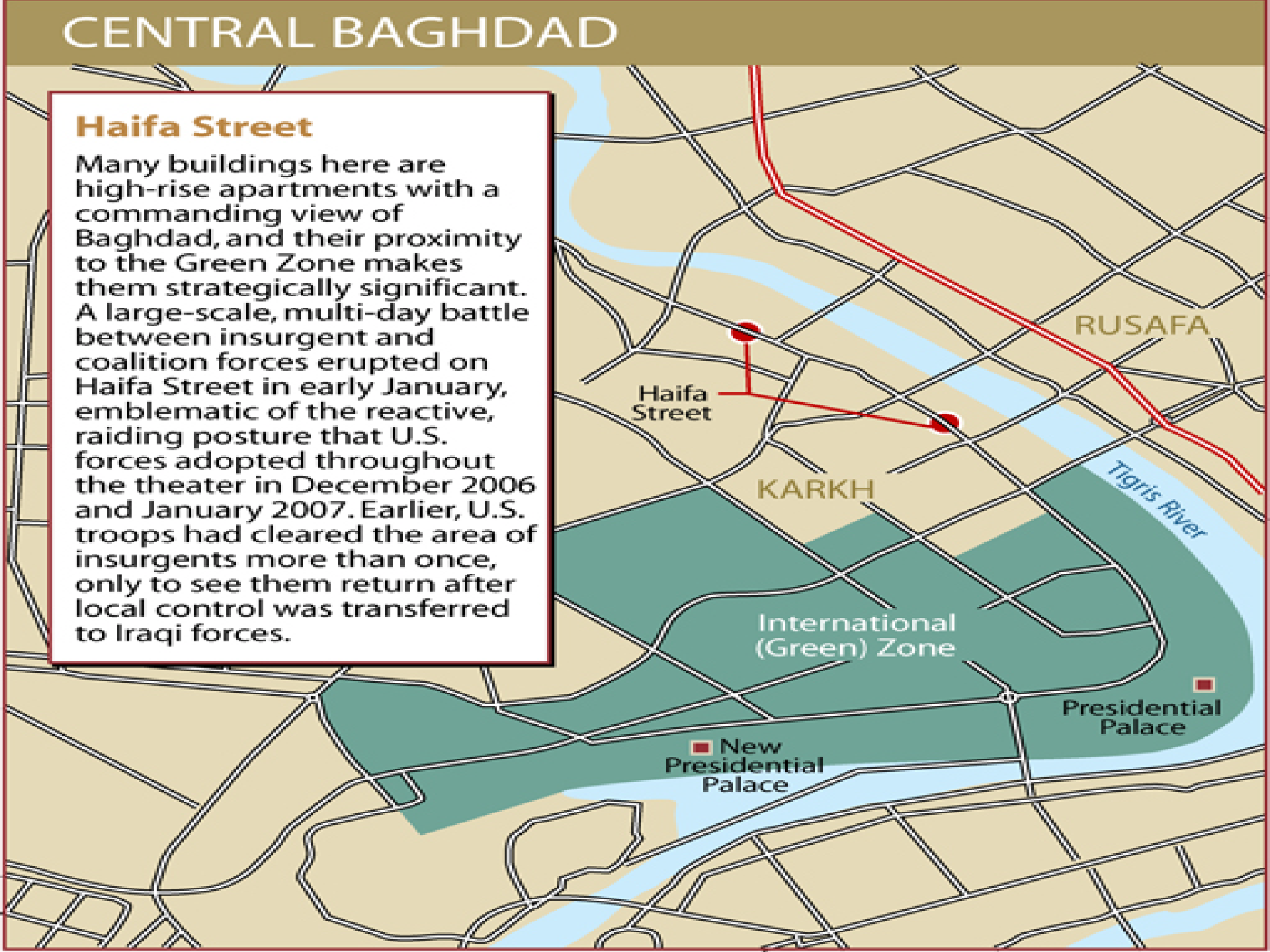
9 January 2007

Haifa Street, Baghdad, Iraq

Background

B co 1-23 Inf, 3-2 SBCT was notified at 2200 hours local time to provide reinforcement to elements of the Iraqi Army operating in the area north of the International Zone known as Haifa Street. The Iraqi Army secured a high rise building along Haifa Street and was defending themselves but was running low on ammo and unable to communicate with its own headquarters for reinforcements. Enemy threat was estimated at a platoon size element with light machine guns, hand grenades and RPG's.


CENTRAL BAGHDAD
Haifa Street
Many buildings here are high-rise apartments with a commanding view of Baghdad, and their proximity to the Green Zone makes them strategically significant. A large-scale, multi-day battle between insurgent and coalition forces erupted on Haifa Street in early January, emblematic of the reactive, raiding posture that U.S. forces adopted throughout the theater in December 2006 and January 2007. Earlier, U.S. troops had cleared the area of insurgents more than once, only to see them return after local control was transferred to Iraqi forces.
RUSAFA
Haifa Street
KARKH
Tigris River
International (Green) Zone
Presidential Palace
New Presidential Palace

Sequence of Events

B co's commander used received the battalion frago at the Battalion HQ's and then moved directly to his Stryker. At the same time the rest of the company was assembling in the motor pool conducting PCI's and preparing to conduct a movement to contact. The commander issued his frago via FM in the motor pool and sent out the route via FBCB2 overlay. He finished and sent out a company level order to his platoon leaders while moving to the Iraqi Army elements. This all occurred within a 30 minute period. Without FBCB2 our company would not have been able to move out as quickly to reinforce the Iraqi Army. The commander was unfamiliar with the area and chose to take two routes into Haifa Square, one element was used to cordon the high speed avenues of approach and the other was used to go directly to the link up point with the Iraqi Army.

Contact Cordon Element

The cordon element made contact first with a small element of dismounted enemy combatants with AK-47's, the cordon stays mounted and returned fire from their air sentry hatches while they moved into covered positions. Once in their positions squad leaders assigned sectors of fire to the vehicle commanders for their vehicles Remote Weapons Stations. Squad Leaders and Vehicle Commanders maintained SA of the main element via the FBCB2. The dismounted nine man infantry squads stayed mounted within the protective armor of the Stryker.

Contact Main Element

The main elements made it to the link up point just after the cordon element established its positions. All leaders in the main element knew the location of the cordon element via FBCB2. The main element was then engaged from elevated positions by enemy forces with machine gun fire, RPG's and hand grenades being thrown from roof tops. Utilizing Remote Weapons Stations with .50 cal MG and soldiers in air sentry hatches firing M-4s and M249s the main element was able to gain fire superiority and force the enemy to retreat after 10 to 15 minutes of sustained fire. The commander then extended the company cordon with his Strykers and established a secure perimeter. B co finally linked up with the Iraqi Army and began the treatment and evacuation of Iraqi Army dead and wounded.

Lessons Learned

- Systems like FBCB2 aid units in not only Situational Awareness but mission planning, rehearsal and command and control

- There is no common communications platform for US forces and its allies

- Armor packages such as Slat Armor and the Common Ballistic Shield give soldiers confidence in their vehicle

- Air sentry hatches enable soldiers a protected platform to effectively engaging enemy forces during movement or while halted.

- Sniper net solution worked well during the day, I had to cut through the netting so I could see to engage elevated targets at night