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Carta de fecha 9 de julio de 2000 dirigida al Secretario General por el Representante Permanente del Iraq ante las Naciones Unidas

Siguiendo instrucciones de mi Gobierno, tengo el honor de referirme al detallado informe de investigación del Sr. Seymour M. Hersh, publicado en *The New Yorker* en su edición de 22 de mayo de 2000, relativo a los crímenes de guerra cometidos contra las fuerzas iraquíes por las fuerzas armadas de los Estados Unidos que participaron en la llamada operación Tormenta del Desierto en 1991 (véase el anexo). En su informe, el Sr. Hersh proporciona tres ejemplos de dichos crímenes, que se describen a continuación.

1. El incidente del 27 de febrero de 1991, sobre el cual el Sr. Hersh ofrece testimonios oculares de soldados estadounidenses en los que se expresa que las fuerzas de los Estados Unidos efectuaron disparos contra civiles iraquíes inermes que no constituían amenaza alguna para ellos y dieron muerte a unas 15 a 20 personas.

2. El incidente del 1º de marzo de 1991, sobre el cual el Sr. Hersh proporciona testimonios oculares de soldados estadounidenses en los que se expresa que un día después de haberse implantado la cesación del fuego efectivos de los Estados Unidos efectuaron disparos contra iraquíes inermes. Uno de esos testigos oculares envió una carta en la que declaró que soldados de la 24ª División habían “masacrado” a prisioneros de guerra iraquíes tras haber tomado un aeródromo.

3. El incidente del 2 de marzo de 1991, en el que la 24ª División, bajo el mando del General Barry R. McCaffrey, actual Director de la Oficina de Fiscalización Nacional de Estupefacientes de la Casa Blanca, efectuó disparos contra efectivos iraquíes dos días después de haberse declarado la cesación del fuego. En el resumen de este incidente el Sr. Hersh indica que esta acción ofensiva no fue un contraataque provocado por disparos del enemigo sino más bien la aniquilación metódica de iraquíes que, en general, cumplían las disposiciones relacionadas con la retirada.

Las denuncias indicadas prueban que efectivos de los Estados Unidos cometieron crímenes de guerra que violan las disposiciones generales del derecho internacional y, en particular, las normas jurídicas que rigen los actos de beligerancia, y el derecho internacional humanitario, concretamente el Convenio de Ginebra de 1949 relativo al trato debido a los prisioneros de guerra.

Cabe añadir esos crímenes al crimen de genocidio, según lo demuestra la destrucción sistemática de la infraestructura de la economía iraquí, el lanzamiento del



equivalente de siete bombas nucleares sobre el Iraq con el pretexto de aplicar las disposiciones de la resolución 678 (1990) del Consejo de Seguridad, el uso contra los efectivos iraquíes de municiones de uranio empobrecido (arma de radiación que provoca la destrucción de la vida y el medio ambiente durante varias generaciones en la zona en que se utiliza) y la prolongación del embargo general por razones políticas que no guardan relación con las resoluciones pertinentes del Consejo de Seguridad. Esto último también constituye una prueba irrefutable del crimen de genocidio tanto en sus aspectos materiales como morales.

Agradecería que tuviera a bien hacer distribuir el texto de la presente carta y su anexo como documento del Consejo de Seguridad.

(Firmado) Saeed H. Hasan
Embajador
Representante Permanente

**Anexo de la carta de fecha 9 de julio de 2000 dirigida al
Secretario General por el Representante Permanente del Iraq
ante las Naciones Unidas**

Annals of War

Overwhelming Force

What happened in the final days of the Gulf War?

by Seymour M. Hersh, The New Yorker May 22, 2000

I- The war

Accolades

Barry McCaffrey has the best resume of any retired combat general in the United States Army. The son of a distinguished general, he attended Phillips Academy, in Andover, Massachusetts, and West Point, and in 1966 was assigned to South Vietnam as a platoon leader. He served two combat tours, winning two Distinguished Service Crosses, two Silver Stars, and three Purple Hearts. He returned from Vietnam with a shattered left arm, which was saved only after two years of operations and rehabilitation. McCaffrey's career continued to be exemplary: he earned a master's degree, taught at West Point, and, as he moved up through the ranks, became an outspoken leader within the Army for women's rights and the rights of minorities. He had, as the journalist Rick Atkinson has noted, "the chiseled good looks of a recruiting poster warrior: hooded eyes; dark, dense brows; a clean, strong jaw line; hair thick and gun-metal gray." He radiated command presence.

In June of 1990, as a two-star major general, McCaffrey was put in charge of the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized), at Fort Stewart, Georgia. He was then forty-seven, and the Army's youngest division commander. Two months later, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, and McCaffrey took the 24th's tanks, guns, and more than eighteen thousand soldiers (eventually, there were twenty six thousand) from its home base to Saudi Arabia in preparation for the Persian Gulf War. The 24th's mission was to drive more than two hundred miles into Iraq-the famed "left hook" maneuver-and block the retreat of Iraqi forces from the war zone in Kuwait. In an account written after the war, *US. News & World Report* praised McCaffrey for leading what one officer called "the greatest cavalry charge in history." More promotions came McCaffrey's way, and he eventually earned four stars, the Army's highest peacetime rank.

McCaffrey announced his retirement from the Army in January of 1996, when President Clinton brought him into the Cabinet as the director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. In that position, McCaffrey serves as the architect of and main spokesman for the Clinton Administration's \$1.6-billion plan to provide, among other things, more training and weapons for the Colombian Army in an effort to cut drug production and export.

The Iraqis offered only disorganized and ragged opposition to the American invasion, in February of 1991, and the much feared ground war quickly turned into a bloody rout, with many of the retreating Iraqi units, including the elite Republican Guard, being pounded by American aircraft, artillery, and tanks as they fled north in panic along a six-lane road from Kuwait City to Basra, the major military stronghold in southern Iraq. The road became littered with blackened tanks, trucks, and bodies; the news media called it the "highway of death." The devastation, which was televised around the world, became a symbol of the extent of the Iraqi defeat--and of American military superiority--and it was publicly cited as a factor in President George Bush's decision, on February 28th, to declare a cessation of hostilities, ending the killing, and to call for peace talks. That decision, which is still controversial today, enabled Saddam's Army to survive the war with many units intact, and helped keep the regime in power. In "The Generals' War," by Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, Bush

explained that he and his advisers were concerned about two aspects of the situation: "If we continued the fighting another day, until the ring was completely closed, would we be accused of a slaughter of Iraqis who were simply trying to escape, not fight? In addition, the coalition was agreed on driving the Iraqis from Kuwait, not on carrying the conflict into Iraq or on destroying Iraqi forces."

The ground war had lasted one hundred hours, and there had been a total of seventy-nine American deaths, eight of them in McCaffrey's 24th Division. On the morning of March 2nd, a day before the Iraqis and the Allied coalition were scheduled to begin formal peace talks. McCaffrey reported that, despite the ceasefire, his division had suddenly come under attack from a retreating Republican Guard tank division off Highway 8 west of Basra, near the Rumaila oil field. The Iraqis were driving toward a causeway over Lake Hammar, one of five exit routes from the Euphrates River Valley to the safety of Baghdad. Overriding a warning from the division operations officer, McCaffrey ordered an assault in force--an all-out attack. His decision stunned some officers in the Allied command structure in Saudi Arabia, and provoked unease in Washington. Apache attack helicopters, Bradley fighting vehicles, and artillery units from the 24th Division pummeled the five-mile-long Iraqi column for hours, destroying some seven hundred Iraqi tanks, armored cars, and trucks, and killing not only Iraqi soldiers but civilians and children as well. Many of the dead were buried soon after the engagement, and no accurate count of the victims could be made. McCaffrey later described the carnage as "one of the most astounding scenes of destruction I have ever participated in." There were no serious American combat casualties.

McCaffrey's assault was one of the biggest-and most one-sided-of the Gulf War, but no journalists appear to have been in the area at the time, and, unlike the "highway of death," it did not produce pictures and descriptions that immediately appeared on international television and in the world press. Under Defense Department rules that had been accepted, under protest, by the major media, reporters were not permitted on the Gulf War battlefields without military escorts. The day after the assault, a few journalists were flown by helicopter to McCaffrey's headquarters. When McCaffrey met with them, he speculated that the retreating Iraqi units that had mounted the seemingly suicidal attack were unaware of the ceasefire, then in its second day. "Some might not even know we are here," McCaffrey told a reporter for United Press International. "But perhaps there are some out there just looking for a fight." Most of the journalists shared McCaffrey's enthusiasm. "Not having been there and seen with my own eyes," Joe Galloway, of *US News & World Report*, told me, "I think it was a righteous shoot. The Iraqis shouldn't have opened fire. They should have walked out."

Two months later, in public testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, which had invited him to discuss the lessons the military had learned from the war, McCaffrey gave a graphic account of the battle. It was a time of national pride in America's performance in the conflict, and McCaffrey was praised effusively by the senators. He told them that the days just after the ceasefire were confirmed, as Iraqi tanks, trucks, and soldiers abandoned Kuwait and fled toward Baghdad along Highway 8. The area west of Basra--a vast tract of wadis and unoccupied desert--was especially chaotic in the predawn hours of March 2nd. "There were lots of people moving in the dark," he said. "They engaged us with R.P.G. rockets"--antitank grenades.

McCaffrey did not give the senators any details about the strength of the initial Iraqi attack, but he depicted the enemy soldiers' performance during the war as, for the most part, aggressive and eager. "They tried to fight," he said. "They fired hundreds of artillery rounds at us. Most of my tracks"--armored vehicles--were hit by small-arms fire. They fired tanks, Sappers, etcetera." Sappers are antitank missiles. Referring to the situation on March 2nd, he told the senators, "I elected to destroy the force that was in this area Then we attacked. And between six-thirty in the morning and about noon, one brigade, three tank task forces conducted a classic attack with five artillery battalions in support." Of the Iraqis, he said, "We destroyed all of them. Most of them, in my judgment, only fought for fifteen minutes to thirty minutes. Most of them fled." He continued, "Once we had them bottled up, up here at the causeway, there was no way out." The senators were deferential and asked

McCaffrey no critical questions about any aspects of the March 2nd engagement, which has come to be known as the Battle of the Causeway, the Battle of Rumaila, and, because of the number of destroyed Iraqi vehicles strewn about, the Battle of the Junkyard.

McCaffrey refused to be interviewed for this article, but he did agree, through his legal counsel, to respond to written questions. Asked about the battle, he wrote, "I believe that my actions at Rumaila were completely appropriate and warranted in order to defend my troops against unknown and largely unknowable enemy forces and intentions. If I had not proceeded as I did and had American soldiers of the 24th ID [Infantry Division] suffered substantial casualties, postwar analysts would not be asking if I acted too aggressively, but would rightly condemn me for sitting stiff in the face of a possible major enemy attack."

McCaffrey's insistence that the Iraqis attacked first was disputed in interviews for this article by some of his subordinates in the wartime headquarters of the 24th Division, and also by soldiers and officers who were at the scene on March 2nd. The accounts of these men, taken together, suggest that McCaffrey's offensive, two days into a ceasefire, was not so much a counterattack provoked by enemy fire as a systematic destruction of Iraqis who were generally fulfilling the requirements of the retreat; most of the Iraqi tanks traveled from the battlefield with their cannons reversed and secured, in a position known as travel-lock. According to these witnesses, the 24th faced little determined Iraqi resistance at any point during the war or its aftermath; they also said that McCaffrey and other senior officers exaggerated the extent of Iraqi resistance throughout the war.

A few months after the division returned home, an anonymous letter accusing McCaffrey of a series of war crimes arrived at the Pentagon. It startled the Army's top leadership and led to an official investigation into McCaffrey's conduct of the war. The letter directly accused McCaffrey's division of having launched the March 2nd assault without Iraqi provocation. A 24th Division combat unit was said to have "slaughtered" Iraqi prisoners of war after a battle. The letter was filled with information, including portions of what were said to be recorded communications between McCaffrey and his field commanders, that could have come only from the inner circle. The anonymous letter writer alleged that McCaffrey had covered up the extent of "friendly fire" casualties within his division, and claimed that he had chosen to award a combat badge to a close a who had not served in a combat unit.

By midsummer of 1991, the 24th Division's 1st Brigade had quietly investigated two earlier complaints at Fort Stewart about alleged atrocities, and determined that neither complaint had merit. The most serious allegation involved the shooting of prisoners by soldiers in the 1st Brigade. In one case, a soldier attached to a Scout platoon reported that more than three hundred and fifty captured and disarmed Iraqi soldiers, including Iraqi wounded who had been evacuated from a clearly marked hospital bus, were fired upon by a platoon of Bradley fighting vehicles. It was not known how many of the Iraqis survived, if any. The second accusation came from a group of soldiers assigned to the 124th Military Intelligence Battalion, whose senior sergeant claimed that on March 1st, the day after the ceasefire, he saw an American combat team open fire with machine guns upon a group of Iraqis in civilian clothes who were waving a white sheet of surrender. The precise number killed was not known, but eyewitnesses estimated that there were at least fifteen or twenty in the group, perhaps more. Neither alleged incident was reported by the 24th Division to the appropriate higher authorities, as was mandated by the Army's operations order for the Gulf War.

The allegations couldn't have come at a more inopportune time. General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of the Allied forces, and General Colin L. Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were national heroes. And their success in Kuwait was seen as validation for the "Powell doctrine"-the use of overwhelming force at the outset of a war in order to minimize casualties and avoid the incremental buildup that had cost so dearly in Vietnam.

McCaffrey's harshest critics are fellow Army generals who served as division commanders in the Gulf War. McCaffrey was widely believed to be Schwarzkopf's favorite general (Schwarzkopf had previously served as commander of the 24th) and was viewed as being indifferent to the wishes of Lieutenant General Gary Luck, the commander of XVIII Airborne Corps. (XVIII Corps included three divisions: the 24th, the 82nd Airborne, and the 101st Airborne.) Other commanders in the Corps were occasionally involved in bitter disputes with McCaffrey over what they perceived as the 24th's hoarding of precious tank and truck fuel. These officers, with some exceptions, castigated the March 2nd assault and expressed dismay over McCaffrey's subsequent promotion to full general. "There was no need to be shooting at anybody," Lieutenant General James H. Johnson, Jr. (Ret.), of Sarasota, Florida, said. "They couldn't surrender fast enough. The war was over." Johnson commanded the 82nd Airborne, and his initial assignment was essentially the same as McCaffrey's-to protect the western flank of the war zone. "I saw no need to continue any further attacks," Johnson told me, adding that his troops processed hundreds of Iraqi soldiers and displaced persons on March 2nd, with no incidents or casualties on either side. McCaffrey, he said, "does what he wants to do."

The officer in charge of enforcing the ceasefire was Lieutenant General John J. Yeosock (Ret.), who recalled that General Schwarzkopf "was explicit about the' cessation of offensive operations" after President Bush's declaration of a unilateral ceasefire, on February 28th. A day or two later, Yeosock flew from the main Allied command post, in Saudi Arabia, to Kuwait City and then took a helicopter tour of the war zone, south of Basra, where he saw abandoned equipment and Iraqi prisoners being evacuated on the roads to Baghdad but no organized Iraqi units. "What Barry ended up doing was fighting sand dunes and moving rapidly," Yeosock said. He was "looking for a battle."

Lieutenant General Ronald Griffith, who commanded the 1st Armored Division of VII Corps, told me it was well known that many of the Iraqi tanks destroyed by the 24th Division on March 2nd were being transported by trailer truck to Baghdad, with their cannons facing backward. "It was just a bunch of tanks in a train, and he made it a battle," Griffith said of McCaffrey "He made it a battle when it was never one. That's the thing that bothered me the most."

