

ship, and USS PRINCETON, a Ticonderoga Class cruiser, were each struck by a mine. The extent of resultant damage was a stark reminder of the danger posed by a weapon which is widely available and often extremely effective, and which can be laid from a variety of platforms by a relatively unsophisticated enemy. Nevertheless, after a brief pause to regroup, continued progress enabled USS MISSOURI to enter the BBFSA on 23 February and commence bombardment of Faylakah Island the next day.

As our ships approached within 10 miles of the coast, the threat from enemy shore defences was of increasing concern and early on 25 February HMS GLOUCESTER detected on radar a fast-moving contact leaving the coastline 21 miles to the west. In less than a minute, the ship's Operations Room team swiftly assessed the contact as a Silkworm missile, posing a direct threat to allied naval units including the US battleship nearby, and fired two Sea Dart surface-to-air missiles which destroyed the incoming Silkworm. Although this incident represented the final action at sea before the suspension of hostilities, allied naval units could not afford to relax as the task of clearing mines from the approaches to Kuwait was effectively only just beginning.

The logistic support provided by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary at sea and the naval stores organisation ashore was critically important. Unlike the other two Services, the presence of the ARMILLA Patrol had ensured that an existing structure of stores support was already available in theatre. Throughout the initial phase, our ships continued to use the port of Jebel Ali as the main base support facility, although augmentation with Royal Navy Supply and Transport Service personnel and expansion of its facilities was necessary. RFA DILIGENCE, the Forward Repair Ship, remained alongside to carry out more complex maintenance and the fitting of equipment enhancements; but following the outbreak of hostilities, she sailed to provide similar support and a Battle Damage Repair capability, the latter being effectively used to assist USS TRIPOLI and PRINCETON after their ministrikes. Similarly, RFA SIR GALAHAD accompanied the MCM force to meet their engineering support requirements. RFAs OLANA, ORANGELEAF and BAYLEAF took the lead in replenishing our ships with fuel, and by the end of the campaign had supplied over 40,000 tonnes of diesel and 2000 tonnes of aviation fuel. Other Coalition tankers were used to fuel our escorts when the tactical situation demanded. RFA FORT GRANGE carried naval stores and ammunition as well as six months supply of frozen and dry foodstuffs, while RFA RESOURCE, primarily tasked to hold the UK land forces war reserve of ammunition, carried 8000 man months of frozen and dry provisions and NAAFI items. This balanced force of afloat support ships also exploited the utility of the LSLs as delivery vessels after they had off-loaded their ammunition at Al Jubayl. The contribution of the Sea King helicopters embarked in RFAs FORT GRANGE and ARGUS was vital in transporting high-priority items to front-line units as they advanced. In order to shorten what became a 500 mile supply chain, SNAME ordered the forward movement of the main support base from Jebel Ali to Bahrain. The availability and serviceability of Royal Navy ships and their equipment remained very high throughout the operation, and full credit must be given to the engineering and support staffs, predominantly civilian, who prepared and enhanced them.

#### SPECIAL FORCES OPERATIONS

United Kingdom Special Forces (SF), drawn from all three Services, were committed at an early stage in the campaign. This deployment developed into the largest and most significant UK SF operation since 1945. Operating in their classic strategic role they carried out long-range information reporting and offensive action missions in support of the overall allied campaign. Their area of responsibility included Western Iraq and the Kuwaiti theatre of operations (KTO). The forces deployed operated on foot, by vehicle and in helicopters in the worst weather conditions experienced in the area for 30 years. Troops had to endure climatic extremes which ranged from sandstorms through fog to nights where the cold was so intense that diesel fuel froze. In these arduous conditions re-supply was minimal due to enemy air defences and men were fighting in survival conditions. In this most testing environment it is a great tribute to the professionalism of all concerned that some patrols operated behind enemy lines for well over a month.

Their prime operational task was identified by General Schwarzkopf as countering the threat of Iraqi Scud missiles. This objective was achieved with outstanding success by the destruction of a number of fixed launcher sites, mobile launchers, command and control and air defence systems. This was done both by direct ground action and by the identification of targets for air attack. Quite apart from the damage wrought on Iraq's offensive ballistic missile capability, the psychological impact of these SF operations in

Western Iraq, hundreds of miles behind the front line, cannot be over-estimated.

