The FA and New Mission-Essential Tasks

by Lieutenant Colonel John H. Northrop

During many months, the 25th Infantry Division (Light) refined noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO) procedures, developed a NEO Mission Training Plan (MTP), tested it in several exercises and sent personnel to observe operations in an actual NEO mission. The division's 3d Battalion, 7th Field Artillery (3-7 FA) took the lead in setting up the Evacuation Control Center (ECC), the subject of this article.

Neither Army doctrine nor other standing operating procedures have the details of "How To" outlined in this article. This information is important for all branches of the Army, including Field Artillery, as our Army defines its missions in the face of the variety of contingency operations possible to counter regional threats. Units, heavy or light, well could be called upon to conduct NEO.

NEO has become one of the mission-essential tasks for the 25th Infantry Division (Light), Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. It applies to a variety of contingencies, ranging from disaster relief to escalation of conflict resulting in a declaration of war. Regardless of the political environment, the determining factor for declaring a NEO is always the same: the security and welfare of US citizens are in harm's way, and to ensure their safety, we must evacuate them.

Major General Fred A. Gorden, Commander of the 25th Division, designated his 3d Brigade as the Center for Excellence for NEO. For this reason, Colonel Robert M. Hensler, the Bronco Brigade Commander, began to include a NEO phase routinely as a portion of his brigade's field exercises. From these experiences, the Bronco Brigade then developed an outstanding MTP for NEO (authored by Major—now Lieutenant Colonel—Michael Smith, brigade S3 at the time).

The division's exercise planning cell then orchestrated two brigade-sized deployments where the focus was on conducting NEO. Junior ROTC cadets or soldiers role-played the parts of former hostages, wounded persons, persons of dubious identities, pregnant women, small children, older people, even entire families, and others.

After refining our MTP last spring, the brigade participated in "Operation Pacific Rescue," one of the brigade-sized emergency deployment readiness exercises in which we evacuated almost 250 people. From the exercises and our sending observers to an actual NEO in the Philippine disaster relief, we refined the MTP further, including the tasks for setting up and operating an ECC.

NEO and the FA

In NEO, there are five phases to the operation. These include the alert, movement to the threat area, evacuation site operations, safe-haven operations and redeployment of US forces. Critical to evacuation site operations is the ECC. The ECC is the command and control center for in-processing and handling evacuees once they've been returned to US control.

The Bronco Brigade's direct support (DS) artillery, 3-7 FA, seemed to be ideally suited for the ECC. This allowed the brigade's headquarters to concentrate on rescue, marshalling and security

Evacuation Control Center Operations

operations and a myriad of other missions given to its subordinate infantry battalions.

We were in favor of running the ECC for a number of reasons. First, it got us involved in the operation. Next, it postured us for our secondary mission as alternate brigade tactical operations center (TOC). Finally, it gave us "a leg up" in the FA planning business should events militarily escalate and the brigade need fire supporters or, more importantly, need to bring in its big guns.

Our experience suggests that a NEO would be initiated under the following circumstances. A serious event occurs in a foreign country where US citizens reside. This event could be caused by a number of factors, including political unrest or natural disaster.

The National Command Authority, in conjunction with the State Department, notifies the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) that a NEO is in order. JCS, because the event is on our side of the world, notifies the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), who then turns to the Tropic Lightning Division. The mission brigade is alerted, and the planning sequence begins.

This article discusses the key issues for ECC operations. Specifically, I discuss the protocols for handling evacuees and concerns about ECC site selection and operations.

Protocols for Evacuees

Problems handling evacuees is one of the most difficult aspects of NEO missions. The 25th Division's NEO handbook describes the following people needing evacuation:

- Those we can order to leave (DoD civilians, military and their dependents).
- Those we may assist (civilian employees of the government residing abroad, private US citizens and their dependents).
- Those personnel specifically authorized by the State Department.
- Others as directed by the chain of command.