Many of the generals interviewed for this account believe that McCaffrey's attack went too far, and violated one of the most fundamental military doctrines: that a commander must respond in proportion to the threat. "That's the way we're trained," one major general said. "A single shot does not signal a battle to the death. Commanders just don't willy-nilly launch on something Eke that. A disciplined commander is going to figure out who fired it, and where it came from. Especially if your mission is to enforce a ceasefire. Who should have been better able to instill fire discipline than McCaffrey?"

Although McCaffrey refused repeated requests for an interview to discuss these accusations, more than three hundred interviews in the past six months with Gulf War veterans and Army investigators have produced evidence that the Army's inquiries into the 24th Division failed to uncover many important elements of the story.

MORE THAN A COMMANDER

By all accounts, McCaffrey was one of the Army's most knowledgeable commanders, a confident and savvy leader who understood in detail the workings of every phase of a combat infantry division. Like most generals, he wanted things done his way, and, as the colonels and lieutenant colonels in his command quickly learned, he gave no middle ground. Lieutenant Colonel Edward J. (Butch) Brennan (Ret.) was a staff officer in the tactical operations center, traditionally a division's most important administrative unit. "A guy Eke McCaffrey can be intimidating," Brennan told me. "He believes that what's good for him is good for the country." Brennan went on, "The No. 1 thing to McCaffrey is loyalty. If you don't have three-hundred-percent loyalty, you're not part of

the game."

One of McCaffrey's favorites was John Le Moyne, a colonel who shortly before the Gulf War was promoted from a division staff job to be commander of the 1st Brigade, one of three front-line fighting brigades in the division. There was an immediate affinity between the General and the Colonel. "I Eke John," one senior division officer recalled McCaffrey saying before the war. "I'm going to make this guy a general." Le Moyne and other officers who prospered under McCaffrey depict him in glowing terms. Le Moyne told me during a telephone interview that McCaffrey was, "Without doubt, the most dramatic and charismatic leader I've served." Le Moyne, now a major general and the commander of the Army's Infantry Training Center, at Fort Benning, Georgia, said that McCaffrey scorned the easy way and always did things "for the right reason. He's earned our undying love and respect."

Another admirer is Lieutenant General James Terry Scott (Ret.), who is now the director of the national-security program at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government; he served in the war as a one-star assistant division commander. "He's a guy of high character and high standards, who doesn't make things up and doesn't cover up," Scott said. "Anyone who stands out in the Army draws fire. A lot of generals were jealous and feared him. They saw him as a guy who would break rice bowls and change things." During the war, Scott said, McCaffrey was "the best division-level tactician I've ever seen. He was very bold-and he never ran out of gas."

With the Gulf War unfolding, the 24th Division headquarters became increasingly tense, as some of McCaffrey's subordinates felt that they were forced to choose between doing the right thing, as they saw it, or doing what their commanding officer ordered. Four senior officers-three colonels and a lieutenant colonel, all of whom had expectations of becoming generals-found it impossible to go along with McCaffrey's directives, his management style, and his battlefield decisions, and openly questioned him. They did so knowing that they were jeopardizing their careers.

In December of 1990, McCaffrey chose Colonel Ronald E. Townsend to be artillery commander of the 24th Division, a job that put Townsend in charge of six field groups of long-range cannons. Townsend recalled that when he arrived McCaffrey told him, "My job is to make you a brigadier general." Sometimes such enticements were communicated indirectly. The wife of Colonel Theodore Reid, the commander of the division's 197th Brigade, recalled that, at a social gathering at Fort Stewart, McCaffrey whispered to her, "I have great plans for Ted." But Townsend and Reid found themselves in chronic dispute with McCaffrey, mainly because, in their view, he didn't delegate, interfering in the jobs of his commanders and making all the key military decisions himself. "McCaffrey and I had our differences," Reid told me. "Do I respect him? Hell, no." By the war's end, Townsend had defied a direct order from McCaffrey concerning the reassignment of a valued senior officer; Reid, during a meeting with the General, had ordered his staff to clear the room and "had it out" with him for twenty minutes. "I blew off my career, and I knew it," Reid told me.

The commander of the division's aviation brigade, Colonel Burt Tackaberry, said to me, "You couldn't tell McCaffrey anything, or disagree with him." Tackaberry had been around generals all his life-his father was a lieutenant general-and he felt that McCaffrey wasn't letting him do his job. His interactions with the division commander were professional, he added. McCaffrey always maintained his poise unlike Schwarzkopf, who was known throughout the Gulf as "the Screamer" and yet, Tackaberry said, he "knew how to hurt you without raising his voice." After the war, Tackaberry said, he told McCaffrey, "If you don't have trust in me, you ought to find another commander."

Two months before the ground war, McCaffrey abruptly relieved Lieutenant Colonel Arnold J. Canada as commander of the 2-7 Battalion in Le Moyne's 1st Brigade, and replaced him with Lieutenant Colonel Charles

C. Ware, who had been serving as the division's Inspector General - a headquarters job. Canada was stunned; he had commanded the battalion for two years, he told me, and was fully prepared to lead it into war--a view echoed by many of his soldiers in interviews with me. "It would be Eke taking a conductor out of an orchestra just before a big concert," one battalion soldier said. "Yes, the orchestra can still play the music, but there's less understanding of the skills and abilities of the people in the orchestra--less perfect music." Changing the command, many soldiers feared, would inevitably diminish the battalions ability to function in combat; Ware had little time to gain its confidence.

The 24th's lieutenants knew nothing of the tensions at the top. They were far too involved in the day-to-day operations of their platoons. It's always difficult for outsiders to get an accurate picture of life at the platoon level of an Army combat unit; in the case of the Gulf War, where journalists were effectively prohibited from the front lines, it is almost impossibly difficult, but two compelling accounts have been published. "Tuskers" (Darlington; 1997) was written by Major David S. Pierson, who served as a taskforce intelligence captain in the 24ths 1st Brigade. (The title refers to the battalion's nickname.) "The Eyes of Orion" (Kent State; 1999) is a collection of remembrances by five 2nd Brigade platoon leaders, with an eloquent introduction by McCaffrey, ("This is a story of courage, dedication, and agonizing self-doubts as these young officers faced the gut wrenching responsibility of leading platoons through the enormous confusion, fear, and physical -fatigue of high-intensity combat operations.") The books revolve around the life of the combat soldier--the rigors of training, the harsh conditions of the desert, and the constant fear of death.

As portrayed in these books, McCaffrey is an autocratic father figure who exhorts his young officers, "You are going to kick their ass and be home in time for supper!" Before the war began, McCaffrey made a series of morale-boosting visits to his combat battalions, introducing a kill-or-be-killed theme. Pierson reproduces one of these talks in "Tuskers": "This won't be a walk in the woods," McCaffrey says. "These boys have the fourth largest army in the world. They're not going to just roll over. I fully expect we will have ten percent casualties in the first week.... You're going to have to prepare yourself for that."

As McCaffrey spoke, Pierson writes, he found himself looking at the General's wounded arm. McCaffrey "became larger than life and his persona took on mythical proportions. He was more than a commander, he was a legend." McCaffrey concluded the pep talk by urging the young officers "to protect yourselves out there," and issued what amounted to a standing order--a sort of foxhole version of the Powell doctrine. "If you're driving through a village and someone throws a rock at you, shoot them! If they shoot at you, turn the tank main gun on them. If they use anything larger than small arms, call for artillery. It's as simple as that. Obey the rules of war but protect yourself." Pierson and his fellow-soldiers were inspired: "He had fanned the embers of the warrior spirit into a flame."

THE ENEMY

The ground war began for the 24th Division on the afternoon of February 24th. From that moment, McCaffrey was always on the move, driving in a specially equipped assault vehicle or flying in a helicopter to stay near the action. His headquarters was situated in the division's tactical command post, a collection of perhaps fifty tanks and armored carriers that moved forward with the troops. These troops were superbly trained and highly motivated. Tanks, armored cars, and trucks, including more than four hundred huge fuel tankers, drove relentlessly, day and night, covering nearly two hundred miles in two days and reaching their objective, the Euphrates River Valley, more than a full day ahead of schedule.

After the war, according to "Tuskers," McCaffrey told Pierson's battalion that the 24th Division had accomplished "absolutely one of the most astounding goddamned operations ever seen in the history of military science We were not fighting the Danish Armed Forces up here. There were a half million of these assholes

that were extremely well armed and equipped." At an Army infantry conference at Fort Benning, in April, McCaffrey went further. According to the official talking points of the conference, he said that there was "heavy resistance" for parts of two days, as the 24th was confronted by three Iraqi infantry divisions and a commando brigade.

There were American casualties, of course, but there seems to have been little or no organized resistance in the 24th's area of operations-only the remnants of a military force that was in retreat. It may be the case that no soldier from the Keith Division died at the hands of the Iraqis. Scrutiny of the available records reveals that at least four of the division's eight officially reported deaths were the result of friendly fire, and, on March 3rd, the day McCaffrey briefed the American press corps on his victory at Rumaila a U.P.I. dispatch reported that the division said that there had been no combat deaths in the ground war. By the war's end, many soldiers told me, fear of being shot by friendly fire far outweighed fear of the Iraqis.

"We met the enemy," 1st Lieutenant Greg Downey, one of the 2nd Brigade's "Eyes of Orion" diarists, recalled on the second day of the ground war. "My gunner reported targets. We moved closer, discovering the Iraqi soldiers to be young boys and old men. They were a sad sight, with absolutely no fight left in them. Their leaders had cut their Achilles' tendons so they couldn't run away and then left them. What weapons they had were in bad repair and little ammunition was on hand. They were hungry, cold, and scared. The hate I had for any Iraqi dissipated. These people had no business being on a battlefield."

One of his fellow platoon leaders and diarists, 2nd Lieutenant Rob Holmes, a 1989 West Point graduate, spotted a small building and a water trailer in the distance, and his superior officer ordered him to open fire with a machine gun. "I figured why not-this is combat," he wrote in "Orion." He missed but then fired an antitank rocket into the building, caving in a wall. "Immediately dozens of Iraqi infantry appeared and scattered.... We cut loose with machine guns from all of our tanks at the Iraqi infantry in front of us." Holmes ordered a second volley of fire into the building. It burst into flames. "A few Iraqis ran out a door," and one of Holmes's gunners "cut them down, riddling them with machine gun bullets." The American soldiers stopped firing when the Iraqis threw up their hands, and the survivors were rounded up. Now Holmes, too, was appalled at the condition of his enemy. "Our new prisoners barely qualified as soldiers. They were poorly clothed and hardly equipped. They looked gaunt and undisciplined. They were very old and very young. They looked pathetic. Quite a contrast with us."

The 24th Division veterans interviewed for this article consistently described the Iraqi opposition as far less daunting than expected. A few Iraqi stragglers brandished weapons, after being fired upon by machine guns from the fast-moving American tanks, but they quickly surrendered or were cut down. Most veterans saw no firefights, and no attempts to attack directly any of the American tanks as they rolled over the sand dunes. The 2nd Brigade's most dramatic moment came early on the morning of February 27th, when a large tank group from the brigade, after firing an intensive artillery barrage, crashed through the chain-link fences surrounding Jalibah Airfield, near Highway 8, and stormed down the runway, destroying Iraqi tanks and aircraft. Iraqi soldiers guarding the base were overrun and isolated. Some fought bravely, if foolishly, firing rifles and automatic weapons at the tanks. One American soldier was wounded in the arm. The Iraqi soldiers "tried to hide in shallow bunkers and some tried to surrender," according to another "Orion" diarist, 2nd Lieutenant Neal Creighton, also a 1989 graduate of West Point. "Most that moved were quickly cut down under a swath of machine gun fire. The burning helicopters, jets and dead soldiers seemed almost unreal.... My soldiers were alive. It was the happiest moment of my life."

But suddenly, after the airport was secured, three American Bradley's were hit by a barrage of rockets. According to Rob Holmes in "Orion," the rockets had been fired not by Iraqis but by "another unit of American tanks, nearly two miles away." Two men were killed victims of friendly fire-and eight or nine more were

injured. "Americans had been killed by Americans," Holmes wrote. "I saw the horrible sight of full body bags for the first time.... I just wanted to finish this job and get back to Georgia."

In the official Desert Storm chronology for XVIII Corps, as posted on the Internet by the Army, the 24th Division reports only that it overcame light resistance in seizing the airfield and that ten soldiers were wounded in action when an armored vehicle was "struck by an artillery round." The division's authorized history, published after its return to Fort Stewart, describes the Jajibah Airfield attack as "brilliantly executed," and notes that McCaffrey flew to the area to congratulate the brigade commander of the mission on his "superb victory." There is no mention of friendly-fire casualties.

Like the soldiers in the 2nd Brigade, those in the 1st Brigade were astonished by the enemy's reluctance to fight. Pierson eventually began to "feel guilty:" guilty that we had slaughtered them so; guilty that we had performed so well and they so poorly; guilty that we were running up the score They were like children fleeing before us, unorganized, scared, wishing it all would end. *We continued to pour it on.*" Private First Class Charles Sheehan-Miles, a tanker in the 1st Brigade who served as a gun loader, was, by all accounts, a competent soldier, a "squared away" type. A native of Georgia, he enjoyed his work and was eager for an Army career. That changed on the third day of the war. "I'd been up for two days and was totally exhausted," Sheehan-Miles told me. There was a radio report from the company commander about Iraqi trucks ahead. As Sheehan-Miles watched, one of the vehicles, carrying fuel, was struck by an American shell and burst into flames. Gasoline splashed into a nearby truck crammed with Iraqis. "Twenty or thirty people came out of the truck," Sheehan-Miles recalled. "They were in flames. We opened fire."

When I asked Sheehan-Miles why he fired, he replied, "At that point, we were shooting everything. Guys in the company told me later that some were civilians. It wasn't like they came at us with a gun. It was that they were there-in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Although Sheehan-Miles is unsure whether he and his fellow-tankers were ever actually fired upon during the war, he is sure that there was no significant enemy fire. "We took some incoming once, but it was friendly fire," he said. "The folks we fought never had a chance." He came away from Iraq convinced that he and his fellow-soldiers were, as another tanker put it, part of "the biggest firing squad in history."

THE HOSPITAL BUS

Scouts had the war's most dangerous duty, and the job enthralled twenty-one-year-old Specialist 4 James Manchester, who was the son, grandson, and great-grandson of U.S. Army officers. Manchester was assigned to the Scout platoon in the 2-7 Battalion of the 1st Brigade-the battalion commanded by the newly assigned Charles Ware. The platoon had six Humvees and two Bradley fighting vehicles, which operated as many as ten kilometers in advance of the main force, seeking out the enemy and serving as a screen in case of attack. It was a glamorous, high-risk assignment. In a major attack, the Scouts understood that they were to fight to the last man, if necessary, to buy time for the main force.

Manchester had excellent qualifications for the job. After enlisting, in 1988, he had gone through Airborne training and the Ranger program, and was offered an appointment to West Point, an honor accorded to only several dozen enlisted men each year. As the drive across the desert continued, Manchester told me, he and his fellow-Scouts began to fear friendly fire more than they did the Iraqis. He recalled that, in the first days of the war, his thirty-man platoon had been involved in only a few dustups, including one that began when the driver of an Iraqi truck fired at the American position. The truck was quickly destroyed, and Manchester and Edward R. Walker, a fellow Scout who had emergency-medical training, attended to the wounded driver.

