

to the north west and north of Kuwait, although we sought to deceive him into expecting our attack to be launched directly into southern Kuwait and by an amphibious landing from the sea.

We preceded offensive operations themselves by four days of extensive artillery strikes coupled with further deception tactics. The first British ground action of the war took place on 18 February when the Artillery Group of 32nd and 39th Heavy Regiments engaged enemy ground positions with M110 Self Propelled Guns and the new MLRS. On 23 February the Alternate Headquarters of 1 (BR) Armoured Division advanced to collocate with 1 (US) Mechanised Infantry Division's Tactical Headquarters. At this stage, 97 per cent of the Challenger main battle tanks, 98 per cent of our Warrior infantry fighting vehicles and M109 guns, and 90 per cent of our Lynx helicopters were serviceable and ready for action.

The ground offensive started at 0100 hours (GMT) on 24 February, deliberately in the way the Iraqi forces appeared to be expecting. Naval gunfire and amphibious feints from the Gulf, with frontal attacks through the defensive fortifications in southern Kuwait, were aimed at distracting Iraqi attention from the main thrust into eastern Iraq. The initial operations were by 18 (US) Airborne Corps on the left flank and MARCENT and the Joint Force Command (East) on the right; 1(BR) Armoured Division Harbour Parties and Main Body began moving forward shortly afterwards. It was planned that the main armoured thrust from 7 (US) corps, which included 1 (BR) Armoured Division, would begin its attack at least 24 hours after the ground operation began. However, because both 18 (US) Airborne Corps and MARCENT advanced much more quickly than was expected, 7 (US) Corps was ordered to attack on the afternoon of the first day. 1 (US) Mechanised Infantry Division conducted breach operations against the light enemy defensive positions throughout the remainder of 24 February, with 1 (BR) Armoured Division remaining at 2 hours notice to move once 16 lanes had been cleared though the enemy minefields facing their Forward Assembly Area.

The leading elements of 1 (BR) Armoured Division, 16/5 Lancers with 32nd and 39th Heavy Regiments providing fire support from the area of the breach, crossed into Iraq at 0200 hours on 25 February, followed at 1145 hours by 7 Armoured Brigade with the Queen's Royal Irish Hussars in the vanguard. The first contact with the enemy occurred at 1630 hours when the Brigade attacked and destroyed a major communication site, with 1st Battalion The Staffordshire Regiment fighting through this position and clearing enemy trenches and bunkers. An enemy armoured company counter-attacked but was defeated with the loss of all its tanks. 7 Armoured Brigade secured their initial objective (codenamed COPPER) by 2000 hours. 4 Brigade, with fire support from 2nd Field Regiment, then advanced towards its first objective (BRONZE) where it encountered pockets of enemy armour, artillery, infantry and logistic elements; the Brigade destroyed at least 12 tanks, 11 guns and 20 other vehicles and secured the position by 0200 hours on 26 February.

By daybreak on 26 February, 7 Armoured Brigade had destroyed 18 tanks, with anti-tank helicopters from 4 Regiment Army Air Corps taking their share, and defeated a weak enemy task force to secure objective ZINC, while 4 Brigade destroyed 50 more enemy vehicles and captured 2 Iraqi divisional commanders as it continued its advance to capture objective BRASS. The 1st battalion The Royal Scots, supported by tanks from the 14/20 Hussars, destroyed numerous armoured personnel carriers as it overwhelmed enemy infantry emplacements in the position. During the afternoon, the Queen's Royal Irish Hussars Battle Group led the 7 Armoured Brigade attack on objective PLATINUM with the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards providing flank protection. Simultaneously, the 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers assailed 4 Brigade's next objective (STEEL), destroying three battalions of artillery.

As it became clear that the enemy was either retreating or surrendering in large numbers, the Division was ordered to swing east and continue the advance to capitalise on its early success. Both brigades encountered isolated groups of enemy tanks, infantry and supporting elements, but quickly destroyed them on their way to securing objectives VARSITY and TUNGSTEN by mid-morning on 27 February. 4 Brigade was subsequently inundated by thousands of Iraqi soldiers fleeing from abandoned positions in the south and seeking to surrender. That night 7 Armoured Brigade was tasked to race east towards what had been considered the vital ground for the defence of Kuwait, the Matla Ridge north of Kuwait City. The objective (COBALT) was seized by 0500 hours as planned and, in the process, 2 FROG missile launchers, a FROG missile and a command complex were captured.

