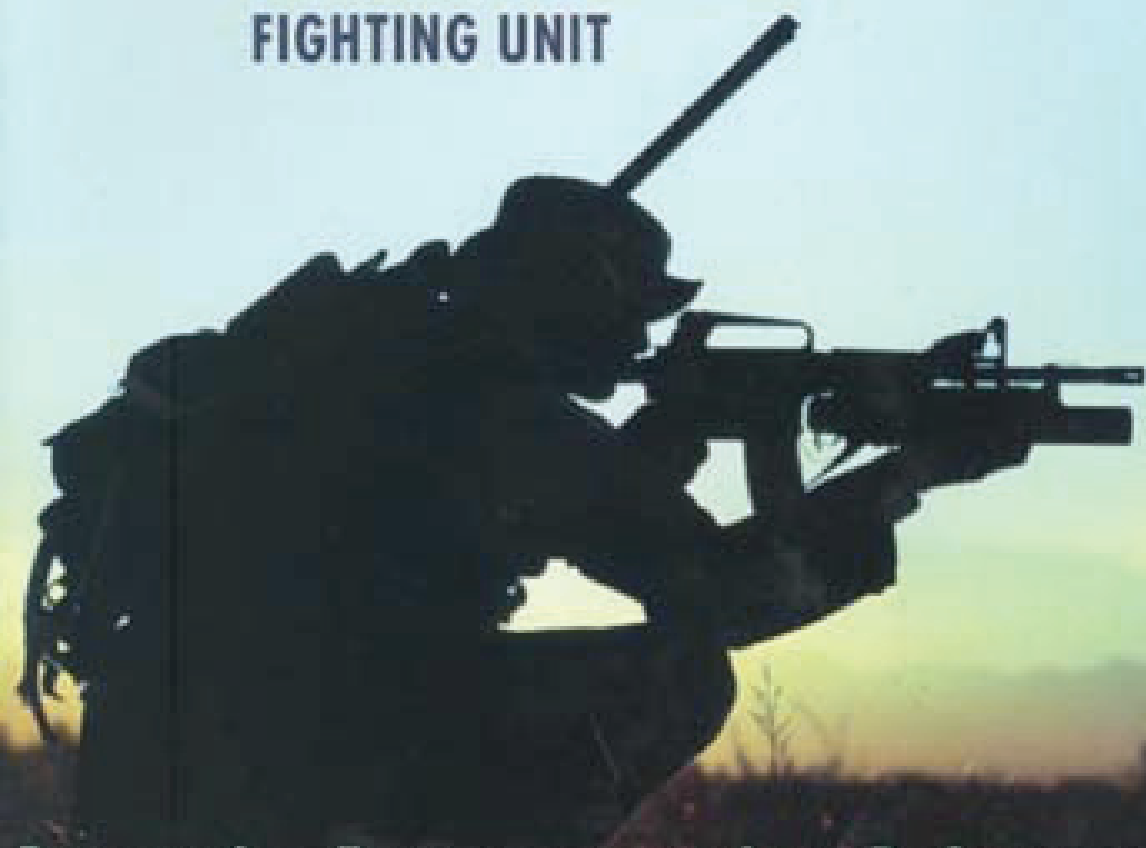


BEYOND **HELL** AND BACK



HOW AMERICA'S SPECIAL
OPERATIONS FORCES BECAME
THE WORLD'S GREATEST
FIGHTING UNIT



DWIGHT JON ZIMMERMAN AND JOHN D. GRESHAM

FOREWORD BY MAJOR GENERAL JOHN K. SINGLAUB

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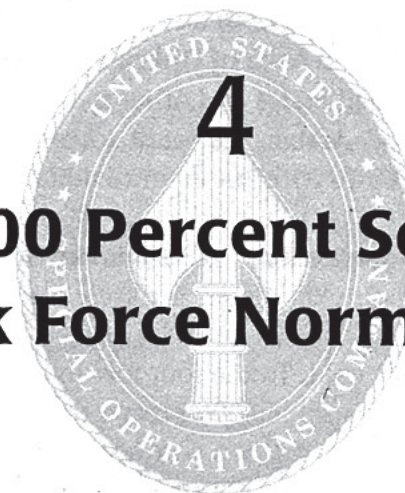
**How America's Special Operations
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**Dwight Jon Zimmerman
and John D. Gresham**