On February 27th, the fourth day of the war, Manchester's platoon was ordered to block traffic on a road near Highway 8 while the battalion's five companies of Bradleys and tanks were refueled by tanker trucks. The battalion was at its most vulnerable for those few hours, and nothing was to get by the Scouts' roadblock. The operation was proceeding routinely, with vehicles beginning to line up along the road. Then, Manchester said, "this person comes walking toward us, wearing red running pants." It was an English-speaking Egyptian, who was serving in the Iraqi Army. He wanted to surrender, as did several other Iraqi soldiers who were with him. The American soldiers were soon inundated with Iraqis, who streamed out of the desert in a caravan of automobiles and trucks, most of them apparently stolen in Kuwait. The Iraqis were "scared and crying," Manchester remembered. "A Buick comes up, with the commander, and he surrenders his battalion to us." The Scout platoon, confronted by a large number of hungry and thirsty Iraqis, maintained its composure. One of the Iraqi trucks came barreling toward the group from the desert, and its driver seemed to have no intention of stopping. He was not shot at, Manchester said. Instead, one of the Scouts fired a volley of bullets into the air. The truck stopped, and its unharmed driver joined the other prisoners. All the Iraqis were searched for weapons and, once cleared, were seated in a large circle. "We were doing it by the book," Manchester told me. "We told them that everything was going to be fine."

In the confusion, Manchester, who was assigned to the lead vehicle, with Lieutenant Kirk Allen, the platoon commander, got separated from his teammates. Allen's driver, Specialist 4 John Brasfield, a wiry twenty-four-year-old Kansan, joined Edward Walker and a few other soldiers who were stopping the traffic along the road. One of the first vehicles to pull up, Brasfield recalled, was an Iraqi hospital bus, marked with a crescent-the Iraqi equivalent of a Red Cross sign. Four Scouts recalled that the bus was filled with wounded Iraqi veterans, many of them bandaged. Another Scout recalled that the wounded were piled in the back of a truck that trailed behind. Doctors and male nurses were among the prisoners. "There was a doctor on the bus who could speak English and was real friendly," Brasfield told me. Brasfield had served as a legal specialist in the Reserves before the war and understood that the rules of international law were very clear: "If it had a crescent on it, you couldn't engage it." Brasfield approached the bus after its military passengers, many in bandages, had been helped off and searched for weapons. The Iraqi doctor proved to be extremely helpful as a translator, and directed the prisoners who had been collected by Manchester and his colleague to a central site along the highway, alongside the now empty bus. "He had studied medicine in Chicago," Brasfield recalled, "and had family there."

Vehicles kept arriving, and more Iraq soldiers surrendered. Edward Walker, who was thirty-one and, because of his medical training, known as Doc, was ordered to keep a head count. "It kept building," Walker told me. "It started with probably thirty, thirty-five. As each vehicle pulled up, it kept adding up and adding up. We got to somewhere between three hundred and sixty or three hundred and eighty~" (A few moments later in the interview, he recalled a precise number-three hundred and eighty two prisoners.) Each prisoner was quickly searched and stripped of weapons. "We were clearing weapons as soon as they were coming out of the vehicles," Walker said. "They were coming in so fast that we had no time but to grab what weapons they had and throw them into a pile."

The Americans were badly outnumbered by the Iraqis, but John Brasfield had no doubts about the enemy's state of mind: "I guarantee you that everybody in that war would have surrendered if they could. We knew that." He and his colleagues gave the frightened prisoners water and food and reassured them. "One of the first guys who came in was bawling--so happy that he was safe," Brasfield recalled. "I told him, 'You've surrendered. You're safe. Nothing is going to happen to you.'" Another man, who had lost an eye, asked if he was now a prisoner. He was told yes. "Thank Allah," the man said.

Sergeant James Testerman, one of Allen's section leaders, told me that to insure the prisoners' safety "we gave each one of them a white piece of paper, if they didn't have anything white." Testerman was referring to

American-designed surrender leaflets, printed in Arabic, that had been dropped throughout the war zone. The leaflet promised that those who gave up would live to see their families again.

Brasfield handled the radios for Lieutenant Allen, and Allen made it a point to keep the battalion headquarters in the loop. Allen told the battalion operations center that he had captured a large number of prisoners; he also reported the precise position of the Iraqi hospital bus. The Scout platoon had a G.P.S. platform on the lead Humvee, and could fix the bus's location within a hundred yards. "We called in spot reports as the group got bigger," Brasfield recalled.

According to Walker, someone in Ware's headquarters ordered the Scouts to blow up the confiscated weapons. Walker was the platoon's demolition expert as well as a medical specialist, and he took charge. He was an engineer by training, and had taught an advanced course for the 5th Engineer Battalion at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, his home unit. He had been assigned to the Scouts only a few days before the war began. The Iraqi weapons were flung into a truck, which was moved a safe distance away. Two captured Iraqi trucks and the hospital bus were also moved, to create what amounted to a three-sided box, or holding pen, and the prisoners were sitting in rows inside. The open end of the box faced west, Walker recalled, in the direction of the main battalion force. "We told them, 'Don't move. Don't go nowhere.'" Walker then busied himself with his demolition assignment, with the help of Specialist 4 David A. Collatt. It would take three charges of a plastic explosive, known as C4, to destroy the truck holding the weapons.

"Suddenly, we're told on our battalion

frequency that it's time to move on," James Manchester recalled. Intelligence reported that an Iraqi missile truck had been spotted a few miles up the road, and Lieutenant Allen was ordered to engage it. The platoon took off. In Manchester's recollection, the prisoners were simply assembled near the hospital bus; he doesn't remember the holding pen. "We're boogying out," Manchester recalled, "And we have *these people* gathered, and we've given them all our MRE.s"-ready-to-eat meals. Then word came that the battalion's main battle force had finished refuelling. "The task force was fixing to move," another Scout, Sergeant Steven L. Mulig, said, "and we had to get out of there, because they shoot at everything."

Walker and Collatt set the delayed fuse for the plastic explosives on the truck and, with seconds to spare, jumped into a Humvee and began speeding away. The explosion was spectacular, Walker told me. "A lot of little stuff" began hitting the ground-truck parts, shrapnel, and hundreds of unexploded Iraqi bullet rounds. At that moment, Walker said, a platoon or two of Bradleys came into view from the west and began rolling toward the clutch of prisoners.

Mulig, who is still on active duty, at Fort Carson, Colorado, recalled, "They were all in fine-moving abreast of each other." The Bradleys' machine guns opened up. "I saw rounds impact in front of the vehicle," Mulig said. "I could tell that they were hitting close to the prisoners, because there were people running. There were some who could have survived, but a lot of them wouldn't have, from where I saw the rounds hit."

The Bradleys were armed with chain driven machine guns, capable of firing up to a thousand rounds a minute. "I couldn't see the prisoners themselves," Walker said. "You can't hear screaming. All you hear is the boom-boom-boom. You could hear rounds hitting the bus and vehicles. I could see the bullets were going where they were. We're yelling'~on the radio-" "They're firing at the prisoners! They're firing at the prisoners!" And about that time I look up and that Bradley turns and they start firing at us. We're in a marked Humvee. They hit the ground right behind our vehicle." He meant the bullets. "I turn around and start screaming. So is Collatt: "They're firing at us! They're firing at us!" We started taking off and they continued to fire at us."

Walker, speaking to me at his home, in rural Missouri, said that he is convinced that all the prisoners "got hit." They were seated in rows, and the high intensity machine guns on the Bradleys were capable of deep penetration. "I'm telling you that when a Bradley hits something it's going to take it out," he said. "And a human body ain't going to slow a twenty-five-calibre round down. And they were in rows. There was a row and another row in front of them and another row in front of them. If they shot one guy in the front row, it's going to go through everybody in that row. It's not going to slow down. The human body will not slow down that round."

Collatt shared Walker's shock as the gun turrets of the Bradleys turned and started firing at the prisoners. "The main thing you could see was the mikemike"-rounds--2'kicking up dirt right around the general area," he said. Collatt, who left the Army in 1993, believes that some escaped the firing by fleeing behind the vehicles: "You could see the prisoners start running." He said that he remains baffled, because "we knew it was a hospital bus and we'd talked about it"-on the radio. "We told everybody where it was. They didn't get the word or they were trigger-happy."

Walker said, "They knew there were prisoners there. They knew they were unarmed. They knew the hospital bus was there, and they knew we were blowing the truck up." The Bradleys were in no danger from the exploding truck, which had been moved a safe distance away. Moreover, Walker said, the attacking soldiers "were all buttoned down in their vehicles, so they really had nothing to worry about."

James Manchester and his colleagues on Lieutenant Allen's Humvee, a few hundred yards farther east, initially thought they were being fired upon. "Shit hits the fan," Manchester recalled. "Bullets are flying." He looked back and realized that the unarmed Iraqis were being targeted. "I did not see people's heads exploding," he told me. "But I definitely saw shooting. I saw a crowd of people who were being fired upon." He recalled thinking, This is fucked up, but the Humvee just kept on moving, shooting away from the shooting at high speed.

John Brasfield had brought a small, inexpensive tape recorder to the Gulf and, while handling the radios on Lieutenant Allen's Humvee, routinely taped transmissions. He would ship some of the tapes home, he thought, and give his wife a glimpse of war. His tape recorder was running as Allen's Humvee sped away from the prisoners, and from the bullets from the Bradleys' machine guns. The recording, made available by Brasfield for this account, documents the young soldiers' horror, anger, and, ultimately, resignation as the shooting went on. It's not always clear who is speaking on the tape, amid the background noise of engines, radio squeals, and the crosscutting of situation reports, but James Manchester, after carefully listening to the tape, was able to distinguish his own voice in some of the exchanges, along with Kirk Allen's and Brasfield's. He also isolated the voice and call signs of Lieutenant Colonel Charles Ware, the battalion commander.

"The lead company behind us is tearing up all those vehicles," someone tells battalion headquarters as the recording begins. "I hope they understand what a Humvee looks like," he adds, referring to the indiscriminate firing in the direction of the Scouts.

A moment later, a Scout reports on the platoon radio net, "Twenty-five mike-mike blowing approximately five hundred metres behind me with my ass end showing." He's telling Lieutenant Allen that machine-gun fire is trailing his Humvee. "You're not supposed to be in that area," Allen responds.

"There's no one shooting at them," another Scout says on the platoon net, referring to the Bradleys. "Why'd they have to shoot?"

Allen reports on Ware's battalion net, "There's shooting, but there's no one there is no combatants-"to shoot at." Ware answers, "I understand," and then asks a series of operational questions about maps.

Later, Manchester asks Allen, "Sir, what element is firing behind us?"

Allen: "I have no fucking idea."

An unidentified Scout asks, "Why are we shooting at these people when they are not shooting at us?"

Brasfield: "They want to surrender... Fucking armored vehicles [the Bradleys]. They don't have to blow them apart."

Sporadic firing continues. Someone asks Allen, "Why don't you tell them, sir, that they are willing to surrender. Tell em that." Someone else says, amid the noise, "It's murder."

Ware is on the radio when someone says, "We shot the guys we had gathered up." Another voice interjects, "They didn't have no weapons." Ware calls for all firing to stop and then asks another question about routine battalion procedures.

"He heard it-, he knew it," Sergeant Mulig told me later, speaking of Ware. "But it didn't register."

James Testerman felt shame as he and his fellow-Scouts left the prisoners and fled. "I had fed these guys and got them to trust me," he said. "The first two who came in were scared to death--afraid we were going to shoot them. We set them down and fed them M.R.E.s." One of the Iraqis played the tough-guy role, Testerman went on. "He wouldn't eat it--afraid we were going to poison him. So I took a bite of it, and gave it to him. The tough guy broke down, crying. I can only imagine what he thought" when the Bradleys "started shooting-that we were sending him to the slaughter."

" You think about it," he said. "All those people."

THE WHITE FLAG

The war ended abruptly. On February 28th, when the ceasefire was announced, McCaffrey's men had not proved themselves in a major engagement, despite months of training and anticipation. The complicated feelings that some of them had about the "one sided victory," over Iraqis with no will to fight, are perceptively expressed by David Pierson in "Tuskers":

My only reservation was illogical; I somehow wished that they had proved a more worthy opponent. They hadn't lost the battle, they had forfeited it. We were achieving a great victory but without great sacrifice. Sacrifice, the lifeblood of freedom, the price of all glory, the nature of soldiering. It was an expectation and a curse.

McCaffrey's tankers had driven more than two hundred miles across the sand dunes and wadis of southern Iraq with little sleep and almost no action. Many of the men were frustrated, on edge, and eager to do what they had been trained to do--fire their weapons. The senior officers of the 2-4 Cavalry Squadron, a unit assigned directly to McCaffrey's headquarters, found a way to relieve tension and to prevent civilian abuse. "The worst thing that could happen was if some kid thought he'd ridden four or five days and never shot his weapon," Lieutenant Colonel Joseph C. **Barto III (Ret.)**, then the executive officer, told me. "We called all the commanders and said, 'Make sure these guys get to shoot their weapons.' "Targets of opportunity were found abandoned buildings and the like-and the tanks lined up and fired away with machine guns, rockets, and shells.

In some cases, the end of the war led to an erosion of discipline. Many soldiers in the 24th Division's tank companies and Scout platoons began to collect battlefield souvenirs-especially Soviet AK-47 assault rifles carried by the Iraqi military. The scavenger hunting caused casualties, especially after the ceasefire, as soldiers triggered land mines and other munitions in their search for souvenirs. In one instance, an elaborate Iraqi Defense Ministry compound was broken into by the 2-4 Cavalry, and, under the eyes of its commander, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas J. Leney, soldiers loaded glassware, trays, sterling silver, gun collections, oversized rugs, and a huge photograph of Saddam Hussein onto tanks and armored cars to take back to America. Leney, who is now retired, told me that his action in authorizing the break-in may have been "bad judgment." The items were to be used, he said, for a Cavalry Ball, to be held after the war, at Fort Stewart. (Soldiers are allowed to confiscate certain kinds of equipment, and in the Gulf War, as in most others, looting was widespread; there was no investigation of the 2-4 Cavalry's actions.) The looting took place in front of officers and men from the 124th Military Intelligence Battalion, whose specialists-interpreters, radar operators, and counter-intelligence officers-were assigned to every brigade in the 24th Division. "Our guys watched them fill up five tanks," 1st Sergeant Jason Claar, of the 124th, told me. "We knew of whole companies loading stuff in their tanks."

One of the 124th's primary missions was to supply for-ward radar teams to the Scout platoons of each battalion. The three-man units, known as ground surveillance-radar, or G.S.R., teams, carried high-resolution equipment in their Humvees that could isolate enemy formations and spot vehicle movements thousands of yards away and in the dark. The G.S.R. team assigned to the 3-7 Battalion of the 1st Brigade was headed by a sergeant named Steven Larimore, who had joined the Army, in 1987, at the advanced age of thirty-one. Larimore was widely admired by his fellow-soldiers for his calm under pressure, his competence, and his integrity, and for his ability to throw passes in touch-football games.

On March 1st, the day after the ceasefire went into effect, Larimore's men and the platoon to which they were attached, the Scouts from the 3-7 Battalion, were ordered to continue patrols in the Euphrates Valley battlefield. In the late afternoon, Larimore recalled, there was a report that some Army troops had discovered a cache of Iraqi weapons at a deserted schoolhouse in a small village near Highway 8. The radar team joined the 3-7 Scouts in clearing the village and searching the schoolhouse. The weapons were covered with waxed paper and protective grease; they had never been fired. After taking souvenirs, Larimore told me, he and his men left the destruction of the weapons to others and moved out, to the east, still accompanied by six or so Humvees and Bradleys of the 3-7 Scouts. Larimore and his men noticed a group of villagers walking in the area. "One guy had a white bed sheet on a stick," Larimore said. Then, he recounted, "out of the blue sky, some guy from where we're sitting"-in the Scout platoon-"begins shooting" into the villagers. Other machine guns joined in. "There was a lot of screaming and hollering going on. We were screaming, 'Cease fire!' People hit the ground. The firing went on." Larimore estimated that he saw at least fifteen, and perhaps twenty or more, Iraqis fall. He had never been in a firefight before, he said, and he was stunned by the noise and the carnage. He estimated that the firing lasted no more than thirty seconds. "I did not see anything that looked like return fire," he said. The vehicles in the Scout unit, he said, had opened up on a group of unarmed civilians.