Our problem is that for many of the people the ECC handles, we have no means of verifying their identities. However, we do have agencies trained to help us: the State Department, the local government and the advice of our division's Staff Judge Advocate (SJA).

The business of handling evacuees can easily become extremely complicated. This is exacerbated by the seemingly contradictory objectives of maintaining tight security while striving for rapid in-processing.

We established five general rules for handling evacuees (see Figure 1). The rules' bottom line: most of the evacuees are US citizens caught in a situation that calls for our help. These rules form the basis for how we expect soldiers in the ECC to conduct themselves and how we expect them to treat their guests.

1. Protect the Army image. We want the "Grenada rescue image" on the 6:00 p.m. news, for example, the released female student hugging the first US Army Ranger she could grab and saying, "Thank God for the Rangers."
2. Treat each individual with common courtesy and maintain a respect for human dignity and right to some privacy.
3. Protecting evacuees doesn't mean restricting individual freedoms, except when an evacuee's actions are detrimental to or risk harming others.
4. Be sensitive to what you see and hear. You may inadvertently learn intelligence we need.
5. The rule of thumb—welcome them home; treat evacuees like you'd like to be treated.

Figure 1. The Five Rules of Protocol for Handling Evacuees. These rules set the standard for soldiers' actions in dealing with evacuees.

Categories of Evacuees

The State Department guidance listed in the MTP identifies three categories of personnel we may encounter in NEO missions: white-, grey- and black-list personnel. To that we've added a fourth—special handle.

By placing an evacuee or detainee in one of these categories, we established the protocol for how they should be handled upon arrival at the entry control point for the brigade support area (BSA) and ECC.

Special-Handle List—Exceptionally Important or Infamous Persons. These include all VIPs, dignitaries and high-ranking government officials, such as US ambassadors. This category also includes the leaders of "the bad guys." The State Department and local government officials identify them. These special evacuees should be handled with an armed escort—either as a protective or restrictive measure. The State Department gives complete disposition instructions.

White List—Good Guys. These people are already on a State Department list that identifies them as good guys. They, therefore, should be evacuated rapidly to safety.

Generally, the "warden" can identify the good guys. A warden is a known, loyal evacuee who can be trusted to identify other friendlies in a significant cohort. If the warden identifies an evacuee as a white lister, he's "good to go."

The warden acts like a patrol leader during a night passage-of-lines. He can stand at the entry gate and vouch for the other friendlies he knows to expedite their processing during evacuation.

Grey List—Unknown Guys. Another group of evacuees is the grey listers. While they're more than likely good guys, we need to take a little extra time to evaluate them because we're uncertain of either their identities or their eligibility for evacuation. They should be handled under light escort.

This list includes unidentified US personnel (e.g., tourists) and non-US persons potentially eligible for evacuation (e.g., persons requesting political asylum). Each is kept in the holding and interrogation area until the proper authority orders his evacuation.

Black List—Bad Guys. We handle these evacuees with armed escorts and hold them in the confinement area. All in-processing is done in restricted areas where their actions can be carefully monitored. They should be segregated immediately from white- and grey-list folks. In this category, we include enemy detainees (by another name, enemy prisoners of war, or EPWs) and State Department black-list persons.

As a final point, it isn't the job of US forces to change or modify the categorization of evacuees as determined by the State Department. While we may use the

person's conduct as justification for restraint, the final decision as to whom to evacuate rests with the SJA, the State Department or the lawful order of the chain of command.

Evacuee Movement

Figure 2 outlines the stages in an individual's movement through the BSA and ECC in a routine NEO, giving handling guidance by phase of operation. In all of these stages, the responsible forces must balance speedy action, protection of the force, safety of the evacuees (including urgent medical care), timeliness of intelligence, the need for a courteous image of the force or US and the utility of segregating groups. As you look across Figure 2, let's examine some of the salient points for each category.

