Use of an intermediate staging base (ISB) during deployment provides the JTF commander many advantages over deploying directly from home station. The ISB becomes more important as the distance from home base and the likelihood of hostilities increase. The commander can finalize his plans, gather additional intelligence, and conduct rehearsals and briefings in the ISB. Use of an ISB also provides an opportunity for units to redistribute and finalize their loads, and for soldiers to recuperate after the long trip from home station. The commander may choose to locate the reaction force at the ISB and use the ISB as an aircraft staging area. The ISB can also serve as a safehaven if required.

In 1990, during Operation Sharp Edge, the 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) deployed with Amphibious Squadron (Phibron) 4 off the Liberian coast from 3 June to 5 August. While the political situation ashore developed, the advance party finalized preparations, the commander finalized and briefed plans, and the evacuation force honed its skills through repeated rehearsals.

The Department of State is responsible for coordinating with the ISB government. This is true even if the ISB is an established US base in that country. Using the ISB as a staging point for launching forces into another country can pose significant political problems. The commander advises the COM of his requirements for the ISB. The ISB site should meet the following criteria:

• Be capable of handling the aircraft or ships used in the evacuation (airports have adequate runway length and ramp space and ports have adequate harbor depth and berthing space).

• Allow effective communication with JTF and CINC headquarters, the advance party, the ECC, the safehaven, and both the ISB and evacuation embassies.

• Have adequate facilities for billeting, messing, and sanitation requirements of the force (and evacuees if used as the safehaven).

• Be fairly isolated to provide maximum possible OPSEC.

• Have repair and refuel capability for aircraft used in the evacuation.

• Have storage facilities for perishables; petroleum, oils, and lubricants (POL); medical supplies; ammunition; and so forth.

• Be close to major medical facilities if possible.

• Have recreation facilities available for use by ISB and evacuation forces (and evacuees if used as a safehaven).

• Have chaplains and their assistants available.

If any of the above criteria cannot be met, the commander may be able to bring additional assets from home station. If the ISB cannot handle the transport requirements, the commander must consider an alternative means of transportation or inform the Department of State that the site is unsuitable.

The JTF commander deploys the ISB force as soon as possible. The ISB commander should know the size, composition, mode of travel, and itinerary of the evacuation force before deploying. He need not know the details of the evacuation force OPLAN when he deploys, but he must know arrival times, aircraft replenishment requirements, and any other specific combat service support requirements that the JTF commander may levy on him.

The composition of the ISB force depends on what support is required and what is already on site at the ISB. An ISB at an established, modern military base requires substantially less than one at a lesser-developed location. Minimum considerations for building the ISB force are—

• Maintenance and service requirements of aircraft or other modes of transportation to be used.

• Civil affairs and PSYOP.

• Liaison with the embassy and ISB national agencies (police, military, customs).

• Interpreters.

• Upgrade and operation of facilities for transportation, maintenance, refueling, billeting messing, and sanitation.

• Contract for local services and supplies.

• Local security.
• Communications with JTF, CINC, embassy (ISB and HN), evacuation force, and safehaven.
  • Air traffic control and movement control.
  • Sufficiency of HN medical infrastructure as determined by the JTF surgeon.

The following supplies and services should be considered in equipping the ISB force:
• Rigging material and equipment.
• Local transportation.
• Material handling (such as rolling stock and fork lifts).
• POL.
• Power supplies.
• Communications.
• Water.
• Showers.
• Subsistence.
• Latrines.

• Medical.
• Laundry.
• Chaplain.
• Maintenance, including aviation unit maintenance (AVUM)/aviation intermediate maintenance (AVIM).
• Air traffic control (ATC) and movement control.
• Procurement and contacting.
• Recreation and morale support.

The ISB force prepares the ISB for the arrival of the evacuation force and operates the base during its stay. It may provide support during the evacuation operation and function as the safehaven force. Since the ISB’s role varies by operation, the point at which it completes its mission also varies. When the ISB has fulfilled its mission, the ISB commander requests release from the JTF commander. Upon release, the ISB force recovers and restores the site, notifies the embassy and the ISB government, and withdraws to home station.

INSERTION OF THE EVACUATION FORCE

After the advance party contacts the embassy and establishes the ECC, the JTF commander inserts the evacuation force. He has three options. He may land at the ECC, then deploy to the assembly areas; deploy his forces directly to the assembly areas; or simply land at the ECC and wait for the evacuees to come to him. This section examines each of these options.

With the first option, the entire force lands at the ECC. The commander issues final instructions and dispatches the marshaling force to collect the evacuees. This is the best option when the situation is vague and the advance party has been unable to provide the commander adequate information to disseminate to his subordinate units. The commander and his staff plan in detail after they arrive and have been briefed by the advance party leader or embassy staff representatives.