A second eyewitness, Sergeant Wayne R Irwin, who was in charge of another G.S.R. team, said the Iraqis were "just passing through" the area when the Scouts suddenly began firing their machine guns. "I yelled for them to cease fire," he said. "I couldn't understand why they were firing." Of the Iraqis, he said, "To me, they posed no threat to us-they were all in civilian clothes." Irwin was the senior man from the 124th on the scene, and the Scouts subsequently explained to him that the Iraqis were carrying "grenade launchers and stuff like that." Irwin, a seventeen-year Army veteran who is now on an intelligence assignment in South Korea, told me that he did not find that account credible. He had seen the Iraqis. "To me, they had nothing."

Michael Sangiorgio, a nineteen-year old soldier from Brooklyn, was one of Larimore's crew members. (He is

now a nursing student in Pembroke, Georgia.) He thought the firing lasted a long time. "It seemed Eke an eternity," he told me. "Three or four minutes. The Bradleys were shooting all their guns. They were firing into a cluster of people." A few of the victims "were wearing dark robes" - clothing that did not rule out the possibility that they were in the military. There was no doubt, however, that "they were basically surrendering," Sangiorgio recalled. "We heard screaming, and we're screaming-a whole lot of yelling is going on." He didn't take a body count, but he estimated that about twenty people were fired upon.

When the firing ended, Sangiorgio said, Sergeant Larimore-who was known for being unflappable----"lost his cool," and jumped off his vehicle to get a better look at the scene. "He was pissed."

Moments later, the G.S.R. unit was ordered back to the schoolyard, along with the 3-7 Scout platoon. "I went to the platoon leader'---Lieutenant John J. Grisillo, a 1987 graduate of West Point" and asked him what he was doing," Larimore told me. "He said they were fired -on and we returned fire." Grisillo was equally angry at him, Larimore said, because "I was questioning his authority. I told him we had a responsibility to go make sure that there weren't any wounded" among the slain Iraqis on the field. The G.S.R. teams carried medical kits in their vehicles. "He said, 'Go ahead,' " Larimore recounted. "I said, 'I'm not going anywhere in front of you."

Sangiorgio and the other crew members were not even in their twenties, Larimore recalled. "'Sarge,' they said to me. 'That wasn't right what happened. What do we have to do?' I told them I didn't know, but I'd find out. I was still very mad."

Lieutenant Grisillo confirmed Larimore's description of the shootings-up to a point. Larimore, he said, had failed to realize that the men were responding to a threat. Grisillo explained that his platoon, made up of two armored vehicles and six Humvees, all armed with machine guns, had cleared a village with the help of Larimore's G.S.R. team, and afterward someone looked back and noticed a small group of Iraqis in civilian clothes. "They raised a white flag," Grisillo said, but he and his men could see through binoculars that "they were carrying weapons. We fired warning shots, but they didn't stop" and continued to move toward a building-the schoolhouse--that was known to contain weapons. In so doing, Grisillo insisted, the

Iraqis posed a threat. His Scout platoon opened fire with machine guns, and some Iraqis, perhaps five or six, were shot. No formal written report of the shootings was ever made.

Grisillo told me that after the war he met with his brigade commander John Le Moyne. "He let me know that he thought the G.S.R. guys didn't understand the situation at the time," Grisillo said. "Calls had to be made. It's not nice, but prudent. If I had that situation again, I'd do it again. I've never lost a minute's sleep about it." Grisillo left the Army, as a captain, in 1992. He now runs a job-recruiting firm for retired military personnel.

According to Major Brennan, McCaffrey's staff officer, during the war the General repeatedly asked his staff to survey the battlefield and determine if Iraqi trophies-such as enemy tanks and artillery pieces-could be salvaged for display at the Fort Stewart museum, back in Georgia. No one had done anything about it. At the morning staff meeting on March 1st, the first full day of the ceasefire, Brennan said, McCaffrey suddenly turned to him and appointed him the division's war-souvenir officer. Brennan commandeered a Humvee and a driver, loaded up with water and food, and took off for the war zone. "I just went out and looked around to the east and to the north"-along the line of retreat from Kuwait to Baghdad, Brennan told me. "I wasn't worried. What I saw was an army that had given up." He and his driver ran into perhaps ten Iraqi soldiers during the morning. "All they wanted out of me was water and food," he recalled. "None of them attempted to fire at me. I felt there was no danger. There was a ceasefire. I was more worried about Le Moyne's brigade'---the 1st Brigade's heavily armed command post was nearby - "than about the Iraqi Army"

It was an eerie scene, he recalled. Dozens of tanks, trucks, and other vehicles lay scattered over the battlefield. In some, the engines were still running. Bombs, shells, and other ammunition lay about as well, much of it near smoldering wreckage and in danger of "cooking off"---exploding in the heat. Brennan marked many sites on a map. He planned to return the next morning, March 2nd, with more men and three forklift trucks to begin the process of gathering McCaffrey's war trophies.

II-THE CAUSEWAY

IMMINENT ATTACK

While other American soldiers and their commanders stopped and cheered the ceasefire, McCaffrey quietly continued to move his combat forces. On the morning of the ceasefire, February 28th, they were approximately twenty five miles west of the Lake Hammar causeway; by the eve of the Battle of Rumaila, two days later, he had expanded his area of operations. The 24th Division was now within striking distance of a seventeen-mile access road connecting the highway to the causeway, one of the few known pathways out of the marshes and desert in southern Iraq. "I knew I did not want to go into Basra and fight in Basra," McCaffrey explained to Army investigators six months after the war, "but I was prepared to continue the attack to the east." His plan was to be ready, as any prudent commander would be, to lead an invasion into Baghdad, should one be ordered. "Was I eager to go north toward Baghdad?" McCaffrey asked the investigators rhetorically. "Personally, I think it would have been militarily an easy option."

With the ceasefire, the rules of engagement were revised by XVIII Corps headquarters. Rather than aggressively seek out and destroy the enemy forces, the commanders were to protect their troops and hold their positions. McCaffrey was no longer authorized to initiate offensive military actions on his own; he had to get prior approval from the Corps commander, General Luck. He could still wage war, but only if he was faced with "imminent attack." The new rules also stated, "If an enemy vehicle approaches with its turret turned opposite the direction of travel, the enemy vehicle will be considered indicating a non hostile intent. "The rules went on to say, "If these conditions are not present, the vehicle will be considered having a hostile intent. In either case, all attempts will be made to allow the occupants of the vehicle to surrender before U.S. Forces will take hostile measures." The unilateral ceasefire gave all Iraqi combat units, including the most elite tank brigades, the right to unencumbered retreat, provided they moved with cannons reversed.

The Iraqi withdrawal through the Euphrates Valley had been carefully choreographed by the Third Army headquarters. The goal was to speed up the exit of the Iraqis from Kuwait, and on March 1st thousands of soldiers-in tanks, trucks, and stolen cars--continued their retreat toward Baghdad, streaming northwest day and night toward the Lake Hammar causeway.

McCaffrey had moved his forces toward the access road without informing all the senior officers who needed to know - inside his own division operations center, at XVIII Corps, and at Third Army headquarters. Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Lamar, McCaffrey's operations officer, told Army investigators in the summer of 1991 that he did not know at the time that John Le Moyne's 1st Brigade, which included the most forward units, had moved to the north and east. Frank H. Akers, a young colonel who was the operations officer at XVIII Corps headquarters, also told me that he did not know that McCaffrey had moved two brigades forward after the ceasefire. Neither did Lieutenant General John Yeosock, commander of the Third Army.

The retreating Iraqis, who had been assured of safe passage, were now in harm's way-and so were McCaffrey's soldiers.

McCaffrey's forces were at risk, Akers told me, because division commanders invariably need "higher headquarters to have an accurate read of their location in case they have to call in support." Careful reporting, Akers added, avoids friendly-fire accidents and enables help to reach a unit in trouble more quickly.

General McCaffrey, in a letter to *The New Yorker*, firmly denied that his division had ever purposely failed to inform the appropriate commands of the troop deployments prior to the March 2nd engagement. In a separate letter he noted, "It is simply not credible that a division in combat, employing artillery and air power, and widely equipped with GPS, could or would falsify unit locations."

However, General Yeosock told me, "Too many people have the imaginary notion that we can track everything from space." What was important, he said, was that the operations officers at the Third Army "get a lot of confirmatory information from the people on the ground. At the end of the day, it's what comes in through the human channels."

Shortly after dawn on March 2nd, a unit reported to McCaffrey's command post that it was being fired upon by the retreating Iraqis and that it had returned fire in self-defense. These were the opening shots of the Battle of Rumaila.

Over the past nine years, McCaffrey has consistently defended his March 2nd offensive by emphasizing, as he did in his letters, that his actions were designed to protect American soldiers-and were thus fully compliant with the revised rules of engagement. "My troops on the ground were under attack," McCaffrey wrote. "MY sole focus was the safety of my soldiers."

The early-morning Iraqi attack that McCaffrey and others speak of was said to be targeted on units in Charles Ware's 2-7 Battalion that were at the forward edge of the American advance. The 2-7 Scouts were attacked by R.P.G.s, Sagger missiles, and "direct fire from T-72 tanks," McCaffrey wrote. The rocketing continued later that morning, as one Sagger missile was fired at the American positions and others were prepared for launch. A muzzle flash was observed, McCaffrey wrote, and an artillery cannon under tow was moved off the road, disconnected, and pointed at the division. (The Army inquiry into Rumaila concluded that two weapons were fired, but did not report any injuries or damage.) "In sum," McCaffrey wrote, "we acted appropriately at the time the Rumaila battle occurred. My troops routed a large enemy force that not only threatened my soldiers but also opened fire on our position."

"They came rolling in there," John Le Moyne told an Army oral historian a few days after the March 2nd engagement, "and I'll be damned if they didn't start shooting at us." In a separate interview, his operations officer, Major Benjamin Freakley, told an Army oral historian that the first reports of enemy contact-the firing of an R.P.G.-came from Charlie Company in Ware's battalion. Moments later, Charlie Company again received fire-this time, Sagger missiles from

Iraqi B.M.Ps (Russian-built armored vehicles known to the soldiers as Bimps). The Americans immediately counterattacked, Freakley said, and destroyed six Iraqi B.M.P.s and four T-72 tanks. Meanwhile, a group of helicopters that had been scrambled to reconnoiter the situation told of seeing "hundreds" of Iraqi vehicles moving to the north. McCaffrey "realized this force could move to the west now that they knew we were here"-and threaten his forces. "So we decided to go ahead and fight them, since they had engaged us first."

Freakley was saying, in essence, that McCaffrey chose to turn all his guns on the Iraqis because of the possibility that the defeated Army might decide to stop its withdrawal and, in a move that amounted to suicide, attack the far superior American forces. If Freakley's recollection is right, McCaffrey waited half an hour or so to gather his forces and create an attack plan. The precise length of McCaffrey's delay could not be conclusively

fixed from the available documents. The division log entries suggest that the delay between the two attacks was less than forty minutes. But in his sworn testimony Patrick Lamar, the division operations officer, told Army investigators that there "was a period of about two hours between the time the firing first was reported before any action was ever taken." All the authorities agree, however, on one essential point there were no further confirmed reports of Iraqi shootings between the first and second attacks.

John Le Moyne told me that "there was absolutely no doubt in my mind" that the resumption of firing was justified. He said he now believes that the Iraqis had not planned their early-morning attack. "After ten years, I think they just didn't have the discipline and training." He theorized, "The first guy who fired was part of a guard post. He woke up, saw American combat vehicles, and said, 'Oh, shit! Oh, dear,' reacted out of panic, and fired."

The authorized history of the 24th Division in the Gulf War, written by Major Jason Kamiya, a division operations officer, closely echoes the Le Moyne and Freakley accounts.

THESE GUYS ARE GOING HOME

Interviews for this article, and the 24th Division's daily log for March 2nd, fail to support many aspects of the official account. The Iraqis were driving anything that moved, and by early morning on March 2nd hundreds of retreating trucks, tanks, and other vehicles had come into radar view of the 1st Brigade. At 4:45 A.M., reports came from Sergeant Lanimore's G.S.R. unit and from Lieutenant Grisillo's 3-7 Scouts, and as they became increasingly vivid they got everyone's attention.

James Manchester, in the 2-7 Scout platoon commanded by Lieutenant Allen, did not see any Iraqi firing, any Iraqi prisoners, or any Iraqi panic that morning. His platoon had been traveling in front of the main attack force, as usual, and he was cheerfully watching the Iraqis retreat in an orderly fashion along the road leading to the Lake Hammar causeway. He and his fellow- Scouts had been told "to make sure that these guys are retreating." He recalled, "I remember thinking, It's over, it's over. These guys are going home. It was just a line of vehicles on the road."

John Brasfield also remembers that morning. He had been troubled by his own brigade's continuing movement to the east, toward Basra. "On the day of the ceasefire, we got an order to move out," Brasfield recalled. "I'm a 'Why?' guy, and I asked Allen why. I did. I want to die after the ceasefire. He said, 'This is what we're instructed to do.'"

Early on the morning of March 2nd, Brasfield continued, his platoon had moved east, with no Iraqi opposition. Some soldiers who were farther east reported that an Iraqi tank "came up on them, but it never fired. We sat there all morning watching movement on the road about six kilometres away." A steady stream of retreating tanks moved along the road. "There's no hostile action toward us, but they don't see us," Brasfield said. Edward Walker also recalled the tableau as non-threatening. "Many of the Iraqi tanks were on flatbed trucks and had their turrets tucked backward"--that is, their cannons were facing away from the American combat forces.

When word of the Iraqi column first reached Le Moyne's 1st Brigade command post, his intelligence officer, Captain Linda Suttlehan, informed him that "the only unit" it could belong to was the Hammurabi Republican Guard tank division, one of the most battle-hardened units in the Iraqi Army, which was scrambling to get back, intact, to Baghdad. There was a growing sense of excitement both in the brigade and in the division headquarters, Suttlehan recalled. Some of the senior officers "wanted action," and said as much.

A far less threatening observation was officially reported sometime around 6 or 7 A.M. by the 1st Brigade to the

24th Division tactical-operations center. Item 47 in the division log for March 2nd noted, "Col Le Moyne is observing vehicles, which consist of 200 trucks (flatbeds with some mil[itary] vans)." A tank or any other vehicle riding on a flatbed posed no threat, as every armored officer knew. However, that reassuring report was contradicted by Le Moyne in the very next log item, which said that Le Moyne "reports that vehicles' report is' erroneous and bullshit." Le Moyne then ordered an attack-helicopter reinforcement for his brigade a major escalation.

The radio suddenly came to life. James Manchester recalled. He listened as Captain Richard B. Averna, the commander of Ware's Charlie Company, told Ware that the retreating Iraqis were preparing to fire antitank missiles at the American forces. Manchester said his platoon was astonished at the message. "We are sitting right on top of these people," he told me, referring to the Iraqis, "and there are no vehicles pulled off " Captain Averna, he said, was behind him and could not see the line of vehicles.

Brasfield recalled a different but equally overwrought report. "One of the companies sees one or two dismounts'-Iraqi soldiers who have climbed off a tank or armored vehicle-"with an R.P.G. pointed in its direction. They ask permission to engage, and finally get it. There's some boom, boom, boom--a very short engagement. This was early, before the big battle." Brasfield said he was later told, "Somebody panicked and thought they saw something they didn't see." Another factor in the Scout platoon's skepticism over the report, Brasfield said, was a lack of confidence in Ware's leadership.

Sergeant Stuart Hirstein, of the 124th Military Intelligence Battalion, was clearing an Iraqi bunker with a company in the 2-7 Battalion when his unit monitored the early reports about Iraqi fire. One of the combat companies in Ware's battalion had issued an urgent call for help, asking every available unit to come to its rescue: it was taking fire from oncoming Iraqi tanks. Hirstein and his team rushed to the site in their armored vehicles. When they arrived, he said, there was no attack and no imminent threat from the retreating Iraqi tanks. "Some of the tanks were in travel formation, and their guns were not in any engaged position." The Iraqi crew members "were sitting on the outside of their vehicles, catching rays," he said. "Nobody was on the machine guns." And yet the Americans "wanted to fire them up." At that point, he added, their commanders said no.

