Garner agreed that it was illogical to have the French and Spanish hospitals located at opposite ends of the security zone, separated from their respective national contingents, but with no prior planning for their arrival it was difficult to prevent.<sup>67</sup>

The large Italian field hospital was authorized by its government to support either the refugees or the coalition forces, as the situation dictated. With General Monticone's Folgore Brigade and other Italian forces positioned next to the Spanish units at Zakho, Goff had the hospital set up near its national contingent, as well as near the greatest concentration of refugees and coalition forces on PROVIDE COMFORT. In the case of Australia, the Canberra government wanted its medical unit to work with the refugees but under British control if possible. To comply, Goff attached the field hospital to the 3 Commando Brigade at Sirsenk. As a result, Brigadier Keeling commanded two medical units in his sector—his own medical squadron that supported his brigade and coalition elements and the Australian hospital to support the refugees. Goff later dispatched the Dutch 11 Engineer Relief Battalion's medical company to the British sector where Colonel van Egmond's marines were located, allowing the unit to serve both the refugees and the coalition forces.<sup>68</sup>

When a small Belgian field hospital, with French-speaking personnel, arrived in late May, prepared to work with coalition forces or refugees, Colonel Goff assigned it to the French sector and moved the Spanish hospital back to Zakho to be near the Spanish contingent. The coalition medical effort in northern Iraq had an estimated bed capacity for about four hundred patients. Despite concern over the needs of the refugees, they never occupied more than one hundred beds at one time, leaving plenty of depth for coalition personnel if required. But the complaint coalition commanders had with the medical support was not its depth or the national alignment.<sup>69</sup>

What concerned the coalition commanders regarding medical support centered on the matter of medical evacuation, specifically the performance of the 159th Medical Company's air ambulance detachment. Communications problems with medevac helicopters developed, as Major Campbell had predicted. When Corporal Haisman was severely wounded from an accidental discharge of his weapon on 4 May, the evacuation request failed to reach the 159th's detachment in a timely manner and a Marine helicopter had to take him to the nearest hospital. When similar mishaps occurred on other occasions in early May, concern deepened. Apparently, General Garner's subordinates never fully understood the limited communications capability of the medical units, despite Campbell's best efforts to make the CTF's key leaders aware of the situation. Some confusion existed over the placement of the evacuation helicopters—either under a medical unit or an aviation unit. By doctrine air ambulance units were assigned to a medical group or a hospital headquarters, thus the natural alignment with the Air Force ATH designated to support coalition forces. Furthermore U.S. Army medical units with an air ambulance function usually resisted being controlled by tactical aviation units.<sup>70</sup>

Finally, General Garner directed Colonel Whitehead to straighten out the entire issue. Once Whitehead became involved, the problem was corrected, with his headquarters taking over command and control of the air ambulance detachment and ensuring that the necessary communications were established to make the system work. But it took an aviation brigade commander to fix it in the absence of a medical commander. By the end of May the medical situation was considered satisfactory.<sup>71</sup>

## General Powell's Visit

In late May, just six weeks after General Garner and his five staff officers had departed Germany for Turkey, General Powell visited the PROVIDE COMFORT area of operations. It had been a busy six weeks for Garner and his team. Once at Silopi, pending the arrival of other coalition forces, the JTF Bravo commander had relied almost entirely on Colonel Jones' marines to initiate the intervention into Iraq, a country he had never visited and knew little about. Within three fast-moving weeks JTF Bravo had approached the size of a division, eight countries having deployed combat units together with engineer, military police, aviation, medical, civil affairs, and logistical formations.

By the time Powell arrived at the JTF Bravo headquarters for a formal briefing from Garner, his subordinate commanders, and his staff officers on 30 May, coalition forces had repatriated four hundred thousand refugees from the mountains to northern Iraq, either returning them to their homes or temporarily housing them in the transit center at Zakho. The briefing for the JCS chairman highlighted the successful accomplishments of the coalition forces: They had protected the refugees from the elements, from the Iraqis, and from each other; had repaired an airport, roads, buildings, small bridges, and electrical and water systems; had put hospitals and clinics back into operation; and had helped the Kurdish people return to the life that they had known several months earlier. Because transit centers were expensive to build and maintain, the Dahuk mission proved both operationally and fiscally sound, reducing overall coalition costs significantly. The fatalities were tragic, but few in number.<sup>72</sup>

Powell was both impressed and satisfied. With Potter's JTF Alpha units preparing to redeploy, the JCS chairman believed that Garner's JTF Bravo units should follow within several weeks. From his perspective, no coalition member should remain in Iraq or Turkey any longer than necessary; it was time to go home. But there were other considerations.<sup>73</sup>

Not everyone agreed with the JCS chairman's position. Because Saddam Hussein was still in power, the Iraqi Army remained a serious threat. Consequently, the British and French governments maintained that it was unwise to withdraw the coalition forces precipitously and possibly encourage Baghdad to resume its campaign against the Kurds. Until Powell convinced his own civilian leaders to support an early withdrawal, Garner would have to keep most of his forces in northern Iraq.



June and July would be slow months for the coalition forces compared to April and May, but they had to fulfill yet another set of missions related to the transition from military to civilian control. Since the United Nations was to assume responsibility for continuing relief operations in Iraq, the transfer of specific tasks had to be coordinated as closely as possible. Time and patience were necessary for UNHCR personnel to form an effective partnership with the remaining NGOs and to establish a working relationship with Turks, Kurds, and Iraqis. The UNHCR's minor role in PROVIDE COMFORT and its few personnel, with little equipment on the ground, made it imperative for the respective staffs of Generals Shalikashvili, Campbell, and Garner to remain involved for a period of time. After Powell left for Washington, Garner set about to ensure a smooth transition. But he did not forget another task that his JTF Bravo staff had yet to complete. To capture the PROVIDE COMFORT experience, to define its problems, and qualify its success, Garner wanted to have an after action review that included all of his subordinate units.

## After Action Review

On 17 June at his JTF Bravo headquarters in Zakho General Garner held a three-hour meeting with his staff and senior commanders, each of whom had recorded their experiences and observations in an after action report for review and discussion. Colonel Goff led off with his presentation, the operations and staff perspective, and each of the involved brigade or battalion commanders followed. The focus was on the deployment, formation, and interaction within JTF Bravo. The Iraqi Army and the refugees received less attention, although the general consensus was that the Peshmerga had been more of a liability than an asset to the coalition's work in northern Iraq.<sup>74</sup>

At the outset the staff and senior commanders agreed that deployment, medical support, and logistics were the main problem areas. Rather than complain about the chokepoints encountered during the movement to Turkey, they discussed how their units might be better configured for such partial or phased deployments in the future. In this respect, all acknowledged that participating units would need a command element to arrive as soon as possible. But with limited airlift space in the flow of movement, it was unrealistic to assume that any unit could take all of its personnel, equipment, and supplies at one time.

Medical evacuation support was considered inadequate, especially during early May. But with no one present to defend or articulate the medical point of view, the discussion was mainly limited to Colonel Goff's comments. He stated that someone or some unit had to take "positive control" of medevac assets early in a relief operation, had to blend medical units from different services or nations into a unified medical plan, and had to implement a preventive medicine plan for coalition forces—diarrhea had affected just about everyone within the first month of PROVIDE COMFORT.<sup>75</sup>

Although a medical officer did not attend the review, those present had experience with medical units. Every battalion and brigade commander had a medical aid

JTF Bravo senior commanders, *left to right*: Colonel Klop, Colonel Ledesma, General Monticone, General Garner, Brigadier Keeling, Colonel Jones, and Colonel Thomann

station in his unit. Brigadier Keeling's 3 Commando Brigade had a full medical squadron, plus Dutch and Australian medical units attached for his operations. And Colonel Goff, as the J-3, had received and positioned all of the other medical formations under JTF Bravo. Yet the advantage of placing them under a medical group or brigade-level headquarters was never broached. Such headquarters existed within USAREUR, but none was tasked or deployed for PROVIDE COMFORT.

Colonel Winsor captured the consensus view on logistics when he said, "Logistics on this operation was a miracle; it was also my biggest pain in the ass." The participants were suitably impressed that so much material and equipment were moved so far, so quickly, to support so many refugees and so many other services and national groups. But the sheer diversity of the supply sources and the types of units that had to be supported had led to shortages in equipment parts. Several officers remained amazed that the coalition had made the commercial trucking system work. No one commented on the echelon-above-corps units of General Burch's Combined Support Command that supported JTF Bravo combat units serving on the forward edge of the operation.<sup>76</sup>

A key topic was the importance of communications that linked brigade formations together over an area more vast than encountered during conventional-type operations. The TACSAT system—simple, reliable, with extended range, and the ability to mate easily with the American military telephone (AUTOVON or DSN) system—had been a new and valuable experience for most of the units. Colonel German's signal personnel had installed a TACSAT system in every brigade and

some battalions working in the JTF Bravo sector. This system allowed them to talk to each other within and beyond Turkey and Iraq via the AUTOVON/DSN linkage. Like the laptop computers that had begun to proliferate in some field headquarters, TACSAT was beginning to be considered an essential military tool.<sup>77</sup>

Command and control was one of the most interesting topics discussed. It was common knowledge to the career military personnel present that *command* meant an experienced and respected commander and that *control* meant the functional staff sections capable of planning, coordinating, and otherwise implementing the commander's guidance. They also knew that command and control required adequate communications that could link the commander and staff to subordinate, lateral, and higher units or headquarters.

All agreed strongly that, when possible, homogeneous staffs should be deployed. If task organizations—single service, joint, or multinational—had to be formed, they could adjust better if assembled around a cohesive staff with an established commander. No one made an argument for either a joint or multinational staff for its own sake, undoubtedly because of the inherent complications and lack of cohesion. In fact, JTF Bravo lacked such a staff.

The participating infantry brigades and separate battalions each had a single-service staff that functioned as such throughout the operation. Specifically, the two brigade-level headquarters, the 24th MEU and the 3 Commando Brigade, routinely controlled other coalition battalions with their own staff officers. Colonel Jones' staff consisted of only U.S. Marines and General Keeling's of Royal Marines; Colonel Delk's and Colonel Whitehead's, of U.S. Army personnel. Only Colonel Winsor's engineer brigade had both joint and multinational components, but the all-Army staff that he brought from Germany was never altered. Even Garner's JTF Bravo staff, essentially the MEU staff for two weeks, became virtually an all-Army organization once replacements for most of his staff section chiefs arrived from Germany. He did, however, retain Marine Maj. Richard J. Raftery as his J-2 because, in the JTF Bravo commander's words, "he was just so damn good."<sup>78</sup>

The coalition participants agreed that experienced and quality liaison officers were essential when other service or national formations were merged into a brigade-level task force, but they did not make an argument for mixing the primary staff positions for the sake of mere representation. No one wanted to reduce the homogeneity essential for staff cohesion.

Had the discussion reached beyond JTF Bravo, the participants might have pointed out that the other PROVIDE COMFORT formations also had single-service, single-national staffs. When General Jamerson deployed to Turkey in early April, it appeared that the U.S. Air Force would be the key player in the operation and his primary staff was mostly Air Force officers. When the task force became multinational, a few coalition officers were added to create the CTF staff. Only one primary staff position was held by a non-American, a British colonel, and he had a strong American deputy, also a full colonel. The other coalition officers serving on General Shalikashvili's staff were defined as assistants or deputies, but in reality they were actually excess to the original staff and their functional contribution was often liaison.<sup>79</sup>

General Campbell's Civil Affairs Command had an all-Army staff, and General Hobson's AFFOR headquarters had an all-Air Force staff. General Burch's Combined Support Command was mainly staffed with U.S. Army officers. Most of the national contingent staffs at Incirlik were also single-service organizations.

General Potter's JTF Alpha staff, formed with his SOCEUR personnel, appeared to be the only truly joint staff to participate on the operation. But a closer look showed that it was more Army green than joint. Each staff section chief was an Army officer, except the J-5 (Plans) who was an Air Force officer. Even though some staff section personnel were from the other services and the JTF Alpha deputy, executive officer, and chief of staff were Air Force or Navy officers, the common denominator was the Army Special Forces background of the commander and the majority of his primary staff officers.

Of all the commanders and staffs participating on PROVIDE COMFORT, only the Civil Affairs Command focused exclusively on humanitarian assistance. Yet General Campbell was the only major commander who did not command his subordinate units in the field. Instead CA units were attached to General Potter or General Garner and integrated within the respective JTF Alpha or JTF Bravo formations. They made important contributions on PROVIDE COMFORT, coordinating with civilian relief agencies, local governments, and the refugees themselves.

Some may assume that the CA units, because of their primary mission and training, were best qualified to support humanitarian operations. Yet the work undertaken by Colonel Tangney and his soldiers in the JTF Alpha sector must be viewed as compelling evidence to the contrary. Accordingly, the 10th Special Forces Group was the ideal unit for the humanitarian assistance mission in the mountain camps; the less agile and robust CA units could only support the Special Forces companies in that environment, not take on the task by themselves alone. In contrast, because of the more conventional nature of General Garner's organization, the greater infrastructure that supported it, and the more structured operational environment in northern Iraq, the participation of CA units within the JTF Bravo sector was more effective.

General Garner later expressed some concern that the chain of command from him through Generals Shalikashvili, McCarthy and Galvin to General Powell was too slow for fast-moving operations in the field. Each of the commanders had to think over a key decision for a day or two and then put his own spin on it before passing it on. Citing this situation as the reason why the Dahuk operation was delayed when the Iraqis withdrew in early May, Garner argued that Shalikashvili ought to have had a direct link to Powell to expedite the decision-making process. However, Powell and Galvin disagreed, and Shalikashvili sided with them. All three were uncomfortable with any recommendation to bypass the existing chain of command, a practice that if once begun could all too easily corrupt the overall management of such complex efforts.<sup>80</sup>

Several officers suggested that if they were going to undertake humanitarian assistance operations in the future, they needed to develop doctrine in the form of supporting publications. Yet the issue was not addressed during the after action review session. Strong commanders, supported by cohesive staffs with adequate com-

munications, could effectively and quickly adapt their assigned and attached units to new missions. Command and control was the dominant factor. The lack of such capacity was apparent in the organizations fielded by the United Nations and the NGOs, and that deficiency would complicate the impending transition of the relief effort from military to civilian control. And until the transition was accomplished, the coalition would have to remain in Iraq longer than General Powell or other military leaders wanted.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.; Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Alpha, 25 May 91.

<sup>3</sup>Interv, author with Frederick C. Cuny, 23 Jun 91; Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>4</sup>Cuny, Garner, Winsor Intervs, 23 Jun, 26 Jun, 10 Jun 91.

<sup>5</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, CAC, 7 Jun 91; Cuny, Garner Intervs, 23 Jun, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>6</sup>Izumi Nakamitsu, "Working With [the] Military in Relief Operations: Lessons Learned From Operation PROVIDE COMFORT and Future Perspectives," pp. 5–6; Intervs, author with Izumi Nakamitsu, 29 Jun 91, 2 Jul 92; Carroll Interv, 8 Jul 91.

<sup>7</sup>Nakamitsu, "Working in Relief Operations," pp. 5–6; Potter, Cuny, Garner Intervs, 13 Jul, 23 Jun, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>8</sup>Comdr's Comments, 10th SFG(A), 27 Apr, 11 May 91; JTF Bravo Briefing Slides, n.d.

<sup>9</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, OofSurg, EUCOM, n.d., and JTF Alpha, 25 May 91.

<sup>10</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, OofSurg, EUCOM, n.d., JTF Alpha, 25 May 91, and JTF Bravo, n.d.; Goff Interv, 24 Jun 91.

<sup>11</sup>Ferguson, "JTF-A Logistical Operations," pp. 34–36.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 17–18.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.; Winsor and Austin, "Engineer Role," p. 6; Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.

<sup>14</sup>Winsor and Austin, "Engineer Role," p. 6; Winsor, Garner, Glass Intervs, 10 Jun, 26 Jun, 30 Jun 91; AAR, Opn PC, NMCB 133, 29 Aug 91, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup>Garcia Interv, 16 Jun 91.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>AAR, Opn PC, CEEUD-TU, 30 Apr 91, p. 2, in Engineering Assessments, Fisher files, USA Engr Div, Transatlantic, Winchester, Va., copy in Rudd PC Collection, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.; Potter, Garner, Winsor Intervs, 13 Jul, 26 Jun, 10 Jun 91.

<sup>18</sup>Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>19</sup>Corwin Interv, 13 Jun 91.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.; Garner, Jones Intervs, 26 Jun, 25 Jun 91; Garner's words as quoted in Ltr, Lt Col John P. Abizaid, Comdr, 3d Bn, 325th Inf, to author, 21 Apr 92.

<sup>21</sup>Shalikhshvili, Garner Intervs, 29 Jun, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>22</sup>Garner and Naab Intervs, 26 Jun 91 and 20 Jun 91, 29 Jun 92.

