

A NEO Is More Than A Maneuver

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SUBJECT AREA National Military Strategy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: A NEO is More Than A Maneuver

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Thesis: The Department of Defense needs to create joint doctrine for the conduct of noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO) which recognizes the significant political consequences of the operation.

Background: The United States has been concerned with rescuing and evacuating its citizens from foreign countries since Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon attacked in Tripoli. With instability spreading in the world, it is likely that more NEO operations will be occurring. Because a NEO is requested by the Department of State and supported by the Department of Defense, joint military doctrine should recognize the foreseeable consequences that occur when NEOs are conducted. During Operation Sharp Edge, the noncombatant evacuation operation conducted in Liberia in June, 1990-January 1991, dramatic and expensive political changes occurred in conjunction with the execution of this mission.

Recommendation: Develop joint military NEO doctrine that shares terms and goals with the Department of State.

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OUTLINE

Thesis Statement: To better conduct future noncombatant evacuation operations (NEOs) the Department of Defense needs to create joint doctrine that emphasizes the significant political consequences of these operations.

I. NEO defined.

- A. Historical legal basis
- B. Modern legal basis

II. Relationship of State Department and Department of Defense in NEOs

- A. State Department Role
 - 1. Responsibilities
 - 2. Emergency Handbook
- B. Department of Defense Role
 - 1. Responsibilities
 - 2. Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan

III. Operation Sharp Edge

- A. Situation
- B. Political considerations
- C. Consequences

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In 1805 United States Marines first planted an American flag on a foreign

shore as part of a rescue mission. Led by Lieutenant Presley Neville O'Bannon, a combined force of seven enlisted Marines and more than 500 Greek, Arab, and expatriate European mercenaries supported by Bedouin cavalry captured the city of Derma to force the Barbary pirates to free 307 American sailors held captive in Tripoli. Despite manifest bravery, O'Bannon's campaign against the beys, deys and bashaws of the Tripolitian Arabs failed to achieve its stated goal. In large part this failure occurred because of contrary diplomatic negotiations undertaken by the U.S. Consul General to Algeria Tobias Lear, the former personal secretary for President Washington.¹

This inauspicious beginning marked the start of the U.S. challenge to effectively coordinate diplomatic initiatives, combined forces, and military action when conducting rescue missions. With regional instability rising in the aftermath of the Cold War, the need to execute military rescue missions -specifically noncombatant evacuation operations (NEOs)- will increase.² To better conduct future NEOs the Department of Defense needs to create joint doctrine that emphasizes the significant Political consequences of these operations.

The U.S. military conducts noncombatant emergency evacuations at the request of the State Department to rapidly remove U.S. citizens and a few specified others from the threat of harm in a foreign country. The need for a NEO occurs when, as a consequence of natural disaster, internal unrest, or armed conflict with another country, a host country can or will not provide protection to U.S. citizens within its borders. Current Marine Corps doctrine describes NEOs as similar to amphibious raids because both involve "swift incursion into or temporary occupancy of an objective followed by a planned withdrawal."³ This description distinguishes a NEO from an amphibious raid because different rule of engagement are followed. In a NEO, force may be used only for self-defense or defense of others, such as the evacuees.

The international law basis for NEOs has become better settled in the years since the end of World War II. Before 26 June 1945, when the United Nations Charter had not yet superseded customary international law, two humanitarian purposes permitted intrusion by one State into the sovereign territory of another.⁴ The rare justification for foreign incursion occurred when a country committed

atrocities upon its own people on a scale that fell below the standards of civilized societies ---an extremely flexible standard. The more frequent basis for foreign intervention occurred when a State's citizens living abroad faced imminent danger to lives and property.⁵

With the passage of the U.N. Charter, world governments reexamined the legal theories of intervention. Initially many believed the U.N. Charter barred any threat or use of force between States regardless of the intentions or goals of the intervening State. The U.N. Charter grants only two exceptions to this absolute prohibition: self-defense or participation in U.N. enforcement actions to restore international peace. However, in the years following World War II, idealism and the U.N. could not establish an effective international peace force to conduct evacuation missions world-wide.