There was a barrage of messages. "The radio was blasting," Linda Suttlehan told me. One message stood out: a Scout claimed that an Iraqi R.P.G. had been fired at him. Other soldiers reported that an Iraqi tank had fired at their positions. "We plotted grids, but

the timing didn't make sense," Suttlehan said. "The timing was too close. Was it one or two different tanks? Or was it the same guy shooting?" In any case, Suttlehan recalled, "I needed to know which way the tubes are pointing"-the cannons on the Iraqi tanks. "Are they in front or back?" After some time had passed, she said, she and the other analysts were "still trying to figure it out." There was similar confusion in the 124th Military Intelligence Battalion. Major James R Kump, the 124th's senior intelligence officer forward in the field during the attack, had been monitoring what he assumed was a routine retreat early that morning when the fighting started. Kump, who spent twenty two years on active duty and is now retired, told me, "I thought, I can't believe what I'm hearing! There's nothing going on. These guys are retreating." The skies above the battlefield were crammed with state-of-the art intelligence devices, Kump said, and much of the intelligence was being passed to his Humvee. "I had links to several intelligence systems-more than I can talk about. And I'd have known if troops were moving toward us." Kump went on, "I knew of no justification for the counterattack. I always felt it was a violation of the ceasefire. From an integrity standpoint, I was very troubled." Before all previous operations, he said, planners at division headquarters had routinely sought his intelligence assessments. This time, he said, "no one asked me for an assessment."

COMMAND DECISION

McCaffrey's official headquarters was the division's mobile tactical command post, but he directed the war from what is known as an assault command post, a unit of four tanks and three or so tracked vehicles which stays in the front lines with the advancing troops. At intervals, the vehicles would stop together, and McCaffrey's staff would pull out canvas extensions to provide shade, and set up cots for quick naps. Fresh coffee was brewed, and the area neatly served as a mobile headquarters where McCaffrey could get up-to-date briefings and hold small staff meetings.

The men in the assault command post worked intimately with McCaffrey and were the most knowledgeable about what was going on. They included Captain Michael Bell, an armor officer who was McCaffrey's personal aide--the man who arranged his schedule, screened his appointments, and monitored his telephone. Bell, a West Point graduate, was married to a fellow West Point graduate, whose father was a two-star general on active duty at the Pentagon. Bell considered it his responsibility to let his boss know what he thought, in essence confronting McCaffrey with observations he sometimes did not want to hear. Whatever the cause, Bell fell out of favor. "One day, he was the greatest thing since sliced bread," Patrick Lamar, the division's operations officer, said. And then, he said, "Bell got blitzed."

Lamar ran the assault command post, and thus was responsible, in war, for relaying McCaffrey's orders to the field units. The son of an abandoned Second World War French war bride, he had worked his way through Kent State University, and to an Army commission, on an R.O.T.C. Scholarship

According to Lamar, the interval after the first skirmishing by Ware's battalion provoked a debate inside McCaffrey's assault command post. "There was no incoming," Lamar told me. "I know that for a fact." He described the battle as "a giant hoax. The Iraqis were doing absolutely nothing. I told McCaffrey I was having trouble confirming the incoming." It didn't matter, Lamar added. McCaffrey wanted to attack.

Colonel Townsend, the division artillery commander, remains skeptical today of some of the early morning radio discussions between McCaffrey and Le Moyne. "There was not point-blank fire," Townsend told me. "The excitement on the command net was not there." Townsend thought that at least one antitank round had been fired, but there was also "some indication" in the radio traffic that something wasn't right."

"There was a lot of confusion," Captain Jim Morris, a West Point graduate who worked in the command post, told me, and also "some huddling" among Lamar, McCaffrey, and General Terry Scott, the deputy division commander. "I remember Lamar outside, smoking a cigarette and shaking his head." Major Thomas Matyok, another junior officer in the command post, had the impression, as he told me, that there was not "a lot of enthusiasm" on Lamar's part for a renewed attack on the Iraqi forces. He added that he and Captain Morris had a running joke about the lack of Iraqi aggression: Iraq was a surprisingly patriotic country "because everybody was always waving their national flag--all white."

As one officer recalled the discussion, "General Scott was all for the attack even to the point of suggesting ways to provoke an Iraqi retaliation. "He was asking a lot of questions about 'Can we get the Scout [helicopter] out and kick some dirt up and see what happens?'" Log Item 53, filed shortly after 7:30 A.M., states that Scott "requests PSYOPs Helicopter."

"Scott was sitting there saying, 'Let's go get these guys,'" Lamar told me. Lamar said his own view was "We didn't need to kill more people--we'd proved our point." But, he said, "McCaffrey had to have his armor battle." Scott, when he was asked about his actions that morning, told me he was "emphatic that the enemy had to start it. Eventually, we became convinced that it was a real, no-shit attack by the Iraqis."

In the course of the discussions, Lamar reminded McCaffrey of XVIII Corps's newly revised rules of engagement, and urged him to obtain higher authority. At that point, McCaffrey made a telephone call to General Luck, or so Lamar assumed, at XVIII Corps headquarters. (Luck later told me that he did not provide any guidance to McCaffrey, or have any conversation with him. immediately before the March 2nd counterattack.) And then, Lamar said, the discussion was over.

After the phone call, McCaffrey in effect pushed Lamar aside and assumed operational command of the division himself. "He just took me out of the picture," Lamar said.

McCaffrey abruptly left the meeting and moved his command post, without Lamar, to Colonel Ware's battalion. "He left the operations center in the cold," Lamar said. "Nobody knew what the hell was going on." (The division log suggested that the time of the shift in command post was 8:27 A.M.)

"I'll kill somebody if I have to," Lamar told me. "But if you're going to violate a truce you'd better have permission to do so. McCaffrey put people at risk at the peace table." Lamar was referring to General Schwarzkopf's formal ceasefire talks with the Iraqi leadership, scheduled to begin the next morning.

Captain Bell, who had been present during the discussions before the counterattack, came to believe that McCaffrey's decision to move his brigades to the east of the original ceasefire line was designed to provoke the Iraqis. Referring to the deployment in force, he said, "The entire regiment moves forward. He's pulled the whole division in line. You have an army that comes forward in the dark after a ceasefire in a confined battlefield, and of course somebody's going to shoot at you." There is a serious distinction, nonetheless, Bell added, between a round or two fired in panic or self-defense and McCaffrey's insistence that the Iraqis were "attacking us." That "is pure fabrication," he said.

BATTLE ORDER

Colonel Burt Tackaberry, the division's chief aviation officer, had been the first pilot in the air early on the morning of March 2nd, and had flown at very low altitudes over the column of retreating Iraqis. His helicopter had been an easy target, but no one had taken a shot. He had noticed Iraqi tanks with their tubes in travel-lock position and pointed away from a forward target. "My first order was to go up and make sure the causeway was cut," he recalled. It was still open, and he could see that about a hundred vehicles had already crossed over it. He was then ordered to make sure that no further vehicles got away. ("I never say no to McCaffrey," he told me.) In an effort to get the vehicles to stop, he fired a few rounds over them. When they didn't stop, he fired a Tow missile at the first vehicle, which turned out to be an ammunition truck. ("It exploded for hours.") Once that vehicle was hit, none of the others could get around it. There was a panic. "All the people took off to the marshes and squatted down," Tackaberry said. "They were scared to death." There was still no opposition. Later that morning, McCaffrey, running the division from Ware's Bradley, got on the radio and ordered the division's missile firing Apache helicopters-Tackaberry's helicopters-to begin a full assault.

The division log placed the time of McCaffrey's first known battle order at five minutes after nine o'clock. According to Log Item 74, McCaffrey directed that the causeway "be targeted"-thus blocking the basic escape route for the retreating forces. The division's Apache helicopters were to "engage from south with intent of terminating engagement." Within moments, the assault was all-out. One company reported that it had engaged a force of between a hundred and two hundred Iraqi "dismounts." By ten o'clock, division headquarters had begun receiving reports of extensive damage to the Iraqi forces. One group of Apache helicopters reported in mid-morning, "Enemy not firing back, they are jumping in ditches to hide." Forty minutes later, according to another log item, McCaffrey ordered artillery to be "used in conjunction with personnel sweep to' pound these

guys' and end the engagement."

The Iraqis, unable to continue driving to the north, because of the bombed-out causeway, were easy targets. In "Lucky War," an appraisal of the Gulf War published in 1994, the Army historian Colonel Richard M. Swain (Ret.) noted, "One can continue to be troubled, however, with the fact that most of the Iraqis killed seem to have been headed north or simply milling around--and not into the defender's lines, notwithstanding that some of their number quite clearly seem to have initiated the combat by opening fire when U.S. forces approached their position." Two other facts remain "somewhat disturbing," Swain added: that 11 only a small number of Iraqis seem to have acted with hostility that morning," and that the Iraqis, when fired upon, had been many miles beyond the 24th Division's front lines, as they existed on the morning of the ceasefire.

Some soldiers who found themselves ordered into the battle remained dubious. Stuart Hirstein, the 124th Military Intelligence Battalion sergeant whose unit had earlier rushed to help a supposedly beleaguered combat company in Ware's battalion only to find the Iraqis sunning themselves on top of their tanks, now watched as the division's missile-firing Apache helicopters systematically began to annihilate the tanks. "It pissed me off," Hirstein told me. "They were not firing."

Charles Sheehan-Miles recalled that his 1st Brigade tank platoon also had been told that morning to rush to the rescue of an American unit near Highway 8 that was under attack by a division of Iraqi soldiers. "We went up the road blowing the shit out of everything. It was like going down an American highway people were all mixed up in cars and trucks. People got out of their cars and ran away. We shot them." Sheehan-Miles said that at least one of his victims was in civilian clothing. "My orders were to shoot if they were armed or running. The Iraqis were getting massacred."

James Manchester was listening to the radio and heard Colonel Ware receive permission to engage. "All of a sudden, all hell breaks loose," he said. "It's surreal." At one point, the battalions tanks were so eager to fire on the retreating Iraqi forces that they moved off an embankment and got mired helplessly in the sand. If the Iraqis had any intention of continuing the war, Manchester explained, the immobilized American tanks made perfect targets. The tanks were "helpless," but kept volleying cannon fire at the Iraqis as they were being pulled out of the sand by tow trucks. What happened along the causeway, he said, was "fucking murder."

"What we did was just seal the oilfield off so he--the enemy-- couldn't get out," Le Moyne told the Army oral historian. "Yup, it's about fifteen kilometres long and ten to fifteen kilometres wide.... So by using artillery we were able to seal the top and the bottom of it, and I'll tell you, that once we did that the panic began to set in.... The Apaches strewed panic and when the columns started rolling up there was just absolute pandemonium. Everybody began to break and run. Run in blind fear and terror ... A Hellfire missile hitting a T-72 tank--it is an absolute catastrophic destruction. The turret absolutely separates and blows off a hundred feet in the air, a hundred yards away."

The 24th Division continued pounding the Iraqi column throughout the morning, until every vehicle moving toward the causeway tank, truck, or automobile--was destroyed. McCaffrey, in a written response to a question, reported that his forces had removed a hundred and eighty-seven tanks and armored vehicles from the Iraqi arsenal, along with four hundred or more trucks. The Battle of Rumaila was closely reviewed at the war's end by an analyst for the C.I.A., who confirmed that the Iraqi losses were great. The toll included at least a hundred tanks from the Hammurabi division. "It's like eating an artichoke," one colonel had said of combat to Captain Bell. "Once you start, you can't stop."

One of the destroyed vehicles was a bus, which had been hit by a rocket. The precise number of its occupants who were injured or killed is not known, but they included civilians and children. One of the first Americans at the scene was Lieutenant Charles W Gameros, Jr., a Scout platoon leader, who called in a Medevac team for the victims. At the time, he was "frustrated" by what he saw as needless deaths, Gameros recalled in an interview. "Now I look at it sadly," he said. Unresisting Iraqis had been slain all morning, but the deaths of the children troubled many soldiers.

Later that afternoon, a platoon sergeant informed Charles Sheehan-Miles that he and a few colleagues might be handed a grisly mission. "He said, 'We've blown away a busload of kids,' and warned us that we were going to get called for a burial mission," Sheehan-Miles recalled. Dirty details were a way of Army life, but *this one* would be special. "The sergeant gave us a heads-up so we could prepare ourselves." The call never came.

A NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT OURSELVES

McCaffrey was triumphant at battle's end. "He was smiling like a proud father," John Brasfield told me. The young soldier got a good look at the commanding general, because the 2-7 Scouts had something McCaffrey wanted: Soviet and Iraqi flags. The flags were not battle trophies but had been pulled down by the Scouts very early that morning while they were walking through a deserted Soviet construction plant along Highway 8. "We got orders to drive up after the battle and present him with the flags," Brasfield recalled. "McCaffrey and Ware were surveying the battlefield from the back of the Bradley" James Manchester thought the scene almost comical: "He wanted that flag. It was very important that he get the flag." The soldiers were later told that McCaffrey had made a gift of one of the flags to General Schwarzkopf

Le Moyne was jubilant as well. At the end of the battle, David Pierson writes in "Tuskers," Le Moyne showed up at battalion headquarters. "Hot damn," he exclaimed, according to Pierson. "I've killed more tanks today as an infantryman than my daddy did as a tanker in all of World War II." He told the Army historian, "This whole operation has been a practical demonstration of what happens when you do things right. For the right kind of reasons. This war has had no Lieutenant Calleys in it.... Has no Jane Fondas. It's just a very professional army."

That afternoon, Le Moyne took Linda Suttlehan on a helicopter tour. "I flew around expecting to see a battlefield," Suttlehan told me. Instead, she saw "millions of footprints in the sand" amid hundreds of smoking vehicles. "I thought, Wow. This is not the kind of battle I thought I'd see."

A couple of evenings later, Pierson was driving toward the causeway. "It must have been a nightmare along this road as the Apaches dispensed death from five kilometers away one vehicle at a time," he writes. "I stopped as a familiar smell wafted through the air... It was the smell of a cookout on a warm summer day; the smell of a seared steak"

James Manchester also wandered among the dead after the battle, and he began describing the scene during an interview, telling me about the vast number of "burning vehicles and burning bodies." He stopped talking, and began to weep.

Sometime after the battle, an interpreter for the 124th Military Intelligence Battalion interrogated a captured Iraqi tank commander who, according to an officer in the 124th, plaintively asked again and again, "Why are you killing us? All we were doing was going home. Why are you killing us?"

After the engagement, reporters were flown by helicopter to McCaffrey's assault command headquarters for a briefing and interviews. McCaffrey praised the "initiative, intellect, and determination" of his troops, and added that "Saddam Hussein still doesn't know what hit him." He also said, "We dismantled the Iraqi Army,

reduced it to a third of what it had been." McCaffrey gave the press corps a statistical rundown of miles traveled, weapons confiscated, prisoners captured, and tanks and trucks demolished. An officer in his command post recalled that "one of the constant themes" was the General's belief that "we hadn't destroyed enough."

Analysts in Washington and at General Schwarzkopf's headquarters were skeptical of McCaffrey's claim that the Iraqis fired first. A senior Iraq analyst for the C.I.A. told me that he and his colleagues had concluded almost immediately that there was "no way" the retreating Iraqi forces opened fire on the 24th Division. People at the C.I.A. understood that the Hammurabi tanks had a much more important mission than continuing an already lost war: more than half the Republican Guard units made their way back to Baghdad and helped to keep Saddam Hussein in power.

