

The Battle of Huwayjah

CAPTAIN SCOTT W. CARPENTER

At the time this article was written, CPT Carpenter was serving as the commander of A Company, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division (Light), which is currently deployed to Iraq. Carpenter was the ground commander in Huwayjah 7 April 2004.

On 7 April 04 at approximately 0945hrs, I left Forward Operating Base (FOB) McHenry to go to the weekly city counsel meeting. I was escorted by two squads from my second platoon led by First Lieutenant Gary Kaldahl (White 6). We road in Humvees along the South Eastern road that takes you to the east side of the city in order to go into the Iraq National Guard (ING) compound adjacent to the city counsel building. Upon entering the city, we observed a protest march of approximately 300-500 people moving east down what we call Market Street, which runs east-west through the center of the city of Huwayjah. As we drove into the ING compound, the protest march closed up to the entrance of the compound from west to east (Diagram 1). We dismounted our vehicles and began to move to the adjacent building which was the city counsel building. I gave the order to call Wolfhound base and launch the quick reaction force (QRF) to the city counsel building in case the protest turned violent. ING soldiers in the compound told me that this was a peaceful protest and was only a student demonstration.

1LT Kaldahl (White 6) was responsible for clearing and securing the city counsel building while I conducted the meeting along with my company fire support officer, First

Lieutenant Robert J. Heatherly, whose job was also information operations (I/O) for my area of responsibility. During the city counsel meeting at approximately 1030hrs, I heard a single rifle shot followed three minutes later by another rifle shot. During this time, White 6 had moved to the roof because he thought he observed a man with an RPG-7 (rocket-propelled grenade) and wanted his sniper to confirm if he could see the enemy. The city counsel was nervous and asked to leave and continue the following week. I began to leave the counsel building and I heard the sniper, Specialist Roberto Zuniga-Saucedo, begin to engage with his M14 from the roof of the counsel building. I immediately moved to the roof to see what he was shooting at with my RTO, Specialist Robert H. Chapman, and 1LT Heatherly. SPC Zuniga reported that he could see a single male with an RPG-7 around a corner on Market Street. He continued to engage until he said he shot the enemy in the shoulder. The company command and control (C2) element then began to hear firing from the south side of the city counsel building. I moved to the

rear of the building with my RTO. On the roof were several Soldiers from 2nd Platoon under the command of Staff Sergeant Andrew W. Gregory. We all could see firing from a building that was 200 to 250 meters from us. We began to engage the enemy and one fired an RPG -7 that missed the city counsel building and went somewhere into the houses on the north side of the building. I reported this through my RTO who relayed through my vehicle based on its communication package in order to reach the FOB McHenry approximately 4.5 kilometers away.

Simultaneously, the QRF from Bravo Company was in the center of the street engaging enemy who were firing RPG-7s straight down the street at our Soldiers and Humvees. I gave the order to maneuver on the enemy and 1st Platoon, Bravo Company began to push forward being supported by 2nd Platoon from Alpha Company and their gun vehicles. I requested another platoon through battalion and received my 1st Platoon under the command of Second Lieutenant David S. Morgan (Red 6). They launched with my executive officer (XO)