Special-Handle Evacuees. These personnel are immediately taken to one of two places. If one is a white-list VIP or otherwise known dignitary, he's immediately escorted to the VIP tent. Body guards are assigned to an important evacuee, as necessary—if we fear he could be a target for a terrorist attack. We notify the military chain of command and the State Department liaison personnel of the VIP's status. We may even take him to wherever he needs to go (e.g., the brigade headquarters). We help the VIP in any way we can.

If the special-handle person is on a black list, we detain him in the detention facility until we can hand him over to the proper authorities.

White-List Evacuees. The key at the entry control area is to get the white-list personnel identified and moved to the ECC as fast as possible. We use wardens to identify as many as possible and conduct the minimum amount of in-processing. We quickly identify them and do a cursory search of their belongings, the latter only if we suspect a problem. They only need escorts to show them where to go, help them with their bags and provide personal security for their evacuation.

Once at the entry control point, they receive a quick briefing. In this briefing, they're told that neither they nor their belongings will be searched but that it's illegal to have drugs or other contraband items. They must know that if US forces discover illegal items, for whatever reason, we'll turn the evidence over to US civilian law enforcement authorities. Also, the briefing should remind them their belongings will be subject to search by US customs officials at the point they enter the United States.

They're then given an opportunity to use the amnesty box. There's no heavy drug-dog scene, frisk search, etc. at the amnesty box. The evacuees carry their baggage with them. After their interview by counterintelligence (CI) personnel during in-processing, they're offered a medical checkout and then taken to the comfort area.

Grey-List Evacuees. The next group is more difficult to process. The grey-list people are generally placed in this category, not because they are bad people, but because the authorities can't clear them for evacuation. The sooner we can confirm their identities, the better.

At the holding and interrogation area, they're subject to frisk and metal-detector wand search. Marshalling forces already should have conducted a cursory check of their belongings. They move in a group and have minimum armed escort. They also are treated with respect and dignity.

If possible, they should be evacuated separately from both white- or black-list persons. However, if there's a shortage of transportation assets, we combine them with the white listers.

The hand-over process between the marshalling force and the escorts at the entry control point to the BSA should be a detailed event. In particular, we account for the chain of custody for contraband or other items taken from evacuees we think may be of interest to our CI personnel or interrogators. They're given the same amnesty opportunity as the white-list persons.

Then, they're taken to a detention area and thoroughly searched by military

	Evacuation Assembly Area	Movement to Release Point	Hand-Over to Escort Personnel	Entry Control Point	Evacuation Control Center (ECC)	BSA Confinement Area
Special	Evacuate ASAP Notify Bde/Div State Dept. Guidance	Segregate, if Possible Separate Destination?	Body Guards for VIPs Guards for Bad Guys Escorts for Others	N/A	VIP Quarters, if Possible Special Handling or Interview	Turn Over Host-Nation Bad Guys to Authorities Hold US Bad Guys until Extradition
White	Wardens ID/P of Lines Evacuate ASAP Min. In-process/Inspect Courteous Treatment Courtesy Escort	Min. Escort (Protection) Next in Priority, After VIPs	Escorts at Hand-Over Point Rapidly Taken to ECC	Quick Interview at Entry Point No Searches, Drug Dogs	CI Interview During In-Processing Offer Medical Checkout To Comfort Area ASAP Amnesty Briefing	N/A
Grey	Wand Search Cursory Bag Check Armed Escort for Group Image vs. Protection	Evac Separately, if Possible or Else. . . Combine with White Min. Armed Escort	Detailed Hand-Over Process Hand-Over Chain of Custody and Contraband	Thorough CI Interview Thorough Searches Amnesty Briefing	Not Allowed in Unless Upgraded by State Dept.	Detain in Holding & Interrogation Area
Black	Five Ss Combat Search Armed Escort EPW Procedures	Max. Armed Escort Minimize Contact with White or Grey Evac to BSA Confinement Facility, not ECC	***No Hand-Over***	N/A	N/A	Process in Confinement Facility Segregate by Rank Heavy Interrogation State Dept. Involved

Figure 2. NEO Handling of Personnel. This chart outlines the stages in an evacuee's movement to the BSA and ECC in a routine NEO. Based on the category of each evacuee, the chart shows the general handling guidance at each phase of the operation.

police. Their bags are searched, using dogs. Next, they receive a thorough interrogation from our intelligence soldiers. They're cleared for evacuation only by authorized personnel.