Military analysts at the coalition headquarters asked to view the battle films that were automatically recorded by cameras on board each Apache helicopter. The footage clearly showed, one officer told me, that the Iraqi tanks were in full retreat when the attack began, and in no way posed a threat to the American forces. "These guys were in an off road defensive position deployed in a perimeter," the analyst added. Once the American attack reached full force, some Iraqi vehicles did attempt to return fire. "We saw T-72s in battle lines, firing away blindly in the air. They didn't know what was killing them, but they were gamely shooting-knowing they would die." (An American could be overheard on the footage shouting, as a missile tore into an Iraqi vehicle, "Say hello to Allah!")

It was clear at the Pentagon, too, that something had gone awry. One colonel assigned at the time to monitor war reports at the National Military Command Center-he is now a major general, and still on active duty-told me that the reports from the 24th Division were extremely "unsettling," because "it made no sense for a defeated army to invite their own death. It didn't track with anything we knew about the theatre. It came across as shooting fish in a barrel. Everyone was incredulous."

The disquiet reached into XVIII Corps headquarters, where doubts about McCaffrey's attack were widespread. On March 3rd, General Luck, McCaffrey's immediate boss, flew to the 24th Division headquarters to ask McCaffrey what had gone on. Luck, who retired from the Army with four stars, said of McCaffrey, "I have a deep and abiding respect for anyone who serves his country." But, he added, speaking carefully, "I felt when I was in command I had a parental responsibility to my soldiers. You don't bring any limelight on yourself Better to give it to your soldiers.

"I went straight up there," Luck went on. "I asked all the people I suspected, 'What went on? Why did it happen at this time? I went up in a positive way and looked them in the eye. Everybody said, 'This is a fair deal. 'The Army, he added, "has built everything on trust and responsibility. I've got to respect what they say. When you give them every opportunity to say what happened and nothing is said, what do you do?" Luck's dilemma was acute: an official inquiry was unlikely to produce any evidence to contradict McCaffrey's account, and would have undermined the Army's victory in the war.

Colonel Frank Akers, who retired as a brigadier general, accompanied Luck on his visit to the division's headquarters. "He was worried," Akers said of Luck. The anxiety was shared by many on the staff of XVIII Corps. "Deep down, there were several of us who said, 'Something doesn't feel right about this; " Akers told me. " 'It doesn't quite add up.' " The response to Luck's questioning at 24th Division headquarters didn't help. McCaffrey's people were "kind of looking at their feet and shuffling around," Akers said.

One of Luck's questions caused consternation, Patrick Lamar told Army investigators in 1991. Luck "turned around and said, 'How's the ceasefire line going?' We said, 'What ceasefire line?'" Lamar's staff showed the Corps commander the division's ceasefire deployment lines, as of March 2nd. Luck said, "This isn't the right

one, fel

lows." Lamar, the loyal soldier, took the blame. "My guys screwed up," he said. He told Luck that the division had deployed forward because someone made an innocent mistake and got the coordinates wrong. McCaffrey said nothing.

Lamar laughed at himself as he told me the story eight years later. "McCaffrey played stupid in front of Luck," he said, adding that McCaffrey's getting the coordinates wrong had been anything but a mistake.

A few days after the battle, McCaffrey and the other Army generals who had helped win the war took part in an extended review and planning meeting at King Khalid Military City. The talks were headed by Lieutenant General Yeosock, who, as the Third Army commander, had been responsible for much of the Army's war planning. He was assisted by his operations officer, Brigadier General Steven L. Arnold. One of the first steps in the review, according to some of the officers who participated, was to discuss and compare the reporting of each division—the logs, journals, and situation reports—with the available satellite data fixing the division's location. The officers did not dispute McCaffrey's claim that the Iraqis had fired first, but the overriding issue was the most basic one of all: why had the 24th Division moved during the ceasefire into the path of the retreating Iraqis? McCaffrey, in a May 8th letter to *The New Yorker*, stated that all the appropriate headquarters always knew his position. "U.S. Army elements in Desert Storm," the letter said, "were the first military force in history that almost always knew exactly where we were. 'The 24th Division' never falsely reported its position," McCaffrey wrote. "I never did so and never instructed any of the soldiers under my command to do so."

A number of generals at the King Khalid commanders' conference remember it differently. Most of the position reports to higher headquarters during the war were accurate to within a few dozen metres, General Ronald H. Griffith (Ret.), who commanded the 1st Armored Division in the war, recalled. "In Barry's logs," Griffith added, "the distances were off dramatically—dozens of miles." McCaffrey spent much of the meeting insisting that he needed to adjust his record, and was finally permitted to do so. "We all laughed about it," the general said. "If we'd known that he was rewriting history, we'd have protested more,"

The general's point was that the 24th Division was not always where McCaffrey said it was. "Barry would tell you where he was going or where he had been," General Yeosock told me later, "but his division isn't there. Some commanders will tell you where they're going; others will not." For General Arnold and the Third Army planners who were plotting the Iraqi retreat, McCaffrey's antics masked a consequential discrepancy. They did not know that the 24th Division would be blocking the causeway over Lake Hammar. "We gave the Iraqis an area" of safe passage, which included the causeway, Arnold told me. "We didn't know there were two American brigades there. We would not have sent the Iraqis there." The planners would have told the Iraqis to get home another way. None of the assembled generals, of course, had any reason to suspect that an official investigation would take place into the March 2nd counter attack, and the potential significance of McCaffrey's inexact reporting escaped everyone at King Khalid Military City. Arnold recalled, "We took it as an honest mistake and attempted to sort it out."

According to the Army historian Richard Swain, who was the only outsider allowed to attend the review, McCaffrey arrived without any detailed records, and came close to turning the proceedings into a shambles. "He got dates all wrapped around the axle," Swain said, and unsuccessfully tried to reconcile his version of events with the versions of others. The goal of Arnold's conference, Swain explained, was to create a broad narrative sequence of what had happened, on a day-by-day, hour-by-hour basis, during the war. McCaffrey "kept on insisting that things happened in different time frames. He was confused, and, being McCaffrey, assumed everyone else was wrong and he was right." At one point, Swain said, McCaffrey was arguing about which day

was which. By then, he said, the conference had degenerated into "an attempt to get McCaffrey's times right."

McCaffrey remained triumphant. According to "Tuskers," he told his troops before they flew back to Fort Stewart, "You knocked them to their goddam knees in the opening day of the war and they never got up." Later in the speech, he said, "You knocked them to their

knees because they were like an eighth grade team playing with pro football players." He had never been "more proud of American soldiers in my entire life as watching your attack on 2 March.... It's fascinating to watch what's happening in our country. God, it's the damndest thing I ever saw in my life. It's probably the single most unifying event that has happened in America since World War II The upshot will be that, just like Vietnam had the tragic effect on our country for years, this one has brought back a new way of looking at ourselves."

After the offensive, McCaffrey asked his senior aviation officer, Colonel Tackaberry, to provide him with a list of pilots who deserved the Distinguished Flying Cross. This time, Tackaberry did say no to his commander. Or, at any rate, he didn't say yes. There was a second request, and then a third. Tackaberry refused. "I put it in writing, and said, 'I do not believe that any of these people deserved it.'" His reasoning was simple: none of his pilots had flown in a sustained battle, with the enemy firing at them. "Our pilots were killing from three or four miles away," he said, and were not in a "battle," as the authorized Army history later reported. He never gave McCaffrey any names.

There was a final Gulf War assignment for Major Brennan as well. McCaffrey ordered him to find two Saudi Arabian camels and transport them to Fort Stewart, where they could serve as constant reminders of the division's success in the desert. "I'm the camel guy," Brennan told me. "Got the mission personally from him. He said, 'I want a mascot.'" Two camels were found, with the aid of the Saudi Arabian government, but the U.S. Department of Agriculture refused to allow them into the country. McCaffrey persisted. "We ended up buying some from a farmer somewhere in Indiana," Brennan said.

III-THE INVESTIGATIONS

THE WHITE FLAG

When the 24th Division returned to the United States, not long after the March 2nd attack, there was a tumultuous rally at Fort Stewart. The Gulf War generals became instant national heroes. "We had given America a clear win at low casualties in a noble cause," Colin Powell wrote in "My American Journey," his 1995 memoir, "and the American people fell in love again with their armed forces."

At Fort Stewart and at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, however, word began spreading that some things had gone very wrong in the war. Shortly after returning from Iraq, Sergeant Steven Larimore gathered five of his colleagues from the Ground Surveillance Radar teams of the 124th Military Intelligence Battalion, and walked into the Fort Stewart branch of the Army's Criminal Investigations Division, or C.I.D., office and met with two investigators.

The men described what they had seen on March 1st, when Iraqis in civilian clothes had been shot near a schoolhouse while holding a white flag. "All six of us went and told what we knew," Larimore said to me. "The basic tenet was that we didn't see anybody shooting at us" before the 1st Brigade platoon opened fire. Larimore had the support of his company commander, Lieutenant Charles Febus. Michael Sangiorgio, one of Larimore's crew members, was anxious about going to the C.I.D. "Are we going to get in trouble?" he recalled asking.

The C.I.D. is known inside the Army as a "stovepipe" command-one whose chain of command leads directly to the chief of staff, in Washington. The goal is to insulate the reporting and investigation of any wrong-doing from a local division commander, who has no interest in prosecutions that could damage his career. Such interference is known as "command influence."

Larimore and his colleagues heard nothing more from the C.I.D., and continued with their day-to-day assignments. The next step gave everyone pause. Colonel Le Moyne, the 1st Brigade commander, wanted to meet after work with the men in the chain of command-including Larimore, Lieutenant Febus, and the commander of the 124th Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Reuss. "Evidently," Larimore told me, "the C.I.D. stovepipe didn't work." Once in Le Moyne's office, Larimore said, "We got this big long speech about how we had never been in combat or in a firefight. We didn't know what it was like. He ripped us pretty good."

Febus, who is now a legal officer in the Army Reserve, was appalled by Le Moyne's intervention, which took place before any of the issues were officially investigated. "It was totally one-sided, totally confrontational," he told me. "Instead of 'What did you see?' or 'What was going on Fit was 'You haven't been in a firefight. You don't know what you saw.' He was accusing my soldiers of not knowing what was going on-of not being squared away," he said. "If his beef was the way it got reported, he should have said that. If his beef was what they saw, I got a problem with that." Sergeant Larimore did not back off in the meeting, Febus said.

Le Moyne also criticized Lieutenant Colonel Reuss, the battalion commander, because his subordinates had made a report to the C.I.D. without Reuss's prior approval-approval that was unnecessary under Army regulations. Reuss said little during the meeting, Febus recalled. (Reuss, who is now retired, told me recently that he had "no recollection whatsoever" of the meeting.) Le Moyne's intent seemed obvious: to get the men to withdraw their complaint. "I was biting my lip to keep from getting in trouble," Febus said.

When I interviewed Le Moyne recently, he defended his meeting with Larimore and the other complainants as merely an attempt "to cut down on confusion. You gather the key people all in one place, so there's no misunderstanding." His message to the G.S.R. teams, he said, was that their allegations "would be investigated fully and completely." He continued, "On issues of morality and integrity, there is no substitute for looking them dead in the eye and telling them of their rights.... McCaffrey's guidance to the chain of command was that any report of any irregularity had to be investigated-every suspicion, war story, fairy tale, and rumor.

I told Le Moyne that some of the young enlisted men felt that his message was one not of reaffirming their rights but of intimidation.

"Absolutely untrue," Le Moyne responded. "The only surprise I had is that they lacked confidence in their chain of command'--that is, in Lieutenant Colonel Reuss----'not to take it to him first. There are no secrets in a military unit. Soldiers talk. Why, months later, had they not discussed this with their chain of command? "

Nonetheless, Le Moyne's showdown meeting badly rattled some of the young radar operators. One battalion officer told me, "The men were terrified-they said, 'We've got the Big Green Machine going after us.'"

Le Moyne's next step was to authorize a captain in his brigade to conduct an informal investigation, known as an AR15-6, and file a report. Such a step was perfectly legal. However, a number of senior Army lawyers, in interviews for this article, questioned Le Moyne's judgment. "As a general rule," one military lawyer said, serious allegations should be "thoroughly examined by an unbiased, neutral party outside of your command. You have a charge of deaths-allegations that rise above the norm. Having a captain? Why do it that way? Is he"-the captain-"trying to come up with results his boss wants?"

A few weeks after Le Moyne's meeting with Larimore and his teammates, the officers and men of the 124th Battalion were again summoned to his office, this time to listen to the results of the brigade's investigation. There were no surprises. "The captain laid out the course of his investigation," Larimore told me. "He said there was a group who observed no weapons" among the civilians who had been shot and "there were also people who said they saw weapons and muzzle flashes" from the Iraqi civilians. The captain then concluded that the allegations of wrongful death were "unsubstantiated."

In Le Moyne's view, the case was now closed. The investigation, he said, had produced a series of witnesses who "totally refuted the allegations." After the captain's report, Le Moyne recalled, "I asked Larimore very specifically, 'Do you understand what's been said here?' and he said yes. 'Do you agree with what's been found?' He said yes."

Larimore's recollection of the encounter is rueful. "For some reason," he explained, "I was tagged as the ringleader. Le Moyne asked me if I was satisfied. I wasn't going to argue with an O-6-a colonel. "I told him that I was glad my soldiers could see the Army had a system to deal with things." Larimore, who is still on active duty in Army intelligence, shrugged and said, "I didn't Eke Colonel Le Moyne or the way he did business. I know what I saw."

Charles Febus, speaking of Larimore and the others, said, "They did their duty and filed their report. And the Army chose to do what it did."

THE HOSPITAL BUS

Specialist 4 Edward Walker was tense, irritable, and quick to take offense after his experiences with the 2-7 Scouts. He returned to the 5th Engineer headquarters in Saudi Arabia around March 6th and immediately got into a dispute with a battalion officer who wanted him to turn in an Iraqi pistol he'd kept as a war souvenir. "I wasn't even there five minutes and they told me, 'Give me your pistol,'" Walker related. "I got pissed and I start screaming and yelling. 'No, you're not going to take this. I been out there getting shot at. You mother fuckers-out there shooting unarmed prisoners, 'and stuff Eke this.'"

Within a few days, Walker found himself telling his story to a lawyer at a nearby Air Force base. He remembered little about the meeting, but he did recall that 1st Sergeant Rex A. Wertz, Sr., approved it. (Wertz, now living in retirement in Pennsylvania, confirmed Walker's account, telling me that "All I know is that this guy Walker said he wanted to talk to the I.G. and we let him go.")

Walker returned to Fort Leonard Wood and soon found himself going three times to Fort Stewart, because the 1st Brigade had convened a second AR15-6 inquiry, into his allegations. Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Kight was the brigade's executive officer-that is, Le Moyne's most senior deputy Walker recalled spending hours at one of the sessions going through maps and documents in an attempt to recount the incident fully. When he was asked if he had seen anyone actually get shot, Walker said what he always said: he hadn't seen any prisoners fall, but he saw rounds being fired at them.

Kight's investigation absolved Ware's battalion of any wrongdoing. Le Moyne, in a conversation with me, depicted the inquiry as sweeping in its absolution. "It was not a hospital bus," he declared. "There were no wounded. They were armed Iraqi officers and soldiers." Le Moyne added that Edward Walker 14wasn't even there. He was off in the distance." At the end of the inquiry, Le Moyne said, he brought Walker to Fort Stewart to hear the investigating officer's report. "You have to look him in the eye," Le Moyne told me. "It's tough to find Walker as a credible witness. The kid never connected with the Scout platoon he was attached to. This kid never took."