<sup>23</sup>Naab Intervs, 20 Jun 91, 29 Jun 92.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Garner, Shalikhshvili and Galvin, Powell Intervs, 26 Jun, 29 Jun 91 and 20 Aug, 3 Sep 92.

<sup>26</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 8–9 May 91, containing the crucial part of the Nashwan note; Naab and Garner Intervs, 20 Jun 91, 29 Jun 92 and 26 Jun 91.

<sup>27</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 8–9 May 91; Naab Intervs, 20 Jun 91, 29 Jun 92.

<sup>28</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 8–9 May 91; Naab Intervs, 20 Jun 91, 29 Jun 92; Garner, Shalikashvili and Galvin, Powell Intervs, 26 Jun, 29 Jun 91 and 20 Aug, 3 Sep 92.

<sup>29</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 15 and 18–19 May 91; Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>30</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 20 and 24–25 May 91; Delk and Garner, Corwin Intervs, 7 Jul 92 and 26 Jun, 13 Jun 91; Lewis Telecon, 17 Jul 93.

<sup>31</sup>Garner, Jones, Corwin Intervs, 26 Jun, 25 Jun, 13 Jun 91.

<sup>32</sup>Garner, Jones, Corwin Intervs, 26 Jun, 25 Jun, 13 Jun 91.

<sup>33</sup>Garner and Whitehead Intervs, 26 Jun 91 and 18 Jun 91, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>34</sup>Garner and Whitehead Intervs, 26 Jun 91 and 18 Jun 91, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>35</sup>Whitehead Intervs, 18 Jun 91, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>36</sup>Garner Intervs, 15 Jan, 7 Jun 92.

<sup>37</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 20 May 91 (quoted words); Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>38</sup>Winsor and Austin, “Engineer Role,” pp. 6–7; Garner, Winsor Intervs, 26 Jun, 10 Jun 91.

<sup>39</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, OofSurg, EUCOM, n.d.; Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>40</sup>AAR, Opn PC, OofSurg, CTF PC, n.d., pp. 1–6; Garner Intervs, 26 Jun 91 and 15 Jan 92; Briefing Slides, Opn PC, OofSurg, EUCOM, n.d.

<sup>41</sup>Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.; Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.

<sup>43</sup>Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91; Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.

<sup>44</sup>Garner, Cuny, Potter Intervs, 26 Jun, 23 Jun, 13 Jul 91.

<sup>45</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.; Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>46</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.; Delk and Cuny, Garner Intervs, 7 Jul 92 and 23 Jun, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>47</sup>Potter, Tangney Intervs, 13 Jul, 5 Aug 91.

<sup>48</sup>Abizaïd Ltr, 21 Apr 92.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.; Garner, Thomann Intervs, 26 Jun, 27 Jun 91.

<sup>53</sup>Garner, Winsor Intervs, 26 Jun, 10 Jun 91.

<sup>54</sup>Thomann Interv, 27 Jun 91.

<sup>55</sup>Statements from Spcs Mark A. Potter and Adam M. Catazon, both 5 Dec 91, and SSgt Vernon McClure, undated; Abizaïd Ltr, 21 Apr 92. On 29 May 1991 Colonel Winsor’s S–3, Lt. Col. Edward Postell, conducted an Article 15 investigation on the circumstances leading to Private Chew’s death.

<sup>56</sup>Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., plus 15 Jan, 7 Jun 92.

<sup>58</sup>Op Sum, Opn PC, 3–325 ABCT, 13 May 91, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup>Ltr, 1st Lt Michael J. Williams, S–5, 3d Bn, 325th Inf, to author, 21 Apr 92.

<sup>60</sup>Garner and Naab Intervs, 26 Jun 91 and 20 Jun 91, 29 Jun 92.

<sup>61</sup>Garner and Naab Intervs, 26 Jun 91 and 20 Jun 91, 29 Jun 92.

<sup>62</sup>On the CTF fatalities, see “History of CTF PC,” vol. 2, app. 13, USAFE HO files, Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

<sup>63</sup>Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>64</sup>For example, Colonel Winsor’s engineer headquarters had the usual S–1, S–2, S–3, S–4 staff officers and sections.

<sup>65</sup>AAR, Opn PC, OofSurg, CTF PC, n.d., pp. 1–4; Campbell Interv, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>66</sup>Garner, Goff, Campbell Intervs, 26 Jun, 24 Jun, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>67</sup>AAR, Opn PC, OofSurg, CTF PC, n.d., pp. 1–4; Garner, Goff, Campbell Intervs, 26 Jun, 24 Jun, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>68</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, OofSurg, EUCOM, n.d.; Keeling, Goff Intervs, 16 Jun, 24 Jun 91.

<sup>69</sup>Goff, Garner Intervs, 24 Jun, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>70</sup>AAR, Opn PC, OofSurg, CTF PC, n.d., pp. 1–5; Campbell Interv, 14 Jul 91.

<sup>71</sup>Garner and Whitehead Intervs, 26 Jun 91 and 18 Jun 91, 14 Jul 92; AAR Review (taped), JTF Bravo, 17 Jun 91.

<sup>72</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.

<sup>73</sup>Powell Interv, 3 Sep 92.

<sup>74</sup>Goff Interv, 24 Jun 91. Although Colonel Goff recommended the report format favored by the U.S. Army, known as the Joint Universal Lessons Learned System, or JULLS, only the Army officers complied.

<sup>75</sup>AAR Review (taped), JTF Bravo, 17 Jun 91.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Garner Intervs, 26 Jun 91 (quoted words) and 15 Jan, 7 Jun 92.

<sup>79</sup>On the CTF key personnel, see “History of CTF PC,” vol. 2, app. 3, USAFE HO files.

<sup>80</sup>Garner, Shalikashvili and Galvin, Powell Intervs, 26 Jun, 29 Jun 91 and 20 Aug, 3 Sep 92.

## *A Period of Transition*

*The NGOs are the ticket home.*

—Maj. Gen. Jay M. Garner

With the refugees safely resettled in northern Iraq, General Shalikashvili's next objective was to extract the coalition forces. He knew that the relief operations would continue, but they did not have to be conducted by military forces once the situation stabilized. The Iraqi Army had exercised restraint in dealing with the repatriated Kurds during the intervention and expansion phase. If some form of deterrence could be maintained from Turkey, then a withdrawal of the ground formations was feasible without endangering the Kurds. The first step was to hand over control of the relief effort to the UNHCR and the NGOs. That step was easier to begin than to complete.

### Changing of the Guard

On 27 April, the same day the first refugees arrived at Zakho, UNHCR personnel established a presence at Transit Center 1. It would take several weeks for the UNHCR to get organized, and even longer to gain broad credibility with the NGOs and the refugees. In spite of underlying problems, the transfer of control proceeded apace. During a ceremony on 13 May the center passed from military to civilian control, marked by the raising of the UN flag. As the United Nations secretary-general's special representative to the region Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan reported two days later, "I am pleased to announce that on 13th May overall responsibility for the transit centre in Zakho was accepted by [the] UNHCR." On the thirtieth General Garner briefed General Powell on the transfer of control, listing it as one of JTF Bravo's many accomplishments.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, not all parties had reacted favorably to the flag-raising gesture on 13 May. Within minutes after the ceremony and the departure of the UN party, an angry crowd of Kurds tore down the flag and demonstrated against the planned withdrawal of the coalition forces. The affair ended in a riot at the Zakho police station, which had to be quelled by Colonel Delk's military police.<sup>2</sup> The beginning of the transition to UNHCR authority was hardly auspicious.





Raising the UN flag at Zakho  
in May

Two issues were crucial to the transfer of control: continued security in northern Iraq, and the UNHCR's ability to coordinate relief operations through the NGOs. The United States government officially requested that the United Nations provide peacekeeping forces as replacements, but UN leaders in New York refused on the principle that the request had to come from the sovereign government of the country in which the forces would be located. Since Baghdad had not made any such request, UN troops would not be sent to the JTF Bravo security zone. But diplomatic efforts with UN officials were subsequently productive, and the Iraqi government reluctantly approved the use of five hundred UN security police to guard the UNHCR and NGO facilities and personnel. This multinational contingent, however, required time to fund, raise, and deploy. On 20 May a few UN police

arrived in the security zone; by 7 June sixty were present but over a month later, 17 July, only two hundred seventy-one.<sup>3</sup>

The United Nations also had difficulty forming a control element to take over the relief operations. The UNHCR's deputy chief, Douglas Stafford, in an address before the National Defence College of Canada on 28 May, told his audience: "There are currently 21,500 [soldiers] from 11 countries [on PROVIDE COMFORT]. Let me remind you that UNHCR's total staff numbers roughly 2,000 persons worldwide."<sup>4</sup>

*Staff* was the correct word to describe the UNHCR personnel sent to Iraq. They were mainly staff officers literally drafted from within the UNHCR headquarters in Geneva. According to Susan Carroll, most of them were volunteers who had to be evaluated to determine if they could adapt to field conditions. The UNHCR also hired others from private relief agencies in Europe and local civilians in Turkey and Iraq, hardly a cohesive group to provide operational guidance to the NGOs. Moreover, it lacked any kind of command-and-control component, as well as the complementary field communications equipment that could provide the coordination and support needed. By June the UNHCR's personnel strength for operating its field stations in the security zone, along the Iranian border, and in Baghdad was hardly impressive: a total of one hundred sixty-nine personnel, including seventy-two from other relief agencies and thir-

ty-two from Iraqi sources, all supported by about thirty vehicles and limited communications equipment.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast to the military coalition that had leaders deploy with their units, the UNHCR leadership on PROVIDE COMFORT emerged as part of an evolving process. Described by Colonel Getty as “arrogant and inept,” the first UNHCR representative to General Potter’s formation did not adapt well and was replaced. Subsequent representatives remained on the operation for only short periods. The turnover rate did not impress the military commanders. Getty, for one, was highly critical, finding some UNHCR personnel unprepared for their tasks yet full of their own self-importance.<sup>6</sup>

Yet within this group the record of two capable individuals—John R. Telford and Ericka Joergensen—was noteworthy. In February 1991 Telford, an Irishman and desk officer at the UNHCR headquarters, was asked to go to Jordan in anticipation of a major exodus of refugees through the region. When the crisis developed along the Turkish-Iraqi border, he was sent to Turkey on 10 April. Although senior in experience and rank to the UN representative assigned to General Potter’s headquarters, Telford was one of the first UN officers to enter the mountain camps. Through most of April he worked with the Special Forces soldiers and subsequently followed the refugee repatriation effort. His performance in the mountains, especially his ability to work with the military forces, impressed his UN superiors. As a result, Telford was put in charge of the UNHCR field station at Zakho and later the larger office at Dahuk, around which time he assumed responsibility for all UNHCR operations in northern Iraq. Telford and his boss, who worked in Baghdad, were the only full-time UNHCR officials in Iraq.<sup>7</sup>

When Telford went to Dahuk, he selected Joergensen as his replacement at Zakho. Joergensen, with prior experience as a consultant on relief operations for the Danish Refugee Council, had received a temporary UN contract when the UNHCR required augmentation in Turkey and Iraq. Like Telford, she worked well with the coalition forces and attended some of General Garner’s command and staff meetings, at which the JTF Bravo commander made sure that she was acknowledged and given a prominent seat.<sup>8</sup>

Telford and Joergensen were General Garner’s main contacts with the United Nations during June and July. Both were well liked by coalition officers and demonstrated an ability to work with a wide variety of personalities and organizations. Neither exhibited a prior knowledge of military operations or organizations. Both were tenacious and dedicated leaders, even though their assignments prior to PROVIDE COMFORT were not leadership positions. They advanced over other UN personnel based on their ability to adapt to the operational environment. They did not form or control large organizations. Their greater contribution was working with the NGOs.

Coalition political and military leaders wanted the UNHCR to become the control element for the NGOs, which in turn would carry on the relief effort in northern Iraq. Some NGOs had preceded the coalition forces into the mountain camps; others followed them into Iraq. In May thirty NGO groups, with a per-



Julia Taft with Kurdish refugees

sonnel strength of 130, were in the JTF Bravo security zone; by June only twelve groups remained. Despite their limited resources, most made valuable contributions. Coming from different countries and having different agendas, the eclectic NGOs owed little allegiance to the UNHCR and had no intention of subordinating their work to the dictates of any larger organization.<sup>9</sup>

With a few exceptions, most NGOs were focused on medical and health problems. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) had two employees whose specialties were in water and sanitation. Under a formal contact with the UNHCR, CARE International sent eighteen personnel to distribute food provided by the World Food Programme and other agencies. General Garner soon realized that the “NGOs are the ticket home” as soon as they achieved the proficiency to assume the relief effort. To assist, IRC board member Julia V. Taft, who later became president of InterAction, an umbrella organization for American NGOs, flew to Incirlik Air Base and then went to JTF Bravo headquarters in northern Iraq. General Shalikashvili came to Zakho, and he and Garner spent an evening with Taft discussing how to enhance the role of the NGOs in PROVIDE COMFORT.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, as the refugees at Zakho were voicing their objections to the proposed withdrawal of the coalition forces, efforts were under way on the draft-

ing of a transition plan. At the direction of Ambassador Abramowitz but without EUCOM's knowledge or approval, Fred Cuny, having completed his work on the design and layout of the transit centers, developed and wrote a draft transition plan. He initially projected that the transfer of the relief effort to the United Nations be accomplished by mid-June, a schedule approved in principle by Generals Shalikashvili and Galvin at the end of May. But the plan quickly encountered some resistance from the UNHCR representatives at Incirlik, who felt that they had been left out of its development and feared that it would be imposed on them without their input. Nakamitsu, speaking as the UN's liaison officer, was adamant on the last point.<sup>11</sup>

To bring some unity to the coalition, UN, and NGO efforts, General Campbell convened a meeting at Diyarbakir on 28 May to negotiate the transition. The UNHCR representatives again criticized Cuny's plan, stating that the United Nations would be unable to assume control by mid-June. The NGO representatives offered to cooperate with the UNHCR, but they voiced strong reservations about their security in northern Iraq after the coalition forces withdrew. In particular, they expressed little confidence in the few UN police that were already in the JTF Bravo sector. Their concern would soon prove justified; at Dahuk the UN police, rather than intervene in a Kurdish-Iraqi incident that involved limited gunfire, fled the scene—allegedly leaving their weapons behind—and took refuge in the hotel occupied by Garner's forces. Sensitive to security concerns, Campbell and the other coalition officers tried to assure the NGO representatives that the early withdrawal did not mean that they would be unable to provide security from Turkey.<sup>12</sup>

On the matter of effective management, Colonel Goff suggested that Campbell's Civil Affairs Command could provide the necessary command and control to link the UNHCR and the NGOs into a workable organization for carrying on the relief effort. The subsequent assistance of the CAC staff was pivotal. On 7 June the UNHCR and NGOs assumed responsibility for relief operations in northern Iraq. The same day General Potter's JTF Alpha forces began to redeploy. The twenty-three officers and soldiers from the 432d Civil Affairs Company under Potter's control rejoined the rest of their unit in the JTF Bravo sector. Potter also released the PSYOP company to JTF Bravo. But General Garner had no intention of enlarging his force. By mid-June he had begun a slow withdrawal from the security zone.<sup>13</sup>

The withdrawal from Iraq had both supporters and nonsupporters. The American commanders, from General Garner to General Powell, were convinced that all coalition forces in the JTF Bravo sector could be withdrawn before the end of June. However, some coalition political leaders disagreed. It was difficult to predict how the Iraqis would respond to a withdrawal, and no one wanted to see the Kurds chased into the mountains again. Remaining longer seemed preferable to pulling out. Meeting with the American civilian leadership soon after his return from the region, a confident JCS chairman stated that it was safe to withdraw the military forces. Eventually, Powell arranged a compromise for a phased withdrawal to be completed by mid-July.<sup>14</sup>

## Coalition Morale and Training

General Garner's coalition forces had been extremely active during the first six weeks in northern Iraq, with the mission requirements of April and May occupying them fully. Everyone seemed able to associate their particular tasks with saving lives. But by mid-June, with the urgency of the crisis diminished and most of the refugees repatriated, the operational tempo had decreased significantly. At first the reduced pace was a relief, but ground commanders knew that limited activity could be counterproductive for well-trained forces.

During this period of transition living conditions took a toll on the soldiers. The daily diet was bland; the delivery of mail was slow, as it had been in DESERT STORM; and the weather, a dry intense summer heat, was well above a hundred degrees during the day and almost as hot at night. Soldiers looked for any location that offered the slightest breeze. Those in protected rear areas often slept on the roofs of the flat-topped Iraqi buildings. The muddy roads of the spring months gave way to never-ending dust in June and July, and the extraordinary swarms of flies by day and mosquitoes at night led to illnesses.

