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Forces
News](#)[Articles](#)[Radio](#)[Television](#)[Special
Reports](#)[Search](#)[News
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+1 (703) 428-0711**Presenter:** Army Lt. Gen. William
Scott WallaceWednesday, May 7, 2003 - 9:00 a.m.
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Fifth Corps Commander Live Briefing from Baghdad

(Satellite-videoteleconference briefing from Baghdad, Iraq, on the involvement of the 5th Corps in the conflict and in post-war stabilization efforts. Participating were Bryan Whitman, deputy assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, and Lt. Gen. William Scott Wallace, commander, U.S. Army 5th Corps.)

Whitman: Good morning, and thank you for joining us so early this morning.

And General, thank you for staying with us as we worked through some of the technical difficulties here a few minutes ago.

But this is our next in a series of briefings that we've been bringing to you with military commanders from Operation Iraqi Freedom. And today, we'd like to welcome Lieutenant General Scott Wallace, who joins us from Baghdad. As the commander of the U.S. Army's 5th Corps, General Wallace led the coalition maneuver forces and was the battle commander for the battle of Baghdad. And today, he's going to talk to us about 5th Corps operations and their ongoing role in this period of time and the postwar stabilization process.

So with that, General Wallace, I think that you have a couple things you'd like to say before we get into questions.



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Wallace: Good morning. Ladies and gentlemen of the Pentagon press corps, I'm grateful for the opportunity to talk to you today.

First, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate my friend, Major General Rick Sanchez, on his selection for a third star and being named as the next commander of the Victory Corps. He's an outstanding soldier and an excellent choice to lead the men and women of this corps, and I wish him every success.

It's a beautiful spring day here in Baghdad. The temperature's around 90 degrees. The warm, clear weather mirrors the improvements we've made and continue to make on behalf of the people of Iraq. Over 110,000 soldiers of the Victory Corps fought valiantly to defeat the oppressive regime of Saddam Hussein. They have freed the Iraqi people. They deserve the praise of a grateful nation for their sacrifices.

Unfortunately, not all of these brave souls will be coming home. They have made the ultimate sacrifice to liberate this once-captive nation. Our thoughts and prayers go out to their families, and we are very saddened by their passing. Their bravery, however, inspires us to complete this mission that they began.

Right now, thousands of 5th Corps soldiers are on duty, their presence creating a secure and stable environment within Baghdad and throughout Iraq. Their diligence is setting the conditions for reconstruction and the development of Iraq. I'm proud to command these brave and dedicated men and women. They are truly the best our nation has to offer.

And with that, I'm prepared to answer your questions.

Q: General, Charlie Aldinger with Reuters. I'd like to ask: How long have you been commander of 5th Corps? And what's your next posting going to be? Do you know? And do you feel you're perhaps being prematurely or unfairly replaced as commander due to statements you made early in the campaign?

Wallace: First of all, I've been in command since July of the year 2001. Secondly, I don't have any idea what my next assignment is. And thirdly, I'm having a great time commanding 5th Corps, and I think I've got the best job in the Army, and I don't think I've been treated poorly by anybody. Thank you for your question.

Q: Sir, this is Tony Capaccio with Bloomberg News. I had a couple questions about weapons of mass destruction. How solid, in retrospect, was your prewar

intelligence about Iraq's intent and capability to use tactical chemical and biological weapons against advancing U.S. troops, question one? And how surprised are you that none of these tactical weapons -- not the buried facilities and laboratories we've been hearing about, but the tactical weapons -- how surprised are you that none of those have been found by your troops?

Wallace: Well, first questions first. We were obviously concerned before the start of the campaign about these use of tactical chemical or biological weapons. We trained our troops to operate in that environment. As far as the intelligence information, we thought we had solid information that -- of the likelihood of their use.

With regard to your second question, I can only say that we've collected evidence, much of it documentary evidence, that suggests there was an active program. It's taken a while, as you might expect, to sort through that documentary evidence. A lot of the information that we're getting is coming from low-tier Iraqis who had some knowledge of the program but not full knowledge of the program, and it's just taken us a while to sort through all of that.

