

THE HISTORICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF NON-COMBATANT EVACUATION OPERATIONS

Sam Dudin*

Defence Science and Technology Laboratory – Policy and Capability Studies Department

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Abstract

Non-combatant Evacuation Operations (NEOs) are one of the most common types of military operation conducted by British forces, with approximately 20 conducted since WWII, including eight within the last 20 years. An enduring requirement to conduct NEOs on a semi-regular basis seems to exist, and the chances of successfully conducting these operations will probably be improved if their historical characteristics are properly understood.

To this end, 30 case studies of British, French, American and Belgian NEOs were researched, gaining insights into the swiftness of these operations, the forces typically used, the types of threat encountered and the importance of forward deployment.

It appears that NEOs should not be treated like other operations. The timescales are very short, requiring forces to be deployed within days, typically from forward deployed locations, and usually without the support of Joint Fires or the protection of heavily armoured vehicles.

The operating environment is often uncertain or dangerous, although historically Blue casualties are rare. Typically, harassing fire, or a small scale attack on isolated forces, is the most likely threat to Blue forces. But narrow misses have occurred, such as leaving evacuation points minutes before enemy bombardment of the area. Furthermore, historical precedents exist for ambushes in an urban environment, gunmen merging into crowds of demonstrators, and an assault on a town held by 500 rebels who were holding over 2000 hostages.

Introduction and Background

The National Security Tasks and Planning Guidelines from the National Security Council state that the UK will require “the military ability to help evacuate UK citizens from crises overseas”.¹ From this statement it can be inferred that Non-combatant Evacuation Operations (NEOs) are non-discretionary. That is to say, there is no choice regarding whether the British military will or will not conduct this type of operation in the future. To paraphrase Richard Haass, these are operations of necessity, not operations of choice.² Furthermore, it can be inferred that the UK should not plan to “freeride” on the capabilities of foreign powers to evacuate British citizens from foreign countries.

* Correspondence to Dstl Portsdown West, Portsdown Hill Road, Hampshire, United Kingdom, PO17 6AD, or sdudin@mail.dstl.gov.uk

¹ HM Government (2010), *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review* (London: Cabinet Office)

² Haass, Richard N. (2009), *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster)

This guidance from the National Security Council should not be surprising, given the importance of NEOs to the UK. Given that nominal GNI (Gross National Income) outstripped nominal GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in 2009 by over 350 billion dollars,³ conducting business overseas is clearly of importance to British citizens, and arguably to the British economy overall. More importantly, there are strong political imperatives to conduct this type of operation. If other nations are evacuating their citizens from a country and the UK is not, empirical evidence indicates that the British Prime Minister will be heavily criticised in Parliament and in the British press. This seems to create downward pressure on the British military to conduct a NEO, even if the military is already heavily engaged in conducting other operations. It should therefore not be surprising that NEOs are one of the most common types of operation conducted by the British military, with over 20 being conducted since World War II and almost as many stand-by deployments for potential evacuations.

Permissiveness in the Operating Environment for British NEOs

Due to the importance placed on NEOs in the UK's National Security Strategy, original research into NEOs was conducted, including the historical research which is outlined in this paper. Initially, the project focused purely on British operations between 1990 and 2010, and the level of permissiveness in the operating environment. Essentially, the level of permissiveness is dictated by the level of threat to British citizens being evacuated and to military personnel conducting the evacuation, and is divided in British NEO doctrine into three categories: permissive, uncertain and hostile. In a permissive environment, no resistance to the evacuation is expected. In an uncertain environment, a climate of insecurity and threat to potential evacuees exists, but the host nation (which is the country being evacuated) has effective control of the majority of its security forces and is not expected to interfere with the conduct of a NEO. In a hostile environment, host nation civil and military authorities have lost control or have ceased to function altogether, there is a general breakdown in law and order and potential evacuees "may be directly targeted and their lives increasingly threatened."⁴ Debate exists as to how these categories, which are outlined in the Joint Warfare Publication 3-51, *Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations*, ought to be interpreted. The debate revolves around whether one is looking at the environment in the host nation leading up to and during the NEO, or whether one focuses purely on the operating environment during the evacuation by military personnel and within the localised area where the evacuation is taking place. For this study, the latter option was chosen, as it provides a more accurate reflection of the level of risk to British forces during the operation.