To assuage some of these conditions, mess halls were set up throughout the security zone to provide hot food as an alternative to the field rations that the soldiers had been issued since the beginning of PROVIDE COMFORT. The Army's new T-rations, a type of TV dinner, attracted some attention in May, but by June most soldiers had lost interest in them, citing their unpleasant aftertaste.<sup>15</sup>

Lack of a thoughtful preventive medicine program at the beginning of the operation, combined with the long days in the field, led to widespread diarrhea and dehydration, occasionally dysentery or related problems, among the troops. The three-holer latrines that Colonel Winsor's engineers had built for the coalition forces saw increased use. Intestinal ailments became the major health problem treated by coalition medical personnel during PROVIDE COMFORT.<sup>16</sup>

Efforts to speed up mail delivery were not successful. Soldiers could not understand why it took four or five weeks for letters to go from Turkey to Europe or from Europe to Turkey; neither could their officers. Finally, another communications alternative became available. Once the TACSAT system was installed, the soldiers were allowed to make "morale calls" when the communications lines were not in use for official business.<sup>17</sup>

Conditions had been as bad or worse for those who had participated in DESERT STORM. General Garner noted that the morale of his soldiers remained high, despite the primitive conditions of northern Iraq and eastern Turkey. He later attributed this to the fact that most of them had missed the Gulf War and were grateful for the opportunity to participate in PROVIDE COMFORT. When the activity decreased during the summer months, they naturally wanted to go home. But Garner's tasks were not complete. He had to sustain the operational transition to the UNHCR and NGOs while contending with Kurdish concerns over the coalition's departure. Although incidents with the Iraqi Army declined and tensions eased along the southern perimeter of the security zone, the situation elsewhere was more problematic, especially along the Turkish border where the militant PKK operated.<sup>18</sup>

With a month left in Iraq, Garner began to fine-tune tasks that still concerned him. Several firefights between Turkish soldiers and PKK guerrillas, which occurred on 17 June and 6 July near Silopi, caused some alarm. So did an FBI warning that Baghdad was issuing false Kurdish identification papers to Iraqi soldiers who might attempt to infiltrate the security zone. In response, Garner directed Colonel Delk's MPs to conduct a counterterrorist, or force protection, evaluation of each installation and unit headquarters under JTF Bravo control; Colonel Winsor's engineers to improve the facilities supporting the forces in the security zone; and Colonel Whitehead's aviators to maintain a visible presence throughout the area while monitoring both Iraqi and Peshmerga positions nearby. Service personnel continued their support missions but remained on guard.<sup>19</sup>



Soldiers' humor

The infantry battalions maintained their defensive positions, but the static nature of their mission left them underemployed. The battalion commanders did not wait for another task. They soon began an aggressive training program. As Colonel Abizaid wrote in a report to his superiors in Italy:

The Battalion will be well trained at the completion of our duties here. I would currently rate us as trained in the tasks to defend, relief in place, movement to contact, air assault, MOUT [military operations in urban terrain] offensive operations (we have cleared numerous villages house to house), and MOUT defensive operations. As long as we remain the primary security force facing the Iraqis, the training value of the deployment will be immense. . . . [But] once we reach the final limit of the coalition zone and fall into routine security operations our efficiency will inevitably decline.<sup>20</sup>

But rather than watch their units deteriorate or await another mission, Abizaid and other coalition commanders began a series of training efforts that soon encompassed almost the entire command. For example, at the end of May and in early June Abizaid established and then expanded a firing range to maintain his unit's weapons proficiency and to handle all of its light, medium, and heavy antitank weapons. His companies also conducted live fire drills daily.<sup>21</sup>

With many of the coalition units airborne qualified, airborne exercises became popular. To meet safety regulations, Abizaid surveyed near Zakho a parachute drop zone that was unofficially named "Saddam DZ." On 1 June his paratroopers



Saddam DZ

made a jump at the new site. The practice quickly spread to the other airborne formations. During the first half of June the coalition's American, Spanish, French, Italian, British, and Dutch paratroopers conducted nine drops on the Saddam DZ.<sup>22</sup>

To sustain interoperability with his coalition forces, General Garner had the marine and airborne infantry formations exchange platoons and companies to conduct multinational training. They eagerly participated in the exchanges. The only unit reporting a training deficiency was the 6th Squadron, 6th Cavalry; although recording more flight hours (both day and night) than would be performed in Germany, no practice firing of the AH-64 HELLFIRE missiles was permitted in either Turkey or Iraq. But the JTF Bravo commander continued to stress the importance of training any time the operational tempo allowed, convinced that the exercises were compatible with each unit's wartime tasks. Given the persistent unrest within the region, no one knew when his unit might be called upon to deploy to some adjacent area for a new mission.<sup>23</sup>

One prominent group of soldiers conducted little or no training within the JTF Bravo sector. During the military intervention and expansion, the Peshmerga had been a matter of great concern. On several occasions they instigated confrontations that almost led to firefights between coalition forces and the Iraqis. Fighting between different Kurdish factions and their unpredictable intentions kept coalition units alert throughout the security zone.

When the situation stabilized and it became more obvious that the coalition intended to avoid a fight with the Iraqis, the Peshmerga scaled back their activities. Coalition intelligence officers, nevertheless, continued to maintain contact with them to monitor their movements and try to keep them out of mischief. As a result, they observed that the armed Kurds did not use their time to conduct individual or unit training. Colonel Abizaid's intelligence officer reported that they spent much of each day drinking tea and talking; General Garner's J-2, Major Raftery, who had seen them fire their weapons earlier in the operation, noted that



Peshmerga on patrol

they lacked basic marksmanship skills because few seemed capable of effectively engaging a target beyond a hundred meters. But the Peshmerga made no effort to correct such shortcomings during June and July, despite the fact that the coalition soldiers were openly training and firing daily.<sup>24</sup>

Given the coalition's lack of comfort with the Peshmerga, one might think that they intentionally refrained from training in the security zone. But that was not the impression of those observing them. Despite their martial nature, they did not exhibit the professionalism of the coalition soldiers who gained proficiency through training. What proficiency the armed Kurds had seemed to come more through the nature of their conflict rather than from professional training. The Special Forces soldiers might have found that natural. The conventional soldiers in JTF Bravo did not and thought little of the Peshmerga as potential allies.

For these and other reasons General Garner continued to discourage a relationship with the Peshmerga other than through each unit's commander or intelligence officer. When the armed Kurds established checkpoints to monitor the movement of refugees as well as the activities of other Kurds and the Iraqis, the coalition forces monitored the checkpoints but did not assist. When they became involved with internal disputes, they observed but generally did not try to interfere or mediate. Direct talks with the Peshmerga, however, were inevitable.



## Kurdish Reservations

With the operational tempo in the JTF Bravo sector slowing down, the Kurds were naturally concerned about the coalition's departure. On 2 June their representatives in Dahuk sent a written message to General Shalikashvili, asking that the coalition forces remain in northern Iraq to protect them from the Iraqi Army. Two days later, in the French sector, fifty Kurdish tribal chiefs and one hundred Peshmerga met with Colonel Thomann, stating their concern over the coalition's planned withdrawal, and demanded a meeting with General Garner. As the coalition prepared to leave, Garner and Shalikashvili conducted several meetings with the PUK and KDP representatives and leaders.<sup>25</sup>

The JTF Bravo commander, needing a more specific grasp for how the Kurds felt about the withdrawal and wanting to prepare them for it, agreed to discuss the issues but not to negotiate. On 17 June General Garner, accompanied by Colonel Jones, went to a house in Al Amadiyah in Brigadier Keeling's sector, where he met with the PUK and KDP representatives. Hussein Sinjari, representing Jalal Talabani's PUK, was talkative and well educated; Hussein Mirania, representing Massoud Barzani's KDP, was more stoic. Both spoke English and were well traveled, with Mirania supposedly owning a car dealership in Nashville (Tennessee).<sup>26</sup>

Garner opened by stating that he was there only to offer advice and that General Shalikashvili would meet with them soon for more formal discussions. When Sinjari and Mirania expressed their appreciation of everything the coalition forces had done and their wish for them to remain, Garner politely but firmly interrupted to emphasize that the coalition was going to leave. He suggested that they should accept the departure and that the Kurds currently had world opinion on their side.

Colonel Jones seconded General Garner's points, adding that the coalition forces were not abandoning the Kurds and would still be operational in Turkey and elsewhere. He also emphasized the great value of having the media and world opinion on their side. Sinjari and Mirania then raised the issue of the coalition extending the security zone to include more territory inhabited by the Kurds. Garner responded that the purpose of creating a safe area for repatriating the refugees had been achieved and that the coalition countries were not prepared to extend the security zone any farther. Nevertheless, the coalition-imposed no-fly zone for Iraqi aircraft above the 36th parallel would be retained for some time. When the meeting was concluded, all parties remained cordial and friendly. Garner believed that at the least he had set the tone for the meeting with General Shalikashvili and that he had a better feel for the personalities of the Kurdish representatives.<sup>27</sup>

Two days later, 19 June, Shalikashvili, Garner, and Jones met with Sinjari and Mirania at a modern hotel near Al Amadiyah. Shalikashvili was unpretentious and low-key, shrewdly posing questions and making few statements. He asked Sinjari and Mirania if their leaders were conducting negotiations with the Iraqi government. There had been some overtures, they responded, but the results were not positive. Shalikashvili restated that the coalition's mission of assisting the refugees in the mountains and returning them to Iraq had been accomplished and that it was time for the coalition forces to leave. The Kurdish representatives again voiced



Reaching out to the Kurdish leaders, *left to right*: Jones, Talabani, Garner, and Barzani

their distrust of Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi government, still regarding them as a serious threat. The American general acknowledged their concern but told them that their leaders would have to reach an accommodation with the Baghdad regime. The meeting, which lasted several hours, achieved little, bringing forth no agreements or strong arguments. Shalickashvili and Garner were disappointed by the results, believing that the Kurds had sensed some dissension among the coalition political leaders and that they might try to play off the United States against the other national governments by conducting a separate dialogue. At the time Garner suspected that the British and Dutch political leaders were not ready to recall their forces from Iraq, an opinion later endorsed by General Powell.<sup>28</sup>

Shortly thereafter Shalickashvili decided that it was necessary to speak directly with the senior Kurdish leaders, Barzani and Talabani. He told Garner to find them and set up a meeting. Working with a Kurdish contact near Zakho, Garner was able to locate the two leaders in the extreme northeast portion of Iraq. With Colonel Jones, he helicoptered to the remote area and met both of them, explaining the CTF commander's interest in developing a dialogue with them. They agreed to a future meeting, to be held within the security zone.

On 3 July Generals Shalickashvili and Garner again went to Al Amadiyah, where the CTF commander met with Barzani and Talabani for the first time. As before, the discussion focused on the coalition's withdrawal and future security provisions. The coalition generals reinforced the same points. A few days later Garner again met with both Kurdish leaders, and on two additional occasions with just Talabani. Each time the coalition's intention of withdrawing from Iraq was reaffirmed. Meanwhile the coalition forces had started their preparations to return home.<sup>29</sup>

## The Final Days

During the last two weeks of June and the first two of July, the coalition forces slowly redeployed from northern Iraq, with the infantry and military police units leaving last. The withdrawal began on 15 June, with the troops pulling out of Dahuk. Most of the service support positioned forward at Zakho and Sirsenk moved back to Silopi. The aviation units did the same, creating an enormous multinational rotary-wing airfield there. The engineers completed their tasks and left Iraq. The medical units working in the security zone withdrew, with the 39th ATH continuing to provide medical coverage for the coalition from Silopi.<sup>30</sup>

Many units flew from Sirsenk straight to Incirlik Air Base. Others struggled through Turkish customs at the border, from where the troops traveled by bus and their equipment and vehicles by Turkish commercial trucks or by convoy to the base. Incirlik surged with tent cities and vehicle parks as units waited their turn for aircraft to take them home. Some units, such as the 24th MEU and the Navy Seabees, went on to the port of Iskenderun and departed Turkey by sea.<sup>31</sup>

For political reasons, the American, British, Dutch, Italian, and Spanish contingents kept a component of their forces in Iraq through the first half of July. It was important to retain the coalition flavor of the operation during the last stage of withdrawal. The platoon and company exchanges that General Garner had promoted between the coalition units in early June greatly eased the process. Brigades and battalions were reduced to skeleton staffs, with only one or two line companies under their control in Iraq while the remaining elements reformed at Silopi.<sup>32</sup>

The UNHCR and NGOs relieved the CA units in June, allowing them to redeploy. As the refugees left the transit centers and went home, in better condition than they had been a month before, many medical NGOs also departed. In the meantime other NGOs, with specialists in food distribution, water systems, and sanitation, arrived as replacements. The coalition continued to assist with the movement of food and supplies to Iraq through Silopi, where the NGOs created large open warehouse sites for temporary storage. From there, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) joined CARE to help with the distribution of food. Although the UNHCR and the NGOs did not restrict their work to the security zone, they used it as a base from which to project food and supplies to other areas in northern Iraq.<sup>33</sup>

Cuny and his DART colleagues took an interest in rejuvenating the Kurdish economy. The large wheat crop that the Kurds had planted in the fall was ready for harvesting. Cuny realized its potential. The grain was a source of food and revenue for the Kurds, who would need to revive their economy after their dislocation and resettlement. It also was a useful bargaining chip for any future dealings with the Iraqi government, given the effect of DESERT STORM and the embargo.<sup>34</sup>

Unfortunately, war and vandalism had destroyed or damaged most of the harvesting machines in northern Iraq. Cuny convinced General Garner of the importance of obtaining some farming combines. They considered outside sources but approached the Iraqi government first. Complex negotiations through MCC and Iraqi channels ensued. Emphasizing that the Kurds needed to harvest the grain in



Consolidation at Silopi



Struggling through Turkish customs at the border



Kurdish protesters, concerned about the coalition's impending departure



Leaving northern Iraq, *left to right*: Cuny, Garner, Jones, Corwin, and Abizaid

order to sell it, Garner strongly recommended that Baghdad provide them with fifty combines. Later, in early July, Garner and Cuny helicoptered across northern Iraq and counted the combines. To their surprise, the Iraqis had delivered all fifty, and the Kurds began to harvest the wheat.<sup>35</sup>

The last few days in the security zone were not without incidents. Not only had the militant PKK begun to threaten coalition forces at Silopi, but its guerrillas were found operating in the JTF Bravo sector. In late June as Colonel Abizaid's 3-325 ABCT was moving to a new position near Zakho, one of his patrols encountered a PKK stronghold. No exchange of fire took place, but the threatening nature of the encounter warranted a response. On 2 July Abizaid's paratroopers conducted a sweep of the area, which caused the PKK to withdraw. About a week later some friendly Peshmerga warned an Italian patrol operating near the border about the proximity of a PKK encampment and offered to escort the patrol to a nearby Spanish position. No other encounters with PKK guerrillas occurred in Iraq, but they remained a concern.<sup>36</sup>

The American infantrymen and MPs were the last troops to leave the security zone. On 13 July the Kurds staged a final protest against the coalition's departure. When the crowd became unruly, Abizaid had two platoons secure the area. After he and Garner addressed the crowd, it dispersed without incident. Two days later the remaining paratroopers and the MPs left Iraq. The last to cross the Khabur Bridge into Turkey were five key Americans: Garner, Jones, Abizaid, Corwin, and Cuny.<sup>37</sup>

## A Follow-on Task Force

To sustain the security effort, the coalition leaders knew that the departure of the ground forces from northern Iraq would require a transition force on the Turkish border. In early June the EUCOM and CTF staffs began planning for such a force to remain at Silopi. The concept called for the formation of a multinational infantry battalion and enough helicopter units to conduct airmobile and attack operations into Iraq. Before the specific details could be worked out, EUCOM directed USAREUR to provide an infantry battalion base for the residual force. USAREUR, in turn, passed the requirement to the U.S. Army's Berlin Brigade, the source of the only remaining nonmechanized infantry in EUCOM. The brigade assigned the mission to the 6th Battalion, 502d Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. John A. Kidder. The fact that many of his officers and NCOs had previously served with deployable infantry battalions at Forts Bragg (North Carolina), Campbell (Kentucky), and Ord (California) greatly eased the task.<sup>38</sup>

To control the infantry, aviation, and service support units, the CTF staff intended to have the residual task force commanded by an infantry colonel with an ad hoc brigade-level staff. When Colonel Whitehead saw the plan, he realized that the aviation resources would come from his unit. This realization sparked an interesting question, which he posed to General Garner: Rather than have an infantry colonel with an infantry staff command two aviation formations and one

infantry battalion, why not simply give the mission to him and his Aviation Brigade. If that was an obvious solution to Whitehead, it was novel to Garner and to the CTF staff. After some study they agreed that it made sense. General Shalikashvili later explained that while commanding the 9th Infantry Division in the 1980s, he had experimented with attaching infantry units to the division's Aviation Brigade and was open to the still somewhat unorthodox practice of having ground maneuver battalions controlled by an aviation commander.<sup>39</sup>