Walker viewed Le Moyne's inquiry as a cover up. "The Colonel was up there doing the talking," Walker told me. "He was the one leading the whole thing, and he was saying 'The Scouts' "Walker's colleagues on the battlefield,, say this didn't happen." Walker said Le Moyne did reveal that one lieutenant in the battalion remembered seeing the prisoners before the Bradleys began shooting, but the lieutenant testified that he did not recall what happened to them. "He went through the whole thing and my story," Walker said. "By the time he got done, the Colonel looked at me and said, 'You haven't got the slightest idea what you're talking about. You were just upset and overwrought.'"

"That colonel was basically just reaming my tush," Walker told me. He felt abandoned by his former colleagues. "I had nobody backing me up anymore. Everybody had changed their story."

Sergeant Steven Mulig also felt helpless. He and a few other Scouts had been summoned to testify, but he felt that none of the brigade officers wanted to hear what they had to say. "We were all getting upset," Mulig told me. The investigators tried to undermine the Scouts' credibility by challenging their ability to read map coördinates and suggesting that they had no idea where the alleged shootings took place. "They made it look like we didn't know what was going on over there," Mulig said. Lieutenant Colonel Kight kept "beating it to death. He just let it go the way it went. It was just an officer cover up kind of thing."

Kight's report, as summarized by the Army, concluded that, while the Americans had fired in the direction of the Iraqis, no prisoners "had been killed or wounded in the incident.... No bodies, graves, or wounded were attributed to this incident-Iraqi or friendly." Another finding, the Army report said, was that the Iraqis who died had contributed to their own demise: "The Iraqi vehicles carrying surrendering soldiers had not been marked with white flags."

Former Lieutenant Kirk Allen, the Scout commander, who is now a major serving in Georgia, told me that all the witnesses from the Bradley companies denied that their bullets had struck any prisoners. Two important witnesses, he added, turned out to be Le Moyne and the brigade executive officer, Major Benjamin Freakley, whose armored vehicles were determined to have been in a position to see the shooting and both men subsequently testified that they saw no wrongdoing. One Army lawyer who was on active duty at Fort Stewart in mid 1991 told me that the AR15-6 testimony even suggested that some of the Iraqis had "feigned" their surrender, and had turned themselves into prisoners with the intent of taking a shot at the Americans. "It was essentially a ruse," he said.

Some of the lawyers in the Judge Advocate General's office at Fort Stewart came to believe that Le Moyne was far from independent in his handling of the allegations. "Le Moyne is on the firing line," one senior lawyer told me, "but McCaffrey is pulling the string."

Le Moyne, in one of his conversations with me, was categorical in asserting the independence of his role: "I appointed one of my brigade officers to investigate ... and his report was that it was not true."

McCaffrey had a different recollection of who appointed the investigators, as he told two questioners from the C.I.D. in 1991. There were, he said, "three allegations of enemy prisoners being fired on. In each case, I had appointed an investigating officer, and I said you will get to the truth of the allegations. You will interview everybody involved done."

For reasons not known, John Brasfield and James Manchester were never called to testify in the 1st Brigade's investigation. David Collatt, their colleague on the 2-7 Scout team, testified that he didn't actually see any prisoners get shot. But he scoffed at the brigade's finding that none of the Iraqi prisoners had been killed or

wounded: "Our Bradleys turned and started firing at the prisoners. And there was no wounded or killed? Rounds pumping right where they're at, and they tell us nobody got hurt?" Collatt told me that he had no hard feelings toward Edward Walker for not leaving the war behind him: "Walker did what he had to do. We were just glad to be alive."

"I knew I was a marked man as soon as I said something," Walker said. He was not permitted to re-enlist by the authorities at Fort Leonard Wood, and he left the Army in the fall of 1991.

MITCHELL'S INQUIRY

Sometime late in the spring of 1991, three members of the 5th Engineer Battalion at Fort Leonard Wood went to the Inspector General's office on base. They told a story much like Larimore's and Walker's about the shooting of Iraqi prisoners of war by soldiers from the 1st Brigade of the 24th Division. The complaints became the responsibility of Fort Leonard Wood's Inspector General, Major Thomas Mitchell. Mitchell, who had little experience in investigations, Army law, or procedure, had spent his career in the Army as an engineer and had agreed to become Fort Leonard Wood's Inspector General only reluctantly. None of his superior officers did anything to help him out. Of the three enlisted men who made the complaint, Mitchell said, "The kids who came in were nice, and there seemed to be some validity to what they saw. But we couldn't confirm anything illegal. Even if you have a witness, if you can't substantiate it you can't report it as a finding." He did not recall their names, but he did recall that their allegations involved "several hundred" prisoners and some Iraqis who got "ripped up."

Army records show that at least one company of engineers from Fort Leonard Wood was assigned in the Gulf War to the 2-7 Battalion of the 1st Brigade. Edward Walker told me that a number of his colleagues worked closely with the various units in Charles Ware's battalion, and that some of those engineers—including, perhaps, those who made the complaint—had swept into the area along Highway 8 on the afternoon of February 27th. "Behind us was the Bradleys, and right behind them were the engineers," Walker said. "They would have seen it"—the prisoners' shootings.

It is far from clear that Mitchell, who has since left the Army, made a serious attempt to substantiate the soldiers' story. In my first conversation with him, by telephone, he told me that he had made a trip to Saudi Arabia but was unable to establish that the Iraqi soldiers who were "ripped up" were victims of wrongdoing by soldiers of the 24th. In a subsequent interview, in Missouri, where he now lives, Mitchell provided a different account. He said it was one of the enlisted men in his office who had traveled to Saudi Arabia to look into an allegation that "hundreds were involved in a shooting incident where dozens were killed." Mitchell shared his information with the C.I.D. office at Fort Leonard Wood, and was informed that the C.I.D. had previously investigated the allegation and concluded that the Iraqis had been killed in an exchange of gunfire among themselves. Mitchell said he was told, "Where they found bodies, the wounds were from Iraqi rounds. The shell casing on the ground did not match U.S. casing. We were finding Warsaw Pact ammunition on the ground."

A number of government and academic experts on the war told me that they knew of no reports during or immediately after the war of Iraqi soldiers shooting one another to prevent surrender. One analyst, Michael Eisenstadt, of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, noted that the anti-Hussein uprisings—which were all violently suppressed—did not begin in earnest until after the war and involved the selected targeting of high-level military and party officials. "Among stragglers in the war, it was every man for himself," Eisenstadt said. I subsequently asked Mitchell if he or, to his knowledge, any other government investigator had actually seen the Iraqi victims, and examined their wounds. He said no.

In the report that Mitchell prepared for his superiors at Fort Leonard Wood, he found that the 5th Engineer

allegations were "unsubstantiated." A draft of those findings, which he gave me, concluded-with no evidence cited-that the Iraqis had shot each other. "In a couple of instances," the draft report said, "gunfire was exchanged within refugee groups and gunshot victims were pointed out as Republican Guard morale officers keeping tabs on Iraqi reservists. Some incidents were explained as internal vengeance and retribution among Iraqis."

Sergeant Tony Abernathy, one of the enlisted men assigned to the Inspector General's office at Fort Leonard Wood, subsequently informed me that no one from the office "went to the desert" during the investigation. Abernathy also provided me with a far different account of Mitchell's investigation. "I don't remember Mitchell doing anything about it," he said. "It was a big situation that nobody wanted to mess with at the time. We weren't equipped to handle it. I think it was not an investigation. The U.S. Army just didn't want the publicity." Abernathy is now retired; before his assignment to the Fort Leonard Wood Inspector General's office, he had spent much of his career in the Special Forces.

No one in the chain of command at Fort Leonard Wood seems to have objected to Mitchell's investigation. He was apparently doing, as Abernathy suggested, exactly what the system wanted.

THE LETTER

In August, 1991, Colonel Ernest H. Dinkel was a deputy chief of staff for the Criminal Investigation Division. Dinkel, then forty-six years old, had spent several years as an Army cop and was working out of the C.I.D.'s local headquarters in Falls Church, Virginia, near the Pentagon. "I'm walking down the hall one afternoon," he recounted recently. "And the General's secretary says, 'Don't go anywhere.'" A few moments later, Dinkel and some associates were in the office of Major General Peter T. Barry, the director of the C.I.D. command. Barry had just returned from the office of General Gordon Sullivan, the Army's Vice-Chief of Staff. The Army had a problem. A carefully typed, two-page anonymous letter had been mailed to the Army Inspector General. It appeared to have been written by an officer serving in one of McCaffrey's 24th Division command posts, for it was filled with information that only an insider could have known. "That's what scared everybody," Dinkel recalled. "This was from someone who was there."

The letter contained a number of allegations that were certain to be explosive if they turned out to be true. Two in particular stood out. The letter alleged that McCaffrey was guilty of a "war crime" in his March 2nd assault on the retreating Iraqis, and had urged his brigade commanders "to find a way for him to go kill all of those bastards." The letter also claimed that 24th Division soldiers had "slaughtered" Iraqi prisoners of war after seizing an airfield on the fourth day of the war.

The letter included a threat that, as its writer obviously understood, would get the attention of the Army's leadership, which was still relishing the warm glow of the Gulf War. "If you chose not to investigate, so be it," the letter said. "Tapes, documents, and photos exist. Jack Anderson--the columnist--would be very interested."

Given the extent and severity of the letter's accusations, an investigation was inevitable, and Dinkel was put in charge of it. His deputy, Warrant Officer Willie J. Rowell, was the most experienced and respected C.I.D. investigator in the Washington area. The inquiry was not merely to be kept secret, as all such investigations were, but to be kept secret from every other office in the C.I.D. It was believed that public knowledge of the allegations--and they were, of course, nothing more than anonymous allegations--would be devastating to McCaffrey's career and to the Army's postwar reputation.

Colonel Dinkel and his C.I.D. team arrived at Fort Stewart in mid-August, 1991, just three weeks after Le Moyne's 1st Brigade concluded its report on the Edward Walker allegations, and well after it closed out its case

on the allegations brought by Sergeant Larimore, of the 124th Military Intelligence Battalion. Both files were immediately made available to the C.I.D. In each instance, the brigade's findings were taken at face value. The cases in Le Moyne's brigade, once closed, stayed closed.

Dinkel and his crew spent the next several weeks assiduously conducting interviews and collecting data on the anonymous letter, at Fort Stewart and at Army bases across America. They spent weeks looking into the letter's charge of the slaughter of prisoners at an airfield, and could find no evidence to support it. They never focused on the hospital-bus shootings described by Larimore and Walker.

Dinkel was most concerned with the letter's charges about McCaffrey's leadership before and after the annihilation of the Iraqis at Rumalla. One C.I.D. team flew to Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, to interview Colonel Michael MacLaren (Ret.), who, as the division's G1, or logistics officer, had been in charge of its rear command post in Saudi Arabia.

MacLaren was told six weeks after the war that the unit no longer needed him around. MacLaren's testimony, released under the Freedom of Information Act, provided support for one of the anonymous letter's most serious charges—that a colleague had overheard McCaffrey urge his commanders on the command radio net "to find a way for him to go kill all of those bastards." MacLaren said that he had been troubled by the March 2nd engagement, especially in the months after the war, when the division spun it numerous versions of how contact was initiated by the enemy—tank fire, frontal assault, artillery, R.P.G., Sagger missile. "I was surprised that there were so many versions of the truth," especially by late spring. "I thought we ought to have figured it out," he said. "After all, it was these enemy actions which prompted us into action." There was another troubling aspect of the March 2nd engagement, MacLaren said: "Our apparent lack of 'measured response' in light of the ceasefire. I thought we should have met enemy force with appropriate force—not necessarily overwhelming force. Even the use of force on the battlefield has its ethical restrictions." The term "turkey shoot," he said, had become common usage within the division when describing the March 2nd engagement.

MacLaren also told the C.I.D. of a cryptic comment he said that McCaffrey made at the beginning of an after-action review meeting later in March: "Remember, the Iraqis started this one." When asked why he had not filed a formal complaint about McCaffrey's actions, MacLaren said that he had no hard evidence to back up his information. "I have no firsthand knowledge," he told the C.I.D. "I believe it may have been a bad decision on someone's part."

The C.I.D. also learned about McCaffrey's dispute with Patrick Lamar, and on August 17th Dinkel and a colleague flew to Fort Stewart to interview Lamar. Lamar, like all colonels, wanted to become a general, and he understood that volunteering his views on the events of March 2nd would do little for that ambition. And, like many Army officers, he had contempt for the C.I.D.; investigators are known as "two by twos," because they travel in pairs and conduct interviews jointly. "They're not real cops," Lamar told me.

Lamar's testimony about McCaffrey alternated between praise and revelation. "He is smart," Lamar told the C.I.D. "He's a combat commander I would follow. I think he knows what he's doing---otherwise he wouldn't be where's he's at.... He has never treated me wrong." Nonetheless, Lamar told the C.I.D. that he considered the attack to be a violation of the ceasefire, and that the Iraqis had taken no action to provoke it. On March 2nd, Lamar testified, he had been contacted by the 1st Brigade and told that lights, from vehicles, could be seen in the distance. "I asked which way they were going," Lamar went on, "and they said they were going north"—to the causeway. "I said, 'O.K., stay away from it, you don't need to have any contact with it.'" His caution won him little favor. Hours later, Lamar said, McCaffrey "took charge" and the attack began. "I'll tell you the truth," the Colonel said, "I didn't support it because at that point in time I thought it was a slaughter. But the bottom line was he was doing what was necessary to protect the force because they had been fired on and nobody knew

what these guys were liable to do." Lamar denied the anonymous letter's report that he had described McCaffrey's actions on March 2nd as a war crime, but he added, "What I did tell him was that we better make darn sure that they were fired on first or otherwise we would violate the ceasefire rule.... The bottom line is that he wanted to keep pushing."

The C.I.D. interview lasted for hours, Lamar says, and he was not contacted again by its investigators. The Lamar interview convinced Dinkel that the C.I.D. was wasting its time. "Boss, we ain't got shit" he recalls telling General Barry. "This is a bullshit letter." A day or so later, Dinkel recalls, he was summoned to the Pentagon, along with General Barry, to meet with the Army's top brass in the offices of General Sullivan, the Vice-Chief of Staff. It was Dinkel's first visit to the Army's inner sanctum. There were at least six generals at the meeting, many with two or more stars on their epaulettes. A few civilian officials were also present. Dinkel says that he and General Barry were told that it was unacceptable to stop the inquiry. There was worried talk, to Dinkel's astonishment, of "another My Lai," and the C.I.D. was given a broad mandate to investigate McCaffrey.

The C.I.D. returned to Fort Stewart and began a series of interviews there, and at Army bases around the country. Dinkel and his colleagues worked hard over the next few weeks--more than a hundred and fifty men and women were interviewed. Had a soldier volunteered information about a crime, the C.I.D. most certainly would have taken the complaint seriously, and begun an inquiry. But few soldiers report crimes, because they don't want to jeopardize their Army careers.

The interviews went on, the questions were asked, and the answers duly transcribed. In the C.I.D. interviews, released under the Freedom of Information Act, soldier after soldier, including those in Ware's 2-7 battalion, reports that he knew nothing about the mistreatment of prisoners. Several thought that the Iraqi prisoners, far from being abused, were treated too well. Many testify that the Iraqis engaged in a variety of hostile acts on March 2nd. The inescapable fact is that Dinkel and his team were left in the dark by the senior officers of the 24th Division, and its 1st Brigade. Dinkel told me he knew nothing of allegations involving an Iraqi hospital bus or a large number of Iraqi prisoners of war: "If someone had said two hundred people, I would have remembered that." He also said he never heard the name Edward Walker, adding, "I don't know anybody at Fort Leonard Wood."

JUST A LINE ON THE GROUND

On August 27th, Dinkel and Warrant Officer Rowell conducted a two-hour interview with McCaffrey in his office at Fort Stewart. When they arrived, McCaffrey was "all smiles," Dinkel said, and greeted them cordially. There was one jarring note, however. Before the questioning could begin, Dinkel recalled, the General "took off his jacket and showed us his screwed-up arm." Dinkel felt that McCaffrey was implying that he deserved special consideration because of his war record--an implication that Dinkel told me he resented.

