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Interview with LTC James Rainey



Combat Studies Institute
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

Abstract

Roughly six months after assuming command of 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel James Rainey led his unit into Operation Phantom Fury, the November 2004 combined-joint assault to retake the Iraqi city of Fallujah. Attached to Marine Regimental Combat Team 1 and working closely (prior to and throughout) with Colonel Michael Shupp, the RCT-1 commander, Rainey's overriding responsibility during this decisive urban fight was to "control the violence" and "manage the chaos" wreaked by his battalion's 14 tanks and 30 Bradleys.

"The best analogy I ever heard," he recalled, "came from one of my former company commanders. He said that fighting in an urban environment was like playing tackle football in a hallway. Then you throw tanks and Bradleys in there and it's like a demolition derby in a hallway - and that's the kind of chaos you need to manage." In this interview, Rainey discusses in tremendous detail the important, even essential, role his mechanized task force as a whole played in this operation, but is also quick to highlight the "selflessness and lethality of the American fighting man: Marine and soldier, tanker and infantryman. They are," he said, "an absolutely unbelievable treasure that our country has." Talking, as well, about those ranged against his men in Fallujah, Rainey explained that "the enemy we faced was a dedicated, committed enemy; he was well trained by insurgent standards and definitely well equipped; he also had a good amount of time to prep his defense and had decent communications - but he was still nothing compared to U.S. forces. He was a pretty competent enemy, but he was absolutely devastated in every engagement we had with him."

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Interview with LTC James Rainey

19 April 2006



MM: My name is Matt Mathews [MM] and I'm a historian for the Combat Studies Institute. Today is 19 April 2006 and I'm interviewing Lieutenant Colonel James Rainey [JR] who commanded the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment (2-7 CAV), or Task Force 2-7, during Operation Phantom Fury.

Could you please start off by giving me your full name and some background information on where you were born, where you went to school, how you got commissioned and your assignments up until Phantom Fury?

JR: My name is James E. Rainey. I was born in Brockton, Massachusetts, but I grew up in Akron, Ohio, went to college at Eastern Kentucky University and was commissioned in 1987 as an infantry officer. My assignment history is as follows: I started out as a light infantryman in the 82nd Airborne Division and moved to the 3rd Battalion of the 75th Ranger Regiment. I commanded a company in the 1st Cavalry Division (1st CAV) and a company in the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, the Old Guard. I was a Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) intern for a year, did Command and General Staff College (CGSC), the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), and then I was a division planner and chief of plans for the 2nd Infantry Division. I went to the 1st CAV and was the operations officer (S3) for 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment (1-9 CAV). I was the executive officer (XO) for the III Corps commander. I went to the initial invasion of Iraq as an augmentee and I worked for General William Wallace in his command and control vehicle (C2V) as a planner. Then I went back to 1st CAV and was the XO for 3rd Brigade, and then took command of 2-7 CAV.

MM: Could you talk me through the whole history of 2-7 being deployed to Kuwait and then eventually up to Iraq?

JR: They deployed as part of the division and 2-7 CAV was task organized to the 39th Enhanced Separate Brigade (ESB), an Arkansas National Guard brigade that was part of the 1st CAV. 3rd Brigade of the 1st CAV and the 39th swapped battalions, so 2-7 went to the 39th, did reception, staging, onward-movement and integration (RSOI) through Kuwait, and then moved forward up to Camp Taji, Iraq

MM: Did that swap of battalions actually take place while you were in Kuwait?

JR: We were task organized for Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) and then we deployed pure and then task organized formally in Kuwait, but the 39th was integrated into the 1st CAV back at Fort Hood. But for accuracy, I was the 3rd Brigade XO during that deployment, and then I assumed command of 2-7 in Iraq on 17 May. I was not the 2-7 commander during the train up, the RSOI portion, the move forward and the first 30 days or so in Iraq.

MM: What happened when you first found out that the Marines might be using you guys in Fallujah?

JR: Before we start on that, I need to talk a minute about the 1st Cavalry Division. The 1st CAV Division was absolutely an incredible team and I'll tell you why. The 3rd Brigade commander, Colonel Mike Murray, got 2-7 ready to go through the train up, JRTC, deployment, equipping. He was an absolutely outstanding commander and fully adhered to the Army ethic and value system where if you task organize somebody, you send them a great unit that's well equipped. General Peter Chiarelli, our division commander, it's a matter of record what he did; but as far as building a team ethic, Colonel Murray and our CG were behind that, as well as the cultural aspect and the train up for this unique kind of warfare. Lieutenant Colonel Larry Phelps, the G4 - the effort that he put into 1st CAV from a logistics standpoint in terms of equipping us, making the transition to up-armored Humvees, having everything we needed to fight - logistically speaking, it could not have been better. There were four infantry battalions in the 1st CAV, all of them great units. It's important from my standpoint that people understand that the reason 2-7 went initially to Najaf was about what we were doing at the time and what those other three infantry battalions were doing. Every brigade has got one infantry battalion. 1-5 CAV is fighting every single day in Sadr City at this time. 2-5 CAV is the main effort for 2nd Brigade. 1-9 CAV is with 3rd Brigade and owns Haifa Street in downtown Baghdad, which was one of the toughest places in Baghdad. 2-7 CAV is working for the 39th north of Baghdad and we had an important daily mission. We had a huge area and our primary mission up there was to protect Taji - which is where all of our aviation assets were and where our Division Support Command (DISCOM) was based out of. We were out fighting every day and we had 685 square kilometers that we owned up there. But the area we were in was not someplace where we were winning the hearts and minds of the people. It was 90 percent Sunni with the other 10 percent being Wahhabist/Salafist kinds of guys. So when General Chiarelli was tasked to give a battalion up for Najaf, I personally think he could have sent any one of his battalions and they would have had the same success that 2-7 did. It was a tactical decision based on the fact that the other three battalions were more decisively engaged and more critical to the overall division fight than us.

MM: Could you expand a little bit on what it was like to work with the 39th ESB, Arkansas National Guard? That has to be something fairly unique, I would think.

JR: I wasn't with them for the train up and deployment, so I have a limited scope - but if I could, I will get to that later. Let me go back to the teamwork thing with the 1st CAV. I called Lieutenant Colonel Gary Volesky, the 2-5 commander, and talked to him because I knew he was fighting platoon- and company- sized fights every day, and actually went to school on what he was doing. They developed some great stuff. They developed this box formation for urban fighting that was a very good, non-doctrinal tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP) based stuff. I also talked to Lieutenant Colonel Myles Miyamasu with 1-5, and his guys were down in Najaf at the same time 2-7 was. Lieutenant Colonel Tom MacDonald down in 1-9 had a really complex civilian population mixed in with insurgents down in Haifa Street. They developed these sniper stay-behind TTPs and all kinds of other stuff. So I went to school on all of three of these guys and then shared those TTPs. To be honest with you, the armor battalions we had were all fantastic, too; it was just that this urban environment was a mech infantry fight, so it probably had to be an infantry battalion. I just cannot say enough about what a great team we had, and that's very important to me that that comes out. Anyway, 2-7 gets sent to Najaf really based upon the availability of forces. We fought well down there. It was a tough fight and we were successful there based on a lot of things, primarily great young leaders and

noncommissioned officers (NCOs). We worked with the Marines there as well, so when it came time to go to Fallujah, 2nd Brigade got tasked, the Marines asked for an extra battalion and 2-7 was the path of least resistance. The same factors applied. We were up north and the other battalions were critical aspects of their brigade combat team fights. I did hear that General John Sattler did ask for 2-7 CAV to come back, but I'm not privy to his conversations. General Chiarelli sent us over there and so that's how 2-7 ended up in Fallujah. Back to your original question, the 39th ESB thing presented a lot of challenges. At different times during the year, we had parts of four different National Guard battalions placed under the operational control of (OPCON'd to) 2-7, and we worked through a lot of things. My personal experience would tell me that, about 90 days into a military operation, a National Guard platoon or company either is already or becomes a very competent platoon, equal to a baseline Active Duty unit. Also, in the type of fighting going on in Iraq, there's some huge value-added in that the soldiers are generally older, more mature and they bring some very unique skill sets. The National Guard unit that was OPCON'd to us for the duration - Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment (2-162) - the company commander was a policeman full time.