Colonel Whitehead moved his formation from Zakho to Silopi in late June and began to reconfigure it for his next mission as the Combined Brigade Task Force. As Burch withdrew most of the Combined Support Command from Silopi, he left a logistical element to support Whitehead. Knowing that Colonel Abizaid would be leaving Iraq last, Garner directed him to assume control of the coalition infantry units until Colonel Kidder's battalion was in place to relieve him.<sup>40</sup>

The withdrawing French, British, Dutch, and Italian infantry formations each left one rifle company at Silopi to join the Combined Brigade Task Force. Turkey added a mechanized rifle company. On 20 July Colonel Kidder, along with his battalion staff, headquarters and headquarters company, and one rifle company, arrived at Silopi and assumed command from Colonel Abizaid. Abizaid and his men then returned to Italy.<sup>41</sup>

The Combined Brigade Task Force was as unique as its predecessors. All of Whitehead's non-American forces were attached to Kidder's battalion. His logistical element consisted of Army service support units and an Air Force Prime BEEF component, organized into a battalion-size force. Whitehead's helicopter assets consisted of his Aviation Brigade's AH-64 Apache squadron and UH-60 Black Hawk battalion, plus an attached CH-47 company. With these formations, controlled by his brigade headquarters, Whitehead had the kind of aviation-dominated organization that he had wanted for the proposed Dahuk operation two months earlier. The new aviation doctrine finally appeared to have taken hold in the next phase of PROVIDE COMFORT.<sup>42</sup>

General Garner departed Silopi on 19 July, leaving Colonel Whitehead in command of the remaining ground forces there and Colonel Rutledge in charge of the similarly reduced and refocused air formations at Incirlik (*see Figure 15*). On the twenty-fourth, with General Shalikashvili returning to Germany, General Jamerson, the Air Force officer who had first commanded the operation in early April, took over as the CTF commander. The command change was of minor significance, primarily because the CTF staff continued to be made up of mainly Air Force officers. As AFFOR stood down, Rutledge's 7440th Composite Wing assumed control of all fixed-wing assets, providing both air support to Whitehead and air security in the region.<sup>43</sup>

The follow-on mission of PROVIDE COMFORT was deterrence. To ensure that it was understood, Colonel Naab kept the MCC office at Zakho for ongoing liaison with the Iraqi Army. During his contacts with senior Iraqi officers Naab stressed that Colonel Whitehead's Combined Brigade Task Force was on full alert and ready to reenter Iraq. Despite some turnover in combat aircraft and the departure of most airlift elements, the 7440th retained sufficient air resources (the 92d



Multinational MCC members and their Iraqi counterparts in July. The principal Iraqi representative, Brig. Gen. Abdulohab Mohammed al Jabouri, is seated to the left of Naab.

and 512th Tactical Fighter Squadrons, plus another two from the Royal and French Air Forces; as well as detachments from the 20th and 48th Tactical Fighter Wings, the 314th and 317th Tactical Airlift Wings, the 58th Military Airlift Squadron, the 306th Strategic Wing, and the 552d Airborne Warning and Control Wing) for completing its primary tasks. To ensure the coalition was a sufficiently credible deterrent to any further Iraqi aggression against the Kurds, daily fixed-wing and rotary-wing flights continued to maintain a visible presence in Iraqi airspace above the 36th parallel.<sup>44</sup>

Colonel Whitehead developed contingency plans for responding to any emergencies in Iraq, such as if the Kurds or UNHCR/NGO relief workers were harassed or if any downed coalition aircraft needed to be secured and recovered. Colonel Kidder, who would provide the ground components for these contingency plans, drafted a training schedule for his multinational battalion. Whitehead's Apache and Black Hawk formations could conduct most of their training in the air, but the infantry units needed adequate terrain on which to exercise properly. The coalition installation at Silopi covered several square miles for the airfield, tent city, supplies, and ammunition supply point, but was not large enough to satisfy all of Kidder's requirements. When he requested more acreage, Whitehead had a Turkish colonel on his staff forward the request to Turkish authorities, and the Turkish Army approved a small training area adjacent to the installation in mid-September. Although Kidder was disappointed with the space provided, his experience in the Berlin Brigade, with its limited facilities, had taught him how to



make the most of any training opportunity. Subsequently, he developed an intense and detailed training program for his multinational infantry battalion. The program supported the soldiers' tasks for PROVIDE COMFORT and did not differ notably from their normal training for war.<sup>45</sup>

During July, August, and September no military confrontations occurred with the Iraqi Army. Although several coalition helicopters had to make emergency landings while flying over Iraq due to mechanical problems, the Iraqis on the ground avoided any incidents. In each case Kidder deployed a rifle squad to secure the aircraft in Iraq until maintenance personnel could fix it. All security and recovery operations were conducted without casualties or mishap.<sup>46</sup>

If there were no serious conflicts on the Iraqi side of the border, a surge in PKK activity on the Turkish side concerned Colonel Whitehead. Near Silopi PKK guerrillas engaged or ambushed Turkish soldiers on five occasions—22 July and 13, 17, 19, and 20 August. In the final firefight five soldiers were killed and seven wounded, while one guerrilla was killed. Several of the Turkish casualties were brought to the coalition hospital at Silopi for treatment. To enhance force protection, Whitehead used Kidder's engineer element to improve the barrier obstacles around his base at Silopi, and Kidder had his battalion construct and man fighting positions throughout the area.<sup>47</sup>

On 17 August PUK elements of the Peshmerga approached Colonel Naab through the MCC office at Zakho to report a firefight with some Iraqi-backed Kurdish mercenaries. They reported that several of their PUK fighters had been injured and that they had captured ten of their adversaries. The coalition leaders were sympathetic but noncommittal, anxious to stay out of internal Kurdish disputes. The PROVIDE COMFORT forces remained wary of being drawn into any kind of active fighting in the area that did not accord with their limited mission.<sup>48</sup>

The Iraqi Army kept its distance, maintaining a low profile in northern Iraq. The situation allowed the UN police to secure the NGOs without challenge—at least no one interfered with them. When the Iraqis obstructed the efforts of the UNHCR officials to renew their visas in Baghdad, Colonel Naab used the MCC staff to expedite the matter. No force was required.<sup>49</sup>

By early September American leaders were encouraged by the progress to date and determined that the coalition aircraft based at Incirlik were capable of enforcing security in northern Iraq. The Combined Brigade Task Force had not been engaged in any significant operations there, and General Jamerson had little reason to maintain a ground force at Silopi. Colonel Whitehead began a phased withdrawal, moving his attack aircraft to Diyarbakir, while Colonel Kidder released his coalition companies to their respective national armies. The Dutch and British departed on 25 September, followed within a few days by the Italians and the French. Kidder and Whitehead broke camp, and all of their forces were gone by 10 October. They left Turkey either by sea from Iskenderun or by air from Incirlik. When Whitehead returned a week later to survey the Silopi wheat field used by the coalition for nearly seven months on PROVIDE COMFORT, it looked like a wheat field, nothing more. There was little evidence that any military force had been there.<sup>50</sup>

For the Kurds, their future prospects appeared mixed. They were able to maintain a certain degree of autonomy from Baghdad, more so than in the past. But unity among the Kurdish tribes and political parties remained contentious, and relations continued to exhibit mistrust and a lack of genuine cooperation. The issue of whether Kurdish tribalism, cultural or political, would eventually give way to a more cohesive nationalism in northern Iraq remained a question. Without such unity, the Kurds in Iraq were doomed to manipulation by Baghdad or some other regional power.<sup>51</sup>

## An Assessment

The operational objectives of PROVIDE COMFORT, as stated in April 1991, were to stop the dying and suffering in the mountains; to resettle the refugees to transit centers; and, finally, to make it possible for them to return safely to their homes.<sup>52</sup> The coalition achieved all of these objectives. General Potter's JTF Alpha, assisted by many NGOs, stopped the dying and suffering in the mountain camps; General Garner's JTF Bravo formations established a security zone in northern Iraq and built the temporary transit centers. Working together, they moved the refugees from the mountains to those centers. Garner's forces, assisted by the UNHCR and NGOs, then rebuilt much of the civil infrastructure and created an environment that enabled most of the refugees to return home.

From an operational standpoint, General Shalikashvili's CTF headquarters and subordinate units achieved everything they were asked to do. They did so with virtually no notice, planning, or preparation, but still managed to accomplish their tasks in a timely manner, with compassion and without significant violence. The United Nations and other relief agencies participated throughout the operation, but ultimately their contribution was secondary. Throughout the most demanding phases of PROVIDE COMFORT these organizations relied heavily on the coalition to provide the command and control, as well as the security, airlift, and logistics needed to care for and resettle the refugees in northern Iraq.

The military coalition also played an important role in forming the UNHCR and the NGOs into a workable organization for continuing the relief operation following the transfer of control and the withdrawal of forces. Most of the military officers who worked with the UN personnel were disappointed in their performance. As General Campbell later stated, "I can be positive about the United Nations, and I can be critical. The UN must be impartial and an honest broker. But [during PROVIDE COMFORT] it could have been much more decisive and much more effective." Military officers were not the only critics. The ICRC president, Cornelio Sommaruga, identified a serious deficiency. "If I have a criticism of the UN," Sommaruga recalled, "it is the difficulty of having a quick, concrete action that goes to the victims."<sup>53</sup>

The United Nations conducted several internal studies as a result of its performance on PROVIDE COMFORT. These studies determined that it lacked not only the funding to react properly to such a massive humanitarian crisis as

PROVIDE COMFORT but the infrastructure and training necessary to forge a coalition of relief agencies for a major operation. The United Nations looked upon the military forces used on the operation as a resource that should be tapped in the future. One of the studies recommended that “civil and military resources with humanitarian potential should be made available by governments to the United Nations within the framework of UN objectives and activities.”<sup>54</sup>

As a humanitarian intervention, General Shalikhshvili’s Combined Task Force employed combat, combat support, and service support formations from each American armed service and from twelve coalition nations. General Hobson’s AFFOR commanded the air and sustained transport operations; General Potter’s JTF Alpha integrated the air support to provide the most immediate relief on the ground; and General Garner’s JTF Bravo relied heavily on the 24th MEU to begin the intervention. The addition of elite ground combat forces from the coalition partners made an extension of the intervention possible and protected the relief operations across northern Iraq.

The combat support and service support forces were pivotal for sustaining PROVIDE COMFORT. Military police, engineers, signal and medical personnel, and aviators with their transports and helicopters provided the ability to maintain relief operations and reestablish the refugees in their original environment. Once the United Nations and NGOs assumed the relief tasks, Colonel Whitehead’s Combined Brigade Task Force furnished the security necessary to protect their efforts. The role played by the military coalition was essential to a timely and effective response to the crisis.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>*United Nations Inter-Agency Programme for Iraq, Kuwait and the Iraq/Turkey and Iraq/Iran Border Areas: Updated and Consolidated Appeal for Urgent Humanitarian Action* (Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations, 15 May 1991), p. ii (quotation); Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.; *Civil Affairs in Gulf War*, p. 380.

<sup>2</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 13 May 91; Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.

<sup>3</sup>Larry Minear et al., *United Nations Coordination of the International Humanitarian Response to the Gulf Crisis, 1990–1992*, Humanitarianism and War Project Occasional Paper no. 13 (Providence, R.I.: Thomas J. Watson, Jr., Institute for International Studies and the Refugee Policy Group, Brown University, 1992), pp. 6–7; *Kurdish Relief and Repatriation: DOD-AID/OFDA Partnership. The Kurdish Response After-Action Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Agency for International Development and Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, December 1991), pp. 9–10.

<sup>4</sup>Address to the National Defence College of Canada, 28 May 91.

<sup>5</sup>Carroll Interv, 8 Jul 91; Info Bull no. 4, UNHCR, 11 Jun 91, sub: Operations in the Persian Gulf Region, pp. 8–9.

<sup>6</sup>Getty, Carroll Intervs, 14 Jul (quoted words), 8 Jul 91.

<sup>7</sup>Interv, author with John R. Telford, 15 Jun 91.

<sup>8</sup>Interv, author with Ericka Joergensen, 15 Jun 91; Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>9</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, CAC, 7 Jun 91; Goff, “Building Coalitions,” pp. 24–26.

<sup>10</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, CAC, 7 Jun 91; Garner’s words quoted in Ltr, Julia V. Taft, President, InterAction, to author, 2 Apr 97; Shalikhshvili Interv, 14 Jun 97.

<sup>11</sup>Cuny Interv, 23 Jun 91; Cuny Telecon Notes, 9–10 Jan 92; Nakamitsu, “Working in Relief Operations,” pp. 6–7.

<sup>12</sup>Nakamitsu, “Working in Relief Operations,” pp. 7–8; Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>13</sup>Goff Interv, 24 Jun 91; *Kurdish Relief and Repatriation*, p. 9; Nakamitsu, “Working in Relief Operations,” pp. 7–8.

<sup>14</sup>Powell and Shalikashvili, Garner Intervs, 3 Sep 92 and 26 Jun, 24 Jun 91.

<sup>15</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, JTF Bravo, n.d.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>AAR Review (taped), JTF Bravo, 17 Jun 91; EUCOM, *Communications Perspective*, pp. 119–21; Goff, Garner Intervs, 24 Jun, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>18</sup>Goff, Garner Intervs, 24 Jun, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>19</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 8 Jun, 6 Jul 91; Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>20</sup>Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91; Op Sum, Opn PC, 3–325 ABCT, 13 May 91, p. 3 (quotation).

<sup>21</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 3–325 ABCT, 27–28 and 31 May, 1–15 Jun 91; Ltr, 1st Lt Michael J. Williams, S–5, 3d Bn, 325th Inf, to author, 21 Apr 92.

<sup>22</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 3–325 ABCT, 1, 5–6, 8–11, 13–14 Jun 91; Ltr, Williams to author, 21 Apr 92.

<sup>23</sup>Whitehead Intervs, 18 Jun 91, 14 Jul 92; Goff, Garner Intervs, 24 Jun, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>24</sup>Interv, author with Maj Richard J. Raftery, 25 Jun 91; Author Observations, 3–325 ABCT S–2 Mtgs With Peshmerga, June 1991.

<sup>25</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 3–4 Jun 91.

<sup>26</sup>Author Audiotape, 17 Jun 91; Garner Intervs, 26 Jun 91 and 15 Jan, 7 Jun 92.

<sup>27</sup>Author Audiotape, 17 Jun 91; Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>28</sup>Author Audiotape, 19 Jun 91; Garner, Powell Intervs, 24 Jun 91, 3 Sep 92.

<sup>29</sup>Garner Intervs, 15 Jan, 7 Jun 92.

<sup>30</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 15–16 and 19 Jul 91; Whitehead Interv, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>31</sup>Garner Intervs, 15 Jan, 7 Jun 92. Turkish customs delayed movement of vehicles and equipment from Iraq to Silopi but did not interfere with personnel movements. Vehicles, equipment, and personnel had to go through customs departing Incirlik and Iskenderun.

<sup>32</sup>Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>33</sup>For details, see Info Bull no. 4, UNHCR, 11 Jun 91.

<sup>34</sup>Garner Intervs, 15 Jan, 7 Jun 92; Cuny Telecon Notes, 9–10 Jan 92.

<sup>35</sup>Garner Intervs, 15 Jan, 7 Jun 92; Cuny Telecon Notes, 9–10 Jan 92.

<sup>36</sup>Ltr, Williams to author, 21 Apr 92; Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 27 Jun, 6 and 10 Jul 91.

<sup>37</sup>Garner Intervs, 15 Jan, 7 Jun 92; Cuny Telecon Notes, 9–10 Jan 92; Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 15–16 Jul 91.

<sup>38</sup>Shalikashvili Interv, 14 Jun 97; AAR, Opn PC, 6th Bn, 502d Inf, 6 Nov 91, pp. 1–2.

<sup>39</sup>Whitehead, Garner, Shalikashvili Intervs, 14 Jul 92, 15 Jan and 7 Jun 92, 14 Jun 97.

<sup>40</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 29 Jun, 19 and 21 Jul 91; Chronology, Opn PC, 3–325 ABCT, 15–16 and 20–21 Jul 91; Whitehead Interv, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>41</sup>AAR, Opn PC, 6th Bn, 502d Inf, 6 Nov 91, pp. 1–2; Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 19 and 21 Jul 91; Chronology, Opn PC, 3–325 ABCT, 15–16 and 20–21 Jul 91; Whitehead Interv, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>42</sup>AAR, Opn PC, 6th Bn, 502d Inf, 6 Nov 91, p. 1; Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 19 and 21 Jul 91; Chronology, Opn PC, 3–325 ABCT, 20–21 Jul 91; Whitehead Interv, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>43</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 19 and 21 Jul 91; Chronology, Opn PC, 3–325 ABCT, 20–21 Jul 91; Whitehead Interv, 14 Jul 92; E-mail, Patricia E. Parrish to author, 11 Dec 02 and 16, 23 Jan 03.

