

Thunder Runs into Baghdad: The Impact of Information Age Command and Control on Conflict

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The Situation

- The British-led efforts in the south to capture Umm Qasr (the only port on the Persian Gulf) and the large city of Basra;
- Attacks led by the U.S. Marine forces through Jalibah and Nasiriyah (between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers) to seize the river crossings at Kut and Numaniyah, from which they could follow Route 6 to the city of Baghdad; and
- The U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry Division, attacking up the valley of the Euphrates River through Najaf, Hillah, and Karbala, from which they would approach Baghdad.

The Invasion of Iraq



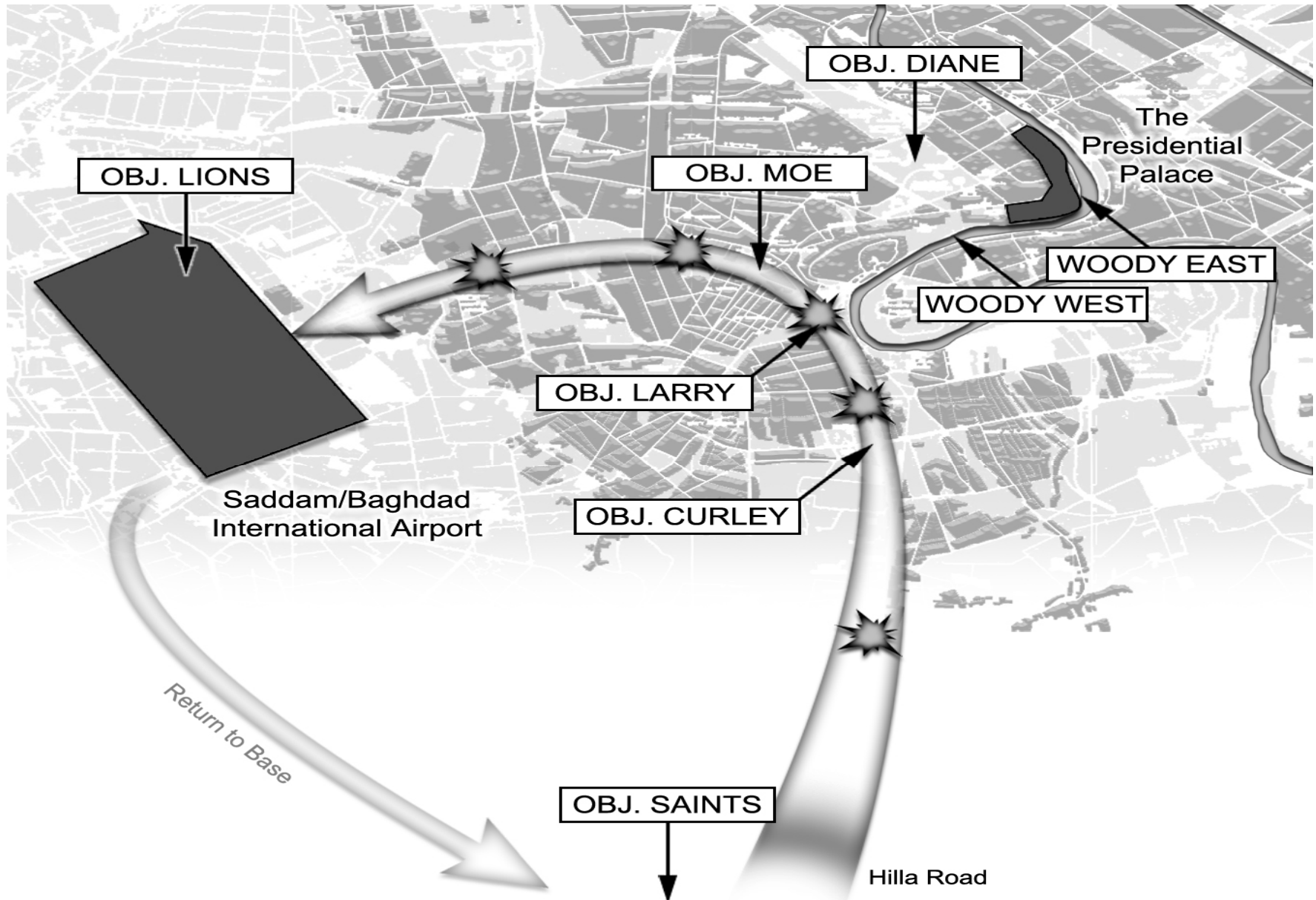
The Plan for Baghdad

- The final battle for Baghdad would be a sequence of raids and limited objective attacks to control, neutralize, or destroy the regime's symbolic and physical levers of power

Intelligence before the Attack

- Lack of accurate, consistent intelligence
 - It was believed that Iraqis had a sophisticated city-defense strategy
 - The international airport and palace complex would be the most heavily defended
 - Imagery and other reports inexplicably showed almost no preparations within the city

Thunder Run of April 5



April 5 Thunder Run

- Only took two and a half hours
- American casualties light, enemy casualties estimated between 800 and 1,000
- Operation was deemed successful

April 5 Thunder Run cont.