MM: Were they an Oregon National Guard outfit?

JR: That's right. When it came time for 2-7 to work with the Iraqi police, he really brought something to the fight that the Active Duty guys didn't. As far as above company level, there are issues and there are successes. I was a battalion commander, so my ability to comment on my higher headquarters is obviously not where my expertise lies.

MM: Major Tim Karcher was telling me that when word started filtering down that something might be coming up and 2-7 might be deployed to Fallujah, he was having a hard time getting the information he required from the 39th ESB. He used some contacts he had at division to find out what was going on.

JR: That's probably accurate. Major Karcher and Major Scott Jackson, the S3 and XO respectively, came down from division and corps, so that was a huge advantage that 2-7 had as far as reachback. I wouldn't say that they were working around the 39th; I'd say that the 39th was focused on their area of operations (AO). Our ability to get information was enhanced by the fact that those guys had reachback and experience from those two higher headquarters.

MM: Can you start from the beginning, from when you guys first figured something was going to happen, the planning that went into that, and how you first made contact with the Marines? Basically the initial stages of what happened.

JR: We received a warning order from the 1st CAV, and everybody kind of knew something was going down in Fallujah. The Marines had asked for more forces and we got that warning order probably about 3 November. We did put together a small package with Tim Karcher and some intel guys - I think Captain Mike Erwin was probably with them - put them on a helicopter and send them out to Fallujah. We found out we were going to be working with the Marines' 1st Regimental Combat Team (RCT), got them linked up and got them started in the planning process. Simultaneously, Scott Jackson and our forward support company commander, Jake Brown, started working on the movement aspects of it. 2nd Brigade, Black Jack, had OPCON of us for movement.

MM: I wasn't aware of that.

JR: We moved with them, doing a tactical road march; and it was a deliberate decision, as a show of force, not to put our guys on heavy equipment transporters (HETs). So we did the movement from Taji out to Fallujah, closed on Camp Fallujah initially, got into the process of planning with 1st RCT, conducting reconnaissance and getting our logistics footprint set. We had a great move; it's not a simple matter to move and deploy in the middle of the night. 2nd Brigade Combat Team (BCT) had a good plan, it was well supported, and then they chopped us over to 1st RCT.

MM: Did any of your units encounter any sort of enemy ambushes or IEDs?

JR: No. We didn't make contact, and I don't know if 2nd Brigade did or not. They had moved several elements ahead of 2-7 so any contact they would have had on the route, they would have cleared. The fact that we had no contact is a testament to their reconnaissance moving ahead of us. So we get in and I had been talking to Tim Karcher on the phone. The initial plan he got from 1st RCT was a very narrow penetration into the city along one axis of advance. When I got my first brief on the plan from our guys, I liked the fact that they had a pretty good intel situation - unlike Najaf, where we had no idea where the enemy was or what he was doing or how many civilians were there. The Marines had done a very solid intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB). They knew where the mosques were, they knew how many civilians were in the city, they had pretty good numbers on the enemy, they'd done a lot of analysis and they had really good maps, overhead imagery and such, so I felt really good about that. I liked the fact that 2-7 was going to be the main effort for 1st RCT, who was the main effort for the Marine Division (MARDIV) - so obviously I liked that for a lot of reasons. I knew their doctrine was the same as ours in terms of a main effort, and I knew we'd be resourced in terms of fires and collection assets as we needed to be. What I didn't like was the very narrow, limited mission. I had not talked to Colonel Michael Shupp yet. Tim briefed me on that. Tim had been working with their S3 guys and he kind of explained that that might not be the optimal use of a mech battalion. I finally met Colonel Shupp: great guy, all about team building, and he went out of his way to make sure we had everything we needed. We were well received. It sounds like a simple thing, but rolling in there and having clean tents and places to bed down our guys, the chow plan - things like that went a long way to getting us off on the right footing with them. I was very impressed. He's obviously a very competent, successful infantryman, a warrior spirit kind of guy and very aggressive. He was really looking forward to finishing the fight in Fallujah. Initially, my concern was that we needed more of a frontage, the ability to get more of our firepower into the fight than we could get on one main route. I looked to the west and there was a major road a couple blocks to the west.

MM: What this Phase Line Henry?

JR: No. We were oriented on Henry. The initial mission we had was Henry; and that was a battalion-sized penetration on that two-lane road and then turn west towards the two bridges in the city. That was the penetration. I asked Colonel Shupp for some more battlespace and explained to him that Route Henry was an axis of advance that would let us get maybe two tanks into the fight at one time. We had 14 tanks and 30 Bradleys and I really felt like we could do more for the RCT if we had more battlespace. So I looked west for more space because the

east was a very limited option, because that part of the city had the older Byzantine type architecture, the streets don't make sense, etc. He told me he did not want to buy off more battlespace. He liked the fact that he was the main effort. He was concentrated on one quarter of the city, 7th RCT had the other three, and he didn't want to go that way. Obviously, he was the commander and so that was fair. The initial mission had 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment (3-1) attacking the Jolan Park, which was the geographical center of gravity of the area 1st RCT had. It was the only open area and was the logical rallying point. There was a Ferris wheel, you can see it pretty well from a distance, and 1st RCT's intel assessment was that the enemy would use that as a rallying point. So 1st RCT thought the enemy would fight all over the city and then fall back to Jolan Park as a final defense; and the MARDIV's plan was to directly attack that with 1st RCT as the main effort and give the other three quarters of the city to 7th RCT. As we're looking at this - Tim Karcher, Mike Erwin, Captain Dave Gray, the intel guys, and my fires guy - we came up with an option that would take Alpha 2-7 and attack as the 2-7 main effort, do a frontal assault, direct attack on about three different roads, with a platoon on each road. We thought we could seize the Jolan Park with Alpha 2-7, acknowledging that we weren't going to go building to building. We'd kill anybody we saw that presented themselves, within the rules of engagement (ROE), but we were not going to clear towards the Jolan Park; we were just going to attack it and then seize it. At the same time, we could put Charlie 3-8 on Henry and still get everything in the fight that we would anyway - because we could only get a couple tanks up front - and use them as a supporting effort to Alpha 2-7. So we would move them on parallel and Charlie 3-8 secures the flank, still conduct the penetration and still kill anybody that wants to fight. We offered that up to 1st RCT and Colonel Shupp said that if we could do that, it would be great, so that's the plan we settled on. Alpha 2-7 as the main effort, frontal assault, north to south, with two tasks: destroy enemy forces and seize the Jolan Park. That was supposed to take about a day. 3-1 would follow Alpha 2-7 and do the detailed clearance to complete the destruction of the enemy. They would use the Jolan Park to do a passage of lines through us and then turn west down to the river, while 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment (3-5) secured the initial foothold in the corner and also had a detailed clearance: a complete-the-destruction type mission. It wasn't a negotiation. Colonel Shupp denied my first request and granted my second request. He listened to feedback and made a decision, just like good commanders do. The fact that he was receptive to listening and acknowledged the fact that we probably were the experts on how to employ mechanized assets impressed me very much.

MM: When the Marines blow the breach to the west of the train station, can you talk me through how your companies came through there and where they went from that point?