<sup>44</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 19 and 21 Jul 91; Chronology, Opn PC, 3–325 ABCT, 20–21 Jul 91; Whitehead Interv, 14 Jul 92; Parrish E-mail, 11 Dec 02 and 16, 23 Jan 03. Turkish fighter aircraft at times joined air security missions, but the 7440th neither supported nor controlled them.

<sup>45</sup>AAR, Opn PC, 6th Bn, 502d Inf, 6 Nov 91, pp. 1–2; Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 19, 21–22, 25 Jul 91; Whitehead Interv, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>46</sup>Sitreps 5, 7, 8, 11, in AAR, Opn PC, 6th Bn, 502d Inf, 6 Nov 91; Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 27 Jul and 1, 5, 14, 19, 23 Aug 91.

<sup>47</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 22 Jul and 13, 17, 20 Aug 91; Whitehead Interv, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>48</sup>Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 17 Aug 91.

<sup>49</sup>Frederick C. Cuny, *Northern Iraq: One Year Later*, Carnegie Special Report (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1992), pp. 21–23.

<sup>50</sup>AAR, Opn PC, 6th Bn, 502d Inf, 6 Nov 91, an. 6, pp. 1–6; Chronology, Opn PC, 6th Bde, [3d Inf Div], 21 and 25–26 Sep 91; Whitehead Interv, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>51</sup>Cuny, *Northern Iraq*, pp. 1–3, 12–15.

<sup>52</sup>Briefing Slides, Opn PC, EUCOM, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>53</sup>Miner et al., *United Nations Coordination*, pp. 19 and 11.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 27.

## *Reflections on the Crisis*

*Who places the last tile on the mosaic?*

—Maj. Gen. Jay M. Garner

With little planning, Operation PROVIDE COMFORT undertook from April to July 1991 tasks that integrated humanitarian assistance and intervention, establishing a new post-Cold War model for military operations. Earlier, to liberate Kuwait, DESERT STORM coalition forces had carried out the warrior tasks of killing the enemy and destroying his tools of war. In contrast, their PROVIDE COMFORT counterparts stood ready as warriors but directed their efforts to stop the dying and suffering in the mountains of Turkey, to create a security zone while rebuilding the infrastructure in northern Iraq, and to return the refugees to their homes.

When the Persian Gulf War ended and the DESERT STORM troops returned home, the veterans were honored with more parades and celebrations than the United States had bestowed upon its armed forces since the end of World War II. These public displays of gratitude were not lost on those working to assist the Iraqi Kurds and other refugees. As Colonel Goff had tersely predicted, “There will be no parades for us.”<sup>1</sup>

But if there were to be no victory parades for them, many PROVIDE COMFORT participants knew that they had accomplished something important. And in the decade that followed they found validation of their contributions, their expertise and experience tapped for a new round of military-led peace operations. Humanitarian missions in Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans would utilize some of the lessons of PROVIDE COMFORT. Unquestionably the PROVIDE COMFORT experience was formative, creditable, and far-reaching, its humanitarian/political and military aspects setting operational precedents that had significant ramifications for the foreseeable future.

### **The Humanitarian/Political Dimension**

For Operation PROVIDE COMFORT the humanitarian dimension drove the political one. The human crisis had three components: the exodus and massing of

nearly a million refugees along the borders of Turkey and Iran; the role of the media in capturing the dramatic events; and the United Nations Resolution 688 condemning the repression of Iraqi Kurds, mandating ingress of international relief agencies into Iraq, and requesting all available UN resources for assistance.

The UN's involvement was important but limited. The United Nations provided the legal basis for responding to the crisis, although it was not prepared to request or provide military forces to intervene. The humanitarian dimension and enormity of the crisis caught the world by surprise in early April 1991, creating a political dilemma. Alternatives other than a military option for dealing with a crisis of this scale would have been slow and tedious, requiring significant negotiation. Time was not on the side of the refugees stranded in the mountains. Early but unsubstantiated numbers collected by the media indicated that over a thousand were dying daily; later the federal Centers for Disease Control would report that sixty-seven hundred died along the Turkish border during April and May.<sup>2</sup> Had the initial crisis gone unchecked for several more weeks or months, the death toll could have been vastly higher. Stemming the crisis quickly was essential to save lives. A multidimensional military operation with speed, force, and cohesion was the only solution.

Challenges were most notable at the commencement of PROVIDE COMFORT and during the operational transitions. In the beginning diplomats and military leaders engaged in negotiations with Turkish officials to determine Turkey's political concerns and deployment limitations. Once the talks were concluded and the parameters approved, then an effective operation was structured within those constraints. Relations with Turkey, however, remained delicate throughout PROVIDE COMFORT and required constant attention.

With the United Nations unable to either intervene or react quickly, Western states stepped in to bring national resources to bear. Political leaders from the United States, the United Kingdom, and France formed a coalition, with the United States taking the lead. Secretary of State Baker, the first high-ranking U.S. official to visit the refugees in the mountain camps, called for immediate relief assistance. Ambassador Abramowitz guided the coalition leaders in their dealings with the Turkish government throughout the operation, and other State Department personnel helped coordinate key meetings between the Combined Task Force Provide Comfort commander and Iraq's senior military representative. The coalition-Iraqi dialogue was continued through the establishment of the Military Coordination Center under Colonel Naab. In addition, supporting the coalition and working with Fred Cuny, USAID's disaster assistance response team drafted a design for the relief effort. The DART was also a conduit for USAID funding, quietly becoming a significant and unique resource for the participating civilian relief agencies.

Nongovernmental organizations from around the world, not the coalition forces, were the first to assist the refugees in the mountain camps. The NGOs were an eclectic group, often suspicious and critical of each other and especially of the military. On balance, their contributions were important, for they saved lives and reduced the suffering.

Briefly preceded by the Turkish Red Crescent Society, NGOs from abroad moved quickly into the mountains to provide medical and other relief aid. It soon became apparent that few could long sustain themselves under the austere conditions. The NGOs lacked not only dedicated aircraft for supply and transportation but also a civilian umbrella organization to manage their activities. Once on the scene the Special Forces soldiers were able to cultivate a relationship with the NGOs that overcame their initial distrust of military authority, making it possible for the two disparate groups to work effectively together. In northern Iraq the NGOs followed the military formations rather than preceding them, for it was the establishment of the security zone that made their time-consuming work to resettle the refugees feasible.

In the mountain camps and in northern Iraq coalition forces provided the catalyst to manage the NGO and UNHCR efforts, often relying on the skills of civil affairs officers to help NGO and UN personnel function together more efficiently. The United Nations, lacking organizational cohesion, was slow deploying capable personnel. Some were talented and useful; others were inexperienced and ill prepared. The NGOs were reluctant to accept UNHCR leadership and management when UN personnel often seemed immature and inept. The United Nations required time to adapt to the situation, especially in northern Iraq. Nevertheless, coalition leaders realized that if the United Nations could be empowered to assume effective control of the overall relief effort, then an accelerated withdrawal of military formations from northern Iraq would be possible.

The political dimension continued to be driven in part by the media, the news reporters and photographers having greater freedom of movement in Turkey and northern Iraq than in the Persian Gulf states during DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM. Whereas an open press threatened to compromise allied security during the Gulf War, putting the military and the media at odds, the humanitarian nature of PROVIDE COMFORT made security a lesser concern and military-media relations more conciliatory and useful. Generals Potter and Garner were quick to see that news reporters and photographers could promote the value and progress of the humanitarian activities to a reluctant political establishment. As a result, the military commanders gave them access to ongoing operations and provided transportation to facilitate maximum press coverage. In the eyes of the senior military officers, the media became a friendly element and a "force multiplier."

## The Military Dimension

PROVIDE COMFORT was fundamentally a military operation, dominated by military forces and managed by military officers (*see Table 2*). The primary tasks were emergency relief, security intervention, and refugee resettlement. Only the second, creating a security zone in northern Iraq, was essentially a military mission. The remaining two were suitable for civilian relief agencies, assisted by UN management. Despite the latter's important participation however, the coalition forces in PROVIDE COMFORT were the decisive component for the successful completion of all three tasks.



**Table 2—Military Forces Aggregate Strength Data,  
Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, April–July 1991**

<u>Country</u>	<u>Number Deployed</u>
United States	
U.S. Army . . . . .	6,119
U.S. Air Force . . . . .	3,588
U.S. Marine Corps . . . . .	1,875
U.S. Navy . . . . .	734
Total . . . . .	12,316
Coalition Partners	
Australia . . . . .	75
Belgium . . . . .	150
Canada . . . . .	120
France . . . . .	2,141
Germany . . . . .	221
Italy . . . . .	1,183
Luxembourg . . . . .	43
Netherlands . . . . .	1,020
Portugal . . . . .	19
Spain . . . . .	602
Turkey . . . . .	1,160
United Kingdom . . . . .	4,192
Total . . . . .	10,926
Grand Total . . . . .	23,242

*Source:* Briefing Slide, Opn PC, CTF PC, n.d.; Statement of Lt. Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, 4 Sep 91, in U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, Defense Policy Panel, *Hearings ("DOD Relief for Kurds in Iraq")*, 102d Congress, 1st Session, 4–6 September 1991.

During the period from April to June, when the coalition grew to its greatest size and diversity, complex command-and-control issues surfaced, their resolution greatly eased by the continuity of the key commanders. At the beginning of PROVIDE COMFORT General Jamerson was in charge, his Air Force staff managing the initial parachute airdrops. When the operation expanded with significant ground formations, a more senior Army officer, General Shalikashvili, assumed command. But Jamerson remained as Shalikashvili's deputy, providing the institutional knowledge he had acquired and a useful link with the vital aviation component of the operation. At the same time, General Zinni, a Marine, changed hats. First serving as Jamerson's deputy, he became Shalikashvili's chief of staff to provide staff guidance on issues that included the integration of American and coalition air, land, and sea forces.

At the outset of PROVIDE COMFORT the immediate requirements were food, water, clothing, and shelter for the refugees, which resulted in a massive air operation for moving the relief supplies to a remote area. Only military air forces could manage such an effort in a cohesive manner. The U.S. Air Force had the largest fleet of transport aircraft, and on 7 April it led the way through the large Incirlik Air Base in Turkey. Other coalition transports soon followed, with General Hobson's AFFOR providing the organization and infrastructure to integrate the emerging air effort. As the Turkish government authorized the use of additional airfields, the Air Force and other military elements deployed ground personnel to activate and manage air operations at Batman, Diyarbakir, and Yuksekova.

With the parachute airdrops proceeding apace, assessments of the refugee situation led political leaders to authorize an area of operations along the Turkish border for General Potter's JTF Express Care (later JTF Alpha) and the immediate insertion of Colonel Tangney's 10th Special Forces Group. The group's companies and A Teams entered the mountain camps to provide more direct assistance. One of their first tasks was the establishment of landing zones for helicopters, which could deliver supplies more efficiently than the airdrops. Soon the soldiers built up a supply base at each landing zone and enlisted the refugees to assist with the distribution of the food and other material.

Helicopter formations from all four American services deployed to Turkey, soon accompanied by similar units from other coalition partners. No grand design existed for the management of such a range of helicopter units. Some were managed centrally through the ATO system; some worked directly for ground commanders. In one case a German helicopter formation provided support without any command alignment. For some Army commanders on the operation, the centralized ATO system was more restrictive than useful, at times denying them direct access to U.S. Army helicopters. With the shift to helicopter delivery of supplies, they also found themselves frustrated at their inability to turn off the parachute drops; concurrently, their Air Force counterparts were frustrated with the sudden surplus of fixed-wing aircraft. The complex arrangements caused some confusion and temporary inefficiency, but key participants adjusted appropriately. In hindsight, mixing a centralized and decentralized system probably worked better than a single approach.

Once on the ground the Special Forces units provided the essential catalyst in each mountain camp to integrate military and civilian relief efforts. Tangney's soldiers had the experience and tact to work successfully with the diverse NGO personnel and broad array of refugees.

As the crisis stabilized in the camps, political leaders authorized an expansion of the operation and the coalition deployed conventional ground formations into northern Iraq to create a security zone. General Garner assumed control of the area of operations, designated JTF Bravo. Initially, the JTF Bravo core component was Colonel Jones' 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, a remarkably agile air-ground formation that could quickly absorb and sustain military units from other countries. As additional coalition forces arrived to support the intervention, the security zone took shape with little interference from nearby Iraqi positions. Each

coalition ground formation brought its own helicopter detachment and kept control of it throughout the operation.

Support expanded with the addition of engineer, military police, logistical, civil affairs, signal, and medical formations. Most had their own command-and-control structures; only the signal and medical units were not consolidated under respective brigade-level headquarters. To better assist in the management of the CTF formations, the coalition also formed the Combined Support Command and the Civil Affairs Command under general officers. The support components not only sustained the coalition forces but worked together to establish transit centers in northern Iraq, where the refugees were temporarily housed until they returned to their own homes.

On PROVIDE COMFORT command and control was adapted in accordance with operational requirements. Throughout the operation Air Force officers held most of the CTF's primary staff positions, augmented by Army and other coalition officers. As a rule, the American formations were under the operational control (OPCON) of the CTF commander. The notable exceptions were U.S. Navy Task Forces 60 and 61, which supported the coalition while remaining under the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. In general, the other national contingents were under the tactical control (TACON) of the CTF, a more limited relationship. As such, TACON units were to function as cohesive organizations under their own commanders and provide their own service support. But operational requirements often necessitated organizational realignments and additional support. In each case coalition leaders remained flexible, making these adjustments as needed to achieve the desired ends.

For political reasons, some national contingents could not even accept the formal designation of TACON. The issue of command relationships came up at the CTF briefing convened for the visiting JCS chairman. Citing several instances when specific command relationships had not or could not be designated, General Zinni told General Powell that in each case the relationship was not OPCON or TACON but "HANDCON"—a discussion and a handshake—hardly a textbook solution but one that worked. Powell approved and suggested that might become a technique for the future.<sup>3</sup>

The national contingent commanders were accorded special status within the coalition. The United Kingdom, France, and Italy sent general officers, with small staffs, to represent the respective national contingents. But these leaders did not exercise operational command over their deployed forces, which were aligned with CTF subordinate formations in most cases under American commanders. However, they attended the CTF command and staff meetings and participated in coalition decisions. Shalikashvili probably spent more time with them than his primary staff officers. As a result, the detailed attention for CTF staff coordination fell more heavily on the shoulders of Zinni.<sup>4</sup>

On the ground, forward in Iraq, the coalition established a dialogue with the Iraqi government through Colonel Naab's Military Coordination Center. The multinational MCC, one of the many innovative aspects of PROVIDE COMFORT, kept the Iraqis informed of coalition intentions, making clear that any obstruction

would be dealt with severely. The dialogue also proved useful to work out conflicts to mutual advantage. For example, to resolve the Dahuk situation, Naab astutely convinced the Iraqis that it was to their advantage to turn over the town to the coalition temporarily. As a result, the resettlement of the refugees was accelerated, allowing the early departure of coalition forces from Iraq. At Dahuk and on other occasions Naab and the MCC arranged the necessary buffer between Iraqi forces and the refugees for a peaceful resolution.