No such resentment showed up in the transcript of the interview, which lasted two hours. Dinkel and Rowell asked a total of eight questions. McCaffrey was asked if he was "aware" of any incident in which Iraqi prisoners were killed; whether he was "aware" of any actions by his division to provoke the Iraqis into violating the ceasefire on March 2nd; and what his understanding of the rules of engagement was. The final question was one asked of all witnesses: "Is there anything you'd like to add to this statement?"

McCaffrey was asked nothing about Lamar's assertion that the ceasefire lines had been ignored, inadvertently or not, at the end of the war. Nor did the investigators pursue Lamar's claim that the senior staff didn't know or communicate the precise boundaries of the division's area of operations.

McCaffrey was careful, nonetheless, to explain to the C.I.D. investigators that he was having "difficulty in remembering precisely times and days"--the same issue that marred the commanders' conference at King Khalid Military City. At the ceasefire, he said, his instructions were not to go more than three or so miles east of the causeway, a map designation known as Phase Line Crush. That map designation, he added dismissively, "did not have any meaning in and of itself. It was just a line on the ground." His goal after the war was to "close the division up on our forward positions," consolidating his forces toward the front and standing by for further instructions.

He had done so by the early morning of March 2nd, he said, when the retreating Iraqis began firing at the 24th Division. The initial contact came from Iraqi infantrymen who fired R.P.G.s. "To be honest," McCaffrey said, "it struck me wrong.... My guess was and still is" that some of the Iraqi units "were hearing their own forces move through the area and may have interpreted that as a counterattack ... because it sounds sort of screwy to engage an armor unit with R. P. G. -grenades that posed little threat to tanks or heavy tracked vehicles. Nonetheless, McCaffrey said, "I started forces going about this time." He ordered one of the division's Apache and Air Cavalry helicopter units to get in the air. Two flatbeds with Iraqi tanks aboard were reported to be moving down the road. "There was a lot of discussion on 'What the heck does that mean?'" McCaffrey recalled. "Because, obviously, it is not an attack." By this point, around eight o'clock in the morning, McCaffrey told the investigators, the Air Cavalry was reporting that hundreds of Iraqi vehicles were moving.

One of his commanders-presumably Le Moyne "comes up on the net," McCaffrey said, "and he said now we are being engaged with tanks and Sagers." The brigade commander further reported that his units were taking direct fire from Iraqi T-72 tanks, with Sagger missiles, and were returning fire. "I said, 'O.K. Got it.'"

At this point, McCaffrey's description of the battlefield situation began to differ from his earlier accounts. McCaffrey told the C.I.D. that he understood from his brigade commander that "there were a couple or three battalions, near Rumaila oil field-armor, tanks." He was also told, he said, that hundreds of Iraqi vehicles had already crossed the Lake Hammar causeway. That fact "sort of surprised me because I thought the causeway was down, so I was not quite sure if they were already over there or--and here McCaffrey added a new element----"had come out of Basra": not an army fleeing its defeat in Kuwait but one looking for a new battle. "It sounds like another brigade ... headed up toward us." McCaffrey was now claiming he thought that the 24th Division was under threat from a large Iraqi military force from Basra, a regional center for the Republican Guard. "So we got three chunks," he concluded. "A piece north of the river; we have got a chunk in the Rumaila oil fields firing at us, and we've got some more back off to the east in a pretty dicey situation."

In the account provided to the C.I.D., McCaffrey was facing a three pronged threat-from the Euphrates, from the infantrymen and tanks already engaging with his troops, and from Basra.

He went on, "What was I thinking at the time? Number one was: 'I am not going to lose fifteen Bradleys and tanks in one sheet of fire and have one hundred eight six killed and wounded. I flat ass wasn't going to do that. I would almost say co-equally I was extremely aware of the political implications of a ceasefire"-that many were angered because the American military was not taking the war to Baghdad. "You can bet your ass I knew that was part and parcel of it. And indeed I was joking ... that if we make a mistake right now I will be selling ladies' underwear in Sears and Roebuck before the week is out.... I would not say that I was reluctant to accept the responsibility, but, baby, you'd bet your bottom dollar I knew that was going on. So I was pretty keen on knowing what the situation was and making the right calls." At some point, he added, "I finally ended up giving instructions-'O.K., whack the guys in front of you.'

"I was very proud of what we had done," he said. "I was just thrilled with that. Was I ready to fight? You are darned tootin'. And, after this battle was over on 2 March, I again gave instructions and we prepared for an

attack to secure the outskirts of Basra. So, had I been instructed to do so we would have executed an attack."

There were some war-crime allegations after the war, McCaffrey acknowledged, and they were fully investigated, at his insistence. "The bottom line was I said you may not drop this action until the soldiers involved understand that the Army fully investigated this allegation, which was done," he told the C.I.D. "So, my personal judgment is that no Iraqis were maltreated or killed or engaged during any struggle. Indeed, the opposite of the case, in my judgment."

Near the end of his testimony, McCaffrey summarized his views on the issue of prisoner rights and possible war crimes. As a combat commander, he said, he routinely spoke to his soldiers about honor. "To a civilian that might sound funny," McCaffrey added, "but one of those points [in his speeches] was talking about your honor as a soldier ... When you get out there and you have helpless people in your grasp ... If you kill or maltreat prisoners you will violate international law and create a terrible political disaster for us. But that is not important compared to the fact that you will violate your honor as a soldier."

Dinkel, who today is the principal of a Lutheran elementary school in Tampa, Florida, made clear in a series of interviews that he has had no second thoughts about the McCaffrey investigation. "The case was closed once we confirmed that rounds were indeed fired," he said. "If I had the assets that McCaffrey had, I'd have done the same thing."

Rowell isn't as sure. When he was interviewed, he was the most senior investigator in the C.I.D.-thirty-six years on the job-and its highest ranking warrant officer. He is now an instructor at the C.I.D.'s training center at Fort Leonard Wood. "We never did think we got the whole story on everything," Rowell told me. McCaffrey had emerged as a hero from the war, and there was "some anticipation that he was to grow up and be Chief of Staff. We knew that we have senior military officers looking at their careers. There was a lot of sealed lips, and people with amnesia." Everyone's story was that the Iraqis fired first, he said, and "We never had information to the contrary... Nothing to prove that they were lying to us."

Rowell said he felt that he and his fellow-investigators had established that, at best, only two rounds were fired by Iraqi forces at the 2-7 Scout platoon on the morning of March 2nd. But, regardless of his and the others' doubts about McCaffrey, he said, the Dinkel investigation "came up with nothing that would have won a trial. If you're a two star general, you can do whatever you want to do, under the confusion of war."

STANDARDS AND ETHICS

The mere presence of the C.I.D. investigators, and their questions, posed a Catch-22 for the men and women of the 24th Division. Those who wanted to tell all about events that would tarnish the reputation of Barry McCaffrey-men Eke Sergeant Larimore and Edward Walker-found that their firsthand testimony wasn't enough. Without physical or documentary evidence-without some Iraqi bodies-the C.I.D. would not consider pressing charges. Others who would have talked, such as Captain Mike Bell and his young colleagues in McCaffrey's assault command post, were not contacted.

Some common understandings did emerge. General Peter Barry, the C.I.D.'s commanding officer, assured me that by the time the investigation shut down some of the Army's senior leaders realized that there was "a certain element of truth" to the allegations made by the anonymous letter writer. "Whoever wrote the letter had detailed knowledge," Barry said. "But establishing the criminality is difficult."

The issue of what to do about McCaffrey became an early litmus test for General Gordon Sullivan, the Vice-Chief of Staff, who in mid-1991 was weeks away from becoming Chief of Staff. Dinkel's voluminous report

cleared McCaffrey of any criminal conduct. It was left to Sullivan to decide whether to refer many issues dealing with military standards and ethics to the Army Inspector General's office. The most important of these dealt with the March 2nd assault and the proportionality of McCaffrey's response to the putative Iraqi attack. Did McCaffrey violate the rules of engagement?

Sullivan chose not to press these questions. McCaffrey had been cleared by the C.I.D. of any criminal wrongdoing, and that was that. He would explain later to a colleague that McCaffrey was an "honest-to-God" hero who had moved his division farther and faster than any other general in the war. McCaffrey also had the strong support of General Schwarzkopf, whose headquarters staff in Saudi Arabia was quick to publicly endorse the March 2nd attack. (Schwarzkopf reiterated his confidence in McCaffrey's attack this spring, telling me that "the information that was relayed to me" made it clear that the 24th Division had been fired upon by the Iraqis "and, for that reason, the 24th 1D [infantry division] attacked those troops.") Colin Power, the Army general who was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also defended McCaffrey's offensive. "They fired on us," he told the reporter Patrick Sloyan, of *Newsday*, "It was their mistake." Later in 1991, according to a senior aide to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Colin, like others in Washington, heard the stories" about McCaffrey's problems with the C.I.D. and asked Gordon Sullivan about it. "In the language of the Pentagon," this person said, Powell "received reassurances" that McCaffrey had been unblemished by the inquiry. Colin Powell told me that he had no "specific recollection" of asking about McCaffrey, but added that he invariably made inquiries about an officer he was considering for an important post, such as McCaffrey was to receive.

Later in 1991, the Army got a new Inspector General-Major General Ronald H. Griffith, who, like most generals, knew through the Army grapevine that McCaffrey had emerged from the war under intense investigation. "If it had come up to us," Griffith told me, "the first thing I'd do is go to Sullivan and say 'Chief, we've got a problem.'" But nothing showed up. "I can't understand how the system could break down like this," Griffith, who is now retired, told me. "If it had come up to the I. G., I'd have known of it."

In his four years as Inspector General, Griffith said, he learned that "the guys will go out and do the investigations and if they determine they can't substantiate the allegations, the chief"—referring to the senior agent—"will call me and say, 'Sir, we can't find anything but there's a whole lot of stuff out there that you can't go to court with.' So you have to ask if you want to know. A lot of officers didn't want to ask about Barry McCaffrey, because you knew what the answer would be"—something negative. (One senior C.I.D. officer laughed on being told of that comment, and said that the Army's generals "didn't need to ask the C.I.D. about McCaffrey. They knew.")

McCaffrey continued to serve as commanding general of the 24th Division at Fort Stewart. Some of his fellow generals have offered me theories about why the Army decided not to press its investigation further. "They'd just won a war and didn't want to shit in their mess kit," a retired major general told me.

A public controversy over McCaffrey's action might have raised questions about the over-all conduct of the Gulf War, they point out, and, at the least, raised public and congressional doubts about the advisability of permitting the military to conduct a war without independent press coverage. In the Gulf, the American military had tried, to an unprecedented degree, to wage a war judge its success, and tell the world's press what to write about it.

By early 1992, McCaffrey, by then a lieutenant general, was serving as an assistant to Colin Powell. (The general who replaced McCaffrey at Fort Stewart quickly donated his predecessor's camels to a Savannah zoo.) His promotion, and the assumption that he would soon be promoted again, caused consternation inside the Army—with most of the complaints aimed at General Sullivan, the Vice-Chief of Staff. A year later, a group of Gulf War generals banded together to successfully lobby Sullivan not to name McCaffrey deputy Chief of Staff

for Operations, one of the Army's plum assignments. The internal bickering also kept McCaffrey from being named commander of the Army forces in Europe a job he had eagerly lobbied for.

McCaffrey got his fourth star in 1994 and an unwanted assignment, according to his aides, as commander-in-chief of the Southern Command, then based in Panama City, which was responsible for all American military forces in Central and South America. In 1996, he retired from the Army to join the Clinton Administration as the director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy-the White House drug czar. The appointment was widely seen as one that would boost Bill Clinton's standing with the military in an election year and put a hero of the Gulf War to work on America's other war. McCaffrey's new war is in Colombia, where he is the Administration's most enthusiastic supporter of a greater American military presence to counter the increasing strength of anti-government guerrilla groups.

There was no hint when McCaffrey joined the Cabinet of any lingering questions about his actions in the Gulf War. Leon Panetta, then the White House chief of staff, told me that he and his colleagues put McCaffrey through "the normal vetting process" and learned, to their surprise, that Panama was going to be his last Army assignment. "There were problems in his career-problems of speaking his own mind," Panetta recalled being told. "He'd rubbed some of his commanders the wrong way. He'd pissed off people." But that was all. There was no suggestion from anyone in the Pentagon that the issues surrounding McCaffrey were any more serious than that.

James Manchester left the Army after the war and attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, in Troy, New York, on a Navy R.O.T.C. scholarship. He was planning, after graduation, to join the Marine Corps. Like many veterans, he was still troubled by his war experiences-even as he prospered academically. "Everything was going good," he said. "But everything was not good." One afternoon, while browsing in the school library, he ran across Major Jason Kamiya's history of the 24th Division, which was published after the war-to McCaffrey's satisfaction. The history stated that a Scout platoon from Ware's battalion Manchester's unit-had been "engaged by Sagger missiles" from the Iraqis and also received "direct fire from T-72 tanks" before the American counterattack. Manchester went into a funk. He stopped sleeping. He eventually resigned from the R.O.T.C. program and wrote a letter to his R.O.T.C. battalion commander, telling what he knew about the shooting of prisoners and the origin of the McCaffrey offensive. The letter was forwarded, with his permission, to the judge Advocate General, in Washington. A few weeks later, he was interviewed by two Army officers, who arrived with a tape recorder and a warning that he would be wise to black out his name on the complaint to avoid possible recriminations. "I told them everything," Manchester said. The interview lasted several hours. A few months later, on April 7, 1994, the Army's Office of the Inspector General wrote him what it called "a final response" to his allegations.

Manchester had accurately described, the letter said, an incident in which both Iraqi prisoners and his Scout platoon had been fired upon by fellow-soldiers in a battalion task force. "Another soldier"-presumably a reference to Edward Walker-had reported the incident at the time, and a "thorough and timely" AR15-6 investigation had been conducted. The letter went on to tell Manchester that the investigation had discovered "no evidence of Iraqi EPW injury or death," because his calls for a ceasefire had "served to notify the task

force" that the prisoners as well as his Scout platoon "were in the zone of fire." The 1st Brigade's investigation was reviewed by legal officers in the 24th Division and by the C.I.D., the letter added, and "deemed technically and legally sufficient." Therefore, it concluded, there was no need for further inquiry, "because no proof was available a war crime had occurred." Manchester had not been summoned by that investigation, the letter went on, because he had already left the Scout platoon. (Manchester did leave the Scouts shortly after the war, but he remained on active duty at Fort Stewart until July 31, 1991.) There was a striking omission in the Army's review: the American combat unit that fired, and managed not to strike one Iraqi, was not identified. The letter spoke

only of "unknown elements" of the 24th Division.

As for March 2nd, the Army informed Manchester that its earlier C.I.D. inquiry had produced an eighteen-volume report that contained the sworn testimony of a hundred and eighty witnesses. "The totality of evidence supported the finding that the Iraqi forces had initiated hostile actions," the letter said. "It was concluded that the responding use of force was appropriate to safeguard U.S. forces and within the allowable limits of the ceasefire rules of engagement." Manchester was also told that the account of the battle in the 24th Division history that triggered his letter "was not accurate." Major Kamiya had compiled the history "from his memory and his personal notes" and was not privy to the C.I.D. investigation.

Manchester graduated first in his class and is now a senior manager at a successful high-tech communications company. He remains convinced today that the Iraqis did not initiate the battle on March 2nd. "I was as patriotic as they come," he told me. "I was a gung-ho ass kicking Commie-hating patriotic son of a bitch. I hated the Arabs. We all did. I dehumanized them. Did the Iraqis commit war crimes in Kuwait? Did they retreat back into Iraq to commit war crimes against their own people? The answer is yes to both questions. But does that make March 2nd justified? There have to be limits, even in war. Otherwise, the whole system breaks down."