In order to prevent sampling bias, case studies were conducted on the entire population of British NEOs within the 1990-2010 timeframe, with the exception of NEOs in response to disasters which were unrelated to conflict/war, which were excluded from this study. The operations researched were: BOTTLENECK (Yemen, 1994); HELVIN (Albania, 1997); HARGRAVE (Eritrea, 1998); SPARTIC (Sierra Leone, 1998); PALLISER (Sierra Leone, 2000); PHILLIS (Ivory Coast, 2004); and Highbrow (Lebanon, 2006). It should be noted that stand-by deployments for potential NEOs such as KINGFISHER (a deployment to Congo-Brazzaville in anticipation of an evacuation from Zaire in 1997), which was the British equivalent of the US operation GUARDIAN RETRIEVAL and the

³ Nominal UK GDP in 2009 was \$2173 billion, whereas nominal UK GNI (using the Atlas method) was \$2558 billion. Figures taken from: The World Bank (2011), *GDP (current US\$)* [<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD>]; The World Bank (2011) *GNI Atlas method (current US\$)* [<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.ATLS.CD>]

⁴ Joint Doctrine and Concept Centre (2000), *Non-combatant Evacuation Operations: Joint Warfare Publication 3-51* (Shrivenham: Ministry of Defence) [http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/95CD1C65-5C59-4F25-A37B-615ED5A43AD0/0/jwp3_51.pdf]

French operation PÉLICAN I, have not been included, as there was no evacuation by military forces – military forces were merely deployed as a precaution in case an evacuation was required. For the sake of summarising the conclusions of the research, these operations have been grouped under three headings, these being Straightforward Operations, Mediterranean Operations and Challenging Operations. It is acknowledged that two of these headings are based on the difficulty of the operation, whereas the remaining heading is based on geography. Nevertheless, they still provide a useful means of summarising the project’s insights during this phase of the research.

BOTTLENECK, SPARTIC and HARGRAVE were grouped as Straightforward Operations. All these deployments were small, light and swift, consisting of one or two C-130 Hercules with a small security detail, which flew into the relevant airport, picked up the evacuees and departed. For all three operations there was no resistance to the NEO, and in the localised area where the NEO was taking place, there was no direct threat to evacuees or British military personnel. It is important to note that the absence of a threat was either due to the evacuation of citizens taking place before rebel forces closed on their location, or was due to negotiated ceasefires which temporarily removed the threat.

HELVIN and HIGHBROW were grouped together as Mediterranean Operations. In both operations there was severe domestic criticism of the British Prime Minister due to the perception that Britain was reacting less quickly to the crises than other countries. Despite the general climate of insecurity and potential threat, in the localised area of the evacuations no British evacuees or military personnel were attacked. As such, the environment was deemed to be uncertain.

PALLISER and PHILLIS were grouped together under the heading Challenging Operations. PALLISER is the only NEO in which a fire-fight occurred; a British Parachute Regiment Reconnaissance Platoon and Nigerian UN forces holding the main access route to Sierra Leone’s Lungi Airport were attacked by rebel forces, resulting in four confirmed rebel dead, no British casualties and the award of one Military Cross (MC). However, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Robin Cook, stated at the outset that PALLISER had a dual mission and holding Lungi Airport had two purposes; one was to enable the non-combatant evacuation to take place, the other was to provide an airhead to allow the continued build up of UN forces, which at the time were heavily engaged fighting rebel forces. He also stated in Parliament on the same day that British forces secured Lungi Airport, that:

“I have also spoken to Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General for the United Nations, and offered further logistical support, such as vehicles, for the UN force... I want to make it clear to the House and to the people of Sierra Leone that Britain will not abandon its commitment to Sierra Leone. Britain has done more than any other country outside of the region to restore legitimate government in Sierra Leone. We are the largest national donor to the peace process; we hosted the international donors conference earlier this year; and we are in the lead in training the new army for the Government of Sierra Leone.”⁵

This clearly goes far beyond the remit for a standard evacuation operation. Furthermore, the fire-fight occurred eight days after British forces had secured Lungi Airport – by this time, the vast majority of evacuees had already left the country. The other notable incident regarding a person eligible for evacuation was the capture of Alan Smith who ignored FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) travel advice to deliver computers to an educational project in territory recently overrun by rebel

⁵ Cook, Robin (8 May), *Commons Debate, Sierra Leone*, Colum 518-519 (London: Hansard) [<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmhansrd/vo000508/debtext/00508-11.htm>]

forces. He was captured and released after the termination of PALLISER. However, neither of these incidents indicates that the situation had degenerated into a hostile environment, in which the host nation civil and military authorities had lost control or ceased to function altogether, and the lives of evacuees were increasingly threatened. Consequentially, the environment was assessed to be uncertain.