In course of the operation, the SF had to close with the enemy and there were many individual acts of outstanding bravery. Four men died in action and four men were wounded. The intensity of some of the combat and the courage displayed is rightly recognised by the high proportion of decorations awarded to the Special Forces.

The Royal Marines, Soldiers and Airmen of the Special Forces who rose to these high standards displayed qualities of fortitude, determination and courage which were in the highest traditions of our Services and of the special place which the SF hold in those Services. They earned my own highest regard and there is no doubt that the contributions the SF made to the Allied success was of an order out of all proportion to their numbers. To protect the security of their operational methods, and as requested by the SF themselves, it is not proposed to publish further details of their operations, which made an outstanding contribution to the overall campaign.

#### THE LAND CAMPAIGN

Between the arrival of 1 (BR) Armoured Division's advance party on 5 December and the air move being complete on 11 January, units married up with their equipment and started training; time was short for this since the main allied preoccupation was to plan and effect a discrete move of the bulk of coalition armoured forces from an area south of Kuwait to one south of eastern Iraq, in accordance with the overall offensive plan. This meant planning for 1 (BR) Armoured Division to be switched from the tactical control of the US Marines in the east to 7 (US) Corps which would move west, without making any public declarations to this effect.

As the land offensive approached, the final UK ground force order of battle consisted of 1 (BR) Armoured Division, comprising 4 Brigade, 7 Armoured Brigade and the Divisional troops; the Logistic Support Group; and the Prisoner of War Guard Force. Tanks and Warrior infantry fighting vehicles in 4 Brigade were manned by 14th/20th Kings Hussars, 1st Battalion The Royal Scots and 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, with artillery and engineer support from 2nd Field Regiment and 23 Engineer Regiment. In 7 Armoured Brigade, the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards and Queen's Royal Irish Hussars provided the armour whilst 1st Battalion The Staffordshire Regiment manned Warrior, with support for the Brigade coming from 40th Field Regiment and 21. Engineer Regiment. Combat support for the Division—reconnaissance, artillery, engineers and anti-tank helicopters—was provided by 16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers, 26th Field Regiment, 32nd and 39th Heavy Regiments and 12th Air Defence Regiment, together with 32 Armoured Engineer Regiment and 4 Regiment Army Air Corps. The Prisoner of War Guard Force came from 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, The Royal Highland Fusiliers and the King's Own Scottish Borderers. In-theatre Battle Casualty Replacements were drawn from across the Army. Excluding in-theatre war reserves, the fighting equipment of the Division was 180 Challenger Main Battle Tanks, 260 Warrior infantry fighting vehicles, 72 M109 and M110 guns, 16 MLRS, 24 Rapier and 72 Javelin air defence systems, and 18 Lynx anti-tank helicopters.

On 14 January, 1 (BR) Armoured Division began the planned move forward from its training areas north of Al Jubayl to the Divisional assembly area, codenamed KEYES, 35 kilometres east of Hafar Al Batin, which was in the 7 (US) Corps Assembly area JUNO. This in itself was a mammoth task. Successfully moving the Division, its Forward Maintenance Area and its armour on low loaders, on a single road used by all the other allies, over a distance of over 200 kilometres and under conditions of operational secrecy, was achieved by the outstanding efforts of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, Royal Corps of Transport and Royal Military Police units involved, together with excellent staff planning. On 26 January, I formally transferred the tactical control of 1 (BR) Armoured Division to 7 (US) Corps, and the Division was declared ready for offensive operations on 31 January when it had completed its move forward. The Division continued its final preparations and work-up until 14 February when it started to advance to its final assembly area, codenamed RAY, north-west of Hafar Al Batin. This move was completed two days later and was carried out under conditions of tight operational security as part of a comprehensive deception plan. The move included a passage of lines exercise with 1 (US) Mechanised Infantry Division as a rehearsal for the forthcoming break-in battle. Rapiers from 12 Air Defence Regiment were deployed to cover the Forward Assembly Area, while 2 Squadron 14 Signal Regiment (Electronic Warfare) were busy contributing to the intelligence picture on the enemy facing us. The overall aim was to outflank the main Iraqi forces in Kuwait by pushing northwards into eastern Iraq before engaging the Republican Guard armoured and mechanised divisions located just