Black-List Detainees. The final category are the black-list evacuees or detainees. They are treated like EPWs. That is, marshalling forces employ the "Five Ss"—search, segregate, silence, speed to the rear and safeguard. We combat search and blindfold them and bind their hands or handcuff them. They're assigned an armed escort and transported cautiously—preferably separate from the white and grey listers. Their belongings are searched, and they're evacuated directly to the confinement facility in the BSA.

Once inside the confinement facility, they become the responsibility of the marshalling force. The black listers inprocess inside and are separated by rank. They're heavily interrogated and their belongings are more thoroughly searched. The State Department helps determine if they're to be turned over to host-nation authorities or US officials.

ECC and BSA Setup and Flow

One of the important missions of the ECC advance party is to select an evacuation site. This may involve a tradeoff between a site that's more defensible (perhaps one more remote and more secure) and a site that has better facilities. A site requiring less security forces may need more extensive horizontal and vertical engineering support while the site with good facilities may require more security forces. Figure 3 outlines several of the more desirable characteristics of a ECC site.

Perhaps the most significant revelation of Operation Pacific Rescue was our realization that the ECC should be close to the BSA. The need for close proximity was driven by three factors. First, we didn't have enough medical people to go around. Second, we were having trouble keeping the intelligence flow linked. And third, we had trouble deconflicting the personnel flow. From these concerns, we developed a blueprint that shows the layout of the BSA and ECC (see Figure 4).

The layout we designed supports the rapid inprocessing of evacuees. We had to take a hard look at how many personnel we needed to man it. Our total commitment was 100-plus people. Moving through the layout in Figure 4 by the circled numbers indicating stations, each station has a specific function.

The ECC site must—

- Be close to an airstrip.
- Be near the main supply route.
- Have good utilities sources (electricity/generators, heat/fuel and water/water trailers).
- Have good communications with the airfield, be within radio range of the embassy and have telephone trunks.
- Have facilities that include, at a minimum, shelter, showers and a detention area.
- Be in an area capable of also supporting the BSA.

Figure 3. ECC Site Selection Criteria. One of the important missions of the ECC advance party is to select an ECC site. The party may have tradeoffs to make by selecting a site that's more defensible but with lesser facilities or a site that has good facilities but needs more security forces.

Station #1 is the Entry Control Point (ECP), the initial screening point for the BSA-ECC complex. Marshalling forces bring all evacuees or detainees to this location. Its mission is to aid in the speedy processing of personnel. Through the use of wardens, State Department personnel and host-nation officials, we can more easily screen out the white-list personnel and more rapidly get them to the ECC for in-processing.

At the ECP, the image is one of a "Gate to Freedom." We don't want military police dogs snarling and security force personnel pointing machineguns at people being strip searched. Those personnel not cleared for the ECC are expeditiously removed to either the