ST. MARTIN'S GRIFFIN  NEW YORK



The 100 Percent Solution: Task Force Normandy

On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, and three days later annexed it as Iraq's "nineteenth province" and appeared poised to invade Saudi Arabia. If that had happened, Iraq's dictator, Saddam Hussein, would have controlled roughly half the world's known oil reserves. President George H. W. Bush responded with his "line in the sand" speech, calling for Iraq to leave Kuwait or be forced out militarily. To back up his words, President Bush, after receiving permission from King Fahd, ordered American troops to Saudi Arabia. Within a week of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Operation Desert Shield, the defense of Saudi Arabia, had begun. Six months later, in the early morning hours of January 17, 1991, Operation Desert Shield became Operation Desert Storm, which led to the liberation of Kuwait. The first shots in that war would come from an operation that almost didn't happen. This is the story of Task Force Normandy.

November 29, 1990, New York City

The Security Council . . . authorizes Member States co-operating with the Government of Kuwait . . . to use all necessary means to uphold and implement resolution 660 (1990) and all subsequent relevant resolutions and to restore international peace and security in the area.

—Excerpt from U.N. Security Council Resolution 678
calling for Iraq to leave Kuwait before January 15, 1991

Early December 1990: Somewhere in a Remote Section of Northeast Saudi Arabia Called Area of Operations Carentan

When troops from the United States and other member nations of the coalition began to arrive in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi government set aside sections in the northeast of the country for use by individual units. These sections, known as areas of operation (AO), served a variety of purposes ranging from training and billeting to sentry duty. AO Carentan was a long rectangular tract containing 6,200 square kilometers set aside for training for the 101st Airborne.

The night was unusually cold. To the four low-flying MH-53J Pave Low III and nine AH-64A Apache attack helicopter crews training that evening in AO Carentan, the conditions were in sharp contrast to the brutal heat they had experienced just three months earlier. Later, the Saudis would tell the coalition troops that the region was suffering the worst winter in fourteen years.

The crews were formed into two teams, code-named Red and White, each composed of two Pave Lows and four Apaches. There was an additional backup Apache in the event that any of the attack helicopters had to abort. Originally there had been three teams, Red, White, and Blue, and three targets—all Iraqi radar sites—in the mission plan. But when Blue team's target was taken off the mission list earlier that month, the team was split up and incorporated into the Red and White teams, giving each of them more firepower.

This was good news to all, because since the mission called for attacking sites deep behind Iraqi lines, the short-range Apache's main battery of Hellfire missiles had been reduced from a standard load of sixteen missiles to eight to accommodate a 230-gallon external fuel tank that was mounted on the right inboard wing store. A pod of nineteen 2.75-inch Hydra 70 unguided rockets and a 30 mm Bushmaster chain gun with 1,100 rounds of high-explosive dual-purpose ammunition rounded out the weapons inventory.

All the helicopters were equipped with a pair of forward-looking infrared (FLIR) sensors, one of which the pilot used for maneuvering, while the other was for the gunner's use. Where the two types of helicopters differed, and why they were flying together, was in their navigation systems. The Apaches possessed a Doppler navigation attitude-heading reference system, or AHRS (pronounced "ay-hars"). All the crewmen wore AN/VIS-6 high-resolution, ultralightweight night vision goggles that were specifically designed for low-level flying. The goggles virtually turned the night into day, albeit a glowing, lime green-tinted one. What the pilots saw below them was a featureless desert that was visually boring and, of more importance, a navigational nightmare.

Two factors about the desert made all but useless the Apaches' AHRS radar navigation system. There were no significant terrain features off of which to

MH-53 PAVE LOW III

The MH-53 Pave Low III is the U.S. Air Force version of the navy's CH-53 Sea Stallion helicopter. The Pave Low's mission is low-level, long-range, undetected penetration into denied areas, day or night, in adverse weather, for infiltration, exfiltration, and resupply of special operations forces. It is a heavy-lift helicopter that is the largest, most powerful, and technologically advanced rotor-wing aircraft in the air force inventory. Features include terrain-following and terrain-avoidance radar, forward-looking infrared (FLIR) sensor, inertial navigation system with Global Positioning System (GPS), and other sophisticated avionics. The Pave Low is also equipped with armor plating. It can transport 37 troops at a time and carry on its external hook a maximum of 20,000 pounds of cargo.