As far as why those weapons were not used during the campaign, it would be speculation on my part. I expect you probably ought to ask the Iraqi commanders. But I have a couple theories. One theory is that we moved so fast that they couldn't get their hands on it to employ it. And secondly, I would like to believe our information operations campaign had an impact on those commanders that might have the opportunity to pull the trigger, and they thought it not such a good idea.

Q: General Wallace, Barbara Starr from CNN. Could I ask you to go back and sort of look at the first six, seven, eight days of the campaign and how things sort of went in one direction and then perhaps began to turn around. In other words, was there a point a few days into the war, when the sandstorm hit, when it looked like it might take longer? Was there discussion then of changing the plan? And was there a turning point when it all seemed to come together somehow?

Wallace: That's an interesting question. Let me -- first of all, obviously the sandstorm had an impact on our ability to move. In particular, it had an impact on our ability to move supplies forward. As you might recall, we were operating over a very long supply line. The supply line that we had planned on using had been interdicted by enemies in and around al-Samawa. So during the sandstorm, we were concerned that we wouldn't have sufficient supplies in place in order to extend all the way into Baghdad. Our logisticians did a remarkable job of rectifying that situation, and I think the results speak for themselves. From the

time we crossed the LD 16 days later, we were occupying downtown Baghdad and had soldiers on the steps of the presidential palace.

Q: Could I just ask you, though, to sort of go back; what, then, became the turning point that made it all come together so you could do that?

Wallace: I'm sorry, I didn't hear your question.

Q: I'm sorry. What, then, became the turning point that brought it all together that allowed you to proceed and do that and move on to Baghdad? At what point did it turn around?

Wallace: "Turn around" implies that we were going the wrong direction, and we never were. The plan all along was to maneuver the 3rd Infantry Division to a position of advantage to the west of An Najaf, which is where we were. The plan all along was to establish a logistics supply base in that general vicinity to allow us to extend our reach into Baghdad. While we were doing that, we were fighting along our right flank, principally in Karbala, An Najaf and al-Samawa to secure those lines of communication.

I can remember vividly -- I don't remember the date, exactly, but I can remember vividly one day, when we attacked to an objective along the Euphrates River between the town of Al Hillah and Karbala with the 3rd Infantry Division, simultaneously we moved the 3rd of the 7th Cavalry of the 3d Infantry Division into a position just south of the Karbala Gap, which was where we intended to make our main effort. At the same time, I directed the 101st Air Assault Division to conduct an attack from the vicinity of An Najaf toward Al Hillah. I also directed the 82nd Airborne Division to do a similar attack into al-Samawa. And the 101st did a armed recon with two squadrons or two battalions of their attack aviation to the west of (Mill Lake ?) to the western flank of the corps.

All of those attacks, all five of them, took place at 0300 Zulu on the same morning. And while we were doing the attack, the 3rd Infantry Division was repositioning the brigades of the division that weren't participating in that attack to prepare for the attack through the Karbala Gap and ultimately into Baghdad.

As we completed those attacks, defeated the enemy in and around Al Hillah -- which is the first time, by the way, that we had confirmed contact with the Republican Guard -- we began to receive reports from our UAVs and aerial observers and from our intelligence folks that the Iraqi Army was repositioning. And it was about 3:00, maybe 4:00 in the afternoon on a beautiful sunlit day, low wind, no restrictions to flight, and at that point the U.S. Air Force had a heyday

against those repositioning Iraqi forces.

So the combination, in my judgment, between that maneuver -- which I believe the Iraqi commanders read as our main effort -- and our ability to have previously set our logistics enabled us to extend our reach into Baghdad, and in fact three days later we were sitting on Baghdad International Airport. So if you're looking for a decisive point in the fight, for me, that was the decisive point. But it was all in accordance with the original plan.

Q: General, it's John McWethy with ABC News. Your answer to a previous question on weapons of mass destruction suggests that you still strongly feel that the weapons were out there. Your answer was, why didn't they use it? Well, we moved so fast they couldn't get their hands on it, and psychological operations had an impact. That suggests that there were these weapons sitting in either the warehouses or on the front lines, and zero of those weapons have yet been found. Isn't it a possible third explanation that they were not there at any time during this campaign?