During PHILLIS, the environment for the French was hostile, but for British civilians and soldiers the environment was uncertain once it had been made clear to the perpetrators of the violence that they were not French.

As such, none of the NEOs were conducted in a hostile environment, and were split roughly 50/50 between uncertain and permissive environments. As such, three historical precedents (BOTTLENECK, HARGRAVE, SPARTIC) exist for NEOs consisting of simply flying into the host nation and collecting evacuees from an airport in an environment which is permissive either because of negotiations and cease-fires, or because hostile forces are still some distance from the evacuees and the evacuation zone. In three other cases (HELVIN, PHILLIS, Highbrow), despite there being a general climate of insecurity and threat in the host nation, British forces and persons eligible for evacuation by the UK were not targeted by participants in the conflict, primarily because the participants in the conflict were focused on fighting their immediate enemies. Under these circumstances, the British NEO was a sideshow to the main conflict in the host nation and received relatively little attention from combatants. In the one case where British forces were targeted by combatants, during PALLISER, it is likely that this was a result of the UK holding open an airhead for one of the sides in the conflict, and not due to the evacuation of eligible persons (EPs, formerly known as entitled persons). Furthermore, the commander of British forces in Sierra Leone, Brigadier David Richards, stated on Sierra Leone's Radio Democracy FM, five days before the fire-fight between British and rebel forces, that "our job now in the short term, using the new SLA (Sierra Leonean Army), is to take the battle forward" and that the pro-government alliance should "do whatever is necessary, increasingly into the interior".⁶ On the same day as this radio broadcast the BBC reported that British forces were engaging in joint patrols and manning checkpoints with UN forces and the Sierra Leonean military in the capital's suburbs. As such, British forces had chosen sides in a foreigner's civil war, which is far beyond the standard remit for a NEO, and as such it should not be surprising that British forces were attacked while they were holding a strategically important road-junction alongside UN forces, as occurred during the battle of Lungi Loi.

Expansion of the Project

However, there are distinct weaknesses in basing conclusions on only seven case studies which themselves focused purely on the level of permissiveness in the operating environment. Furthermore, the role of Defence is not only to prepare for the most likely contingencies, but is also to act as insurance against the most dangerous of circumstances that threaten British citizens. It had been observed that French and American NEOs have often been far more challenging than British NEOs, and could give insights into the nature of challenging NEOs. The project was therefore expanded to include French and American operations, as well as British ones, looking specifically at NEOs that dealt with challenging circumstances and were not straightforward. Once again, NEOs due to disasters unrelated to conflict/war were not researched.

The focus for the new case studies was on:

⁶ Sierra Leone Web (2000), *Sierra Leone News*, 12 May [<http://www.sierra-leone.org/Archives/slnews0500.html>]

- The types of forces committed and whether the deployment was swift and light or slow and heavy;
- Whether these forces had any observable deterrent effect;
- The number of engagements and fatalities;
- Whether “mission creep” occurred; and
- The timeline of the degenerating security situation.

As well as looking at NEOs from 1990-2010, three exceptionally challenging NEOs from the 1970s were also included, as these case studies could potentially give the best insights into how to conduct a NEO from a country where forces exist that have displayed an active interest in killing potential evacuees or military personnel from the country conducting the evacuation.

The US case studies researched were: EAGLE PULL (Cambodia, 1975); FREQUENT WIND (Vietnam, 1975); SHARP EDGE (Liberia, 1990-91); EASTERN EXIT (Somalia, 1991); ASSURED RESPONSE (Liberia, 1996); SILVER WAKE (Albania, 1997); NOBLE OBELISK (Sierra Leone, 1997); and the NEO from Lebanon in 2006.

French case studies researched were: LEOPARD (Zaire, 1978); REQUIN (Gabon, 1990); the non-combatant evacuation phase of NOROIT (Rwanda, 1990); VERDIER (Togo, 1991-92); VOLCAN (Rwanda, 1993); AMARYLLIS (Rwanda, 1994); AZALÉE (Comoros, 1995); ALAMANDIN I and II (Central African Republic, 1996); PÉLICAN I, II and III (Congo-Brazzaville, 1997); MALACHITE (Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1998); the non-combatant evacuation phase of IROKO (Guinea-Bissau, 1998); KHAYA (Ivory Coast, 1999); PROVIDENCE (Liberia, 2003) and the non-combatant evacuation phase of LICORNE (Ivory Coast, 2004).