SPECIFICATIONS—MH-53J

Manufacturer: Sikorsky

Crew: Six

Power plant: Two General Electric T64-GE-100 turboshafts producing 4,330 shaft horsepower each

Length: 88 feet (28 meters)

Height: 25 feet (7.6 meters)

Rotor diameter: 72 feet (21.9 meters)

Maximum speed: 165 mph (265 kmh) at sea level

Range: 690 miles (600 nautical miles; 1,100 kilometers)

Maximum takeoff weight: 46,000 pounds (Emergency War Plan allows for 50,000 pounds)

Armament: Any combination of three 7.62 mm miniguns or .50-caliber machine guns mounted on the sides and rear ramp.



Photo: U.S. Department of Defense

bounce the Doppler radar waves. And the Doppler waves themselves penetrated sand. Even if the Apaches encountered landmarks such as significant dunes or wadis, instead of bouncing off the surface of those features, the beams would continue down through them until they (eventually) reached bedrock. But the Pave Lows, from Air Force Special Operations Command's 20th Special Operations Squadron, carried brand-new Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers that used orbiting navigation satellites to fix a ground location. That was why they were the pathfinders for the "hunters" following them, the army Apaches from the 1st Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

All of the crews assigned to the Iraqi radar sites mission did their training literally and figuratively in the dark. Not only were the exercises conducted at night, but only their commanding officers, Lieutenant Colonel Dick Cody for the army Apache crews and Lieutenant Colonel Richard Comer for the air force Pave Lows, knew the actual details of their mission and targets. The

mission was code-named Operation Eager Anvil, and its goal was the total destruction of two important radar outposts, part of the Iraqi integrated air defense system, located in the remote western desert.

The teams had trained intensively under a cloak of secrecy for almost three full months. They had spent hours going over flight profiles, studying sandbox mock-ups of their targets as well as intelligence photos, and keeping their helicopters in combat-ready condition. They had flown at night for hundreds of miles in formation, with only a three-rotor disk radius of separation between the helicopters, no more than a hundred feet above the ground, no navigation or formation lights, and no communications to and from their target area in AO Carentan.

Tonight, however, they were cleared to use live munitions instead of practice rounds when they reached their targets. This night, as in earlier runs, the targets were groups of empty buses obtained from the Saudis. This time there were two groups stationed twenty-nine miles from each other and arranged in a typical Soviet-style field emplacement deployment. However, this live-

AH-64 APACHE

The AH-64 Apache is the U.S. Army's principal attack helicopter. The Apache can operate during the day or night and in adverse weather conditions using the integrated helmet and display sight system. The Apache is equipped with the latest avionics and electronics systems, including target acquisition and designation system, pilot night vision system (TADS/PNVS), black hole passive infrared countermeasures, surface-of-the-earth navigation, and GPS. The AH-64D model is equipped with the AN/APG-78 Longbow Fire Control Radar (FCR) target acquisition system, installed over the main rotor. In addition, a radio modem integrated with the sensor suite allows the D-model Apache to share targeting data with other AH-64Ds that may not have a line of sight to the target. This allows a group of Apaches at different locations to engage multiple targets, with only one Apache revealing its radome.

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Boeing

Crew: Two

Power plant: Two General Electric T700 turboshafts producing 1,690 shaft horsepower each

Length: 58 feet 4 inches (17.8 meters)

Rotor diameter: 48 feet (14.63 meters)

Maximum speed: 182 mph (158 knots; 293 kmh)

Ceiling: 21,000 feet (6,400 meters)

Maximum takeoff weight: 21,000 pounds (A model), 23,000 pounds (D model)

Combat radius: 300 miles (260 nautical miles; 480 kilometers)

Armament: One M230 30 mm chain gun, Hellfire and Stinger missiles, Sidewinder and Hydra rockets



Photo: U.S. Department of Defense

AGM-114 HELLFIRE

The AGM-114 Hellfire is an air-to-ground missile system designed to defeat tanks and other individual targets while minimizing the exposure of the launcher to enemy fire. The Hellfire was developed in 1972 and went into production in 1982. It uses laser guidance and is the principal weapon used by U.S. Army helicopters against heavily armored vehicles and reinforced fortifications. The guidance system in the Hellfire models AGM-114A through AGM-114M requires the launcher to illuminate or "paint" the target from launch to impact. The exception is the recent AGM-114L model, which is a true "fire-and-forget" missile.