Lacking an active international force, the U.S. has adopted an interpretation of self-defense which rests upon customary international law. This interpretation accepts the ideas of self-defense put forth by the U.N. Charter. However, it permits a nation to help its own people when the U.N. is unable to effectively act. When harm to citizens abroad is imminent, the U.S. government can take appropriate action to prevent injury or harm. These actions can include intervention into another country provided the intervention is limited to protecting the citizens being evacuated.⁶

Current regulation, agreement, and plan place the responsibility for protecting U.S. citizens abroad on the Secretary of State.⁷ Under the scheme of Executive Order 12656, the Secretary of State eyes the world to minimize the number of U.S. citizens who are subject to the risk of death, injury, and capture as hostage. To carry out this responsibility, the Secretary of State names offices within the Department of State that are responsible for evacuation planning and implementation. The cognizant on-scene official who oversees the preparation and implementation of these plans for each country is the U.S. ambassador.

As instability grows, the Ambassador is charged to review the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) contained in the Embassy's 12 Foreign Affairs Handbook-1 Emergency Planning Handbook.⁸ This plan is composed of completed checklists from the 16 chapters and seven annexes of the 12 FAH-1 Emergency Handbook. Started as

a Department-wide program after the report of the 1985 Inman Commission which examined the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut and other disasters, these checklists assist the Ambassador and the Embassy Country Team in anticipating potential emergencies.

In the EAP, chapters are devoted to natural disasters, bombings, civil strife, massive refugee requests, reduction of personnel, and evacuation. The EAP plans responses to these various emergencies which range from standing-fast, leaving the country by commercial means, evacuation, and post closing. When complete and updated, an Embassy EAP contains extensive maps, pictures of landing zones and beach sites, a transportation plan, a logistics plan, and a communication plan. Copies of the EAP, which become a classified document when filled out, are returned to the Emergency Plans Office of the State Department in Washington, D.C., which then sends 44 copies to the Pentagon for retention and use.⁹

Along with reviewing crisis response plans, the Ambassador is also tasked with coordinating with the Secretary of Defense to maximize timely use of military transportation assets and to insure military evacuation plans can be integrated into the Department of State plans.¹⁰ If military assistance may be required for an evacuation operation, the Ambassador makes the request to the Secretary of State who then informs the President. The Ambassador's message to the Secretary of State requesting this action normally informs the area Commander in Chief of Unified and Specified Commands (CinC) so that military planning of the evacuation may begin.¹¹

Each CinC is tasked with preparing and maintaining plans for assisting the Department of State in the protection and evacuation of U.S. noncombatants abroad.¹² Matters considered when drawing up these plans include courses of action, forces, assembly area operations, evacuation site operations, embassy security, medical support and host nation support -the same matters also considered in Chapter 15 of 12 FAH-1 Emergency Handbook.¹³ As the CinCs and their staffs work on concepts of operation for the evacuations in their region, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management and Personnel, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Washington Liaison Group--a joint monitoring body established and chaired by the Department of State with Department of Defense representation--all oversee, and provide coordination for

the implementation of the non-combatant emergency evacuation plan.¹⁴ In their final form, these military evacuation plans are included as part of the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP) which gives the CinCs guidance for the accomplishment of their military tasks over a two year cycle.¹⁵

Two opportunities presented themselves in 1990 and 1991 to test the multi-layered planning now involved when conducting NEOs. Both occurred in littoral countries of Africa as Desert Shield built into Desert Storm. The first, Operation Sharp Edge in Monrovia, Liberia, started as a evacuation rescue mission and evolved into a seven month embassy sustainment mission. The second, Operation Eastern Exit in Mogadishu, Somalia, began as an emergency evacuation and lived up to its billing. Of the two operations, Operation Sharp Edge differs most from the normal "amphibious raid" model of a NEO and for that reason perhaps had more influence on the political situation of the host country.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) started Operation Sharp-Edge on 25 May 1990 by ordering the United States Europe Command (EURCOM) to deploy Mediterranean Amphibious Ready Group (MARG) 2-90 off the western coast of Africa near Monrovia, Liberia. The 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (MEU(SOC)) embarked aboard four amphibious ships gave MARG 2-90 its ground combat element. This MEU(SOC) consisted of a Marine medium helicopter squadron, a rifle battalion, and a combat services support group. upon receipt of the JCS order, MARG 2-90 began planning the potential tasks of a NEO. These included reinforcement of the United States Embassy in Monrovia, protection of communication sites in Liberia, and possible extraction of key United States Embassy personnel.¹⁶

The circumstances which started the NEO begin in December of 1989. On Christmas eve, 1989, Charles Taylor, the U.S. educated former head of the Liberian Government Services Agency (GSA) and a member of the Gio tribe, started a revolt against the then president, Samuel K. Doe, a member of the Bakwe tribe. Doe had accused Taylor of corruption in 1987 and forced him to flee the country.¹⁷ Upon his return in 1989, Taylor starte his insurrection with a small organization, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). Fueled by tribal rivalries, the NPFL spread civil

dissent while growing quickly during the early months of 1990. Working inland from the coastal town of Buchanan, Taylor followed Maoist doctrine by advancing slowly while he gained the support of the people.