It should be noted that the French case studies focus heavily on NEOs during the 1990s. This is because, with the exception of the highly publicised NEO from the Ivory Coast in 2004, it was not possible to construct case studies on French NEOs after 2003 due to a scarcity of information on these operations. This is mainly because official sources from the French Ministry of Defence could not be found for operations between 2003 and 2010.

It should also be noted that it was realised after the case studies were completed that no evacuations occurred during PÉLICAN I, PÉLICAN III, VERDIER and AZALÉE. PÉLICAN I was merely a stand-by deployment, with forces deployed to Congo-Brazzaville in case a NEO was required from Zaire. A NEO was not required in this case since the Zairian government and military collapsed prior to the peaceful entry of well disciplined rebel forces into the Zairian capital, Kinshasa. PÉLICAN III occurred shortly after the NEO PÉLICAN II, and consisted of a military withdrawal from Congo-Brazzaville. VERDIER and AZALÉE are both interesting since forces were initially deployed to protect French citizens and, if necessary, conduct non-combatant evacuation operations. However, once forces were deployed, the French opted to protect their civilians by deterring/coercing rebels (as occurred during VERDIER), or by engaging rebel forces, destroying their centre of gravity and breaking their will to continue fighting (which occurred during AZALÉE). As such, all four of these cases were discounted from further analysis.

It is also worth noting that during ALAMANDIN I only about 20 French civilians were evacuated from one part of the country to a safe area within the same country (this being the French embassy);

the rest of the foreign nationals in the Central African Republic capital of Bangui, who numbered over 3000, were not evacuated, but were protected by the highly visible employment of light armoured vehicles, helicopters and Mirage fast jets, with continuous patrols and conspicuous over-flights. However, it should be noted that although these forces forestalled the need to conduct a large scale evacuation, the effect was only temporary, as ALAMANDIN II occurred later in the same year, with approximately 4000 persons evacuated to Libreville (in Gabon) and N'Djamena (in Chad).

The Belgian operation RED BEAN was also studied, as it occurred in tandem with the French operation LEOPARD, with the French liberating Kolwezi and the Belgians securing an airstrip for the evacuation of European civilians.

The British operations PALLISER, PHILLIS and Highbrow were also researched in more depth.

All case studies, a summary of French NEO doctrine and a full bibliography of sources are available on request. However, given that they total 142 pages, they have not been included here for obvious reasons.

Speed, Logistics and Permissiveness

The primary overriding characteristic of NEOs is that they have a short deployment time with the evacuation usually commencing within days of the request for the NEO being made. Typically, the evacuation will start within 2-5 days of the request for the NEO being made, and with the exception of SHARP EDGE, evacuations for all the NEOs researched started within two weeks of the request for the evacuation being made. Above all else, it should be remembered that NEOs are swift, since all their other characteristics flow from the necessity to undertake this type of operation quickly. However, once a force has been deployed, there have been cases of mission creep occurring as the forces deployed to conduct the evacuation attempt to stabilise the host nation, or stand-by in the host nation to evacuate embassy staff, as occurred during IROKO.

The main challenge for any NEO is logistical, due to the very short timeframes in which forces must be deployed in order to maximise the chances of success – that is, to maximise the chances of survival of persons eligible for evacuation, and, in the worst case scenarios, to minimise civilian fatalities. This issue is best illustrated by LEOPARD, the French NEO from the Zairian town of Kolwezi in 1978. For this operation, French forces used US transport aircraft to transit to Zaire, and Zairian transport aircraft for the parachute drop near Kolwezi, as this was the only way they could deploy their forces within the required timeframe. Poor logistics led to French fast jets running out of ammunition after they had provided close-air support to Zairian troops during an unsuccessful attempt to retake Kolwezi from rebel forces. This led to 600 legionnaires, who para-dropped (using unfamiliar American parachutes) near the town without their heavy equipment, assaulting approximately 500 men and several Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) in an urban environment, without close air support, in order to rescue over 2000 European hostages.