By this time the lines of communication were extremely stretched. The Royal Highland Fusiliers and the King's Own Scottish Borderers, part of the Prisoner of War Guard Force following up behind the leading brigades, were awash with prisoners and busy

supervising their move back to the divisional prisoner of war compound manned by the Coldstream Guards. Logistic resupply had been maintained despite a rapid advance across the desert over 200 kilometres from the initial breach. Moreover, communications were maintained throughout by the Royal Signals over the full length of the lines of communications, and the Royal Engineers and Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers had ensured that not only were all physical obstacles overcome but also that virtually the whole armoured vehicle fleet was still operational.

When hostilities were suspended at 0500 hours on 28 February, the Coalition commander ordered the land forces to remain in place and take up defensive positions, but to be prepared for further offensive operations should they prove necessary. Our troops were told to destroy all enemy military equipment within their areas of responsibility, while continuing the tasks of surveillance, reconnaissance and the collection and processing of Iraqi prisoners of war. Thereafter, both brigades moved to secure positions on the main road running from Kuwait City to Basra. The land campaign had lasted just short of 100 hours and in that time the Coalition force had routed an Iraqi army that originally had over half a million men. Mercifully, our own casualties were extraordinarily light, amounting to only 15 Army personnel killed and 43 wounded, although the tragedy of such small losses was magnified by the death on 26 February of nine soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, as a result of an air attack by friendly forces. Three of the soldiers were attached from the Queen's Own Highlanders, exemplifying how reinforcements were spread throughout the length and breadth of the Division.

#### MEDICAL SERVICES

One of the major concerns during the planning for Operation GRANBY was to seek to minimise the number of allied casualties. I was particularly conscious that Iraq possessed chemical weapons and had employed them against Iran and even against its own people. I therefore had to mobilise a significant medical presence in theatre and put in train a system for treatment of the injured back in the UK.

The medical plan ultimately resulted in the establishment of 1,800 UK hospital beds in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and on board RFA ARGUS in the northern Gulf. The beds and their associated surgical facilities were formed as dressing stations and medical support troops, as well as general surgical and evacuation hospitals. We also developed a major aeromedical evacuation plan both within the theatre and from the theatre back to the UK, which involved the use of over 60 helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, some dedicated solely to aeromedical evacuation, together with arrangements to charter eight aircraft from civilian companies if the need arose. Regular medical personnel from all three Services staffed these facilities and were supplemented by the mobilisation of the Territorial Army (205 Scottish General Hospital RAMC(V)), Royal Auxiliary Air Force (4626 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron) and other individual reservists with specialist skills.

In addition, we had to prepare to deal with the potentially large number of prisoner of war casualties. The Secretary of State for Defence invited other nations to assist in this task and Memoranda of Understanding were agreed with a number of countries. Canada, Norway, Romania and Sweden provided formed hospital units totalling 710 beds; and Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Singapore contributed surgical teams who worked in conjunction with UK and other national units. In addition a surgical team from Belgium worked in the RAF Hospital at Akrotiri in Cyprus.

Medical support was just one area where we received invaluable backing from the civilian community. Many of our medical personnel were reservists who readily volunteered. In addition, there was a considerable amount of preparatory work carried out at hospitals in the UK in anticipation of an influx of injured troops. Many people played a part, for example those who had retired from nursing and underwent refresher training to release specialist nurses for front-line duty, and those who freely offered transport and accommodation for relatives of injured servicemen returned to mainland hospitals. No-one was more relieved than I when the number of casualties was so low, but I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the dedication of the many who were instrumental in the establishment of comprehensive medical support facilities which, had the battle taken a different turn, would undoubtedly have saved many lives.

#### POST HOSTILITY EVENTS

After consultations with the British Government and other Coalition members, President Bush gave the order to suspend hostilities at 0500 hours GMT on 28 February. The limited resistance which the Iraqis mustered, almost certainly because of the