Diagram 1





Diagram 2

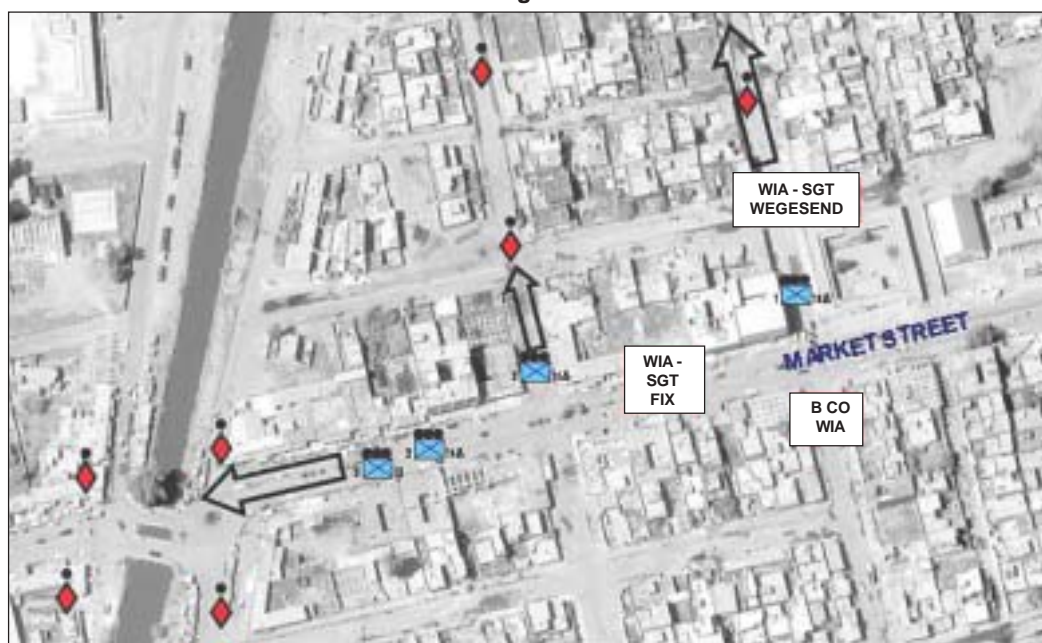
First Lieutenant Christopher A. Hopes (Black 5) and my acting first sergeant Sergeant First Class Steven Green (Black 7) from FOB McHenry. While they were moving to the city, I relocated myself and my RTO over to the ING compound where I could see what was happening with the QRF platoon from Bravo Company.

First Platoon entered the eastern side of the city because I reported that the fight was moving toward the canal which ran north-south. This canal divided the city by three bridges that you had to use in order to get from east side to the west side of Huwayjah. I was also trying to confirm the enemy because we were receiving fire from the south and west sides of the city. When the XO and my 1st Platoon leader were coming into the city, they ran into a wire obstacle that had been dragged over the street to prevent either entrance or exit from the east. They quickly reduced the obstacle and moved into the ING compound (Diagram 2). I called the 1st Platoon leader (RED 6) and told him to move his platoon across the street and move west down market street and re-enforce 1st Platoon from Bravo Company. My C2 element moved with 1st Platoon towards the enemy contact since we were now taking a lot of heavy machine gun fire and RPG-7s straight down Market Street. We moved down about three blocks and came upon one Bravo Company Soldier, who was wounded in the lower leg and upper arm and was being stabilized by their platoon medic. I called for the company C2 vehicle to move forward in order to relay through my RTO to battalion to provide another platoon to maneuver from the south of the city and try and flank the enemy. My XO (Black 5) arrived and I told him to put the wounded Soldier in my vehicle and

get him back to the ING compound. We decided to use the ING compound as our company casualty collection point (CCP) to extract wounded. I then crossed back to the north side of the street because we were being engaged from a side street to the north. During our movement, we saw a wounded Soldier (Sergeant Andrew J. Fix) being helped by Specialist Joseph F. Herdon because he had been wounded in the leg. They could not cross to us because of the fire so the RTO, my FSO, and I laid down a base of fire and suppressed the enemy which allowed them to cross the street. My vehicle arrived back to my location on Market Street. I told them to put SGT Fix into the back seat. I then yelled to Red 6 to push a squad

north up to the street that we were taking fire from. They maneuvered up to the first intersection. When the team leader, Sergeant Don K. Wegesend, attempted to cross, he was wounded in the arm by AK-47 fire coming from the northwest corner of the next block over to the west. I then jumped into my vehicle and told my driver (and company training room NCO) Corporal Kenneth W. Day to drive up to them because we had an up-armor Humvee. I yelled at them to put SGT Wegesend into the vehicle, but they went right past it. I told CPL Day to go back and get SGT Wegesend and take them both to the ING compound. At that time, I received a report from the Bravo Company platoon, that they were trying to get across the canal at the Market Street bridge but were receiving heavy fire. I called battalion and told them I needed my 3rd Platoon to come up from the south and cross the southern bridge and attempt to flank the enemy; this would allow the Bravo Company platoon to cross the bridge and continue to push the enemy west.