- It was monitored by higher headquarters using at least two different systems: imagery from a UAV and Blue Force Tracker (BFT)
- Some errors were made due to “fog of war”
- This first run was replete with examples of information sharing and self-synchronized actions at the tactical level

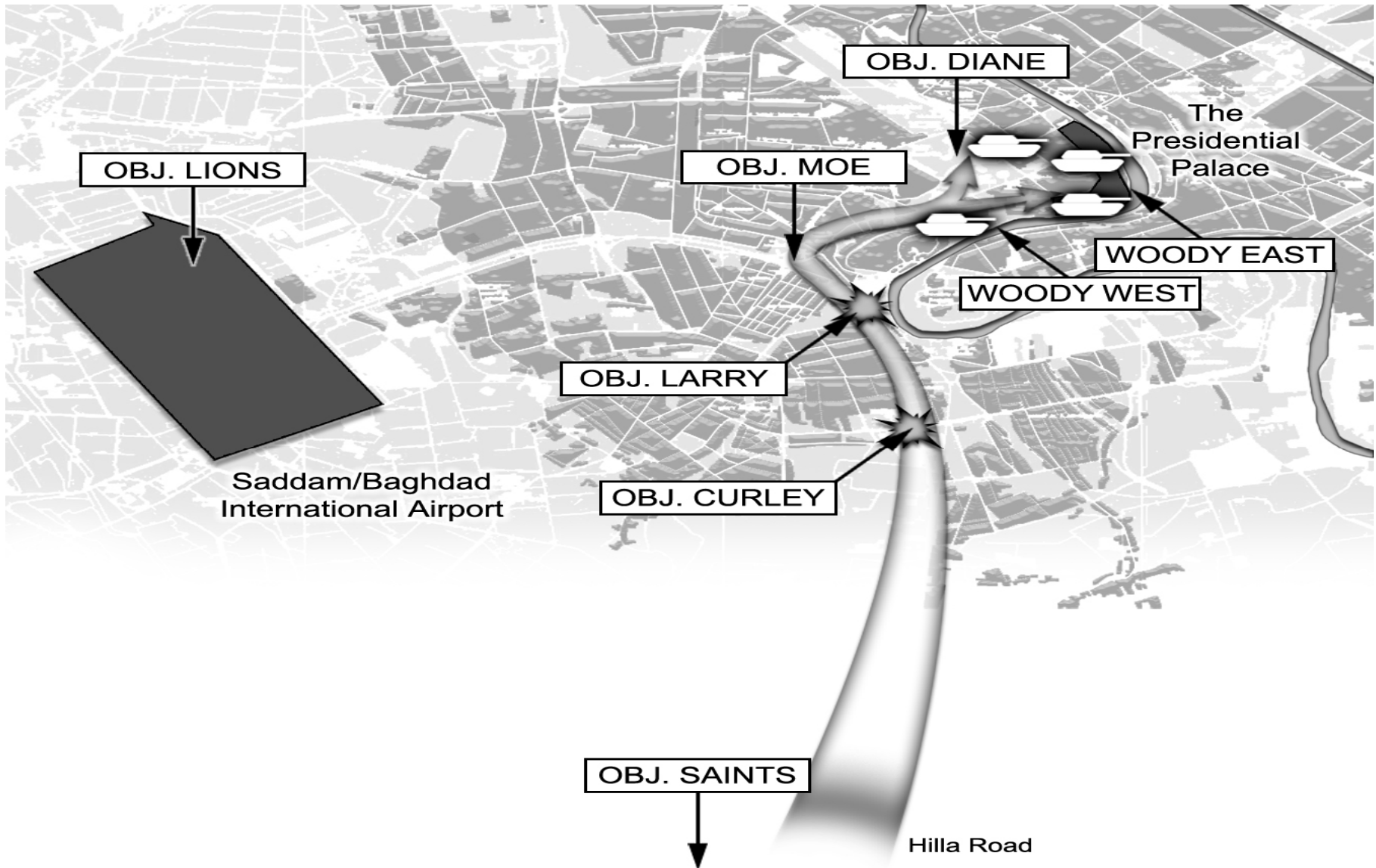
Planning for the Next Run

- Decisionmaking for the second Thunder Run was not straightforward
 - Planning began on the evening of the first run but was not communicated throughout the different levels (theater, division, brigade)
 - Theater and division believed this run would be like the first (in and out)
 - Brigade had different ideas (understood information war implications)

Planning for the Next Run cont.

- Lessons from the first run:
 - the forces must maintain momentum
 - overpasses were key pieces of terrain
- Decided to use Objectives Curley, Larry, and Moe once again
- I-64 Armor to lead, followed by 4-64 Armor Battalion, and then 3-15 Infantry would hold the intersections open, allowing for resupply columns to come through

Thunder Run of April 7



Thunder Run of April 7

- Had to clear a mine field planted overnight
- The operation:
 - I-64 Armor led at 0600 and made it downtown by 0700
 - Curley, Larry, and Moe more strongly defended than last run
 - Very difficult to resupply fuel and ammunition
 - TOC is hit—troops self-synchronized quickly

The Decision to Stay

- The resupply convoy decided to move when TOC was hit
 - Infantry reserve was committed to strengthen Curley, Larry, and Moe
 - They resupplied the overpasses then made it downtown
- Perkins believed staying downtown was the best option
- Both Blount and Wallace adjusted their plans and put all effort into supporting Perkins

Looking Back on the Thunder Runs

- There was some miscommunication among those involved in the planning of the second run;
- Fighting at the southernmost overpass was the heaviest, which caused a greater need for reinforcements than originally planned;
- The Americans believed that taking Baghdad would involve intensive hand-to-hand combat that might last for weeks.

Insights about Command and Control

- American Army advantages:
 - equipment of the forces engaged,
 - the level of training and professionalism of the individual soldiers at all ranks,
 - the quality of the command and control functions of the forces
- April 5 tested enemy strength
- April 7 proved Americans were in Baghdad to stay

Conclusions

- Self-synchronization was an important factor due to the problems linked to decisionmaking
- Recognized the battle was an information war
- Inconsistencies during April 7 run will hopefully aid in the knowledge of the importance of communication throughout the planning and battle stages.

Questions, thoughts, puzzles?