

Kill All the Lawyers?

by Maj Cody M. Weston

Situation

You are a rifle platoon commander for Fox Company, Battalion Landing Team 2/1, 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (13th MEU(SOC)) operating in the African country of Blue-land. Your platoon has been sent ashore to reinforce the American Embassy in the nation's capital, Blue-land City. Blue-land is in the middle of a civil war between the pro-U.S. democratic government and rebel forces known as the "Zebras" because of the distinctive black and white utilities they wear. The Zebras have small arms, primarily AK-47s. The violence has escalated to the point where the Embassy staff may be in danger despite the presence of a 10-man Marine security guard (MSG) detachment.

At the MEU confirmation brief prior to the launch, the MEU lawyer, or staff judge advocate, spelled out the rules of engagement (ROE). He said that: (1) the Zebras had been "declared hostile"; (2) "proportional force" was authorized to defend U.S. forces, the Embassy staff, and any other U.S. citizen against any "hostile act" or demonstration of "hostile intent"; (3) tear gas and pepper spray were not authorized; and (4) all efforts must be made to "minimize collateral damage."

You have no attachments or detachments. You have your organic platoon weapons—M16s, M203s, M249s, 9mm pistols—as well as non-lethal weapons to include shields, batons, stinger grenades, beanbag rounds, and rubber bullets. A forward command element (FCE) consisting of the MEU executive officer, two other officers, and three radio operators inserted into the Embassy 3 days prior to conduct liaison with the U.S. Ambassador. The MSG Marines have already spread concertina wire around the perimeter.

You inserted via helicopter into the Embassy compound, did some quick coordination with the FCE, and then established three hasty squad defensive positions along the Embassy perimeter. The MSG Marines are inside the Embassy building itself.

Once you were satisfied with your initial defensive scheme you went back into the Embassy to conduct more detailed coordination with the FCE. Within a matter of minutes, two of your squad leaders are trying to reach you via radio.

1st Squad, at the northern end of the compound, reports that a group of five men are standing about 30 meters away smoking cigarettes. They are wearing the same black and white utilities that the S-2 had briefed and have AK-47s slung on their shoulders. The squad leader is requesting guidance.

2d Squad, at the southern end of the compound, reports that a group

of about 50 civilians is within 20 meters of their position shouting and waving their fists at the Marines. A few civilians are throwing rocks at the squad. The Ambassador overhears the conversation and mentions that his MSG Marines have tear gas grenades and pepper spray canisters that your Marines can use to disperse the crowd.

What do you do?

Requirement

In a time limit of 5 minutes, issue your orders to your squad leaders. Provide a brief rationale for your actions and a sketch of your plan. Include a discussion of how your orders fall within the ROE. Submit your solution to *Marine Corps Gazette*, TDG #02-11, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, fax 703-630-9147, or e-mail <gazette@mca-marines.org>.