And secondly, the suspected bioweapons laboratory which you have found -- can you give us your assessment of its significance?

Wallace: First question first, and that is, I still suggest to you that we've got plenty of documentary evidence to suggest that they did have an active program. I would also suggest to you that as you recall, the UNMOVIC inspectors only left Baghdad a few days before the start of the campaign, and it's entirely possible that they have located that -- the -- what systems that they did have, such that the UNMOVIC inspectors couldn't get -- couldn't observe or get their -- or find evidence, and therefore, because they were so clever in disguising that and burying it so deep, that they themselves had a problem getting to them.

I forget the rest of your question. (Chuckles.)

Q: Sorry, sir. These are complicated questions. The significance of finding the mobile biolab that you are now, I guess, bringing to Baghdad to further inspect. What do you think that laboratory represents in terms of their capabilities? And how significant a find is it?

Wallace: I -- frankly, I'm not sure. I'm going to leave it to the experts to do the analysis of the laboratory, do the analysis of what it might portend, and we'll just leave it at that. I'm not prepared to really make any judgments about it until the experts have had a chance to take a good, hard look and make their own judgments.

Q: Good morning, General. This is Tom Infield from Knight Ridder Newspapers. Two quick questions. There are reports today of a new tape that may or may not be the voice of Saddam Hussein, and may or may not be post-conflict. Do you have any word on that?

Wallace: I'm sorry, I didn't hear what the report was.

Q: There are reports today of a new audio tape that may or may not contain the voice of Saddam Hussein, and may or may not have been taped post-conflict. Do you have any information on that?

Wallace: I don't have any information on it. You know, since the start of the campaign, we've been hearing tapes and seeing videos that were suggested to be filmed or tapes taken during the course of the campaign that have proven not to be so.

Q: And one other question. CentCom, just today, has put out a long list of incidents in which United States troops were fired on yesterday. To what extent is Iraq still a combat zone?

Wallace: It's -- Iraq's still a dangerous place. There are still residual elements of the regime that we're actively going after. There are a number of criminal elements that we continue to bump into. As you recall, before the start of the campaign, Saddam Hussein let all of the criminals out of jail, and some of those are some of the folks that we're running into. We are not, however, involved in active combat operations as we were a number of weeks ago.

Q: Good morning, General. Robert Schlesinger with the Boston Globe. Is there at this point any evidence to lead us to believe that chemical or biological weapons were actually deployed for use against coalition forces?

Wallace: We know that his long-range missiles systems were deployed well forward. In fact, a number of them were fired into Kuwait before we ever crossed over the line of departure. And those weapon systems have the capability to carry chemical munitions. But we have found, thus far, no evidence of him trying to employ them directly against U.S. troops.

Q: Good morning. Eric Westervelt with NPR News. Could you tell us what progress, if any, has been made in screening and training, retraining, an Iraqi police force to help secure Baghdad? And what obstacles have you faced so far in that effort?

Wallace: Starting about two days ago, I guess, we made a call for the Iraqi police force to come back to work. The first day after that call, about 52 percent or roughly 4,000 policemen reported to duty. I now have my 18th MP Brigade in Baghdad with four- and-a-half U.S. Army Military Police companies that are conducting joint patrols with those Iraqi policemen to assist them and to help train them in police procedures.

There are some hurdles, some challenges, one of which is the mobility of a police force. Much of their equipment is (sic) either been taken or not available. We've got some challenges associated with making sure that they get paid a reasonable wage. We've got challenges associated with reestablishing their authority in the city of Baghdad. But I'm very confident that our MPs doing joint patrols while training the Iraqi police force in Baghdad will be a successful operation. Thus far, the reports from the 18th MP Brigade and our MPs have been very favorable.

Q: Sir, Anne Plummer with Inside the Army. It's been reported that DIA has -- would like to lead a coalition team. I believe Major General Keith Dayton is supposed to lead a coalition team to look for weapons of mass destruction. Is he in theater yet? I think the name is the Iraq Survey Group. And would that refocus the mission of any of your troops?