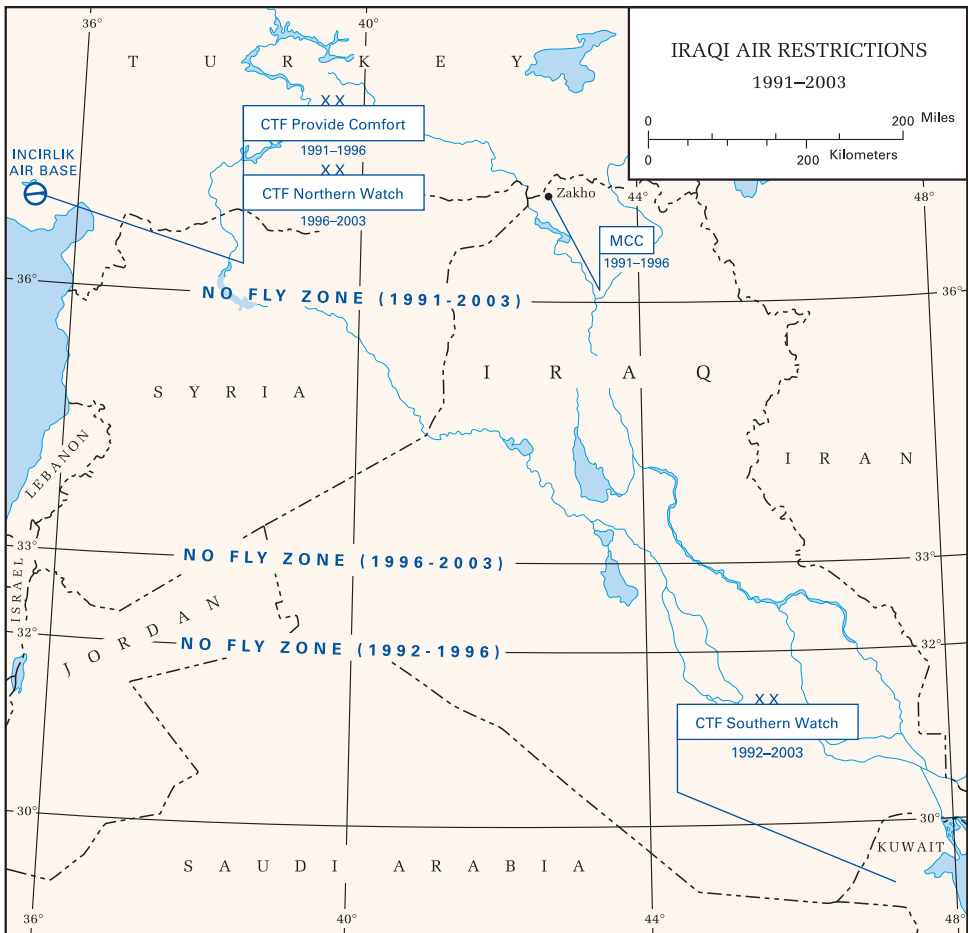
Relations with the refugees were positive but complex during each phase of PROVIDE COMFORT. In the beginning coalition soldiers were perceived as saviors. Desperate acts by Kurdish mothers who rushed the first helicopters to land in the mountain camps and threw their infant children aboard led to a heightened sense of urgency among the rescuers. The friction and conflict that flared in the camps originated with the refugees themselves or with the Turkish border guards, not with the coalition soldiers. Tangney's Special Forces quickly developed close ties with the Kurdish tribal leaders and the Peshmerga, who assisted with order, security, and information, and Potter held extensive discussions on their return to northern Iraq once the security zone was established. As the repatriation phase began, relations with the refugees remained positive but the chemistry changed with the Peshmerga. Garner and his conventional forces were concerned that the irregular Kurdish fighters would disrupt the resettlement process or incite a conflict with nearby Iraqi units.

Once most of the refugees had returned to northern Iraq, coalition officers held meetings with more senior Kurdish leaders, notably Barzani and Talabani, to discuss the planned withdrawal from the region. Not surprisingly, the Kurds wanted the ground forces to remain as the ultimate security in northern Iraq. Garner and Shalikashvili each explained that the pullback would occur but that air protection would continue. Despite the threat of demonstrations, the coalition proceeded with its preparations to depart.

The ensuing period of transition to civilian control posed its own set of problems for the troops. The operational tempo, previously fast paced, became static. But during the lull unit commanders seized the opportunity to conduct individual and unit training. Support personnel also continued to assist the refugees and otherwise sustain the troops.

Even when the situation appeared to be sufficiently under control to allow a hand-off to the United Nations, objections continued to surface. Relief workers voiced their concern that northern Iraq would not be secure enough if the ground forces left the region; refugees objected to the coalition's departure, having little confidence in the UN's ability to protect them; and some political leaders expressed their reservations about an early withdrawal. But the senior American leadership handled the objections in a tactful manner. The withdrawal was delayed until mid-July, and coalition commanders began redeploying their forces with limited turmoil.

To cover the withdrawal, as well as to provide security in the region, the coalition planned to station a residual task force on the Turkish side of the border. The concept of a transition force was an important component of PROVIDE COMFORT,



**Map 4**

and its multinational composition required innovation. Placing ground forces under an aviation brigade commander and staff was not a well-accepted concept among Americans or other coalition participants. But Colonel Whitehead, an experienced aviator, was able to promote the concept and execute it in a successful manner. Under an American commander and staff, the Combined Brigade Task Force, like some other PROVIDE COMFORT formations, had a core of American units, with the brigade's infantry battalion consisting of companies from six nations. Once the formation was withdrawn in the fall of 1991, the residual air component remained at Incirlik to sustain patrols over northern Iraq in the coalition-imposed no-fly zone north of the 36th parallel (*Map 4*). Continuing as PROVIDE COMFORT through the end of 1996, when the operation was renamed NORTHERN WATCH, that phase of the coalition's original mission was still in force a decade after the relief assistance and military intervention efforts were terminated. The ongoing air operation over

northern Iraq to protect the Kurds made the PROVIDE COMFORT security mission an open-ended task, with no finality in sight.<sup>5</sup>

## Operational Precedents

PROVIDE COMFORT, the first American-led humanitarian intervention to follow the Cold War, set useful precedents for future operations. Of particular importance were the utility of the joint/multinational combat and support formations employed and the nature of how they worked with the civilian relief agencies in an extremely remote mountainous area. In fact, based on the PROVIDE COMFORT model, some aspects of the humanitarian missions undertaken in the decade that followed were implemented with success, except when the objective shifted from assistance/intervention to nation building—a challenging endeavor not attempted in PROVIDE COMFORT.

### Coalition Formations

All of the major and most of the subordinate formations deployed on PROVIDE COMFORT were task organized for the requirements of the operation. The U.S. Air Force led with combat aircraft to ensure air supremacy and transport aircraft to provide relief supplies. The CTF's air component expanded with transports from other nations, loosely incorporated into General Hobson's AFFOR. The large Incirlik Air Base in Turkey, with its established infrastructure, was essential for the air effort. Once the Turkish government made available additional austere airfields closer to the Iraqi border, Air Force Prime BEEF engineers used bare base sustainment packages to activate them. As a result, the CTF command was able to expand air support for the refugees and later integrate it as part of the military intervention.

Specific combat formations were deployed and task organized to accomplish operations on the ground. Notable examples were the 10th Special Forces Group, the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, and the Combined Brigade Task Force. All three of these organizations began as single-service and single-nation formations but became joint and multinational as PROVIDE COMFORT developed.

Colonel Tangney's 10th Special Forces Group deployed early to the area of operations, initially providing a search and rescue capability for coalition aircraft but subsequently humanitarian assistance to the refugees massing in the mountains of Turkey. The humanitarian mission was not a defined special operations task, but the Special Forces training and innovation offset the lack of formal doctrine.

The American Special Forces soldiers were uniquely qualified for their role in PROVIDE COMFORT, given their combat skills and organizational flexibility. The twelve-man A Teams had mature members with diverse skills, a strength effectively exploited. Just as important, when the Special Forces company, battalion, and group were augmented with additional military resources for an expanded operation, each command element proved capable of employing them effectively.

The Special Forces company, commanded by an experienced major, played a crucial role in the four large mountain camps. Major Bissell at Isikveren, Major Helfer at Yekmal, Major Riester at Cukurca, and Major Vasta at Uzumlu—all employed their full complement of A Teams augmented with additional civil affairs and Air Force personnel. Other national forces, such as Royal Marines and Luxembourg infantrymen, also joined the A Teams in the mountains. The Special Forces company commanders, working with the NGOs, refugees, Peshmerga, Turkish soldiers, and the media during PROVIDE COMFORT, demonstrated their capacity to perform successfully in a complex environment—a new model for a lean but capable command element.

The three Special Forces battalion headquarters had a lower profile in PROVIDE COMFORT, focused on sustaining their companies and A Teams. They did not often employ joint and multinational elements directly, but they certainly monitored such relationships through their subordinate companies.

The 10th Special Forces Group functioned in an organizational manner comparable to an expandable infantry brigade. It employed all three of its assigned battalions, reinforced with additional personnel, and assumed control of infantry, engineer, logistical, signal, civil affairs, PSYOP, and medical units from other American and coalition participants. Colonel Tangney's organization was the senior coalition headquarters deployed forward from Incirlik for the first weeks of PROVIDE COMFORT to work directly with the refugees, the NGOs, and the media.

Many countries have a special operations component within their military establishments, in some cases of comparable quality to their American counterparts at the company and team levels. But few have a deployable battalion-size special operations formation, and virtually none have a deployable group-level organization like the 10th Special Forces Group. The U.S. Army has five active-duty Special Forces groups and several National Guard and Army Reserve groups to back them up. Each of the active-duty groups can deploy on short notice, as the 10th Special Forces Group did on PROVIDE COMFORT. This operation validated the successful expansion of a Special Forces group with combat and support units from other American and coalition participants. Despite the lack of formal doctrine for humanitarian assistance, no formation was more appropriate for those early tasks on PROVIDE COMFORT than the U.S. Army Special Forces group.

Another unique American formation was the 24th MEU under Colonel Jones. It arrived as a cohesive Marine air-ground task force well trained for disparate missions, many undertaken on PROVIDE COMFORT. Designed to be employed and supported by the U.S. Navy, the MEU landed at Iskenderun and quickly self-deployed by air and ground 400 miles (640 kilometers) inland to work for CTF Provide Comfort with an Air Force staff and then JTF Bravo led by an Army commander.

The MEU immediately sent its squadron of helicopters to move supplies from Silopi to the refugees in the mountains. It then deployed the initial intervention force into northern Iraq. When General Garner arrived without a proper staff to command JTF Bravo and oversee the expanded mission, he relied upon the MEU staff while forming his own. During the decisive phase of the intervention the

MEU became both a joint and multinational formation, integrating marine battalions from the British and Dutch and an airborne battalion from the U.S. Army. Its organic helicopters, trucks, artillery, and armored vehicles provided essential combat and service support for the enlarged formation.

Although other countries have a variety of marine or marinelike formations, the American marine expeditionary units, with air and ground components ready at sea for immediate employment, are unique. The U.S. Marines maintain three to five MEUs at sea in different parts of the world. During a six-month deployment each MEU frequently trains with allied counterparts. On its tour in the Mediterranean the 24th MEU had trained with Spanish, French, and Italian forces, and would work with some of them in PROVIDE COMFORT. Its performance validated the MEU's capacity to adapt quickly to a complex situation, provide most of its sustainment, and receive tactical control of joint and multinational forces.

When the requirement for a residual ground component called for an aviation-heavy formation with both attack and assault helicopters, Colonel Whitehead's Aviation Brigade, 3d Infantry Division, proved a suitable base. Unlike the 24th MEU, it lacked an organic infantry component, but the Aviation Brigade staff was capable of employing an attached infantry battalion. The coalition determined that the battalion should be multinational, with rifle companies from six countries. Formed around a U.S. Army battalion headquarters, the multinational battalion was effectively integrated and employed by Whitehead and his brigade staff.

The U.S. Army had developed a doctrine for attaching ground units to aviation formations, an arrangement that worked on PROVIDE COMFORT and validated a model promoted by the Army aviation community. While many armies employ helicopters to support ground forces, only the U.S. Army has a formal doctrine to integrate ground forces within aviation formations and the experience to back it up.

The expanded mission of PROVIDE COMFORT necessitated a larger support base, with the CTF command ultimately relying on such organizations as the Combined Support Command, the 18th Military Police Brigade, the 18th Engineer Brigade, signal and medical units, and the Civil Affairs Command. The service support structure in the U.S. Army at the tactical level normally comes from a division or a corps support command. But rather than employing one of these larger formations or breaking up existing ones, American leaders structured an ad hoc formation from other service support components. In the beginning that effort was based upon innovative officers like Colonel Wisniewski and Major Cooley. As the operation expanded, the coalition tapped an Army logistics general officer, General Burch, to head the Combined Support Command. Burch set up the appropriate staff sections to oversee the emerging support structure. The resulting command primarily consisted of Army personnel and units, augmented by Air Force and Marine logistical elements. While the other coalition participants provided significant ground forces and aircraft, most of their external service support came from or through this American organization.

To enhance ground security and help manage the refugees, the 18th Military Police Brigade under Colonel Delk established a new model for the employment



of MPs. Delk successfully defended his vision that his MPs ought to remain under his direct control instead of being broken up and attached to combat formations, a concept validated in PROVIDE COMFORT. He also suggested that other formations could be attached to his brigade to make full use of its command-and-control capability. Although that did not take place, it inspired the idea that an MP brigade, like Whitehead's Aviation Brigade, could take on a larger role than normally associated with such a formation. For example, if the mission of the PROVIDE COMFORT residual force had been peacekeeping in a populated environment with a limited ground threat, the MP brigade might have been a useful base around which to build a task force. Virtually all military establishments have military police, but only the U.S. Army has significant depth in MP battalions and brigades capable of both tactical employment and law enforcement, both useful for humanitarian assistance and similar operations.

To augment the limited engineer capacity within the coalition combat formations, the 18th Engineer Brigade joined PROVIDE COMFORT to build the transit centers for temporarily housing the refugees in northern Iraq and to restore the essential infrastructure in the region. Such tasks required construction engineers with appropriate equipment and building materials. Brigade-level headquarters to manage large engineer formations are not common in many military establishments, but again are available in depth in the U.S. Army. Colonel Winsor's headquarters and one of his construction battalions were reinforced with Air Force Prime BEEF, Navy Seabee, and British and Dutch engineer units. The professional engineer background quickly broke down any service or national barriers, and together the coalition engineers accomplished all assigned tasks.

Communications and medical units were essential to the success of PROVIDE COMFORT, yet neither had a consolidated command. To assist with the communications assessment, a signal brigade commander, Colonel Beaver, deployed to Incirlik for a short period and worked with the CTF C-6 staff officers to develop a communications plan. Based on that plan, he structured a composite unit around his brigade's 72d Signal Battalion to support the CTF. Signal units came from other American sources and worked directly for JTF Alpha or JTF Bravo. The CTF C-6 officers were able to successfully integrate and manage communications support without a brigade-level headquarters.

In contrast, the medical assessment team for PROVIDE COMFORT did not include a medical commander, nor did it develop a comprehensive medical plan. Furthermore it did not anticipate the number of coalition medical units that would be deployed on the operation. The medical staff officers were poorly prepared to manage the expanding medical effort. By default, that task devolved to the commanders and operations officers in JTF Alpha and JTF Bravo. The result was less than satisfactory. While operational personnel were familiar with signal units, they had less experience with medical units. And while the separate signal units were all American, the medical units came from many nations—often with political constraints on their employment. They contributed on the operation, but in General Garner's view a medical group or brigade headquarters would have been useful for overall management of the medical effort.<sup>6</sup>

To better integrate the military and civilian relief efforts, the coalition also established the Civil Affairs Command under General Campbell. Most of the CA units deployed on PROVIDE COMFORT came from the U.S. Army Reserve; one active-duty detachment joined them. Although selected CA personnel participated early in the operation, their units were not sufficiently robust for immediate employment. Campbell allocated CA resources to both Potter's JTF Alpha and Garner's JTF Bravo. In the mountain camps the CA personnel worked with the Special Forces companies; in northern Iraq, where the coalition provided more military infrastructure, they came into their own as adept organizers during the refugee repatriation phase. Other nations have civil affairs units, but only the U.S. Army Reserve has civil affairs brigades and higher commands for managing such an effort.

Command and control of the CTF Provide Comfort formations required innovation. With no suitable operational plan available before PROVIDE COMFORT began, the CTF as well as the AFFOR, JTF Bravo, and CSC staffs evolved as required. On the other hand, for JTF Alpha, Potter used his SOCEUR staff with far less turmoil. Similarly, for the Civil Affairs Command, Campbell used the staffs of the 353d Civil Affairs Command and the 354th Civil Affairs Brigade, relying upon the latter to form his Civil-Military Operations Center.

All five of the CTF's subordinate commands had American commanders, four of them Army officers. Most of their staff officers were American, supported by American signal units. PROVIDE COMFORT was a coalition operation, with half the forces from non-American sources, yet the command and control was without question American. Except for coalition representation on the CTF staff, no effort was made to make any command or staff element joint or multinational for the sake of diversity. Based on operational requirements, command and control was developed in a rational manner to achieve the tasks of the operation.

None of the coalition formations had specialized training for humanitarian assistance. The intervention required the skills of combat units. In the skies, jet fighters secured air supremacy and provided a constant military presence. Always prepared for combat operations against Iraqi air and ground forces, aviation units conducted vigilant reconnaissance in and beyond the security zone. On the ground, Colonel Abizaid's paratroopers and Colonel Corwin's marines maintained unit cohesion and were able to deploy and operate all of their weapon systems, including their artillery batteries. They worked in large areas but controlled their maneuver companies and platoons, using them for many offensive and defensive tasks fully compatible with their wartime missions. When the operational tempo became static, they conducted training that included live fire and airborne exercises. After less than four months in Iraq with their mission complete, both battalions returned to their previous training cycles. Corwin's marines may have needed some retraining in amphibious operations, but Abizaid asserted that his battalion had incurred no significant loss in proficiency.<sup>7</sup> In short, the performance of security operations in a distant and hostile environment provided an invaluable experience for both units.