It is important to note that, despite the risks facing French forces, they were still deployed into a hostile environment in order to rescue European civilians. At the time, European hostages were already being massacred in the town of Kolwezi by rebel forces, and the rescue attempt was made with whatever forces could be brought to bear at very short notice. This is a key difference between a NEO and other operations, such as the invasion or liberation of a country. For an invasion, such as the invasion of Iraq in 2003 or the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, there was time to deploy extensive forces that generated an overwhelming force against the Iraqi military. Detailed deception plans were formulated and implemented, campaign modelling had been conducted and historical analysis had

been used to estimate British casualties. In short, time had been used to eliminate as many potential risks as possible. However, it is often the case with NEOs that there is insufficient time to deploy overwhelming force, and even if such forces are available, as in the case of SILVER WAKE and ALMANDIN II, using such force would be counterproductive. It should be noted that light ground forces were deployed into an environment known to be hostile during AMARYLLIS, FREQUENT WIND and RED BEAN (the Belgium operation that occurred in tandem with LEOPARD). Furthermore, light ground forces were deployed into an uncertain environment, characterised by a general climate of insecurity and potential threat, for ALMANDIN I, Highbrow, PALLISER, IROKO, MALACHITE, SILVER WAKE, NOROIT, VOLCAN, EASTERN EXIT, REQUIN and NOBLE OBELISK.

Forces Deployed

An important aspect of defence planning is to evaluate the relative utility of different types of equipment and different platforms for different types of operations. Given that NEOs are frequent and non-discretionary, it is important to analyse the types of forces deployed for these operations.

For NEOs, the emphasis regarding deployed forces is very much on quality rather than quantity; as such, NEOs are usually conducted using Special Forces and elite light forces such as paratroopers, marines or Foreign Legion, although there are cases of other, non-elite troops being used when they were already stationed in the host nation, or happened to be the unit maintained at a high level of readiness in order to react rapidly to a crisis overseas. The emphasis on quality rather than quantity is likely to be the driver behind the French practice of maintaining Special Forces whose primary role is to conduct NEOs, and specialist NEO logistics personnel. Commonly, the Order of Battle (ORBAT) for NEOs will also include medium or large transport helicopters⁷ and armed or attack helicopters.⁸ Depending on the nature of the evacuation, the ORBAT will either include transport aircraft⁹ or it will include one or more naval helicopter platforms.¹⁰

One of the interesting aspects of the use of helicopters is that there are historical precedents for helicopter self-deployment from the UK and France for NEOs. During PALLISER and Highbrow British helicopters self-deployed into theatre from the UK mainland; for PALLISER, self-deployment was via Gibraltar, the Canary Islands, Mauritania and Senegal, with British Chinooks operating in Sierra Leone five days after the renewed Revolutionary United Front (RUF) offensive and the emergency United Nations Security Council (UNSC) meeting on Sierra Leone, and four days after the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) deployed an Operational Reconnaissance and Liaison Team (ORLT) to Sierra Leone. Furthermore, French Special Forces helicopters typically self-deploy from France for NEOs in Western or Central Africa. This illustrates the speed of response required for NEOs.

On no occasion was heavy armour deployed for NEOs. The use of armoured vehicles is limited to only five of the case studies, these being ALAMANDIN I, ALMANDIN II, PÉLICAN II, LICORNE

⁷ Such as Chinook, Super Stallion, Puma, Cougar, Merlin and various variants of Sea King (dependent on the nation's helicopter assets).

⁸ Such as armed Pumas or Cobras.

⁹ Such as C-130 Hercules or C-160 Transalls.

¹⁰ Such as Landing Platform Dock (LPD), Landing Platform Helicopter (LPH) or Transport de Chalands de Débarquement (TCD).

and KHAYA, all of which are French operations. The vehicles in question were armoured reconnaissance vehicles with 90-105mm guns, armoured cars and armoured personnel carriers, with a maximum weight of 15 tons. In all five cases, armoured vehicles were already in the host nation before the evolution of the crisis necessitating the NEO, either because they were deployed on other missions in the country, such as Peacekeeping, or because the host nations contain permanent French bases. In two cases (ALMANDIN I and II) armoured forces were also deployed into the host nation for the NEO to bolster the armoured forces already present in the country.

Regarding armoured units, SILVER WAKE is of particular interest. Although the US are likely to have had armoured units available within their Amphibious Ready Group (ARG), as part of the force of 2,200 marines off the coast of Albania, they only deployed 170 marines, 11 transport helicopters and an unspecified number of Cobra attack helicopters. After the Cobras received fire, it was debated whether a heavier footprint was required. This option was rejected in favour of rerouting helicopter flight paths.