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Rockwell International, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman

Length: 64 inches (163 centimeters)

Diameter: 7 inches (17.8 centimeters)

Weight: 99 pounds (45 kilograms)

Warhead: 18 pounds (8 kilograms) shaped charge high explosive antitank (HEAT)

Speed: 1,529 kph (425 meters per second)

Range: 8,750 yards (8,000 meters)

Guidance system: Semiactive laser homing (SALH)

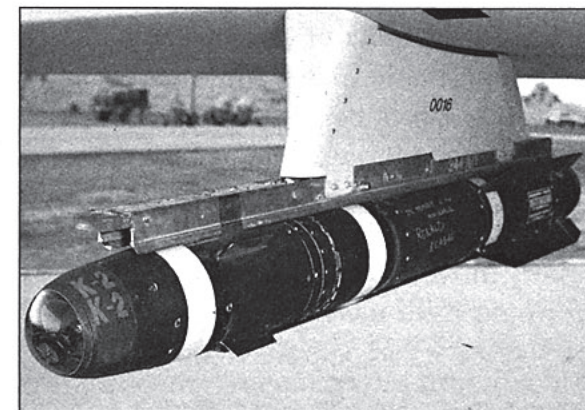


Photo: U.S. Department of Defense

fire exercise was a departure from normal training exercise procedures, and no small matter. The Apaches' Hellfire missiles cost, depending on the warhead type, anywhere from \$40,000 to \$65,000 each. The firing of a live missile prompted Apache pilot Warrant Officer Timothy Roderick to joke that triggering one was "like shooting a BMW downrange."¹ The orders called for all of the targets to be attacked at the same time. When the Apaches were in place, and at the right moment, a volley of Hellfires was launched, with cameras recording the action. Then, because orders called for a total neutralization of the targets, the Apaches bore in to employ their secondary batteries of rockets and cannon shells.

At point-blank range, the arpeggio of destruction commenced. It began with the launching of volleys of 2.75-inch Hydra 70 rockets—some with high-explosive warheads, others with flechette warheads that released 2,200 steel darts on impact. Then it was time for the deadly baton protruding from beneath the chin of the Apache, the M230 Bushmaster chain gun. Smoothly weaving back and forth under the power of a 6.5 horsepower electric motor, the Bushmaster fired 625 rounds per minute of 30 mm cannon shells that were armor piercing, incendiary, and fragmenting.

When the shooting stopped, the once recognizable Saudi buses were noth-

ing but twisted, perforated wrecks in the middle of a patch of sand serrated with countless impact furrows. Had the buses been occupied, there would have been no survivors. An after-action review of the tape would confirm yet again that the Apaches had annihilated the practice targets. The mission plan was for the Apaches to destroy their targets at exactly zero hour on the first night of air operations against Iraq. This would open a wide hole in Iraq's southern radar "fence." Once this was accomplished, more than one hundred nonstealthy coalition strike craft such as F-15Es, F-111Fs, and Tornados would fly through the "hole," spread out, and hit tactical and strategic targets throughout Iraq and Kuwait. Including the two sites assigned to Task Force Normandy, the U.S. Central Command's (CENTCOM) target list had grown from a low of 84, back in August, to 238 targets in eleven categories. As commanding officer for the army's side of Eager Anvil, Cody shouldered many responsibilities. One of the easiest decisions he had to make was choosing a name for the attack group. In a nod to the 101st Airborne's combat history in World War II, he christened it Task Force Normandy. The attack group would have the honor of scoring the first hits in Operation Desert Storm.



Photo: U.S. Department of Defense

A helicopter crewman from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) stands beside an AH-64A Apache helicopter as it is prepared for takeoff during Operation Desert Shield. Clearly visible is the 30 mm M230 chain gun. Hellfire missiles are mounted on the Apache's wing pylon (left).

The men were as sharp as a well-honed razor's edge. Outside news reports and their own intelligence indicated that war was no longer a question of if, it was a question of when. Task Force Normandy was good to go. The unspoken question in the minds of senior commanders who knew about Eager Anvil was, would the force be allowed to? After all, this was a special operations mission. As Lieutenant General Charles A. "Chuck" Horner, commander of the Central Command Air Forces later observed, his boss, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, "hates Special Operations."²

But whether the mission would get a green light was only the latest in a series of questions beginning in August 1990 that had bedeviled the planners of the air campaign. It was something of a miracle they had even reached this still-precarious point.