This option has significant advantages. Preparation time after their arrival allows personnel who may have spent long hours in transit to rest and recover before beginning the crucial part of the operation. This option also allows subordinate commanders to revise and improve plans based on the most current information the embassy can provide. If the advance party has not finished preparing the ECC, the main body can assist in completing the work. The chief disadvantage of this option is that it takes the unit longer to accomplish its mission, it may be unsuitable in a hostile environment.

Because the unit must be prepared for combat operations, it deploys with arms and ammunition. The marshaling force carries to the assembly areas only what the commander considers necessary.

The second option allows the marshaling teams to deploy directly to their respective assembly areas. This option is unquestionably more complicated than the first. The commander uses this option when he has had sufficient time to plan for its detailed execution or when the time available is so short that he must risk losing control of some of his units.

With this option, the commander must rely on the judgment of his subordinate leaders. He may not have an opportunity to change the plan once the unit leaves its home base or the ISB, and subordinate leaders may face unanticipated problems that require maturity and judgment.

Also, the force has to distribute the equipment it needs for the operation prior to loading the aircraft, adding time to the alert phase. The commander should...
decide well in advance what the marshaling teams will need to accomplish their mission. Additional material may be delivered to and stored at the ECC. Once loaded, the marshaling teams must carry their equipment with them for the rest of the operation.

The commander’s third option is to deploy the force to the ECC where it evacuates only those citizens who make their own way there. With this option, citizens who miss the notification also miss the evacuation, and the deploying force only partially completes its mission. This is normally an unacceptable alternative unless the embassy has notified and marshaled all evacuees in advance. The success of the operation depends on the embassy notification system.

A significant advantage to this course of action is that it requires fewer soldiers; the deploying force does not have to send units from the ECC to locate or escort potential evacuees. The force also requires less logistics support and fewer transportation assets.

Operation Sharp Edge combined aspects of all three types of deployments. While all evacuees were instructed to report to the embassy for evacuation, Marines deployed directly to two outlying assembly areas, picked up evacuees, and returned directly to the ship. The remainder of the evacuation force deployed to the embassy and, with few exceptions, processed and evacuated people as they made their own way to the embassy.

One other factor affects this step in the operation. The aircraft transporting the evacuation force may also transport the evacuees. If this is the case, the commander must determine what to do with aircraft from the time the military off-loads until the time the evacuees are picked up. Aircraft remaining on the ground with the military force are subject to sabotage or outright attack from hostile units or individuals. A large evacuation force increases the unit’s security problems because it must guard more aircraft.

If the aircraft do not remain with the evacuation force, coordination must be made to ensure sufficient aircraft return at the right time. Ideally, as soon as there are an appropriate number of passengers, one plane lands, picks up the passengers, and departs. Precise timing reduces waiting time for evacuees as well as ground time for aircraft.

The evacuation force commander must find a suitable location for the aircraft to wait. Using the ISB or safehaven reduces the number of governments to be negotiated with for landing rights and logistics requirements to support the aircraft at multiple sites. Having the aircraft wait anywhere in the HN entails significant risks. During Operation *Dragon Rouge*, USAF C-130s staged out of Kamina and Leopoldville, Congo, in support of the evacuation of Stanleyville. Although these two cities were in the same country as the evacuation, they were sufficiently outside the contested area to be fairly secure. A large air fleet probably cannot wait in one location. The commander divides the fleet and disperses subunits to different airports. Places selected for the aircraft to wait should have the facilities to support the types of aircraft involved. Flights from home bases are usually long. Each aircraft needs a detailed postoperation inspection with needed repairs done before the force can use the aircraft again. The quality and availability of maintenance services are extremely important to the Air Force (AF) commander.

Perhaps the most effective way to control the aircraft’s arrival is through an airborne command and control aircraft which maintains constant communications with the ECC, the aircraft controllers, and the AF officer responsible for the aircraft. An airborne control center offers increased communications effectiveness when compared to an aground control center. This aircraft is also ideal for controlling the marshaling team movements.

The solution the force adopts must result in the evacuees’ spending minimum time in the holding area and the aircraft spending minimum time exposed to sabotage or ground fire.

Naval evacuation is a likely alternative to aircraft evacuation. Naval operations could include loading ships pier side at the seaport, ferrying evacuees from seaports to amphibious ships, transporting them aboard helicopters to ships, or using landing craft and beach operations. Beach operations are ideal for moving large numbers of evacuees at one time. Use of Navy ships as intermediate safehavens may allow a faster turnaround for tactical evacuation assets. If the situation warrants, marshaling teams and search squads may deploy from and return to offshore ships. This will allow the ECC to be shipboard. Crews of aircraft ferrying soldiers and evacuees to and from ships must be deck-landing qualified.