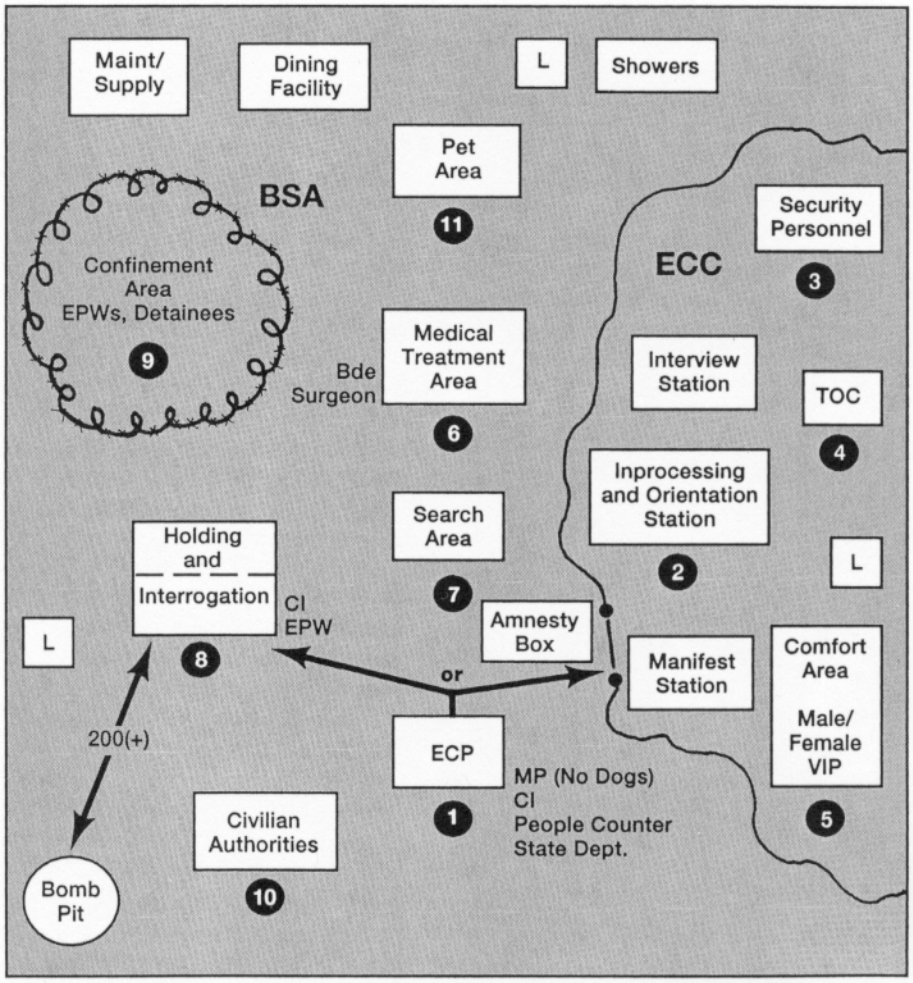


Figure 4. ECC and BSA Lashup. The figure shows a blueprint for laying out the BSA and ECC for NEO. The circled numbers are the stations through which evacuees are processed, depending on if they're special-handle, white, grey or black listers. For example, all white listers go from Station #1 to #2, while black listers go from Station #1 to #9.

Holding and Interrogation Area (#8) or the Confinement Area (#9). It's important to establish an accurate head count of who have been in-processed at the ECP. Medical triage is performed, as necessary. We man this location with sharp soldiers, including a few CI personnel.

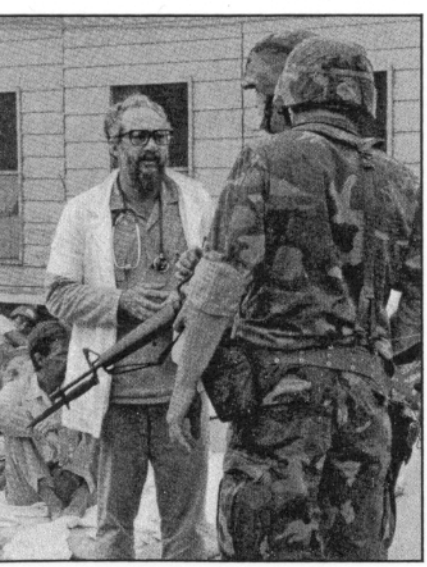
During the Philippine evacuation, a significant number of evacuees drove privately owned vehicles (POVs) to the ECC area. ECC personnel must have a plan to have them removed.

Station #2, the ECC In-processing and Interview Station, is inside the entrance to the ECC. Here evacuees receive an initial orientation and briefing on what's about to happen to them. They receive their amnesty box briefing. We man this station with sharp soldiers and CI personnel.