Fast jets were used during four of the NEOs researched, these being SILVER WAKE, FREQUENT WIND, LICORNE, the US NEO during the Israeli-Lebanon War of 2006 and PALLISER. During SILVER WAKE, US fast jets escorted Serb jets out of the zone within which the NEO was being conducted. During FREQUENT WIND, according to CIA analyst Frank Snepp, US fast jets laid down suppressing fire against advancing communist forces on the outskirts of Saigon during the NEO.¹¹ During PALLISER Harriers attempted to generate a deterrent effect, but played no role in the battle of Lungi Loi between rebel forces and British soldiers. Curiously, during the NEO phase of LICORNE, although fast jets were in the host nation, it does not appear that they played an active role in the NEO. Similarly, during ALMANDIN II, although fast jets were present in the host nation, and seemed to have had a deterrent effect on mutineers during ALMANDIN I, the French chose not to use their fast jets during the NEO as they believed it would send the wrong signal, namely, that they supported the host nation government, from whom the French were trying to distance themselves.

In several case studies the importance of ISTAR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance) assets and intelligence has been highlighted, but it has not been possible to gain information across all the case studies on ISTAR assets and the role of intelligence.

Forward Deployment of Forces

It is difficult to accurately predict where NEOs will be required and with what warning. The reasons that NEOs are difficult to predict are thus: in some cases, the security situation rapidly deteriorates over a couple of days due to, for example, mutiny, coups, assassination or ceasefire violations, whereas in other situations the security situation degenerates slowly due to, for example, government forces slowly giving way before a rebel advance towards the nation's capital. Furthermore, previous historical analysis by Dstl on lead-in times and conflict prediction indicates that attempts to predict conflict, including conflicts that lead to evacuations, will generate numerous false positives, as well as failing to predict some conflicts that do occur. This conclusion is supported by analysis of UK NEO deployments since World War II, since the numbers of NEOs where evacuations were conducted is roughly equal to the number of stand-by contingency deployments in case a NEO is required, but for which no evacuation by military personnel takes place. This issue has frequently been mitigated through the forward deployment of forces, which is often essential for deploying forces into the host

¹¹ Appy, Christian (2003), *Vietnam: The Definitive Oral History, Told from All Sides*, p.503, quoting CIA analyst Frank Snepp (Beccles: Ebury Press)

nation within the required timescale. The most common ways for forward deploying forces which are used in NEOs are: overseas basing (both permanent and semi-permanent); training and exercises near potentially unstable countries; regional naval patrols; and deployments which stand off the coast of potentially unstable countries.

It should be noted that in none of the case studies analysed did maritime and amphibious forces depart from their homeland after the request for the NEO was made. The main drawback of utilising maritime and amphibious forces is their speed of travel and hence they must generally be forward deployed, whether fortuitously or deliberately, in order to reach the host nation in a timely manner. Such forward deployment will often pin down substantial forces, especially if roulement is required. One example of such a forward deployment is Operation CORYMBE off the West African coast, which the French have been conducting since 1990. The primary purpose of the operation is to conduct NEOs as and when required. Since 1990, this standing presence has been called upon to conduct three NEOs, at least one of which was conducted in conjunction with other French forces based in Africa, and Special Forces deployed from France.

Casualties amongst forces conducting NEOs

Estimating casualties is an important aspect of military planning. As such, it is worth noting that the majority of NEOs are conducted without casualties being taken by the forces conducting the NEO. No casualties were sustained during: EAGLE PULL, RED BEAN, REQUIN, NOROIT, EASTERN EXIT, VOLCAN, BOTTLENECK, SHARP EDGE, AMARYLLIS, ASSURED RESPONSE, ALMANDIN I, SILVER WAKE, HELVIN, NOBLE OBELISK, HARGRAVE, SPARTIC, MALACHITE, IROKO, KHAYA, PALLISER, PROVIDENCE, the NEO phase of operation LICORNE, PHILLIS, the US NEO during the Israeli-Lebanon War of 2006 and HIGHBROW.

However, fatalities were sustained in four of the NEOs researched, all in different types of circumstances. Looking at these operations should give a sense of the types of potential threat during NEOs.

During ALMANDIN II, French casualties were 2 killed and 15 with light injuries. Casualties were sustained when mutineers concealed in a mob of demonstrators targeted a small, isolated group of French soldiers.