JR: Sure - but let me go back to one thing that's important about the 1st Cavalry Division. I read a lot about guys not having stuff and being poorly equipped. In 2-7, we had everything we needed. The only Humvees we had down there were the up-armored '1114s. We had M1A2 tanks, all with the system enhancement package (SEP), with lots of parts. We had M2A3 Bradleys - the best Bradleys that we had. We had the new 120 millimeter digital mortars; we had Barrett sniper rifles. Despite the fact that General Chiarelli had the main effort division in Baghdad and had already given up a brigade and given up 2-7, I felt like 2-7 needed a third company, which originally I had been directed to leave with the 39th so they'd have some mech forces. This is Charlie 2-7. So when I briefed General Chiarelli and briefed him on our plan, he asked me if I needed anything and I told him I really felt like I needed that third company - and it was really a difference of a platoon in terms of combat power. I was taking one of Charlie 2-

7's platoons anyway. I wanted to take a second platoon and a company headquarters. I really thought having Captain Chris Brooke and his guys and the ability to have a third company headquarters was critical to our mission; and, at great pain to the 1st Cavalry Division, General Chiarelli told me that if I needed it, to take it. Then we had had a problem with the enlisted terminal air controller (ETAC) - the same thing from Operation Anaconda all the way through OIF II. The ETAC thing is a huge problem. Not because they're not great guys, but because there aren't enough of them and we can't certify Army guys as ETACs. It's something that needs to be fixed in the Army and it's definitely an after-action review (AAR) point. But when we had not had ETACs in Najaf, we really had problems because of that. So when I asked for ETACs, General Chiarelli gave us an air liaison officer (ALO) captain at our battalion headquarters and ETACs with all three of our companies, which was basically almost the entire 1st CAV allotment of Air Force ETACs. We also had a lawyer. I felt that since we were operating independently of the division, I asked if I could have a lawyer and I was given one, a captain.

MM: Why did you feel you needed a lawyer?

JR: As it turned out, it didn't turn out to be a big deal in Fallujah because our ROE were actually pretty good. But in Najaf it was just torturous in terms of ROE. Just having the ability to have a guy in our tactical operations center (TOC) that we could talk to about these things was great. And this is illustrative of what kind of commander General Chiarelli was. He'd give a commander a mission, the commander asks for something, and he provides everything we needed. So that's how we got the third company. Getting back to your last question: We were leading with tanks, and the intel we had was that the area from the railroad tracks to the road was mined. We had brought rollers from Charlie 3-8 and, in all honesty, we had not done a good job maintaining them because we hadn't used them in the six months that we'd been there. It wasn't for lack of patriotism - I mean, the mechanics were busy and we had to prioritize our stuff; and since we weren't using them, they got pushed aside. So it was hard to get the rollers back working. Anyway, we were going to follow the Marine breach with our lead tanks and, once they got a lane set, we were going to roll it. What really ended up happening was that the breach was very hard to get in. The light engineer company did a great job, but in terms of equipment and getting down there and actually breaching a railroad track on a trestle, it was not a simple thing. We actually didn't get through the breach until 0130 and there wasn't a lane, so Charlie 3-8's lead tank - Staff Sergeant Reyes was the tank commander (TC) - led with a roller. I remember doing breaches at the National Training Center (NTC) as a younger officer thinking, "When the hell are we ever going to do this shit?" and here we go. So we rolled the lane, marked it, the rollers went through the open area and hit the main road, and the breach was easy to find because the kid who was doing it just jammed the rollers right into the wall on the other side of the road. To get a roller off a tank, you have to dismount the tank; so now we've got two tanks through the breach and a young hero gets to jump out of his tank in contact to get the roller off, because you can't turn with it. He gets out and drops the roller - now we've got a lane marked and we've got a good point to orient on because the roller's stuck in the wall on the other side of the road. Charlie 3-8 led, then myself and Major Karcher and our command section. They turn west on the initial road and then turn south on Henry into heavy contact. We were followed by Alpha 2-7 and I'd given them three axes of advance, a platoon on each: one tank in the middle, mech on each side. They conducted an attack in zone oriented on the Jolan Park. Charlie 2-7 was initially the reserve and they had to be prepared to follow and assume. If Alpha didn't make it to Jolan Park, the main mission was to put Charlie 2-7 behind Alpha and

have them do a passage of lines and complete the mission of securing Jolan Park. The secondary mission was if Charlie 3-8 couldn't get far enough down Henry, I was going to put them in there. We didn't see them doing a forward passage of Charlie, because anything tanks couldn't do we weren't going to do with Bradleys. But I talked to Chris Brooke and Charlie 2-7 and said they may have to come in and secure parts of Henry that would let Charlie 3-8 continue the attack south, which is eventually what ended up happening. Before all of this, when we were still at Camp Fallujah, once I understood the mission I was very interested in getting up there, getting eyes on the objective and conducting some reconnaissance. I sent Scott Jackson out, he had picked our assembly area to the north, and it was a real good location. We were pretty close, but this wasn't conventional doctrine: the enemy could hit us with mortars at Camp Fallujah, so we went with "closer is better," shorter turns to the fuel point. We were north of the train station, up pretty close. The RCTs had been doing limited objective attacks, reconnaissance's by fire, and the purpose was to keep the enemy guessing about our orientation and when we were coming. So 7th RCT was attacking the city from the east and the south and 1st RCT was doing some limited objective attacks with dismounted infantry guys from the north. Colonel Shupp agreed to let us go up and do one of these limited objective attacks the night before the actual attack. He was rightly concerned and didn't want us to take too many tanks and Bradleys and tip our hand. Our thought was we could do a limited objective attack and the enemy wouldn't know that that was the actual one we were going to use, because they'd done dozens of them all over the city. As I said, Colonel Shupp was rightly concerned so he gave me some real clear guidance about how close we could get and not getting decisively engaged. He did give us authority to engage targets within the ROE: so if we saw an enemy defensive position, or armed enemy forces in contact en route, we were cleared to engage and destroy them. So we took Captains Pete Glass and Ed Twaddell and they took their lead sections. It was the platoon leader, the Bradley that was actually going to be leading Alpha 2-7's attack, Charlie 3-8's roller guy and his lead platoon leader. We went from north to south and got up close to the city. We got close enough to leverage our optics and actually made sure that we all understood what three roads Alpha 2-7 was going to attack up. Then we identified Henry and the train station. We couldn't really see Henry because the train station was blocking it, but we got a good orientation on the breach. Captain Glass identified three enemy in a prepared defensive position up in a bunker on top of a building just south of the train station, and he engaged them with a main gun round from about 1,500 meters. It was a very long shot against three individuals in a bunker with weapons. That ended our limited objective attack for the night, but we accomplished our recon objective, so that was a very good advantage we had. Our scouts, led by Lieutenant Jimmy Campbell, had been out the whole day marking our route. There were some danger areas I was real concerned about that I wanted him to mark. That way, the next night when we actually did the attack, he could get in there with engineer tape and infrared (IR) chem lights so we didn't roll any tanks or Bradleys, because the route was pretty precarious and dusty and there was a landfill - risk assessment type stuff. In fact, the reason the breach took so long was that 3-1 actually did roll a vehicle in a similar place.

MM: Was that a tank they rolled?

JR: No, it wasn't a tank, but it slowed things down a little bit. The second thing was the shaping ops, and Scott Jackson and Captain Coley Tyler will be able to give you more information. As I see it, while we had a lot of tough fighting in the city, we had won the fight by the time we crossed the line of departure (LD) based on how effective two things were. First, there was the

unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) collection of 1st RCT. They had UAVs all over the place. They had way more than we do – about three per company and eight per battalion, I think. What I liked about the way the Marines flew them is that they take full advantage of them being “unmanned.” There’s a reason they’re unmanned. They fly them around, they crash them and they don’t really worry about them too much. So thanks to them we had pretty good intel. The second thing was that we had two AC-130s committed to this the night before the fight. As the main effort for 1st RCT, we had eight hours of one AC-130 dedicated just to 2-7 to shape this fight. It came with a second load of ammo, and we actually ran out of ammo before we ran out of station time, which had not happened in my experience in the military before. You usually run out of air before you run out of ammo. We destroyed obstacles we’d been able to identify with 105 millimeter munitions from the AC-130s. We’d collected and engaged numerous targets in the Jolan Park and taken away the enemy’s prepared defenses. Also, anybody who moves at night with a weapon when there’s an AC-130 up is going to die, so there was a very lethal eight-hour prep. Then we shot artillery and some 120 millimeter mortars – but we didn’t have eyes on so we couldn’t really get our 120s in the fight.

