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MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

**SIGNED**

FROM: ROBERT C. McFARLANE *RCM*  
SUBJECT: General Kelley's Report on Security for the U.S.  
MNF Contingent in Beirut

Issue

Improvement of security measures for Marine contingent in Beirut

Facts

General Kelley has forwarded a report of his visit to Beirut with recommendations to improve security measures for our Marine contingent.

Background

As you directed at the NSPG meetings immediately following the bombing attack, General Kelley visited Beirut to assess the security situation and prepare recommendations on how to improve security in the wake of the attack. General Kelley's report has been endorsed by General Vessey and Secretary Weinberger, and it is attached at Tab A.

The recommended security improvements should reduce the risk to our Marines substantially. Improved coordination with the Lebanese and other MNF contingents, particularly in the intelligence area, has been effected and the physical security of the airport perimeter has been increased by restructuring the road access, more stringent search procedures, and more aggressive participation by the LAF. The disposition of Marines at the airport has been revised to emphasize sound defensive tactics instead of administrative expedience.

Of some concern is General Kelley's conviction that more attacks using different tactics are very likely even as we improve the physical security of the perimeter at the airport. The problem is the traffic congestion in and around the airport and the urban setting for the Marine (and other MNF) deployments. One means to mitigate the risks inherent in the environment in which the Marines are deployed is to redeploy the Headquarters and support elements of the Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) to a more secure and less congested site. General Vessey's endorsement notes that the JCS are examining such a measure.

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BY km NARA DATE 1/10/13

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There are two additional points of note in the Kelley report. One is the recommendation that we move logistical and support forces for the MAU back to the ships off shore to the degree feasible, which has already begun, and that we further reduce the number of line personnel in tactical dispositions. This latter step is under review by the JCS. My concern here is the impact such reductions may have on both the Lebanese and the other MNF contingents which, by the nature of their deployments, do not have the capability to redeploy forces to support ships off-shore. I am especially concerned that these reductions in personnel could send the wrong signals to the French and Italian MNF units, whose positions in Beirut are at least as vulnerable as ours and whose numbers exceed our own.

The second point is that the security improvements proposed will enhance the perception that our MNF unit is a force which is dug in for self-defense and therefore increasingly less visible to the Lebanese people. Congress has been very critical of our static deployment at the airport on the grounds that it creates a veritable "bull's eye" for artillery, rocket and sniper fire. Neither the basic report nor the endorsements come to grips with this criticism, principally because a more mobile and tactically aggressive deployment is regarded by the JCS and the responsible commanders as inconsistent with the mission of our MNF. I believe that a statement clarifying the mission of our MNF in a way which would allow regular training exercises and civic actions in the greater Beirut area might encourage the JCS to give more consideration to this type of activity.

From my experience I think that a more active and mobile deployment which would permit regular tactical training exercises could go a long way toward reducing the continuous exposure of our Marines, increasing their visibility and deterrent effect and improving their training readiness. An NSC staff paper which makes this argument is attached at Tab B for your consideration.

Recommendation

On the basis of the foregoing, I recommend the following:

OK    NO

✓ PR

1. That you approve the near-term recommendations as submitted in General Vessey's endorsement while placing a floor on the extent of the reductions in total numbers ashore.

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- PR     2.     That you approve and sign the decision directive at Tab C which would clarify the mission of our MNF.
- PR     3.     That you authorize me to transmit the foregoing decisions while encouraging the Department of Defense to recommend additional measures to enhance the mobility, visibility, and training readiness of the MNF. (I would do this in the correspondence which forwards the NSDD on the MNF mission to State and Defense.)

Attachments:

Tab A     General Kelley's report on the security situation in Beirut.

Tab B     NSC staff paper: Improving Security, Training Readiness and Visibility of the MNF.

Tab C     Draft National Security Decision Directive: Mandate and Mission for the U.S. Contingent of the Multinational Force in Beirut, Lebanon.

Prepared by:  
Philip A. Dur

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

63 NOV 7 P 8:49

7 November 1983

*Hand*  
MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL  
SECURITY AFFAIRS

Attached is P. X. Kelley's report on his findings and recommendations for Beirut, and General Vessey's comments on reports of actions taken.

As you will see, he thinks preparation for swift and appropriate retaliation is an important part of it. If you have any questions or require further information, please call.

Incidentally, I talked with Michael Heseltine this morning, and he has agreed to send some suggestions for additional security measures, based on their experience in dealing with the Irish as well as their own security problems in Lebanon. I do not know if these will be useful or not, but at least we will get some additional ideas to consider.

As you know, Admiral Long is completing organization of his Commission, and they will be at work shortly with a target of December 16th for their final recommendations.

*Keep*  
Attachments

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See Def Cont Nr.