In May the NPFL threatened the only international airport in Liberia, Roberts International Airport. Around this airport in the outskirts of Monrovia, the members of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), who remained loyal to President Doe, and the NPFL, engaged in bloody battles with neither obtaining much success. Observing the mayhem, the American Embassy in Monrovia issued situation reports which "painted a picture similar to the 'Fall of the Roman Empire' for the rest of the world to read in message traffic."¹⁸ By 25 May the severity of these reports caused the JCS to send MARG 2-90 from Toulon, France, to Mamba Station, a navigational point off the coast of Liberia.

To plan for the missions assigned in Operation Sharp-Edge, MARG 2-90 sent an advance party comprised of the executive officer of the 22nd MEU(SOC), the executive officer of the Marine rifle battalion ahead of the MARG to Monrovia. The platoon commander of the Navy Sea, Air, Land (SEAL) team, an air/naval gunfire liaison team (ANGLICO), and two radio operators joined them en route in Barcelona, Spain. Together these individuals formed the Forward Command Element (FCE) of MARG 2-90.

Prepared for immediate action, the FCE arrived in Monrovia on 29 May. Their baggage included food, batteries, satellite communications gear, smoke grenades, weapons, and ammunition. Because they believed either the 22nd MEU(SOC) would soon land or the crisis would end shortly, the FCE brought supplies for only ten days.¹⁹

The tasks the FCE conducted when it reached Liberia expressly concerned the technical Marine Corps aspects of a NEO: finding and evaluating possible helicopter landing zones, finding and evaluating potential beach landing sites and assembly sites for the evacuees, and drafting a reenforcement plan for the American Embassy. As planned, MARG 2-90 reached Liberia on 5 June. By diplomatic decision, it sat offshore for sixty days.²⁰

The Embassy personnel had several good reasons to resist the NEO. First, as diplomats, the State Department officials in Liberia wanted to pursue negotiations for

as long as possible. Problems in the revolt caused circumstances to not be as dire as broadcast.

In late May, Charles Taylor lost two of his top lieutenants. One, Elmer Johnson, was killed. The other, Prince Johnson, a professional soldier who had trained with the U.S. Army at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, broke away to form a splinter group called the Independent National patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL).²¹ Hampered by these command problems and logistics difficulties, Taylor's advance on Monrovia slowed. This delay, and the entry of the INPFL into the melee, provided an opportunity for a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

Second, the U.S. had a great deal of prestige and money tied to the government of Liberia. Because good relations existed between the two countries for a long time a surprising number of valuable U.S. assets are within its borders. The U.S. abolitionist societies in 1822 began to send free slaves to Monrovia for settlement of the country. By 1892 more than 16,000 freed U.S. slaves had returned to Africa. They became the ruling elite, formed a republic, and became the model of independent rule in Africa. Samuel Doe brutally crushed these leaders and the traditions of their government when he came to power by insurrection and assassination 1980.²²

From 1980 until 1987 Liberia received the largest per capita share of U.S. aid to the sub-Saharan Africa, a figure close to \$500 million.²³ North of the town of Careysburg, a place too small for most maps, Voice of America maintains its largest transmission center in the world. Broadcasting with six 250 kW and two 50 kW transmitters, coverage is provided for the entire African continent, the Middle East, and southwestern Russia.²⁴ Looking towards the sea from Monrovia, the U.S. keeps an Omega communications and navigation relay station to transmit and guide submarines in the Atlantic.²⁵ Firestone runs the largest rubber plantation in the world outside of Monrovia, complete with a 200 bed medical facility.²⁶ Recalling these facts, it is understandable why, although President Doe seemed to be losing his grip on the country during the summer of 1990, the U.S. did not wish to under take any action which would hasten his overthrow.

