



Official Marine Corps Photo

Staff Sgt. Charles C. Robinett, MACS-2 air traffic control crew chief uses a radio to coordinate and control a C-130 taking off from an Iraqi airstrip.

Control squadron welcomed home

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On a desert highway, a mile south of the city of An Nasiriyah, a six-man Marine air traffic control team from Marine Air Control Squadron 2, attached to Marine Wing Support Squadron 371, waits for light armored

reconnaissance vehicles to pick them up and escort them through the city. Suddenly, an enemy unit is spotted between LARs and the six air traffic controllers. Deciding to take their chances with the six men instead of armored vehicles, the Iraqis engaged

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the air traffic controllers with small arms, heavy machine guns, and 25 millimeter high explosive rounds.

After the fire fight in which the Marines took two minor casualties, they joined up with the LAR convoy to resupply units on the road out of An Nasiriyah. Outside of the town, in the small village of Ash-Shatrah, the convoy was ambushed. The MACS-2 Marines were pinned down, and spent the night fighting and calling in air support. With the help of AH-1 Super Cobras, F-18s, A-10 gunships, and AV-8B Harriers, the Marines fought their way through the night.

This is but one harrowing story from MACS-2. After five months in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, more than 50 Marines from MACS-2 returned to Cherry Point May 25. The control squadron Marines served with Task Force Tarawa and the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade.

The Marines of MACS-2 have been building as a team during the many deployments of past years.

"Most of us have been a lot of places together in the last two years during Operation

Enduring Freedom," said **Gunnery Sgt. William B. Hodges**, senior air director, and a native of Roanoke, Va. "So the teamwork and camaraderie that was built carried over into this deployment."

The Marines of MACS-2 had a lot on their shoulders in the desert, but worked hard to accomplish their many missions.

"Our Marines were all over the place, working independently in eight different six-man teams," said **Master Sgt. Bryan Strong**, ATC staff noncommissioned officer-in-charge, and a native of McCleary, Wash. "We provided air traffic support throughout the entire country of Kuwait, and all through the Marine Corps area of operations. Some ended up in An Nasiriyah, some ended up on mobile maintenance teams, and the rest in ATC detachments throughout the area of responsibility."

"I've seen a lot of young Marines fulfill their potential," Strong said. "I've seen Marines step up as leaders and learn to use initiative on the spot. We've grown a whole new generation of leaders on the operation, and when it's all said and done, the Marine Corps will be a better organization."