MM: Speaking of your indirect fire, who did most of the 155 millimeter shooting for you guys?

JR: 2nd Brigade had a 1st CAV division artillery (DIVARTY) battery, and Colonel Michael Formica could tell you which battery it was. But they shot a ton of ammo. Because we had so much air with the AC-130s over the city, the 155s were shooting from Camp Fallujah and were primarily supporting 2nd Brigade’s efforts as part of the isolation of the city. They did shoot a lot in the city but not for 2-7. Our 120 millimeter mortars were unbelievably lethal, though. The first time we’d ever fired them was down in Najaf; and we’d fired 200 to 300 rounds there, so we knew what other people didn’t know about how lethal they were. Everybody knows 120 millimeter mortars are lethal, but if you grew up in a 4.2 inch mortar Army, understanding the difference between those and even the 120s – between those and this digital, ballistically computerized system that we had fielded in the 1st CAV. Those are the stories you’re hearing from the Marines about the lethality and the accuracy of it. I was itching to get those in the fight but didn’t really need to because we had so much air. We had 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment (1-227). We had Marine attack aviation and the 1st CAV Apaches. 1-227 was there, and we had worked with them every day in our AO back in Taji, we’d fought with them in Najaf, so just knowing they were there was just a tremendous advantage. There were all sorts of fixed-wing stuff in the fight. Marines are very good at joint fires, and I would say significantly better than the Army, which is hard for me to say. But the reason I say that is because they’re so dependent on fires and they train with it. Their platoon leaders and company commanders do it on a routine basis when they’re out doing floats, doing Marine expeditionary units (MEUs) and train ups. Whereas generally speaking in the Army, if you get live close air support (CAS), it’s out at NTC or a couple training missions at Fort Hood, but it’s not a routine thing. The Marines also have comms capabilities to talk joint fires that we really don’t have organically in the Army, without getting those ETACs. So anyway, the joint fires and shaping ops the night prior started at dark and went well into the night. The decisive point, where we started winning and the enemy started losing, was right about the time we LD’d because the enemy was reeling. Then we hit them very hard with a very lethal mechanized force followed by dismounted Marines all over the place. If you’ve heard any of the enemy radio intercepts, they clearly show that the enemy was panicking and reeling from this attack. There were basically six battalions attacking from north to south and the enemy’s making contact on a broad front.

MM: Why don't we now focus on when the Marines actually blow the breach and the actions that occurred right after that.

JR: Sure. We were staged, waiting for the breach to get put in, and they had some troubles with just the normal fog and friction of combat. So we were waiting about four to six hours, trying to keep everybody alert. We were frustrated, as you can imagine, because we were burning that darkness up and we really wanted to have the entire period of darkness – limited visibility – to fight. Our plan was pretty simple. We were going to go through the breach with Cougar (Charlie 3-8). They were going to come down, turn to the east, orient on Phase Line Henry and attack along that axis. Alpha 2-7 would follow them through the breach. Then, as our main effort, Alpha 2-7 would conduct a frontal assault on three avenues of attack, but primarily three axes on three main roads, directly into the Jolan Park. It was risky; and when we did our wargaming and developed our plan, we realized that a frontal attack is not the optimal form of maneuver. However, if you're a rifle squad or a platoon in an urban environment, everything is a frontal assault. If we'd gotten sexy and tried to do some maneuver, we would have exposed a whole bunch of flanks, complicated the plan and end up hitting the Jolan Park anyway. No matter which way we did it, it would ultimately be a frontal assault for those young guys down there in those squads and platoons. So we opted for the frontal attack and mitigated that risk by having Cougar with tanks on Phase Line Henry. The plan was to keep those guys on line, so if Cougar needed to get in there and help, they could conduct a spoiling attack on any one of the east/west roads from the east to the west. If Apache (Alpha 2-7) got in trouble in there, they had the mutual support of the three platoons; and if it got real bad, they could get out to Phase Line Henry. One of the things about this terrain was that once you were committed to a route, your choices were to go forward or turn. Turning around was not an option. The attack went pretty well. We started getting through the breach and, according to the IPB, the enemy had mined the open area that ran from the railroad tracks to the first east/west main road. So we had our rollers on our lead tank, went through the breach, went through the open area into the road, and just put the rollers into a standard six-foot concrete wall on the far side of the road. As I said, this turned out to be pretty good, because when they detached the rollers and continued to attack, everybody was able to orient on the roller stuck in the wall, which turned out to be better than any terrain feature. Cougar turned and made contact initially. They had to turn their flank to the enemy and skirt that road, and they did a great job. They dropped off a platoon in overwatch and were engaging while the remainder of the company turned east and got on Phase Line Henry. Once there, they conducted the attack in-column as a company. They could get two tanks on line on the road because it was a pretty wide road, although one set of tracks were on the sidewalk. They followed that with two Bradleys so they could actually engage distant targets with the 25s shooting over the tanks if they had to. They made steady contact with the enemy: initially swarm tactics with the rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and a little bit of small arms fire, but really ineffective in terms of fighting the tanks and Bradleys. But there were *a lot* of RPGs. We also reduced one obstacle with 105s from the AC-130. But the primary contact was two to three man groups with RPGs jumping out from alleyways and off of roofs.

MM: It was my understanding that these RPGs penetrated some of the vision blocks on some of the tanks. Is that true?

JR: Yes. It's really a constant throughout the fight. We combat lost six M1 tanks in this battle, which is indicative of the ferocity of the combat. What the enemy was doing – and I don't know

if it was intentional or just luck – but the M1s were pretty vulnerable when they took an RPG shot in the vision blocks. It would blow the glass back into the turret, which caused minor problems. Our guys were actually wearing ballistic goggles and everything inside the turret after this happened the first time. We had two penetrations of number one skirts. We had one track blown off. Captain Glass ran over a Brazilian mine that blew the track off and damaged the turret. We had a couple pretty deep penetrations in the front hull armor. So we lost six tanks that had to be replaced, carted out. We had a lot of vision blocks blown out, some weapons systems damage, and one of our main guns took a RPG through the gun tube. But despite all this, we did not lose any tankers in the direct fire combat. So anyway, swarm tactics, RPGs, guys jumping in and out – really hard to clear fires, especially on the flanks. In the meantime, 7th RCT was attacking behind us; the boundary was a little bit to our east. We actually got through the breach and were in the city first, as per the plan, so you don't have a secure flank. Even though Apache is off to the west, there's a block of housing between Apache and Cougar; so when the enemy's jumping out in there, shooting RPGs, your ability to return fire is really important to understand where everybody is on the battlefield. We wanted to get Cougar all the way on to Henry, which would give Apache the room to get in there, get on those three avenues of approach, and start his attack with the two mech platoons and a tank platoon. Apache took a lot of small contacts – hit and run type things. We didn't have enough infantrymen, nor was it our intent to dismount and clear in detail as Apache attacked north to south. They were to destroy enemy forces they made contact with, and I told them not to bypass a squad-sized element if they saw it. So through the night and as dawn approached, Apache attacked all the way to the Jolan Park and got there right as the sun was coming up. Cougar had maintained that guard mission, that flank, all the way along Henry making heavy contact also. Major Karcher and I were behind Cougar on Phase Line Henry and then bounded east to west to check in and make sure Apache was doing fine.

MM: At this time, Charlie 3-8 and your element, you really have no protection on your left flank as far as the Marine battalion that was coming in on your left. Were they on line with you at this time?