Such judgments apply to the other combat units participating in PROVIDE COMFORT, American and coalition alike. If Whitehead's Apache gunships did not have the opportunity to fire their HELLFIRE missiles in northern Iraq, they flew

with them daily, continually coordinating with ground and air forces in a hostile setting. This type of combined arms training cannot be sustained for an extended period in peacetime. Although he did not control the other coalition helicopters, Whitehead noted that their aviators were always ready and willing to operate closely with his headquarters.<sup>8</sup>

In peacetime environments brigade staffs normally engage in administrative tasks more than on field operations. But those that deployed on PROVIDE COMFORT remained in the field with their battalions. They maintained tactical control over them, prepared plans, wrote orders, coordinated movements, and provided logistical and other support. Furthermore they consistently worked with other combat and support brigades and battalions—an experience peacetime field exercises rarely provide.

Everyone participating in PROVIDE COMFORT was there to assist the refugees. The commanders seldom had to explain to their soldiers why they were engaging in a particular task. They knew that they were there to save lives and prevent abuses. Doctrinal differences between services and coalition partners surfaced, but never became obstacles.

The short duration of PROVIDE COMFORT is in part a credit to the military leadership. At the operational level, where political objectives are converted into action, the vision of key military leaders centered around accomplishing all subsidiary tasks quickly while working with the diverse civilian relief agencies. When Potter and Garner grasped the significance of taking Dahuk and passed it on to Shalikashvili, Galvin, and Powell for approval, their combined persistence and confidence eventually overcame the reservations of the civilian leadership in the United States and among the coalition partners. The ensuing drive south on Dahuk greatly accelerated the refugee repatriation. Throughout PROVIDE COMFORT senior commanders knew that after completing the basic relief and resettlement missions, the important task was to depart in a timely manner. The early recognition of that goal not only advanced the ongoing relief efforts in favor of the refugees but underscored the importance of working with the UN and NGO personnel, whatever their capabilities. They would be the military's "ticket home."

### **Relief Agencies**

The close association of the coalition soldiers with UN and NGO personnel during PROVIDE COMFORT offers perspectives on how they might work together in the future. The ties between the military and civilian relief efforts was evident in the vital roles played by the Civil-Military Operations Center within the Civil Affairs Command, by the DART from the USAID, and by the disaster relief and reconstruction group from INTERTECT.

With General Campbell as the coalition representative to the UNHCR and the NGOs, the Civil-Military Operations Center served as a medium to coordinate the military and civilian relief efforts and to empower the UNHCR for a leadership role following the coalition's departure. It was not a command headquarters and was inexpensive to operate, requiring only a sheltered area with non-

secure fax, cellular phones, a few hand-held radios, and some copiers. A small number of CA officers handled CMOC operations, and UN and NGO representatives normally participated only in meetings. But the CMOC took a significant load off the operational commanders and their staffs by providing a single coalition element to coordinate with civilian relief agencies.

Along with the CMOC, the USAID's DART supported the humanitarian effort by distributing American funds to the relief agencies. DART personnel, who made assessments in the mountain camps and later in the security zone, had experience with such groups and were better prepared to evaluate their capacity to employ such funds than military leaders. A cooperative relationship between the DART and the coalition proved beneficial and quickly developed. Coalition personnel provided information, security, food, shelter, and transportation; DART personnel, operating at multiple locations, reciprocated with information on the progress of the relief effort.

The INTERTECT consultants augmented the DART effort, first informally at the beginning of PROVIDE COMFORT and then formally when Cuny became the DART operations manager and the residual team leader. Cuny knew more about military organizations than most civilians involved with the operation, and his group brought a great deal of relief and reconstruction experience to the overall effort.

For military professionals and their civilian peers in international relief work, PROVIDE COMFORT was a new type of operation—humanitarian intervention—that demanded analysis. As an action officer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Peter Walker took a hard look at the advantages and complications of linking military formations with relief agencies. He focused on four questions: why were such matters more significant now than in the past; what were the differences in how the two groups operated and related to each other; who should control military resources committed to a relief operation; and when should military resources be withdrawn from such endeavors.<sup>9</sup>

As his response to the first question, Walker stated that the “relationships of Mutually Assured Destruction and the client-patron state have gone.”<sup>10</sup> Certainly the Cold War had made armed intervention a serious business; however, since 1989, with the end of the East-West conflict, regional hostilities and outside interventions had become less dangerous affairs and yet paradoxically more probable. Whereas earlier peacekeeping operations had been conducted on a carefully orchestrated invitational basis, subsequent operations have become more widespread and devoid of ideological content. In PROVIDE COMFORT, for example, without being asked by Baghdad, coalition forces intervened to provide assistance to the Kurds. And it must be noted that Turkey's acquiescence to the operation was a vital prerequisite and that no comparable coalition effort was made to assist those who fled to Iran.

International relief workers, according to Walker, traditionally refused to associate with military personnel from NATO or any similar organization. Because the relief agencies relied on neutrality to sustain their work in contested regions, they assumed that association with any aligned group compromised that neutrality. Yet Walker believed that such concerns were now less relevant. Furthermore the

greater interest displayed by major world powers in allowing their military forces to be used for humanitarian assistance offers important opportunities in this area that cannot be ignored.<sup>11</sup>

During PROVIDE COMFORT the interaction between the coalition soldiers and UN and NGO personnel highlighted differences in operating techniques. According to UN liaison officer Nakamitsu's observations, military leaders employed a centralized and structured decision-making process and the United Nations and NGOs a decentralized one, the latter often characterized as loose and consensus-driven. Walker took a more moderate view, maintaining that military decision making was centralized and objective-driven. Yet, in reality, the authority to implement decisions in most Western armies devolves downward and is often flexible in practice. Nevertheless, Walker concluded that relief agencies tended to delegate more decision-making authority to their field representatives, often their most senior and experienced personnel, allowing them to be more reactive to changing circumstances on the ground.<sup>12</sup>

Military leaders might well disagree. Certainly those who served on PROVIDE COMFORT could argue that the UN's and NGOs' decentralized structure and reactive nature actually retarded their efforts, making them less effective. But the issue should not be which type of management is better, for the probability is high that neither the military services nor the civilian relief agencies will change their respective management style. Instead the issue should be how the two types of management can come to a workable accommodation with common objectives. Goodwill on the part of each party and a closer association is the first prerequisite.

Walker also made a few recommendations that may be more controversial. He suggested that in humanitarian situations civilians should control military resources; his preferred alternative was giving control to the civil administration of the disaster-affected country, which then would delegate the resources to the NGOs involved.<sup>13</sup> For PROVIDE COMFORT, as well as for any operation, military professionals accept the concept of political control, but at the lower operational and tactical levels military formations respond to military leaders, not to civilians. Moreover, few countries will release their military forces to the political control of another government or another authority, at least not without clearly defined terms of reference and an effective overwatch capability. During PROVIDE COMFORT most coalition partners maintained a national military headquarters to ensure that their forces were employed within the parameters established by their governments. Shalikhvili, Garner, and others were sensitive to this situation. Even if the environment had been less hostile, the coalition was certainly not going to place its forces at the disposal of the Iraqi government. It was Baghdad's vengeful policies that made the military intervention necessary in the first place.

As long as UN and NGO relief officials remain convinced that they understand humanitarian assistance better than military commanders, they will be inclined to think they can employ military resources more effectively. On this point Walker was not addressing combat forces but those engaged in engineering, medical, transportation (air and ground), and communications tasks.<sup>14</sup> If the scale of humanitarian operations is limited to one or two sorties of aircraft, a few trucks

and radios, or some medical supplies with personnel to operate or distribute them, civilian control may be feasible. But if large military formations are employed, such control is not an option because civilian relief agencies lack the capacity, leadership, and organization to manage them effectively. When the United Nations tried to bring relief agencies together on PROVIDE COMFORT, General Campbell was the catalyst for implementing sound organization, not the UN or NGO officials.

On PROVIDE COMFORT neither the United Nations nor any relief agency employed a leader with the demonstrated organizational capacity of Winsor, Whitehead, Delk, Tangney, Peksens, Burch, or Campbell, much less one as experienced as Jamerson, Hobson, Jones, Keeling, Potter, Garner, or Shalikashvili. These men were not only masters of their military specialties but masters of organization. Although certain UNHCR officers, such as Telford and Joergensen, performed well, they lacked the staff, vehicles, and communications for an extended span of control. Furthermore they had not been designated as key leaders early in the operation, but had gradually emerged as the best from an extremely disparate group of UN officials.

A fundamental requirement for employment of military formations is effective command and control. Leaders who understand their organizations, their staffs, and their communications are generally the best qualified to employ those resources to complete an assigned task. The coalition leaders may have lacked expertise in humanitarian assistance on PROVIDE COMFORT, but their professional track record allowed them to adapt quickly. The operation's most inefficient military aspect was the medical effort, attributable to the lack of an experienced medical commander and staff to control the medical assets committed. One solution for integrating the efforts of military formations and relief agencies might be to have civilian specialists serve as staff advisers or liaison officers to the military commands. Such arrangements on PROVIDE COMFORT were made to support Shalikashvili, Potter, Garner, and Campbell.

Coalition leaders also grappled with another crucial issue, best typified by Garner's rhetorical question: "Who places the last tile on the mosaic?" Walker analyzed how relief agencies coped with the military's objective of completing its role as early as possible, stating that some agencies operate best in a crisis environment while others continue for years with little threat.<sup>15</sup> The implication is profound: After containing and moving beyond the crisis stage of an operation, relief agencies would like to retain access to the military resources. This option, however, would compete with the primary task of military organizations, preparing for war.

On balance, for the first three months of PROVIDE COMFORT, military formations were required not only to bring in massive amounts of relief supplies but also to provide the essential security for the effort. Only gradually, with military management and assistance, was the UNHCR able to establish itself on the ground and gain credibility with the NGOs. Once the situation stabilized, the coalition transferred control of the humanitarian operation to the United Nations and the soldiers returned to their home stations to resume training for war. Certainly, military units could have continued to make a contribution in the relief effort. But such a practice would represent a misuse of military resources when relief agencies, their primary mission clearly assistance not war, can accomplish the task.

## Epilogue

Humanitarian assistance/intervention is normally associated with peace operations,<sup>16</sup> considered by many a backwater in military operations. But the potential of such operations to reduce turmoil and conflict, and in effect contribute to shaping the international environment, is significant. Thus, like war, humanitarian assistance/intervention and peace operations warrant serious study, for they are serious endeavors.

General Shalikashvili addressed the Army's preparation for operations like PROVIDE COMFORT at the Civil Affairs Symposium in late October 1991, observing:

It is often argued that, because the world is changing, we in the military should include preparation for operations like [PROVIDE COMFORT] . . . in our training. I think that is wrong. If we train for our primary mission, we will have the skills needed to support something like this.

To illustrate, he explained that the engineers on PROVIDE COMFORT were able to repair airfields because that was one of their primary missions and that civil affairs and medical units—he could have added aviation, Special Forces, and logistical units—likewise were able to adapt their wartime missions to the operation. Clearly, his intent was that the U.S. Army should not alter the way it trains for war. But he did not say that operations like PROVIDE COMFORT should be ignored or expunged from the military memory. In fact, his purpose in attending the Fort Bragg conference was to underscore the importance of PROVIDE COMFORT. And later during his tenure as JCS chairman (1993–97) he would direct those responsible for staff and war college curriculums to include the study of such peace operations.<sup>17</sup>

As the ground phase of PROVIDE COMFORT ended, turmoil in other parts of the world erupted. During the 1990s larger and more challenging U.S.-led humanitarian interventions were necessary in Somalia, in Haiti, and in the Balkans. Each intervention followed a humanitarian crisis and the failure of a peacekeeping operation under Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter. Chapter VI operations, conducted with lightly armed forces, required the consent of the belligerents. But when such consent was either lacking or insincere, the United Nations' recourse was to authorize or direct a peace enforcement intervention under Chapter VII of the charter, which did not require the belligerents' consent.<sup>18</sup>

The crisis in Somalia stemmed from a severe famine and a breakdown in the civil government, with the media graphically reporting the plight of thousands dying from hunger and the inability of relief agencies to gain access to distribute food. When clan warfare prevented freedom of movement, the United Nations negotiated with the warlords to bring in a UN peacekeeping force under Chapter VI (UN Resolution 751) to assist with the relief effort. In September 1992 a battalion-size formation, designated United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), arrived at the port of Mogadishu, but was unable to operate when the clans attacked it. The United Nations responded by authorizing a peace enforcement intervention under Chapter VII (UN Resolution 794). The United States was the lead nation for Operation RESTORE HOPE, conducted by the multinational Unified Task Force

(UNITAF). In December UNITAF was formed around the I Marine Expeditionary Force, a much larger Marine air-ground task force than that employed in PROVIDE COMFORT. The commander was Marine Lt. Gen. Robert B. Johnston; his operations officer, Maj. Gen. Anthony C. Zinni. UNITAF combat formations secured the ports and airfields, opened the roads, and suppressed the militant factions. Military police, engineer, logistical, and medical units, while supporting the military forces, provided humanitarian assistance and rebuilt basic infrastructure. With its tasks successfully completed, UNITAF departed Somalia in May 1993.

UNOSOM II (UN Resolution 814), a UN-directed peace enforcement intervention under Chapter VII, took over. It was a much larger force than UNOSOM I, and tried to continue the UNITAF mission and enhance it with aspects of nation building that included disarming the belligerents. When that resulted in violence and significant casualties of both American and other groups, the international political support for the operation evaporated. In March 1994 UNOSOM II was terminated with great controversy.

Tensions in Haiti developed in September 1991, when a military coup toppled the democratically elected government. The result was economic instability and human rights abuses, eventually leading to a mass exodus of the population by sea. International diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions coerced the military regime to accept, under Chapter VI, a UN peacekeeping operation. Having the objective of assisting with internal control, the peacekeepers attempted to land at Port-au-Prince on 8 October 1993. Encountering armed resistance, the Chapter VI operation could not continue. The United Nations subsequently authorized a multinational peace enforcement formation to intervene in Haiti under Chapter VII (UN Resolution 940), the Department of Defense designating the U.S.-led intervention Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY. Under Lt. Gen. Henry H. "Hugh" Shelton, American soldiers and marines began going ashore by helicopter on 19 September 1994. The soldiers deployed from a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier; the marines, from a marine expeditionary unit similar to the one employed on PROVIDE COMFORT. With limited resistance, they disarmed the militant forces and expelled the military regime, restoring the legitimate government. On 31 March 1995, as directed in Resolution 940, the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) assumed control.

Experienced commanders from PROVIDE COMFORT were involved. General Potter led a Special Forces formation that spearheaded early relief assistance in the more rural parts of the country. Maj. Gen. Donald F. Campbell led a civil affairs command that restored basic infrastructure, integrating the efforts of military police, engineer, medical, and logistical units tasked with reconstruction. As the situation stabilized and most of the soldiers and marines were withdrawn, military engineers remained for construction projects that included building roads and schools. Haiti continued to have serious internal problems throughout the late-1990s, but the intervention stopped the violence and the population exodus.

As the Cold War ended, Eastern Europe underwent significant political and economic turmoil—peacefully in most countries but violently with the breakup of Yugoslavia. Ethnic cleansing raged, particularly in Bosnia and Croatia, giving way to the worst humanitarian abuses Europe had experienced since World War II.



Again diplomacy and economic sanctions coerced the belligerents to accept, under Chapter VI (UN Resolutions 743 and 749), a peacekeeping operation known as the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). Established in April 1992, UNPROFOR entered Croatia, Bosnia, and Macedonia to stabilize the region but encountered significant resistance, mainly from the Serbs. As a result, the United Nations directed a peace enforcement intervention under Chapter VII (UN Resolution 757), with UNPROFOR soon expanding to thirty-eight thousand troops. Such a large formation, however, was difficult to control without the cohesion of a designated lead nation.

NATO countries supported UNPROFOR with operations off the coast and in the air. SHARP GUARD restricted the flow of arms into the region by sea, DENY FLIGHT prevented the belligerents from using combat aircraft, and PROVIDE PROMISE brought in relief supplies by parachute airdrops or delivered them directly to airports not under fire. Again commanders from PROVIDE COMFORT were involved. Brig. Gen. James L. Jones led PROVIDE PROMISE, General James L. Jamerson provided U.S. forces in his roles as the USAFE commander (1994–95) and the EUCOM deputy commander (1995–98). When UNPROFOR proved unable to stop the violence in Bosnia, the United Nations in December 1995 authorized NATO to conduct a peace enforcement intervention under Chapter VII (UN Resolution 1031). As a result, UN forces either withdrew or shifted to NATO control. The United States then assumed the role of lead nation of the NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) and deployed a large intervention contingent. Violent conflict between the ethnic groups ceased, and the relief agencies obtained freedom of movement to aid the distressed populations. Other civilian groups, mainly from Western Europe, entered Bosnia to assist with nation-building tasks that continued into the next decade.