During PÉLICAN II, French forces were ambushed in an urban area close to an evacuee pick-up point. Their losses were: 1 killed, 5 seriously wounded and 4 lightly wounded. This is probably the reason why French NEO doctrine emphasises the importance of armoured personnel carriers (APCs). Fortuitously for the French, APCs were still at the airport, as they had not yet been transported out of the country after the stand-by deployment of PÉLICAN I. Once these vehicles were retrieved from the airport, French forces were able to traverse the urban environment while under small arms fire and successfully collected all evacuees.

During FREQUENT WIND, two helicopter crews were lost at sea, probably due to the large volume of enemy ground fire directed at US helicopters during this operation. Two marines were also killed when the Defence Attaché compound (one of two evacuation points) was shelled.

The most severe case of casualties occurred during LEOPARD. The 2nd REP (Foreign Parachute Regiment), of which 600 legionnaires deployed, sustained 5 killed and 20 wounded while retaking a rebel held town containing numerous persons eligible for evacuation who were being held hostage. The Foreign Legion claimed in 8 days of operation to have killed around 250 rebels, captured another

163 and seized large quantities of military equipment. 230 European civilians and 500 Zairian civilians were also killed by rebels before or during the operation, although over 2000 Europeans were rescued and evacuated.

Mission Creep

Mission creep occurs when forces deploy for one type of mission which is later expanded into a far more costly and lengthy operation. As such, it is a concern for military planners.

Whether or not mission creep occurs seems to depend on how involved the state conducting the NEO is in the politics of the situation in the host nation. Specifically, if substantial political capital has been invested in the host nation, mission creep is more likely than in situations in which no political capital has been invested. However, it should be noted that sometimes it looks like mission creep is occurring when in fact it is not. This is due to a mission having always been dual or multi-purpose; or, as in the case of KHAYA, the forces engaging in enduring operations in the country had a broad mandate to begin with and were subsequently tasked with conducting a NEO. It should be noted, however, that even when there is no mission creep, forces may be required to stay in theatre for longer than anticipated due to embassy staff remaining in the host nation after other persons entitled to evacuation have been evacuated (as occurred during IROKO).

It should be noted that it is often difficult to establish whether mission creep has occurred, as it is dependent on deviations from the initial goals and objectives of the mission. In particular, with French operations, it is difficult to determine whether the sources used accurately captured the initial mission statement of the operations as opposed to the mission objectives as they appeared in hindsight.¹²

Nevertheless, it appears that mission creep did not occur during: EAGLE PULL, FREQUENT WIND, REQUIN, SHARP EDGE, EASTERN EXIT, VOLCAN, AMARYLLIS, ASSURED RESPONSE, BOTTLENECK, SILVER WAKE, HELVIN, NOBLE OBELISK, HARGRAVE, MALACHITE, SPARTIC, KHAYA, PROVIDENCE, LICORNE, PHILLIS, the US NEO from Lebanon in 2006 and Highbrow. This contrasts with the following NEOs where it appears that mission creep occurred: LEOPARD and its sister operation RED BEAN, NOIROT, ALMANDIN I, ALMANDIN II, PÉLICAN II, IROKO, and PALLISER. As such, in the case studies analysed, it seems that mission creep has only occurred in a minority of NEOs. It appears to have been more common with French operations than British operations, and did not occur in any of the US NEOs analysed. It should be noted that one of the operations when mission creep occurred is PALLISER, and the hypothesis can be proposed that the mission creep which occurred during PALLISER has skewed British perception of NEOs away from the historical record.

Deterrent Effect

Deterrence is always a difficult topic to study due to the impossibility of proving a counter-factual. When the 30 case studies are viewed as one data set, there is insufficient information to prove whether or not certain military platforms consistently create a deterrent effect, particularly when considering that an absence of violence does not prove deterrence. However, there is anecdotal evidence of light armoured vehicles, armed helicopters and attack helicopters having a deterrent or coercive effect during several operations. In particular, it seems that during ALMANDIN I the conspicuous and

¹² The main source for French operations was the *Répertoire Typologique Des Opérations: Tome 2; Afrique* by the DREX (Division Recherche et Retour d'Expérience) of the CDEF (Centre de Doctrine d'Emploi des Forces), large sections of which were translated by Dstl (Defence Science and Technology Laboratory) analysts.

highly visible employment of light armoured vehicles, helicopters and Mirage fast jets coerced mutineers into submission (or, depending on the definition used, deterred mutineers from continuing their aggression).