Diagram 3



Meanwhile, I called Red 6 and told him to push his squads north up the two streets running parallel to each other (Diagram 3) where the enemy was attempting to flank us from the north. Red 6 squads were led by Staff Sergeant Allen E. West and Staff Sergeant Chad C. Borchers. Red 6 was with Red 1 (SSG West's squad). I told him to continue to push north up to the north bridge. While 1st squad, 1st Platoon maneuvered north, my FSO, RTO, and I stayed at the corner where SGT Wegesend had been wounded. I could see the end of an RPG-7 sticking out of the corner wall, but the enemy would not expose himself. SSG Borchers' squad (Red 2) moved up that street and caught four enemy soldiers up against the block wall, engaged, and killed all four. I then moved west down to Red 2's squad and told him to keep moving north along his street and link up with his PL that was a street further over to the east moving in the same direction. I had my C2 vehicle pull forward so I could report to battalion again and talk directly to the S3.

At that time, we had Apaches on station. I threw an HC smoke to identify my location and then directed him to look for enemy forward of the platoons. I gave orders to engage any personnel carrying a weapon in civilian clothes. Simultaneously, my 3rd Platoon arrived at my location with an (FLA) and the battalion command sergeant major, CSM Karl K. Morgan. I told the CSM and the FLS to move to the ING compound to extract our wounded Soldiers. I knew I had one platoon from Bravo Company and two platoons from my company to maneuver with the third

platoon securing the ING compound and the city council building and engaging enemy to the south. I then told 3rd platoon led by First Lieutenant Timothy Ungaro (Blue 6) to move west on market street and cross the middle bridge. 3rd Platoon then pushed west along the street maneuvering on all enemies that they encountered.

At that time, I received a call from my 1st Platoon leader (Red 6). Red 6 reported he had three more wounded from Red 2's squad. I jumped into my vehicle and told my FSO, who now had his full team, to follow behind my vehicle as I pushed north to find Red 6 and his wounded. He said his second squad had pushed north across the north bridge chasing enemy (Diagram 8). Upon entering an industrial area, they encountered an enemy RPG-7 ambush waiting for them. The enemy volley fired three RPGs at them. One went high, one was a dud, and one landed in the middle of a fire team wounding Sergeant Jay R. Lawrence in the forearm, Specialist Ryan J. Goede in the head and Private First Class David L. Godwin in the leg. The shrapnel also wounded a little girl. The squad leader was not sure where they were in a field near the north water tower. I told SPC Chapman and CPL Day to drive with me. We moved across the north bridge to



Specialist Sean Kimmons

Soldiers of Co. A, 1-27 Infantry, force themselves into a suspected terrorist's home during a cordon and search mission in Iraq.

look for the 2nd squad. We went all the way north until we were at the tower. I then could see them across the fence. We had to go back the way we came. They were in an industrial park with a rod iron gate that you could only get to from the east side of the park by vehicle. I told CPL Day to ram the gate. We arrived and put the wounded inside my vehicle. At the same time, the rest of 1st Platoon made it to my location with 1LT Hopes. I told him to transfer the wounded into his vehicle with the little girl and extract them to the ING compound. I then told Red 6 to keep pushing west. I now had two platoons from Bravo Company and my 3rd Platoon. The Bravo Company QRF platoon held at the canal on the east side and overwatched from there. My 3rd Platoon crossed Market Street and pushed west in the center. The other Bravo Company platoon pushed west along the south side of the city. My intent was to push the enemy into the north-west portion of the city and kill them or force them into the open farm field where I could direct the Apache element to engage them. After the last engagement with 1st Platoon, I did not hear anymore firing in the city. I continued to push the platoons until they made it to the far west side of the city. I then recommended to battalion that we begin to