JR: No. They were a little bit behind and there was a block or two of urban housing. The RCT boundary was a block or two to the east, so even if we were on line with each other – and they had the same problem. It's not like they weren't taking care of our flank; we weren't taking care of theirs either. We intentionally planned to leave some dead space in between us and them, and I'll get to that in a little bit. That's what Comanche (Charlie 2-7) ended up dealing with, along with a bunch of other stuff. So, Apache gets up to Jolan Park. Once we got close enough to it to start taking fire from the enemy defending there, we were able to really leverage the fires. That's where we got our 120s into the fight and got a couple close air missions into it. The AC-130, before it ran out of ammo, was able to pick up targets and armed men in Jolan Park, too, so they did a real good prep. Apache hits that, dismounts two infantry platoons, and basically drives the tank platoon through the Jolan Park from north to south. The plan was to attack through the objective mounted, dismount and clear backwards through it, which totally devastated the enemy. They were still trying to get out of the way of the tanks and the Bradleys and our infantry squads were on top of them. They killed a few guys, policed up some detainees, found a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) factory. Imagine you're a young team leader clearing vehicles and you come up on a VBIED and don't know if it's going to go off or not. So they wisely got the hell away from that and got into a building. The sun's

coming up, they've secured the four corners of the Jolan Park, and we're getting ready to do a passage of lines with 3-1 Marines, who'd been following a couple city blocks behind Apache getting into that tough clearance of building by building. I think what happened was that some of the enemy had seen the tanks and Bradleys and all the firepower and had just gone to ground in small two to three man elements. We just bypassed them. Even though we knocked out the big pockets of enemy and prepped all the terrain in terms of destroying cars that were VBIEDs, knocking down a couple obstacles, 3-1 still had a tough fight behind us rooting those guys out. So we're getting ready to do this passage of lines with 3-1 who was supposed to come up and pass through Alpha through Jolan Park and then turn west and attack downhill, if you will, to the river. We took a 127 millimeter rocket the enemy fired into Jolan Park and, unfortunately, it hit a building and we took about five or six wounded. We didn't lose anybody but had some pretty serious casualties. We lost one of our sniper teams, lost our air and naval gunfire liaison company (ANGLICO), so a little bit of chaos there. 3-1 was taking a little longer than they had thought, based on the tough fight, to get up there. So now we're getting ready to do forward passage of lines of 3-1 Marines; and the only good thing that came out of the delay with the breach taking an extra four hours was that now it was daylight and that was better than doing the passage in darkness. It's hard enough doing a forward passage of lines in contact - because we're still taking random sniper fire, guys are jumping out and shooting RPGs into Jolan Park, we're taking some mortar fire and that one rocket. But now, you've got a U.S. Army unit doing a passage of lines with a Marine unit in contact, so this is about as complex an operation as you can get going here. Cougar is still in heavy contact on Phase Line Henry and we had not been able to rehearse the passage of lines. As far as we'd gotten was that Major Karcher, our S3, and the S3 of 3-1 had met and gotten some shared graphics, made sure we'd done all the commo. Captain Twaddell had guys in contact so Major Karcher and I decided that that was the decisive point in the battle. We bounded up to Phase Line Henry three or four blocks over to Jolan Park and linked up with Captain Twaddell - who was doing a great job doing the passage of lines. I told him to get back in the fight and concentrate on the enemy. Major Karcher dismounted and the 3-1 S3 dismounted and the two of them stood on the corner talking on the radios. After a little bit of friction, they managed to complete the passage of lines and we got contact points set up. The challenge of doing a passage of lines is always finding the lanes. You've got to use what works for you, but in an urban environment the lanes are the roads. It's pretty easy to identify them. Everything else is impossible, but that part is easy. So we got them on about four lanes and turned to the west. 3-1, over the course of about four hours, passes about two of their companies through us and got turned down to the west, which then freed up Apache to consolidate and complete actions on the objective and secure Jolan Park. As soon as we were sure that was going to happen, we pushed Cougar all the way to the southern boundary of our initial objective. Objective Pennsylvania was Jolan Park and Apache got that secured. By 1230 on the 9th, we got 3-1 passed through us and decided that that night we were going to push Charlie 3-8 to what we called Objective Virginia. So they're going to turn the corner from Phase Line Henry onto Fran and attack down to this open schoolyard-looking piece of terrain. The thinking behind that was that down in Najaf we'd had real good luck. Going back to my thing about the infantry associated with the mechanized formation that, in an urban environment, is pretty much committed to protecting the tanks and the Bradleys. Their job is to dismount, grab a building, get some elevation, get a piece of decisive terrain and, if the enemy has an obstacle set up, they can dismount and clear the obstacle. But they're not going to clear in detail. What we found worked real well in Najaf, and what we're trying to do here in Fallujah, is grab a piece of open terrain - a school, a park - something we could take away from

the enemy so we could get our mechanized guys good fields of fire. What we saw in Najaf was that the enemy's going to defend that because it's important to him, too. So you have an opportunity to kill or capture the enemy as part of the initial assault, and it gives you a marked advantage in terms of terrain. Usually, the enemy will counterattack against that, therefore giving you even more of an opportunity to kill or capture him. So we're trying to do that here. As Cougar pushes south on Henry, we start to not have enough of Charlie 3-8 to maintain Phase Line Henry. Charlie 2-7 was our reserve and their initial mission was to follow and assume Apache's mission as Apache culminated or got bogged down going to Jolan Park; and its secondary mission was to follow and take up the slack on Henry so Cougar could continue the attack. Once we knew we had Jolan Park, that's how we committed Comanche. So Comanche comes in, led by Captain Chris Brooke - a great officer - and he gets onto Phase Line Henry. The S3 and I are forward so we're just talking on the radio. He pulls in there with his company and he's got an unsecured flank to the east, unsecured flank to the west, he knows there are friendly Marines on both of those things, he's got Charlie 3-8 forward of him, and he's still making contact. The enemy is still counterattacking with those two to three man teams, jumping out, using RPGs, so he's not in there just mopping up the road. I told Charlie 2-7 that they had enemy on their flanks, they probably had enemy between them and Apache 2-7 and 3-1 Marines, and definitely between them and 7th RCT. They couldn't be whipping 25 rounds all over the battlefield, but using precision fires they could get it all mopped up. So they secured the road and Captain Brooke had his platoons dismount and took one set of buildings on each side of the road. They did have enough infantry, in that case, with the Brads on the road in support, to start detailed clearance of at least the first set of buildings on both sides of the road. That's what he spent the next day doing. He eventually expanded that to the west - all the way out to the 7th RCT/1st RCT boundary. Not your typical secure line of communications (LOC) mission. Anyway, it gets to be about 2300 and we decided to commit Cougar to Objective Virginia. We thought it would be Cougar but we had Alpha 2-7 prepared as well. This was our success option where Alpha was sitting on Jolan Park, we'd passed the Marines, and Cougar still had enough combat power to turn. At this time, as I recall, I think we're a good way ahead of 7th RCT. I'd say they were about halfway to Fran over on their side. I knew Cougar was going to have an exposed flank to his west, but when he turned this corner, he'd be doubling the amount of exposure because the enemy was going to be on his south. Just to the west of Objective Virginia is the cemetery and we used the same kind of thought process as with Jolan Park. Now we've taken away their rallying point, the enemy isn't going to know where to go, and so they'll be congregating in there. We're getting reports of 10 to 20 guys milling around here and there and people on the roofs of buildings. When they did pick up weapons, the AC-130 was back up again that night and we would have them shooting in there. We also had our 120s shooting some prep fires. The problem was that there was a protected target - a mosque - near the southwestern corner of Objective Virginia. We knew the enemy was going to take advantage of that, but we couldn't strike it until we actually picked those guys up. So Cougar turns to the west on Fran and comes down on a couple different axes. Again, same basic TTP: we're going to lead with tanks, attack through the objective, dismount and clear back. He does that, gets on the objective and, sure enough, we start taking a lot of fire from that mosque. Of course, by this time, we've got dismounted squads on the streets, in the buildings and all around there, so we've masked all of our indirect fire ability. We can't shoot an AC-130 on it, can't shoot 120s, can't call for artillery, and we surely can't do any kind of CAS or fixed-wing strikes. We're kind of in a predicament here. I've got good comms with Captain Glass. Major Karcher and I are sitting on Fran about halfway between Jolan Park and Objective Virginia. We