Wallace: I'm sorry, I am unfamiliar with the mission or with that major general. I just really can't answer your question, just because I don't know.

Q: General, Dennis Ryan, the Army newspaper Pentagram. The tactics you used in the final battles for Baghdad, did you train for those before the war? Or are those something you kind of evolved as you saw how things went earlier in the battles of the cities south -- in southern Iraq?

Wallace: I guess I'll give you two -- first of all, we didn't train those tactics explicitly. What we did do, however -- before I deployed the corps from Germany, I had some of the troops from the 1st Armored Division, as a matter of fact, do some simulation work with a simulation called JCATS, which is a very high resolution simulation that can be used to simulate urban combat. And what they investigated over the course of about five days was possible ways to conduct urban combat with armored formations. And one of the techniques they investigated was the idea of doing armored raids into urban areas.

Prior to leaving Kuwait, we hosted a seminar with all of the brigade-level commanders within the 5th Corps and in fact invited the brigade-level commanders and their senior officers from the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force to the same seminar. And the folks from the 1st Armored Division that had

conducted the simulation shared with us the techniques that they seem to have refined through simulation, not perfected, but refined, and at least planted the seeds for the idea of heavy armor in a urban raid-type configuration.

I think the most significant thing, however, was -- were the battles in and around An Najaf. It was not our intention -- it was not my intention to get involved in battles in and around An Najaf early in the campaign, largely because of the political and cultural and religious significance of An Najaf. But we found it necessary to isolate the city and start doing those type of urban raids, those armored raids, into the urban environment because of the forces that we met there and because of their penchant for attacking out of those urban centers toward our forces.

So in a small way, I think the -- those battles in and around An Najaf served as a rehearsal of sorts for the subsequent isolation of Baghdad, which, by the way, was part of our original plan, which was executed beautifully the 3rd Infantry Division. And then the idea of conducting heavy armored raids into the city was something that our soldiers adapted to during the course of the campaign, and adapted very well.

Q: General, Nick Childs from the BBC. Could you give us some idea, apart from Baghdad, of the current dispositions of your forces, particularly whether there are any concentrations -- anywhere where you are still concerned about the security situation? Are there any particular areas where you are worried about instability?

Wallace: I'll give you a perfectly blunt and honest answer. I'm not particularly concerned about security in Baghdad at all, other than the general notion that we are still seeing criminal elements on occasion. We are still occasionally experiencing what we believe to be celebratory fires. We will occasionally receive small arms fire on some of our patrols or our fixed installations.

But in general terms, the security situation in Baghdad is improving every day. And in fact, I talked to General Blount, the commander of the 3rd Infantry Division, over a relatively long period this morning, and he confirms that the security situation is relatively stable, particularly compared to what it was yesterday or a week ago.

Q: Just to follow up, outside Baghdad, in terms of beyond Baghdad, could you give us some idea, perhaps, of how your forces are disposed and whether there are any other areas that you are particularly focusing on?

Wallace: There are -- well, first of all, I can't talk to the South, because we turned

that area over to 1st Marine Expeditionary Force after we liberated the towns of al-Samawa, An Najaf, Karbala, Al Gula (ph) and Al Diwaniyah. They, of course, themselves had liberated al Kut, and the Brits have been in Basra and Umm Qasr. So I can't really speak to that area.

The area to the north, as you know -- that is, the area north of Baghdad -- is an area where substantial U.S. formations had not been. And over the last several weeks, we've been operating in those areas and establishing U.S. presence.

The city of Tikrit, which, as I think everybody understands, was Saddam's hometown, has been an interesting place to operate in. But we are making great progress there. In fact, we just opened a civil military operations center in downtown Tikrit yesterday. So the people there are beginning to cooperate. They're beginning to realize that the regime that they were closely affiliated with is no longer in control.

The town of Mosul, as some of you may be aware, had a council election and elected a -- or selected an interim mayor yesterday, which is also good news for that very important town.

I visited Kirkuk earlier in this week, and great progress is being made in Kirkuk. And we're expanding our operations all the way out to the Jordanian and Syrian border in the West.

