



THE EVACUATION OF CANADIANS FROM LEBANON

by

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With regard to the situation in Lebanon, it should be understood by all that it is the Government of Canada that has the fundamental obligation to ensure the safety and well being of Canadian citizens.

For those citizens abroad, this responsibility is assumed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). It is the Canadian diplomatic missions abroad who are responsible for planning for the evacuation of Canadians in their respective areas of responsibilities.

Due to the uncertainties under which evacuations are normally conducted the Canadian mission may require assistance from the CF to conduct an evacuation. This "military assisted" type of operation is termed a Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO).

It is my understanding that in most instances the CF contribution would normally be in the form of an appropriately tailored task force to provide security so the DFAIT conducted evacuation can proceed at minimum risk to the evacuees. In extreme circumstances the CF may have to accept full responsibility for the evacuation. Non-combatant evacuations may also be conducted with ad-hoc coalitions.

The prevailing CF doctrine for NEO is well established and mirrors that of NATO, the US, UK and our other major allies. As we all know, though, the CF currently does not possess the capability to field, a NEO capable Standing Contingency Task Force (SCTF) similar to

that of all routinely deployed USMC MEU (Marine Expeditionary Units). So, as I see it, until the day comes when the CF has acquired the necessary means to embark and deploy a SCTF with an integral NEO capability it would appear to have no other option but to rely on its current NEO doctrine calling for the fielding of an ad hoc task force. such as Joint Task Force Lebanon which is now in the region assisting Canadian Embassy staff to ensure Canadians are evacuated.

A DND/CF July 20 news release states that "this 100-person contingent is composed of a headquarters element, telecommunications specialists, a medical section, naval liaison officers, security and movement control personnel and a portion of the contingent will remain in Larnaca while others will proceed to Beirut to support DFAIT in the departure of Canadian citizens."

The current DFAIT organized operation to transfer Canadians from Lebanon to Cyprus and beyond is not, as far as I am aware, a declared CF NEO.

With respect to Canada's relationships with its allies all Canadians should also know that:

- British representatives have the authority to co-operate with Canadian Missions. Where there are no resident Canadian Missions the British are prepared to accept, by arrangement with the accredited Mission, the inclusion of Canadians in their contingency plans on a space available basis;
- By virtue of a "Memorandum of Understanding Between

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Canadian and United States Authorities Concerning Cooperation on Evacuation Planning", American missions have standing instructions to cooperate with Canadian Missions on contingency planning and to accept Canadians for evacuation on a space-available basis; and

- Canada and Australia have signed a consular services-sharing agreement for specific locations and Canadian Missions co-operate with Australian authorities in the area of contingency planning.

This is what the American Forces Press Service's reporter, Jim Garamone, had to say today about the ongoing American response in Lebanon:

"Evacuating thousands of Americans from Lebanon is an extremely complicated undertaking, but one that servicemembers train to accomplish, Defense Department officials said here today.

American servicemembers have been involved in getting U.S. citizens out of danger since the founding of the republic. Before the current non-combatant evacuation order - or NEO - for Lebanon, U.S. servicemembers helped evacuate people from Liberia in 1993, Tanzania and Kenya in 1998, Indonesia after the tsunami in 2005, Liberia again in 2004, Panama in 1989 and Saigon in 1975.

Each of these NEO evacuations had different causes and different players. All have one thing in common, said Marine Capt. Jay Delarosa: uncertainty.

The captain, who is a spokesman for the Corps, said there are always more questions than answers when faced with the evacuation mission. "You don't know how many people you are going to

evacuate, or what kind of problems you are going to encounter," he said during an interview with American Forces Press Service. "You are always working with people you have not worked with before. You need to be flexible so you can best fit into the plan."

A NEO evacuation is always in support of the State Department. The U.S. ambassador is the senior authority for the evacuation, and embassy personnel are responsible for the plan and handle contacts with American citizens to be evacuated.

Delarosa once deployed with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit. He said every MEU does six months of work-ups - what he called "the pre-deployment training to prepare for the unexpected" -- before it deploys. One work-up covers noncombatant evacuations.

The Marines work hand-in-hand with the Navy, and the Marines track developments on developments that might affect them, Delarosa said. He said that when called on, the sailors and Marines "are extremely excited." "You always want to do your part, whether it's in combat or for a humanitarian mission," he said."

In my opinion, our government has done what is expected of it. Moreover, I feel that Prime Minister Harper in particular has acquitted himself exceptionally well and demonstrated exemplary leadership qualities of the very highest order.

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