get a call from Attack 6, the 1-227 commander, who is our organic 1st CAV aviation battalion. They were based out of Camp Taji and we'd worked with these guys pretty much on a daily basis when we were up in Taji, so we had a good working relationship, good interoperability. So Attack 6 says he thinks he can get a Hellfire missile shot in. It took about 30 minutes. I told Captain Glass to get all his dismounted squads, get the situation under control, so at least his guys are in buildings so they can be secure. Once we did that, we cleared the objective and were able to get two Hellfires shot in by lasing the target. 1-227 shot two Hellfires into the building and that was it. They destroyed the enemy. I really don't think they were expecting that kind of attack because we were so close to them. We were within 100 to 200 meters of the building probably. After the shots, Captain Glass did a great job of immediately getting his infantry back on the offensive. They got into the building and killed a couple guys, captured a couple more, but really their fate was decided prior to the squad getting into the building. So a day and a half into the fight, we've got our Day Two objective, which was Objective Virginia. We thought it would take us a day to get to Jolan Park, another day to get to Virginia, and then a third day to get down to Ohio and Kentucky, which were the two bridges. We're already a little bit ahead of schedule and we had a long discussion about whether we should hold what we got during the day time and wait for another night - because we were really having our way with the enemy at night because of our optics. At this time, 3-1 was fighting but they were doing well; and 3-5 was up in the northwest corner of the city, which was their objective. They were in some really tough terrain and rooting the enemy out down there. I called Colonel Shupp and told him what we had and where we were. I said that I believed we could continue the attack, if that was his intent, or if he wanted we could continue to hold and consolidate what we had. He said to continue the attack. Now we had a couple different options. We could have pushed Cougar down to the bridges - Ohio in the north and Kentucky in the south. The good news is that the far side of the bridges had been secured by one of the Marine reconnaissance units and the enemy didn't have the ability to counterattack us across the bridges. The Marine UAVs were looking, all the aircraft we had up were looking, and they were all saying there were 10 to 20 man dismounted defenses around these things. We assumed - especially Ohio, the contractor bridge - that they had a psychological or information operations (IO) importance. Our IPB said there would be about a platoon of dismounts, RPGs and some automatic weapons at these two places, so I didn't think we needed to send the tanks. They had just fought all night. Apache had fought all day and all night in Jolan Park, lost a couple guys to casualties, but basically had been static for about 12 hours. So we decided to have Apache go up to Henry, go south of Henry and come down Fran and conduct two platoon-sized attacks against those bridges and take Objectives Ohio and Kentucky. Captain Twaddell came back up on the net and said he could do that. But as he was looking at it, he wanted to go south of Objective Virginia and take Kentucky and then attack up into Objective Ohio from the south into the north. Everything had been a north to south fight and he thought that attacking south to North would give him a marked advantage over the enemy. He also didn't want to get in between Jolan Park and Objective Virginia, because he had to turn over Jolan Park to the Marines and Cougar was sitting up on Objective Virginia. He didn't want to shoot the gap in between those two guys because there wasn't a lot of room. Captain Twaddell had done everything I'd asked him to do and he did a great job down in Najaf. And you know, the ability to acknowledge that one of your guys doing the fight might have a better idea than you is not something that's lost on me, so I told him if that's what he wanted to do, he could do it. He started that attack at about 0900 on the 10th. He made some contact as he was going south around Objective Virginia and that was then in the southernmost flank of 1st RCT. He got to Objective Kentucky, the enemy had a

squad or two sized element on there, but it was downhill and the 25 millimeter Bradley machine guns made quick work of that defense. They dismounted when they got there and the Navy SEALs we had attached to us as snipers weren't doing anything. I asked their platoon leader if he knew anything about explosives and he did, so we put him in the back of Captain Twaddell's Bradley and he went down there with an infantry squad and checked out the bridge so he could render a good report. We weren't going to try and cross it; that wasn't part of the plan. We just had to render a report on whether any visible explosives had been wired or detonated. Then they continued the attack south to north and saw the same type of thing: 10 to 15 guys on Objective Ohio trying to make some impassioned last stand that lasted all of about three or four minutes. They secured Objective Ohio and they were all done early on the afternoon of the 10th. It's now starting to get dark. Since we'd taken the objectives, we didn't want to give them up so we called back to 1st RCT and cross-talked with 3-1 and 3-5, because we weren't sure which one of them was going to take the bridges. It was very unlikely that the enemy was going to try and take those back; and if they did, it wasn't going to be much of a defense. Our other option was trying to do a battle handoff between a Marine platoon and an Army platoon at night. What we recommended, and what Colonel Shupp agreed to, was that we'd pull off those objectives, maintain overwatch and let the Marines come up and take them over that way, instead of doing a physical handoff of the two objectives. I think 3-5 was the one who eventually ended up doing that. Now it's the night of the 10th around 2100 and we've accomplished the first 72 hours worth of objectives. The Marines are having a good but tough fight, they have some casualties, but they're rooting out the last pockets of the enemy in the 1st RCT sector. They're well on their way to having that secured and I think they got that clearance complete and got out to Phase Line Fran around the morning of the 11th. So it took them about 48 hours. At this point, we've got Apache down by Ohio and Kentucky in overwatch; we've got Cougar on Virginia screening along Phase Line Fran and then the southern road that runs from Henry to Objective Kentucky. Comanche 2-7 has got Phase Line Henry from Fran back to the train station secured, and that's where we stood on the night of the 10th.

MM: Can you tell me a little bit about the SEALs that were with you?

JR: They were snipers that we had attached to our companies. We had done the same thing down in Najaf and it worked really well in Fallujah as well. These sniper teams come with a real good capability because they're all joint tactical air controller (JTAC) qualified and can call fires also. So we put them with our companies and when we got to a key piece of terrain - an extra tall building or a real good field of fire - we'd dismount them and put them in there. We'd use that cover to get them in position and secure them. We'd give them quick reaction force (QRF) capability, so if they had to break contact, they can get back to you. That worked pretty well. Their platoon leader would be in our TOC, usually. It was a good improvisation and my XO, Major Jackson, was the one who thought of that. Okay, so it's the night of the 10th and we're about a good solid day and a half ahead in terms of 2-7, and a day ahead in terms of 1st RCT. The original plan was for 7th RCT to take the other three quarters of the city, to attack south and kind of wheel around and attack the southwestern quadrant last. They had a tough fight over there, and no plan survives contact with the enemy. What's really happening is 7th RCT and 1st RCT are about on line and they've each taken about a quarter of the city. Their quarter was bigger, obviously. So we're all arrayed on Phase Line Fran and this is when we had the conversation - the night of the 10th, morning of the 11th - where there was some talk about 2-7 moving over to 7th RCT and completing that attack. I was actually talking to Colonel Shupp

while we were on Phase Line Henry at this mosque and General Richard Natonski, the 1st MARDIV commander, rolled up and we had a quick huddle. I just told him that it was not easy to break contact, disengage, get back and go get integrated in a new regimental combat team, so I offered the suggestion of just continuing the attack south along Phase Line Henry. It would just be easier, purely from a re-task organization perspective for 2-7. I don't know what the rest of the conversation was after that. He and Colonel Shupp talked for a while and, basically, Colonel Shupp came back and gave us the new mission of continuing the attack to the south. He wanted me to continue to attack down to Phase Line Henry all the way down to the southern part of the city. Then his plan was to take 3-1 and 3-5 and push them through the urban area to the south. So between 11 and 13 November, we continued the attack with Cougar down Phase Line Henry from Fran all the way down to the south. We attacked with Charlie 3-8 and Alpha 2-7 on the night of the 11th. We attacked down to the south – not on a clearance mission – but we did pick some zones where we thought the enemy was concentrated based on terrain and intelligence. Cougar continued down Phase Line Henry all the way down to the southern part of the city. Alpha 2-7 launched from Phase Line Fran – again picking up one or two roads per platoon – and attacked about halfway through that fourth quadrant, about two kilometers into the city. They made *really* heavy contact there.

MM: Was that about the 13th when Captain Twaddell's Bradley got hit?