Our intent is to manifest the evacuees and assign them an escort to take them inside. We used lap-top computers to enter, process and manifest evacuees while they in-process.

Station #3 is the Security Personnel Area where security personnel park their gear. Here's where the reaction force is assembled. These men are "shift" workers, so dark rooms for sleeping is a good idea.

Station #4 is the FA battalion TOC, the command and control node for the ECC and the focal point of intelligence information for the infantry task force. The TOC personnel orchestrate the flow of personnel in the ECC. It's manned by the personnel normally found in an FA TOC (minus a few fire direction center soldiers) with the addition of administration and logistics personnel. Also, the division augmented our TOC with Military Intelligence (MI) assets.



With detainees in the background, a doctor discusses their medical conditions with soldiers guarding the detainees in the evacuation control center.

Station #5 is the Comfort Area. Here's where the evacuees wait for their plane trip home. We try to partition off evacuees into approximately four groups: families, single females, single males and VIPs. There are showers, toilets, cots, blankets, sundry packs, food, water and other items to add to their comfort. Our experience has shown it's important to have an authority figure to act as a chaperon for the area. Additionally, a chaplain and physician's assistant work well here.

Station #6 is the Medical Treatment Area for screening and treatment. Here's where the brigade surgeon is located. The station treats a significant number of people not authorized in the ECC, so it's located outside the boundary of but near the entrance to the ECC.

Station #7 is the Search Area. At this station, military police with wands and sniffer dogs check out gray- and black-list personnel. Everything is thoroughly inspected. Approximately 200 feet away from the search area, the military police identify a bomb pit area.

Station #8 is the Holding and Interrogation Area where black- and grey-list persons, plus other detainees, are interrogated by CI personnel. This area should be enclosed and guarded. Each grey-list person is detained here until his identity can be established.

Station #9 is the Confinement Facility. Here we hold black-list persons until competent authorities come for them (either US or host nation). Additionally, other detainees or EPWs are kept here. This area has security fencing, armed guards and equipment and barriers designed to prevent escape. Additional lighting and communications for the guards may be necessary.

Station #10 is for Civilian Authorities (local). Here they provide interpreters, wardens and other agents who help with the NEO. If possible, units need to coordinate to have Immigration and Naturalization Service support.

And last, ***Station #11***, is the Pet Holding Area. Our experience during the Philippine disaster assistance mission, shows the evacuation of pets is a significant issue.

Conclusion

This article has discussed one of the MTP tasks for conducting NEO missions: setting up and operating an ECC. Our FA battalion is ideally suited for this task.

I've focused on battalion-level missions, but there are many battery missions too. For example, an FA battery could easily help—

- Build the ECC, using some light carpentry skills.
- Provide soldiers for the escort, comfort station, in-processing and TOC missions.
- Perform security force duties.
- Conduct advance party operations.
- Provide marshalling forces ground transport.
- Run the landing zone (LZ).

NEO is an exciting and challenging mission now part of our mission-essential task list (METL). I encourage you to write the 3d Brigade and get a copy of their outstanding effort—the "NEO Mission Training Plan." Write: Commander, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division (Light), Schofield Barracks, Hawaii 96857-6302. In that MTP, you'll see how ECC operations play a small part in a large operation—one we should all be prepared to conduct.

Lieutenant Colonel John H. Northrop commands 3d Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, the direct support artillery of the 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division (Light), Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. His battalion is responsible for setting up and operating the NEO evacuation control center for the brigade. Lieutenant Colonel Northrop's past assignments have included serving as the S3 and Executive Officer for the 3d Battalion, 319th Field Artillery, 82d Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and as Aide de Camp to General Maxwell R. Thurman, Commanding General of the Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Monroe, Virginia. He is scheduled to attend the US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, this summer.

The author gratefully acknowledges Colonel James E. Shane, 25th Division Artillery Commander; Brigadier General George A. Fisher, Jr., the former Assistant Division Commander for Operations; and his S3, Major Joseph P. Nizolak, Jr., for their help in this effort.