And generally speaking, everywhere we go, the folks that we run into are very appreciative of our presence. Many of them have already started to develop their own interim governments that -- we will, of course, help them in further development.

And right now, today, this morning, I have no areas that I'm overly concerned about.

Q: Hello, sir. Neil Baumgartner, Defense Daily. I had a question about the performance of your aviation units, specifically the Apaches. There was a lot of talk towards the end of March, around the 23rd or 24th, about the attack of the 11th Aviation running into some trouble against the Medina Division. And I was wondering if you could talk about that attack and, overall, the performance of the Apache attack helicopter during the conflict.

Wallace: Our attack aviation performed a significant role during the fight, but I must admit it didn't perform the same role that I had envisioned for the attack aviation. The attack of the 11th Aviation on the Medina Division did not meet the

objectives that I had set for that attack. We found out, subsequent to the attack, based on some intelligence reports, that apparently the -- both the location of our attack aviation assembly areas and the fact that we were moving out of those assembly areas in the attack was announced to the enemy's air defense personnel by an Iraqi observer, thought to be a major general, who was located someplace in the town of An-Najaf using a cellular telephone. In fact, he used it to speed-dial a number of Iraqi air defenders. As our attack aviation approached the attack positions, they came under intense enemy fire.

Interesting also that as we approached the attack positions, based on our pilot reports and after-action review after the aviation attack, the entire power grid in the area went blank; the entire town, the entire area went black for about three seconds and then came back on, you know, in what we believe to be a signal to the air defense gunners using small arms and aimed tracer fire to engage our attack aviation. Thankfully, all our attack aviation, save one aircraft, returned from that fight. And also, thankfully, the two downed pilots from that aircraft, the two POWs, have returned safely back to Fort Hood, Texas.

As a result of that experience, we conducted an after-action review with the pilots and commanders involved in the attack, and we altered our use of our attack aviation based on that information.

Two nights later, we conducted a successful deep operation using the attack aviation of the 101st Division into an area just north of the city of Karbala.

We also have used the Apache a number of times in armed reconnaissance missions, one in particular where I used the 11th Aviation Regiment to do an armed recon of the corps' right flank. As you might recall, during the campaign, based on the maneuver of the corps up to Baghdad and the maneuver of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force toward al Kut and subsequently to the right flank at Baghdad, there was a significant area in between the two corps formations that had not been cleared by any ground forces, and I had a great deal of concern that there might still be enemy artillery that could engage us from that wedge that was in between the two formations. So I used the 11th Aviation Regiment to go out there and clear that area. And in fact they found enemy air defense -- (short audio break from the source) -- they found a large number of abandoned enemy equipment. They did not find any substantial enemy artillery formations out there, which gave me a degree of security and sense of -- a sense of security, at least, associated with our right flank.

Most significantly, though, what we used our attack aviation for, which we trained for prior to crossing the line of departure, was in what we refer to as close

combat attack, close support of our ground forces. When the 3rd Infantry Division attacked through the Karbala Gap and subsequently to Baghdad, they attacked with their own Apache battalions, plus I placed an attack aviation squadron of 21 Apaches from the 11th Attack Helicopter Regiment under their operational control, so they had in excess of 30 Apaches that were available to provide close combat attack or close support of ground forces 24 hours a day during that attack.

So I guess, to summarize, I would suggest to you that we learned from our mistakes, we adjusted and adapted based on what we learned, and we still used the Apache helicopter in a significant role during the course of the fight.

I will tell you also that the pilots that I talked to have gained a tremendous appreciation for the fightability and the survivability of the Apache based on their experience.

Q: General, this is Jim Mannion from Agence France-Presse. In retrospect, is there more that you could have done to prevent looting, to protect the museums and other government buildings in Baghdad, or was what happened inevitable in view of the number of troops that you had available to you?

Wallace: Well, I don't think it was as much an issue of the number of troops as the fact that we were still fighting our ass off as we went into Baghdad. And our first responsibility was to defeat the enemy forces, both paramilitary and regular army. And as their resistance dissipated, as we were able to stabilize the military situation, then we were able to get around to point security and area security of the ministries and museums and places such as that.