JR: Right. The 13th was a bad day. We were fighting nonstop and were pushing the Bradleys and the mech platoons into that southern part of the city to try and prep it. We knew we couldn't clear it all. We knew 3-5 and 3-1, primarily, were coming behind us and our guys were in there really trying to make contact with the enemy. By this time, the enemy wasn't stupid, so they're not really looking to make contact with tanks and Bradleys. They'd shot their best stuff at us, they'd shot RPGs, but the tanks are still out there. Every time they shot at a Bradley, they got a 25 millimeter response followed by dismounted infantry squads, so my assessment was that the enemy wasn't going to make contact with us unless we found them. We're pushing into these urban areas, knowing that the Marines are going to have to go building to building behind us. My guidance to the company commanders was to get in there and destroy the enemy where you can because, if not, he's going to be fighting on his terms inside a building against the Marines. So we got in there and had several small engagements. The enemy really got a lucky shot into the ramp of Apache 6, Captain Twaddell's Bradley. They had a couple of seriously wounded guys in there and the commander's vehicle is now inoperable. I'm listening to all of this on the radio, and I'm about five blocks north of that when it happened. I'm just thinking that it sounded like the beginning of a *Black Hawk Down* kind of thing, but we had some unbelievable heroism on the part of some young soldiers. Specialist Scott Cogil – Captain Twaddell's medic – jumps out of the back of one Bradley, runs through open fire and gets in to the casualties. One of our sergeants had his arm blown off by the RPG and he got in there, put a tourniquet on, and saved his life. The guys in the back of the Bradley were seriously wounded but were still trying to do buddy aid on each other. Captain Twaddell has wounded guys but he's up there staying in charge of his company. Lieutenant Michael Duran and Lieutenant Daniel Kilgore, the two mech platoon leaders, moved to the location, got a good security perimeter and continued to engage and destroy the enemy. Over on Phase Line Henry, at about the same time, is where we had the engagement with 3rd Platoon of Apache where they took some pretty heavy fire from a building dismounted. The enemy had built a bunker inside the room so they survived the initial entry blast; and as our guys went into the room, they opened

up with an RPK machine gun and inflicted five casualties out of the squad in seconds. So we get everybody out on the street and the enemy is up on the roof throwing grenades down into the alleyway. Almost the entire squad is wounded at this time. Specialist Jose Velez had a squad automatic weapon (SAW) and basically stood over three of his wounded comrades in the alleyway and returned fire, suppressing the enemy and keeping them off the wall so they couldn't throw grenades. He got hit by a sniper and unfortunately lost his life. He earned the Silver Star doing that. And Specialist Benny Alicea, who was in the same squad and was already wounded at this point by a grenade fragment that hit him in the leg and lower back, he stepped up and did the same thing. He put his body in between the enemy and continued with the SAW until the rest of the platoon could get up, get a Bradley in there, and start suppressing with 25s so they can evac the casualties. Then one of our armor platoons under Lieutenant Matt Wojcik moved to the location and was able to put a tank section's worth of fires into the building - and the enemy that survived actually surrendered. As a result of just that one squad contact in the alleyway, both Alicea and Velez were awarded the Silver Star. Unfortunately, Velez's was awarded posthumously. But it was just unbelievable heroism and bravery and small unit leadership, and that engagement was indicative of what was happening everywhere: Marines, 2-2 Infantry, 2-7 - just all over the battlefield. In another instance, Cougar had lost one of his tanks; the vision block had been blown out. The platoon leader and the TC had both been wounded and evacuated, so Sergeant Jonathan Shields was trying to get the tank back to the task force support area. He was a great young sergeant trying to get his tank fixed so he could get back to the fight, get back to his buddies. The TC's hatch had been damaged by the RPG round and he's up in that hatch. Well, the tank went into a 60-foot strip mine that was north of the train station that nobody knew was there; the tank flipped and unfortunately he lost his life. That was a great young sergeant. All he could think about was getting back and getting the tank fixed, or jumping on another tank and getting back in the fight, because he knew his buddies were at it. For me, that's the main difference between our soldiers / Marines and the enemy fighters. The enemy had some committed fighters and some competent fighters; and they had strategic leadership and operational level leadership just like we do. A different value system but effective. The difference is the enemy doesn't have the young sergeants like we do and the fire team leaders like Alicea and guys like Sergeant Shields. When you make contact, four enemy equals four fighters; for us, though, four Marines or four soldiers equal a well-trained fire team led by competent leadership. "Go where I go. Do what I do." That carried the day in every single engagement that I saw in Fallujah and in Najaf.

MM: One of your soldiers was kind enough to drop off the memorial ceremony sheets. I've got Sergeant Shields and Specialist Velez's pictures here from the ceremony.

JR: That would be a good one to put on the cover of the book. That's what it's all about. They were very tough losses. You can say the battalion fought a tough fight and only lost two guys, but to me that's ludicrous. Others may say it was a big success, but whenever you lose an American fighting man in your command it was not a success. We accomplished our objectives, we destroyed the enemy and it was a big victory for the U.S., but it's never going to be a great thing based on guys like that making the ultimate sacrifice for their country. So, we're back on the 11th, 12th and 13th, continuing these spoiling attacks with Apache 2-7 and trying to make contact. Cougar is dominating the road to the south - again, exposed flanks on both sides, pretty steady contact here and there. Sniper fire is dying down now, so are the RPG fires. 3-1 is moving behind Apache. The last piece is that the Marines were making pretty steady contact;

and as they got south after they passed through Apache, there was some great work by some young company commanders like Captain Glass and his Marine counterparts who were down there talking to each other and coordinating the fight. He would ask where they were, what their next objective was. As a preparatory shaping operation to that, Captain Glass would take a tank section and attack east to west along an avenue of approach which would put him in proximity of those objectives, hopefully drawing fire from the enemy. That would then give us the ROE we needed to engage and destroy the objective, shape the fires, and greatly reduce the casualties that the Marines would take. We had real good crosstalk. About the night of the 13th, we got another mission to continue the attack all the way to the south and continue to conduct those attacks in support of 3-1, and that lasted until about the 19th. Then we pretty much controlled Henry all the way to the train station with Charlie 2-7 and to the southern outskirts of the city with Charlie 3-8. On the night of the 19th, we were told that the Marines had it under control from there and they released 2-7 to get back in the fight with 1st CAV.

MM: During the last few days as Charlie 2-7 is controlling that LOC, is he pretty much constantly still under fire?

JR: Yes. I need to talk about that. He's got a seam between him and 7th RCT. Apparently, there were 5,000 to 10,000 enemy in the city at one time and I don't know how many of them stayed and fought, how many left, or how many fled. There were a lot of them in 2-7's axis of advance and zone of attack. The enemy's basic strategy was to stay in three to four man pockets, stay behind in the buildings, and wait for somebody to come into the buildings in order to take away the advantage of indirect fires and all the other advantages we had over them. By now, we're monitoring all this and we know what's happening to the Marines. They went into one building and the enemy detonated the building on them; there were several buildings where the enemy had set booby traps and IEDs. The one incident we had was where the enemy had built a bunker inside a building and there were satchel charges. So inside the buildings was no way to do business. My guidance to Captain Chris Brooke was that he needed to destroy those pockets of enemy but he needed to make contact on his terms. Chris spent the whole time with some great sergeants and platoon leaders dismounting and moving fire teams through the urban area, making contact with the enemy, breaking contact, remounting, and then destroying the enemy in detail both mounted and with fires. He basically made movement to contact to make contact, fix the enemy, back up so he could clear fires, and then destroyed them primarily with the 120 millimeter mortars. We were so confident in those things: you can shoot them behind you; you can shoot them between units. As long as you're confident in the grid you're calling, you're going to hit exactly what you shot at, and that was a great asset. The 4th Battalion of Iraqi Army was OPCON'd to 2-7, basically to pick up that security of Phase Line Henry from Fran back to the north. I tasked Captain Brooke to integrate them and he did a great job of that. He used them to do the search and security missions. They'd find a cache, maintain security on it, which then let Chris maintain his combat power for these mounted and dismounted urban search and attack missions he had to do to clean up that scene. Basically, three companies in heavy contact at the same time, all different fights but all doing a great job, and it's 100 percent due to the skill and the will of the individual soldiers and Marines, which was very high. The real difference maker, I would say, was from team leader through platoon leader, and then three great company commanders.