From 29 May until 4 August, the FCE closely worked with the State

Department and bided its time while the MARG sat over the horizon. On 29 July President Doe met privately with the American Ambassador Peter de Vos and refused an offer to depart the country under U.S. protection. On this date over 7,000 Liberians had taken shelter on grounds adjoining the U.S. Embassy with 12,000 more taking refuge at the Voice of America transmitters and another 18,000 crowded on the grounds of the telecommunication facility near Brewerville.²⁷ Then, on the evening of 30 July, Armed Forces of Liberia soldiers massacred 200 hundred of civilians in an Lutheran church in Monrovia and wounded many more. ²⁸ Five days after the slaughter, on 4 August, Prince Johnson demanded humanitarian intervention by the U.S. to settle the bloody three-way civil war. To back up his demand, Johnson and the INPFL, threatened to arrest U.S. citizens for the sole purpose of forcing foreign involvement. This threat forced the Ambassador to finally initiate the NEO.

Based upon the extensive time for in-country planning by the FCE and the opportunity for face-to-face coordination with the Embassy staff, the execution phase of the non-combatant evacuation proceeded superbly. At dawn on 5 August more than 200 Marines aboard 11 CH-46E and CH-53D transport helicopters escorted by four AH-1T gunships flew into the U.S. compound in Monrovia. Ten AV-8B Harriers assigned to the Saipan took turn flying air cover. During the next few weeks more than 2,400 people, including 226 Americans, were evacuated and no weapons had to be fired by Marines.²⁹

The primary evacuation effort continued until 20 August when MARG 3-90 arrived with the 26th MEU(SOC) aboard and conducted an in-place relief. Rifle companies from 26th MEU(SOC) then took up the mission of remaining ashore in the U.S. embassy compound to reinforce the Marine Security Guard Detachment and the State Department security forces directed by the Embassy's Regional Security Officer. This duty continued until 9 January 1991.³⁰

With the landing of the first helicopters on 5 August, the tempo of the insurgency increased. Within 33 days, on 9 September, the President Samuel Doe's rule ended when Prince Johnson trapped and then assassinated him, recording the whole gruesome event with a video camera.³¹ During all of the time the Marines were ashore in Liberia daily fighting between among the three factions of the population continued.

At Nigeria's urging, five of Liberia's adjoining Africa states formed a 6,000 soldier multi-national force to help put a cease-fire into effect among the three factions. Although these forces entered the country in late August, by November the U.S. State Department recognized these regional troops would not soon establish order.³² At the last count in November of 1990, 20,000 Liberians in a population of 2,639,809 had died either from fighting or starvation.³³ In July of 1991, U.S. State Department estimated that 750,000 Liberians had become refugees. To assist in this increasingly chaotic situation the U.S. provided \$130 million to the Liberian relief effort, \$2.8 million to ECOWAS and an additional \$3.75 million grant in fiscal year 1991 directly to the five ECOWAS countries whose troops maintained the regional peace keeping coalition in Liberia.³⁴

The principle conclusion which may be drawn from this brief overview of NEO procedures and Operation Sharp Edge is that a NEO is more than a maneuver. Joint doctrine which recognizes the dramatic political consequences of noncombatant evacuation operations must be developed. The constant warfare, the large number of casualties which occurred to Liberians during the operation, and the political involvement at the highest levels in supervising these events suggests that permanently including NEOs as part of Low Intensity Conflict is confusing.³⁵

President Samuel Doe lost his legitimacy on 5 August when the first helicopter touched. Analogizing this seven month operation to an amphibious raid brushes away too many complications. The turbulent manner in which his government ended caused the U.S. to lose some ability to influence events in West Africa. To regain this influence, to date, has cost \$136 million.

ENDNOTES

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35. The place to begin this work is with the dictionaries. The term "NEO," and the words "noncombatant," or "noncombatant evacuation." are not defined in JCS Pub. 1, , Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, 1986, JCS Pub. 3-02.1 (Test), OH 1-100 Joint Doctrine for Landing Force Operations, 1989, Joint Test Pub 3-07 Doctrine For Joint Operation In Low Intensity Conflict, 1990, and JCS Test Pub 3-0 Doctrine For Unified and Joint Operations, 1990. Lacking a shared definition of the terms quickly leads to differing courses of action. In Operation Sharp Edge these different understanding were most apparent when the Forward Command Element (FCE) reported to the Embassy in Monrovia expecting the NEO to be over in 10 days!

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