Diagram 4



WIA
SGT
Lawrence
SPC Goede
PFC Godwin

search all of the houses on the west side of the city where firing came from in case the enemy attempted to hide in the houses as we bypassed them. As we searched, we found several weapons of various types and detained several adult males who were suspected of being involved in the attack. The end result was a complete victory for the Wolfhounds, who suffered six wounded and retained total control of the city and the fight from the beginning to end. The enemy loses were far greater: 35 enemy KIA, 45 WIA, 58 detained and a terrorist who attempted to tape the attack and use it for propaganda was captured by the company XO as he attempted to flee the fight.

COMBAT OPERATIONS IN A NONCONTIGUOUS ENVIRONMENT

Lessons Learned

The mission and fighting in Iraq spans the full spectrum from routine patrols and civic engagements to intense battle that can rage throughout an entire day. This was the case on April 7, 2004. The lessons extracted are extremely relevant to today's battle field where commanders and Soldiers are expected to be politicians and warriors simultaneously. I will attempt to address the key points for company commanders who are about to deploy to this theater of operations so that you can better prepare yourselves and your company prior to deployment into combat operations. These are essential elements that commanders must master in themselves and their Soldiers so that victory on the battlefield will be met with the minimal amount of friendly casualties.

TTPs for Company and Below Combat Operations in Iraq

First thing to ensure is that you have a thorough relief in place (RIP) with the unit that you are replacing. Soldiers to commander should know every square inch of their immediate battle space before the unit leaves. You need to know every entrance, ally or short cut to the cities or villages that you are in charge of. This also includes all choke point, canals, bridges and government facilities. If you learn your battle field as well as the enemy, then you will take away their home town advantage. This was key to the company's success at defeating the enemy during the battle. I knew exactly where he could come from or retreat in order to out maneuver the enemy forces.

Second, ensure your Soldiers are pulling active security when inside the town. You can go for months without an event happening on a civic engagement. The key to us being able to initiate the fight was my platoon leader's and sniper's ability to pick the weapon out of the crowd. Second, do not hesitate to kill the enemy when he is positively identified. My sniper was able to hit the enemy before they began their coordinated assault because of the platoon's active security measures. This immediately put us on the offense and the enemy on the defense.

Third, have battlefield patience when it comes to determining what the enemy is trying to achieve. The first place I located myself was on a roof top to gain a perspective on where the enemy was attacking from. From there I was able to see him harassing us from the south with RPG and small arms fire but because of the open fields, I knew he would not attempt to close with us from that direction. I also knew from the day before that the enemy was attempting to gain control of government buildings across Iraq in order to demonstrate their strength and to gain a media victory. Since I had control of their possible objective I knew I would have



Specialist Sean Kimmons

Specialist Robert Chapman of Co. A, 1-27th Inf., apprehends a suspected terrorist as Specialist Rodriguez Cruell provides security during a later operation in Iraq.

to hold this location until reinforcements arrived.

Fourth, we are an offensive fighting organization. Do not sit still and have to react to the enemy. Take the initiative from him by closing with him with superior fire power, maneuverability and mass. I immediately called for extra platoons so that I could kill him in this place and time. I did not want to fight the same enemy more than once. Find him, fix him, and kill him must be ingrained into your Soldiers.

Finally, I will talk to you about leadership. During the fight, you have to be everywhere at once. The saying the leader must be at the key point in time to influence the battle is true. Lead by example, do as I do. During the battle, I found myself controlling five platoons with attack aviation, fighting as a rifleman with my FSO and RTOs, directing the flow of casualties to my XO, telling platoons and squads to continue to maintain contact and going forward of my platoons to locate a lost squad that had wounded with my RTOs. This is only possible if you train yourself and your Soldiers to fight and win on the battlefield.

Captain Scott W. Carpenter is a 1996 graduate of Arizona State University. At the time this article was written, CPT Carpenter was commander of A Company, 1-27th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division (Light). He previously served in the 82nd Airborne Division and 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment as a platoon leader.