MM: In your unit's AAR comments, they have a slice in there on roles and missions. They have the commander managing the chaos, the XO controlling the fires and the S3 controlling maneuver. Do you have any comments about that, particularly your role in managing the chaos?

JR: We made that slide when we came back because we really wanted to capture these lessons for efforts like yours. We did some officer professional developments (OPDs) with other units that were deploying, and this was just something Major Karcher, Major Jackson, Sergeant Major Timothy Mace and I, along with the platoon leaders' and company commanders' input, put together. In my career growing up as a platoon leader and a company commander, I'd spent a lot of time and energy trying to get my guys going, trying to get the support by fire position up, trying to get a squad to bound – all the way back to platoon live-fire stuff. However, the thing I was struck by is that that's not what happens. In the absence of guidance, these great soldiers are going to act. They want to make contact with the enemy. They want to do their job and, quite frankly, within the ROE, they want to kill everybody they can kill. The challenge as a commander is harnessing that energy and that violence of action – because they're going to go somewhere. It's not about getting them to go; it's about getting them to go where you want and stopping a company when you need to stop them so you can get your other company up on line. Like in the beginning of the fight when Cougar's out on Henry: their whole purpose is to stay parallel with Apache, secure Apache on the flank, and give them the ability to get out or be able to counterattack. Well, left to their own devices, Cougar would have attacked all the way through the city the first night. The ability to know where you're at on the battlefield is important, so you can do things like call fire. There's no doubt about it: you can't win at anything without infantrymen on the ground physically taking it. But the easiest, most effective and least casualty-producing-on-friendly-forces way to fight the enemy – even in an urban environment – is with fires, and Major Jackson did an incredible job, as did all the guys in the TOC. But in order for them to be able to their job, my job as commander was to make sure we knew where everybody was and that we were controlling that violence. The best analogy I ever heard came from one of my former company commanders. He said that fighting in an urban environment was like playing tackle football in a hallway. Then you throw tanks and Bradleys in there and it's like a demolition derby in a hallway – and that's the kind of chaos you need to manage. You're the guy behind the main effort company or in between two companies, and you listen to the radios, leverage your digital systems and you pay attention to who's really where and make sure you're doing the right thing.

MM: One of the Marine battalion commanders was telling me that, in the course of planning this operation when they were discussing the ROE, he said your S3 raised his hand and said something to the effect of, "When you unleash a heavy mech battalion like this in the city, it's going to be Armageddon." That apparently got somebody's attention.

JR: [*Laughter*] Well, I don't know about that. But, you know, they know that. Colonel Shupp and Lieutenant Colonels Willy Buhl and Pat Malay are career infantrymen. Marine infantry and Army infantry are probably closer than Army infantry is with other branches in the Army. They're pros, but maybe they do have a bit of angst: they don't have Bradleys and they don't fight mech warfare the same way we do. But at the risk of overstating the obvious, we did go to great pains to point out to them that a mechanized task force is not a precision instrument. Things are going to get broken and there's going to be some damage. Sometimes, when a sniper

is placing effective fire on somebody and, depending on where he's at – and the fact that we can see him wherever he's at – sometimes we're going to shoot a tank main gun round at a sniper, which happened a lot. It does break a lot of stuff and those 120 millimeter mortars are great. We shot 580 of them, and every single one of them is going to destroy something. Literally leveling buildings with mortars. I think some of the Marines would tell you the same thing, that those guns were one of the big lifesavers out on the battlefield – a big enemy killer and a devastating weapon system. So out there on the battlefield, that's kind of how we divided the labor with the two majors. I would figure out what's going on, I'll talk to Company Commanders and control the big picture. Major Karcher knew the plan and, passed down from me, he issued clear, direct task and purpose orders. He would listen to what I would tell the company commanders and would follow up on it to make sure it happened, make sure they understood exactly what I meant. He would look at implications of that movement to other things in the task force and would make sure we were adjusting a phase line or moving a fire support coordination measure. Calling over to 3-1 and reporting back to the TOC. Major Jackson did a great job as well, and his task was to fight the fires. He kept me out of the business of worrying about which aircraft is doing what to who. He did all that, using the UAVs and mIRC Chat and all the other intel capabilities. And oh by the way, we lost six tanks and at least three or four Bradleys, and were shooting ungodly amounts of ammo. Going back to what I said earlier about the 1st CAV. Colonel Murray called me one time and said, "Do you want them with crews or without crews?" That's all he said. The guy was in charge of the Green Zone in Baghdad – the one place they can't fail in all of Iraq. He's talking about sending us tanks, fully loaded tanks with ammo and crews if we'd asked for them. We'd get the helicopters flying us mortar ammo in conditions that nobody had any business flying in. All that was because of Major Jackson and the BN TF staff, they made that happen.

MM: Is there one overarching point that stands out from the battle of Fallujah that new battalion commanders should know?

JR: Something that is obvious, but needs to be said, is that I was struck and amazed and will forever be humbled by the selflessness and lethality of the American fighting man: Marine and soldier, tanker and infantryman. They are an absolutely unbelievable treasure that our country has. And it's not about leading them in combat; it's about watching them and serving with them. To watch these guys look at a building full of bad guys that they know are in there, to watch them look at their buddy and look at their team leader and go, "Hell yeah, we can do this." They went building after building, block after block and won every single fight. This is Fallujah, the last stronghold, the last bastion of the insurgency, the most diehard guys – and these young fire teams, these squads and platoons just whipped their ass. We had the best company commanders that I've ever served with, not just in 2-7 but across that whole formation. The stuff we ask company commanders to do on the modern battlefield exceeds what battalion and brigade commanders have done in history. That's my number one observation. From a tactical lessons learned standpoint, mechanized forces can fight in urban terrain and can be absolutely lethal and devastating. We have the best equipment in the world, period. When you talk about the commander's independent thermal viewer (CITV) systems on the Bradleys and the tanks, you basically have turned a section of tanks into a platoon of tanks and a section of Bradleys into platoon of Bradleys. You can put two tanks at an intersection and they can control all four of those roads. There are 11,000 rounds of coax on the tank, not to mention the main gun rounds and the 25 millimeter on the Bradleys. If you take a round from a

building, you can respond. They had an asymmetric enemy running around shooting sniper rounds and whipping RPGs at us, and a section of Bradleys can suppress the face of a 10-story building and kill everybody in it with relative precision. They can hit a window the enemy is shooting from and do so without causing damage and casualties they don't intend to. As long as the infantrymen organic to that mech task force understand that their task and purpose is to protect the tanks and Bradleys, and that there's a supporting force that's larger than that mechanized formation. Don't get me wrong: if you're going to clear and secure urban terrain, you're always going to need to have dismounted light infantrymen - guys like the 3-1 and 3-5 Marines and all the other guys that fought. But if you're going to go in and destroy the enemy, gain a key piece of terrain and take something important away from the enemy in an urban environment, I believe that not only can you do that mounted with mechanized forces. You can also do it faster, with more effect on the enemy and way fewer casualties by going with that mounted tank and Bradley/dismounted infantry mix - as long as you have good fire support. I caveat all that by saying that that was Iraq and the battle of Fallujah. It worked for us in Najaf and Fallujah, although there's always going to be a caution against learning lessons and then applying them to a different enemy on a different piece of terrain. The enemy we faced was a dedicated, committed enemy; he was well trained by insurgent standards and definitely well equipped; he also had a good amount of time to prep his defense and had decent communications - but he was still nothing compared to U.S. forces. He was a pretty competent enemy, but he was absolutely devastated in every engagement we had with him. That would be the thing I learned over the course of a year as a mech battalion task force commander in Iraq, because I would not have thought that going in necessarily.

MM: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

JR: I've taken a lot of your time already, Matt, but I'm glad you're doing this.

MM: Thank you very much for your time.



END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Jennifer Vedder, 26 April 2006