In 1990, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein was confronting financial ruin. His eight-year war against revolutionary, fundamentalist Iran had ended in a strategic stalemate and left Iraq with an \$80 billion debt and a reconstruction bill estimated at a staggering \$320 billion.³ That spring, Hussein demanded generous reparations from his neighbors, particularly Kuwait. His rationale was that since he had saved the Sunni-dominated nations from Iran's Shiite hegemony, they should pay Iraq more than they had for his protection. When his petition did not produce the hoped-for largesse, he raised the ante in July by submitting a written protest to his fellow Arab League members, claiming that Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates were cheating on their oil production quotas and committing "direct aggression"⁴ against Iraq by driving down oil prices, thus depriving Iraq of billions of dollars.

On July 21, at MacDill AFB near Tampa, Florida, a response analysis in the event of the outbreak of hostilities by Iraq was conducted by CENTCOM. It was one of the new regional commands formed as a result of the landmark 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act. That legislation, and the subsequent Nunn-Cohen Amendment, also established U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) as a military organization on a par with the other services, with a four-star general as its commander. Though potential Iraqi targets were identified by the response analysis team, and types of forces were tagged for possible deployment, the agenda presented only a patchwork of options. There was no real plan on file that could serve as a basis for an integrated offensive operational plan. The meeting lasted ninety minutes, ending, as Schwarzkopf later recalled, "with no sense of urgency."⁵

Then on August 2, at 1:00 A.M. local time, two Iraqi Republican Guard divisions launched a surprise attack on Kuwait. That evening, President George H. W. Bush issued a statement condemning the invasion and called for Iraq to unilaterally withdraw from Kuwait. Soon after, General Schwarzkopf received an order to prepare to deploy to Saudi Arabia a rapid

response force composed of air force fighters, tankers, and AWACS aircraft, along with advance elements of the 82nd Airborne Division. Though the code name would come later, Operation Desert Shield had begun.

Officially, Desert Shield was a defensive action, designed only to protect Saudi Arabia from possible invasion of its northern oil fields. The reality, however, was somewhat different. From the first moments of Desert Shield, Lieutenant General Chuck Horner had been ordered by General Schwarzkopf to begin preparing an offensive air campaign, something that had very specific meaning to the U.S. Central Command Air Forces (CENTAF) commander. A generation earlier, Horner had been a young fighter pilot flying over North Vietnam, where he had been one of the early Wild Weasels, jet fighter-bomber pilots who had dueled with radar-guided surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft guns. Horner had been lucky. Unlike most of the other Wild Weasel crewmen he'd flown with, he had survived his tour against the North Vietnamese integrated air defense system.

Horner had also learned some hard lessons, things he kept in the back of his mind for the day he might be asked to lead young airmen into battle in a faraway land. One was to be suspicious of plans and orders that came from the lofty heights of the Pentagon and other Washington, D.C., centers of power. Another was, before anything else in an air campaign, to take down the enemy air defense system so that you can operate over the battlefield with total air supremacy. In the case of Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 1990, this was a daunting task.

The Iraqi national IADS included almost twenty types of European and Soviet search-and-acquisition radars linked to an equally wide range of SAM and AAA gun systems. Added to this was the world's fourth-largest army and air force, the latter armed with state-of-the-art Soviet MiG and French Mirage fighter jets. Iraq's IADS was run by a French-built command, control, and communications network known as KARI (the French word for *Iraq* spelled backward). Obtaining intelligence on KARI, sometimes also called the KARI C3 system, quickly became a top priority for CENTCOM. Significant data initially was provided by the U.S. Navy's SPEAR organization. SPEAR (Strike Protection Evaluation and Anti-air Research) was a "black" group created to gather intelligence about Soviet Union transportation systems and electrical grids in support of U.S. nuclear response in the event of a Soviet first-launch nuclear attack. They also had amassed much information about the Iraqi KARI system, and they conducted a series of briefings with senior members of the CENTCOM leadership. Later, when France joined the coalition, the contractor that had developed the system was able to provide important information about KARI's facility locations, along with system strengths and vulnerabilities.