On balance, the operations in Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans generated considerable controversy, but they also saved lives and reduced suffering, validating the utility of military formations for humanitarian interventions following the PROVIDE COMFORT model. The consequence of not intervening in a humanitarian crisis is best illustrated by the Rwanda experience in 1994. In response to a civil war, the United Nations deployed a peacekeeping force under Chapter VI (UN Resolution 893). But when the peacekeepers failed to stop the violence and no other UN action was forthcoming, the result was mass genocide. The civilian deaths totaled over a million, a catastrophe that arguably could have been prevented or lessened with forceful intervention.

Despite the subsequent interventions having larger tasks and employing larger military formations than PROVIDE COMFORT, they used the same operational concepts. Parachute airdrops brought in relief supplies to those in need, and the Special Forces assisted desperate populations in remote areas. Both combat and support formations deployed. Heavily armed conventional soldiers intervened to stop the violence; military police, engineer, logistical, and medical personnel rebuilt basic infrastructure. Civil affairs organizations played a vital role, integrating the reconstruction work of the support forces and using the CMOC to coordinate with relief agencies. USAID provided considerable fund-

<b>Table 3—USAID Humanitarian Assistance Funding</b>		
<b>Operations in</b>	<b>OFDA/DART<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Other USAID</b>
Iraq <sup>b</sup> (1991) . . . . .	\$ 13,331,334	\$ 36,973,000
Somalia (1990–2000) . . . . .	132,873,997	237,719,722
Haiti (1994–1999) . . . . .	7,789,600	82,541,583
Rwanda <sup>c</sup> (1992–2000) . . . . .	107,630,800	364,430,500
Former Yugoslavia <sup>d</sup> (1995–2000) . . . . .	\$258,977,181	\$685,396,661
<p><sup>a</sup>The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, a crisis-response component of USAID, distributes funding quickly in overseas areas, often through disaster assistance response teams.</p> <p><sup>b</sup>Includes both northern and southern Iraq.</p> <p><sup>c</sup>In addition to USAID funding, other U.S. government agencies provided \$645,148,006 in humanitarian assistance.</p> <p><sup>d</sup>Covers Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro but not Kosovo.</p>		
<i>Source:</i> USAID/OFDA Annual Reports, 1990–2000.		

ing to these agencies directly and through the DARTs (*Table 3*), the latter working through the CMOCs.

These interventions, according to General Zinni, were needed for dealing with the calamity of failed states, which constitute a tremendous challenge for the international community.<sup>19</sup> Although coalitions controlled by a lead nation were effective in such tasks as saving lives, ending violence, providing access for relief agencies, and rebuilding basic infrastructure, those successes in and of themselves had little effect on changing the nature of a failed state. Consequently, operational missions often expanded with nation building, a far more ambitious undertaking than humanitarian intervention.

PROVIDE COMFORT, of course, had stopped short of nation building, as the political aim had never been to create a Kurdish state in northern Iraq. Unbalanced nation-building efforts in the Middle East and other regions account for much of the turmoil in the world today. When the British Mandate of Iraq ended in 1932, an independent Iraq began with an inadequate democratic foundation. The British had employed their civil servants to administer the country while attempting to establish a constitutional monarchy. But the monarchy lacked legitimacy, and the population had no democratic tradition. The British had invested heavily in Iraq to exploit the oil, not to develop the economy. For that investment, they required internal security through a strong military organization. To create a capable Iraqi Army, they trained and educated an officer corps. But they did not implement comparable civil education programs, which impeded the development of a civil service for government administration. As a consequence, the Iraqi military officers became the dominant force in the government and continue as such today.<sup>20</sup>

The experience of the 1990s confirms the challenges of nation building. After the withdrawal of PROVIDE COMFORT formations many observers believed that the



Elections held by the Iraqi Kurds in 1992



no-fly zone established over northern Iraq had created a more stable environment for the Kurds, affording them an opportunity to achieve political autonomy and cohesion. They tried to realize both in the spring of 1992, holding popular elections to ascertain the political parties' relative strengths and to choose an overall leader. Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party received 45 percent of the vote; Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, 43.6 percent. To create a common political entity, the parties formed the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) with a 105-seat parliament—50 for the KDP, 50 for the PUK, and 5 for minority groups.<sup>21</sup>

But free elections alone could not establish democracy. As before in Kurdish history, the two political parties were unable to cooperate with one another or develop any lasting coalition. Instead a kind of neotribalism evolved along party lines. Seeking to obtain autonomy and party leverage, Barzani and Talabani made separate overtures to Saddam Hussein, who in turn played one against the other. When the KRG failed to win international recognition, each tried to play the role of foreign minister when dealing with regional or Western states, but neither could effectively represent all Kurdish groups. Due to divided loyalties the KRG was inherently weak, a situation that allowed Baghdad to employ economic pressure and limited violence against all factions. When Iraqi pressure increased, the allied coalition reacted to contain it but otherwise could not improve the political situation.<sup>22</sup>

The experience of the Kurds notwithstanding, the rest of Iraq has made few advances toward democracy. Nation building is not merely a matter of replacing one regime with another or providing economic assistance to the population, as neither inherently alters the nature of a failed state. If funds are misappropriated or used for purposes other than establishing a prosperous economy, then the advantage of the aid is temporary at best and potentially disruptive at worst. At the national level this remains a dilemma for northern Iraq and, without correction, will restrain the future of the Iraqi Kurds.

The PROVIDE COMFORT experience validated humanitarian intervention by military forces to save lives and rebuild basic infrastructure in a short period, with an ongoing air operation over northern Iraq ensuring stability for the Kurds. But it is beyond the realm of military forces to change the nature of a country or to implement a new tradition. The subsequent interventions in Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans achieved the same initial aim but expanded with limited aspects of nation building. The PROVIDE COMFORT intervention required a military-civilian partnership to achieve the humanitarian objectives. If a humanitarian intervention shifts to nation building, that partnership unequivocally must continue with increased civilian resources and adequate time to fully complete such a bold undertaking.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Author PC Log, 19 Jun 91.

<sup>2</sup>*Kurdish Relief and Repatriation*, p. 8. EUCOM's estimates were several thousand higher. See Briefing Slides, Opn PC, OofSurg, EUCOM, n.d.

<sup>3</sup>Zinni Interv, 5 Jul 01.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Garner Interv, 26 Jun 91.

<sup>7</sup>Abizaid Ltr, 21 Apr 92.

<sup>8</sup>Whitehead Intervs, 18 Jun 91, 14 Jul 92.

<sup>9</sup>Peter Walker, "Foreign Military Resources for Disaster Relief: An NGO Perspective," *Journal of Disaster Studies and Management* 16, no. 2 (1992): 152–59.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>11</sup>Walker Interv, 2 Jul 92.

<sup>12</sup>Nakamitsu, "Working in Relief Operations," pp. 2–4; Walker, "Foreign Military Resources," p. 157.

<sup>13</sup>Walker, "Foreign Military Resources," pp. 156–57.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 154–56.

<sup>15</sup>Note, Maj Gen Jay M. Garner to author, 28 Jun 91; Walker, "Foreign Military Resources," pp. 157–58.

<sup>16</sup>*Peace operations* is an umbrella term that includes peacekeeping and peace enforcement. Peacekeeping is undertaken with the consent of all major parties in a dispute to monitor and facilitate an agreement. Peace enforcement is the application of military force, or the threat of its use, to compel compliance with resolutions or sanctions designed to maintain or restore peace and order. See Joint Pub 3–07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*, 16 June 1995, pp. 3–12 to 3–13.

<sup>17</sup>Remarks by Lt Gen John M. Shalikashvili to the Civil Affairs Symposium, 26 Oct 91, in *Civil Affairs in Gulf War*, p. 68 (quotation); Shalikashvili Interv, 14 Jun 97.

<sup>18</sup>The United Nations either directs an operation itself or authorizes a lead nation to run it. For the former the United Nations assumes direct control, designates a commander, and forms a staff from the nations providing forces; for the latter the lead nation provides the commander and staff, with other national forces joining it as part of a coalition. Unless otherwise noted, information on the discussed peace operations is based on *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping*, 3d ed. (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1996).

<sup>19</sup>Zinni Interv, 5 Jul 01.

<sup>20</sup>Marr, *Iraq*, pp. 29–76.

<sup>21</sup>McDowell, *History of the Kurds*, pp. 379–82.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 382–85.

# Bibliography

During the writing of *Humanitarian Intervention: Assisting the Iraqi Kurds in Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, 1991*, I relied predominately on primary sources collected during my tour in Turkey and northern Iraq, as well as on correspondence, papers, reports, and studies obtained later. Deeming it important to provide a historical background on Iraq and the Kurds in my first chapter, I included a number of secondary sources. As much of the contemporary material written about the Kurds tends to be notably sympathetic, particularly covering the period during and immediately after World War I, I made use of documents from those volumes of the *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* that covered the Paris Peace Conference and related diplomacy to provide balance.

The primary sources consist of interviews with those detailed or assigned to PROVIDE COMFORT, documents produced by military and civilian organizations during or immediately after the operation, and papers or articles written by the participants. I relied on the interviews extensively throughout the writing phase.

During the decade between Operation PROVIDE COMFORT and the publishing of this work, I was able to devote additional time to correlating the information provided from all sources. Based on valid editorial concerns regarding a range of substantive issues, I carried out follow-up interviews, correspondence, and research in an effort to produce a cohesive and harmonious study of the operation.

The U.S. Army Military History Institute (MHI), Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, has custody of my supporting materials known as the Rudd PC Collection. For this work, any primary document cited without repository information may be found in the Rudd PC Collection, whereas a primary document in the custody of another agency is explained in full the first time cited in each chapter. Citations for published sources conform to the general rules of scholarly documentation. The abbreviations/acronyms used are listed in the back of the book.

## Unpublished Sources

Unpublished sources include both military and civilian after action reports (AARs), command briefing slides, chronologies, journals, memorandums, and evaluations generated during or immediately after PROVIDE COMFORT. These were essential to providing the larger context and overall picture. In addition, many letters and e-mail correspondence with the participants proved fruitful for defining key details. I also reviewed several unpublished Army War College papers written by participants and retained at MHI.

Many American units deployed in PROVIDE COMFORT produced AARs throughout the operation, which often were more of a chronological narrative of events rather than an analytical review. Command briefing slides created by the CTF Provide Comfort headquarters and its subordinate organizations—JTF Alpha, JTF Bravo, Air Force Forces, Combined Support Command, and Civil Affairs Command—at multiple stages during the operation were useful for capturing their mission, specific objectives, accomplishments, and applicable data. Several officers, notably Col. William P. Tangney and Col. Erwin E. Whitehead, kept individual logs of their daily actions and thoughts that greatly complemented the AARs and briefing slides. I also consulted evaluations written by the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Tasked with evaluating the technical and tactical aspects of the U.S. Army elements participating in PROVIDE COMFORT, the CALL team made little effort to target the operation as a whole. As a result, the evaluations are limited in scope.

The United Nations prepared periodic documents during PROVIDE COMFORT that tracked the events, their focus on refugee rather than coalition issues. Many of the civilian relief agencies that participated did not generate substantial documents related to the operation until after it was completed. The UNHCR and several larger relief agencies produced rigorous reviews on their participation, in which they discussed the deficiencies and the need to develop better procedures for working with military organizations. I made copies, when possible, of the unpublished reports, which are now part of the Rudd PC Collection.

## Interviews

During and after PROVIDE COMFORT I conducted numerous interviews with not only military and civilian participants but also military and civilian personnel and other specialists. For some contextual background and an understanding of the forces at work, I consulted with former JCS chairman assistant Lt. Gen. Howard D. Graves, USA (27 August 1992), V Corps historian Charles E. Kirkpatrick (7 July 1992), EUCOM G-3 (Operations) Col. Robert A. Maddocks, USMC (6 July 1992), USAFE field historians S.M.Sgt. Thomas L. Raab, USAF, and S.Sgt. Thomas A. Traynor, USAF (June 1991), USAREUR historian Bruce H. Siemon (25–26 June 1992), UNHCR historian Jeff Crisp (2 July 1992), Kurdish specialists Mehrdad R. Izady (3 August 1992) and Vera Beaudin Saeedpour (29 July and 3 August 1992), Iraqi specialist Phebe Marr (18 July 1992), and League of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies action officer Peter Walker (3 July 1992).

To capture the events and to clarify the complex aspects of PROVIDE COMFORT, I interviewed the military and civilian participants as well as some of those tasked with supporting them from their European offices. The interviews listed below provide the name, the rank and service, if applicable, or organization, the duty position and/or role during the operation, and the date(s). An asterisk by the date indicates that I conducted the interview(s) by telephone.

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# Abbreviations/ Acronyms

AAR	after action report
ABCT	Airborne Battalion Combat Team
ACG	Amphibious Combat Group
AFFOR	Air Force Forces
ANGLICO	Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Company
Asst	Assistant
ATH	Air Transportable Hospital
ATO	Air Tasking Order
AVN	Aviation
AWAC	Airborne Warning and Control
Bde	Brigade
BG	Brigadier General
BLT	Battalion Landing Team
Bn	Battalion
Brig	Brigadier
Bull	bulletin
CA	civil affairs
CAC	Civil Affairs Command
Capt	Captain
CBTF	Combined Brigade Task Force
Cdo	Commando
CEEUD-TU	Corps of Engineers European Division-Turkey
CENTCOM	Central Command
CES	Civil Engineering Squadron
CMAGTF	contingency Marine air-ground task force
Cmbt	combat
Cmd	Command
CMOC	Civil-Military Operations Center
Co	Company
CofS	chief of staff
Col/COL	Colonel
Comdr	commander
COSCOM	corps support command

Cpl	Corporal
CSC	Combined Support Command
CSM	Command Sergeant Major
CTF	Combined Task Force
DART	disaster assistance response team
Det	Detachment
Dir	director
DISCOM	division support command
Disp	disposal
Dist	district
Div	Division
EC	Electronic Combat
Encl	enclosure
Engr	engineer
EUCOM	European Command
f	following
FA	field ambulance
FCT	firepower control team
FIN	finance
Flt	Flight
FM	field manual
FWD	forward
Gen	General
Gp	Group
Helo	Helicopter
HMM	Helicopter Medium Marine
HO	History Office
HQ	Headquarters
HSSB	humanitarian service support base
HSSD	humanitarian service support detachment
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
Inf	Infantry
Info	information

Interv	interview
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JCSE	Joint Communications Support Element
Jnl	journal
JSOTF	joint special operations task force
JTF	Joint Task Force
JULLS	Joint Universal Lesson Learned System
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party (Iraq)
KDPI	Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran
Lt	Lieutenant
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
LTG	Lieutenant General
Ltr	letter
MAGTF	Marine air-ground task force
Maj	Major
MCC	Military Coordination Center
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force
Memo	memorandum
MEU	Marine Expeditionary Unit
MG	Major General
Mil	Military
MMC	Material Management Center
MP	military police
MRE	meal, ready to eat
MSF	<i>Médecins Sans Frontières</i> (“Doctors Without Borders”)
Msg	message
MSSG	MEU Service Support Group
Mtg	meeting
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCA	National Command Authority
NCC	national contingent commanders
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NL	Netherlands
NMCB	Naval Mobile Construction Battalion

Off	officer
OofSurg	Office of the Surgeon
Op	operational
OPCON	operational control
Ops/OPS	operations
Ord	Ordnance
Pam	pamphlet
Para	Parachute
PC	PROVIDE COMFORT
Pfc	Private first class
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party (Turkey)
Prime BEEF	Prime Base Emergency Engineering Force
Prime RIBS	Prime Readiness in Base Services
PS	Personnel Services
PSYOP	Psychological Operations
PubAffs	public affairs
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (Iraq)
Pvt	Private
QM	Quartermaster
Regt	Regiment
RPIMa	<i>Régiment Parachutiste d'Infanterie de Marine</i> ("Marine Parachute Infantry Regiment")
Rpt	report
SEAL	sea-air-land
SecDef	Secretary of Defense
Sfc	Sergeant first class
SFG	Special Forces Group
Sitreps	situation reports
SMSgt	Senior Master Sergeant
SOCEUR	Special Operations Command, Europe
SOSC	Special Operations Support Command
SOW	Special Operations Wing
SP	Spain
Spt	support
Sqn	Squadron
SSgt	Staff Sergeant
Sum	summary

TAACOM	Theater Army Area Command
Tac/TAC	tactical
TACON	tactical control
TACSAT	tactical satellite
Telecon	telephone conversation
TF	Task Force
TG	Tactical Group
Tm	Team
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDRO	United Nations Disaster Relief Operations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USA	U.S. Army
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USAF	U.S. Air Force
USAFE	U.S. Air Force, Europe
USAR	U.S. Army Reserve
USAREUR	U.S. Army, Europe
USASETAF	U.S. Army Southern European Task Force
USMC	U.S. Marine Corps
USMCR	U.S. Marine Corps Reserve
USN	U.S. Navy
V	veterinary
WO	Warrant Officer

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