Motivation to attack or ignore NEO forces

Often, forces conducting NEOs are not attacked simply because it is not in anyone's interests to attack them. Even in cases like ARMARYLLIS and FREQUENT WIND, enemy forces, despite a history of attacking French or American forces, passed up the opportunity to interfere with the final stages of the NEOs. The reason for this in ARMARYLLIS is uncertain. During FREQUENT WIND, CIA agents inside the Communist command revealed that a scheduled artillery bombardment on the US Embassy which would have coincided with the evacuation was cancelled after the communists realised that all the Americans were leaving.¹³ In many cases, such as Highbrow, forces in the host nation are focused on fighting a war, and are relatively uninterested in evacuations. On several occasions, safe conduct for NEOs was achieved through high level diplomatic negotiations with rebel forces and/or one or more nation states. This seems to be one of the reasons why NEOs are often commanded by a higher level officer than the forces deployed would usually warrant.

On occasions when negotiations are not possible, such as during EAGLE PULL, or when high level cease-fire agreements are ignored by the troops on the battlefield, as occurred during VOLCAN, the ability to rapidly infiltrate forces either through or over hostile territory seems to be key to ensuring relatively light forces can successfully conduct a NEO. As such, these forces rely on speed, good intelligence and good situational awareness rather than a preponderance of force.

The most common reason why a nation's forces are attacked during a NEO is because those forces are perceived to be affecting the conflict in the host nation. Activities that seem to have provoked attacks in the past include: supporting UN Peacekeepers; supporting the host nation's government; and destroying units loyal to the host nation's government.

Op DEFERENCE, British NEO from Libya

After all other aspects of the project had been completed, events during the "Arab Spring" led to Operation DEFERENCE, the British NEO from Libya in 2011. This presented the opportunity to compare the historical record to a contemporary operation. As is to be expected, there were some unique and unusual aspects to Op DEFERENCE, although precedents for many aspects of DEFERENCE can be found in the historical record.

Highbrow and Helvin provide precedents for the British Prime Minister being heavily criticised in domestic media and Parliament during the lead-up to the NEO. In common with many NEOs, harassing fire was received by the forces conducting DEFERENCE, there were no casualties, and Special Forces featured heavily. Overall, the types and quantities of forces deployed for DEFERENCE is similar to those deployed in the historical record, as was the timeline during and leading up to the NEO. Eastern Exit provides historical precedent for evacuation from a country where active Surface-to-Air Missile systems could, hypothetically, be a threat. IROKO, Highbrow and the US NEO from Lebanon provide historical precedents for the use of seaports. Volcan provides a precedent for the retrieval of evacuees from a remote area, although in Volcan a land convoy was used, as opposed to transport aircraft. And Highbrow and the US NEO from Lebanon

¹³ Appy, Christian (2003) *Vietnam: The Definitive Oral History, Told from All Sides*, p.497 and p.503, quoting CIA analyst Frank Snepp (Beccles: Ebury Press)

provide precedents for negotiations with parties other than the host nation in order to conduct the NEO.

One unusual aspect of DEFERENCE was that the main threat to a number of persons eligible for evacuation was starvation and dehydration. Although oil company evacuation plans had successfully evacuated numerous oil workers, there were still British oil workers in the desert who had been abandoned by their security guards, whose vehicles had been stolen, and who had taken in non-British oil workers whose compound had been ransacked, placing an increased strain on limited supplies. Another unusual aspect was that the operating environment for uniformed military personnel conducting the NEO, once they had been properly identified, was more permissive in rebel held areas than government held areas.

Conclusions

Speed of response is key to the successful execution of a NEO given that the deployment of forces for NEOs is rapid, usually between 2-5 days of the request for the NEO being made. NEOs are typically conducted by light troops and helicopters, without the presence of armoured vehicles, artillery or fast jets. Maritime forces must be forward deployed if they are to respond in a timely fashion to requests for a NEO to be conducted; in none of the case studies analysed did maritime forces depart from their homeland after the request for the NEO was made.

Although there are high profile cases where mission creep affected NEOs, the majority of NEOs are conducted without mission creep occurring. It is possible that light armour and armed or attack helicopters had a deterrent effect during NEOs in which they were deployed, but given the nature of deterrence, this is impossible to prove with the information currently available. It is also noteworthy that NEOs are usually conducted without any casualties being sustained by the forces conducting the NEO.

Finally, overseas bases seem to be important in NEOs. Given that the UK has bases in Gibraltar, Cyprus, Oman, Kenya and Sierra Leone, as well as in other places, it might be worthwhile investigating whether better use could be made of these bases to support NEOs in the future.