With regard to the museum, I know that has gained some notoriety. I read a report yesterday that of the artifacts that were allegedly taken from the main museum downtown, all but 38 of them have been accounted for. And I further received a report this morning that that number, 38, is perhaps a high number, and we be down to as many -- or, as few as 17 items that are still accounted -- unaccounted for. What doesn't get reported is the fact that we also secured a significant museum that is located at the Tomb of the Unknowns in downtown Baghdad, and that was not looted at all, by virtue of our presence.

Q: General, it's Mike Mount with CNN. I was wondering if you might be able to put into perspective your comments from earlier on in the war, when you said that the enemy was a bit different than what you had war-gamed for.

Wallace: I lost -- you blanked out just at the beginning of your question. I think

the question was you want me to put into context the comments I made about the enemy that we fought was different than the one we war-gamed against. Is that correct?

Q: That's correct.

Wallace: Yeah, I make no apologies for those comments. The enemy that we fought in al-Samawa, the enemy that we fought in An Najaf, the enemy that we fought in Al Hillah and in Karbala, the enemy that we fought to some extent in An Nasiriyah when the 5th Corps first seized Tallil Air Base and the first intact bridge over the Euphrates River was much more aggressive than what we expected him to be, or at least, what I expected him to be. He was willing to attack out of those towns toward our formations, when my expectation was that they would be defending those towns and not be as aggressive.

There was also a presence of foreign fighters that we subsequently discovered to be seeded within and cooperating with the Saddam Fedayeen, which were at least fanatical, if not suicidal.

So all of those things led to that comment.

But as I suggested earlier, I think the soldiers of the 3rd ID and the 101st and the 82nd reacted very well in adapting to those enemy tactics, and as I said, you know, 16 days to Baghdad ain't a bad record. I would have -- you know, crossing the LD, if somebody told me that in 16 days we would be in downtown Baghdad, I would have accepted that outcome gladly.

Q: Did you have any -- have you take away any lessons learned? And were the troops able to adjust for what you ran into?

Wallace: Yeah, I've got a whole thesis on lessons learned, I guess. There are a couple of things that I think are of note. First, the courage and the heroism and the resilience of the American soldier was truly remarkable to behold. Our young soldiers fought great battles against a sometimes fanatical enemy.

Something that I've known most of my career was revalidated for me, and that was the extraordinary power of the combined arms team; that is the ability to balance reconnaissance and fires and maneuver in the right balance and the right proportions is an unbeatable combination. I think the joint combined arms team that you saw fighting over here was extraordinarily successful. You know, each service -- I know there's probably debates going on in the Pentagon, even as we speak, about who won the war. And my answer is, the U.S. military won the war.

The Army, the Marines, the Air Force, our Special Operations forces, the Navy, the Marine Corps all played a vital and unique role, and without any one of those, we probably would have had the same outcome, but it may have taken us a little bit longer and it may have been a little bit more costly.

So I think -- I think if you're looking for grandiose lessons learned, those are some of them.

Whitman: Sir, we're going to be respectful of your time and make this the last question, okay?

Q: Hi, sir. This is Kim Berger. I'm with Jane's Defence Weekly. And I was wondering, as you've encountered a mix of civilians and combatants throughout Iraq, if you've made use of non-lethal weapons, and if you'd describe that a little bit, and whether there are some capabilities you would have liked to have had if you'd had them?

Wallace: Yeah, we have had the ability to use some non-lethal weapons, largely resident in our military police forces. We're beginning to use them -- or we're beginning to deploy them now in places where we either anticipate or have experienced some crowd control problems; things such as the plastic face masks, plastic shields, pepper spray, things like that.

Up to this point, there's been no real utility in using those type of items. But we are in the process now of moving them into areas under -- largely under the control of our military police forces who are trained in their use in places where we anticipate there might be some utility in their use in the future.

Whitman: Sir, I just want to thank you for being with us today. This has been very informative. And, actually, we hope that in the very near future that you'll allow us to do this with some of your division commanders also.

Wallace: I'll make sure they're available to you. And I enjoyed the exchanged and I enjoyed the questions. I hope you all have a great Washington day.

Whitman: Thank you.

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