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BY RW  
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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20380

IN REPLY REFER TO

CMC:cgg  
2 Nov 1983


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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Via: (1) Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff  
(2) Secretary of Defense

Attached is my report for the visit to Lebanon, 25-26 October 1983.

Most respectfully,

  
P. X. KELLEY  
General, U. S. Marine Corps  
Commandant of the Marine Corps

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NLRR M370/1 #38647

BY KPL NARA DATE 1/10/13

~~TOP SECRET~~ - SENSITIVE

2 November 1983

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Subject: Visit to Beirut, 25-26 October 1983

Enclosure: Remarks before Senate Armed Services Committee,  
31 October 1983

1. (U) At daybreak on 23 October, a 5-ton Mercedes truck (roughly the size of a large dump truck and of a type commonly seen at the Beirut International Airport) entered a public parking lot adjacent to the four-story, steel-reinforced concrete and sandbagged building which housed the headquarters elements of BLT 1/8. It is reported that this truck, after making a complete circle of the parking lot to gain speed, and while travelling at a speed estimated by witnesses to be 60 miles per hour:

- a. (U) Crashed through a barbed wire entanglement,
- b. (U) Moved at high speed between two sandbagged sentry posts,
- c. (U) Passed through a gate in an iron fence --- jumped over a sewer pipe which had been placed as an obstacle to impede the forward movement of vehicles,
- d. (U) Hit with precision a four-foot wide passenger entry into the lobby of the building, and,
- e. (U) By sheer velocity and mass, wedged itself into the lobby where its cargo, estimated now to be 5,000 pounds of explosives, detonated.

2. (U) The entire event, which can best be described as the delivery of a 5,000-pound bomb at 60 miles per hour, took approximately six seconds from start to finish. It is of particular importance to note that the Commander's security was oriented toward the threat of the past several months, i.e., artillery, rockets, mortars, small arms and car bombs. In this context, his security efforts had been successful. Not one Marine, sailor, or soldier protected by this building had been killed or wounded during a period of 13 months. Obviously, the Commander's security arrangements were inadequate to counter a form of "kamikaze" attack. On the other hand, I have yet to find any intelligence which would have alerted the commander to this extraordinary "truck-bomb" threat. General Tannous, the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, informed me that he cannot recall in his vast experience a terrorist attack of the type which hit the Headquarters of BLT 1/8 on 23 October 1983. In his opinion, this attack represents a new and unique terrorist threat, one which could not have been reasonably anticipated by the Commander on the scene.

3. (U) Almost simultaneously, a smaller vehicle approached an eight-story apartment building to the north of Beirut International

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Airport. Since this building is on a busy thoroughfare, there would be no reason to suspect its intention. As it approached the building, it accelerated speed, took a sharp right into the driveway, and forced entry into an underground garage --- where it exploded. During a personal conversation, General Cann, the Commander of the French contingent of the MNF, informed me that he had no intelligence which would have warned him of this threat.

4. (U) At a National Security Council meeting during the afternoon of 23 October, you directed me to go to Beirut to assess the security situation on the ground and to return with specific recommendations for improvement. I departed at 0900 the following morning, and, since a direct flight would have had the aircraft landing in Beirut during the middle of the night, I stopped at Frankfurt where I paid my respects to 142 KIA who were being off-loaded for processing from a C-141, and visited sixteen injured personnel at hospitals in the area. I presented the Purple Heart Medal to each.

5. (U) I believe it important at the outset to recognize that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that both incidents were not suicidal acts by some individual fanatic. They were, instead, well planned and professionally executed acts of terrorism which appear designed to force U.S. presence out of Lebanon. In this regard, the following information is provided:

a. (U) The attack was executed with precision, indicating that it was well planned and coordinated.

b. (S) The French Commander reported to me that he now has intelligence which shows that of the twelve persons who departed rapidly from the Iranian Embassy within 15 minutes of the attacks (fully clothed and in a hurry), ten have been identified as Syrian military officers.

c. (S) General Tannous told me that the First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Beirut reported to one of his senior officers that, "Reagan thought he won his reelection at Suq el Gharb, but he will lose it in the streets of Beirut."

6. (U) I was accompanied throughout my visit to Beirut by the Deputy Commander-in-Chief, USEUCOM; Commander, SIXTH FLEET; Commander, Amphibious Task Force; and Colonel Geraghty, the 24th MAU Commander. They concur with the general thrust of my comments, as does Ambassador Bartholomew. During my visit to Beirut I had discussions with the following: President Gemayal (in company with Vice President Bush); General Tannous, LAF Commander; General Cann, French Commander; General Angioni, Italian Commander; and the Commander of British Forces.

7. (S) My first and most important conclusion is that in my professional estimation our Marines have now been targeted for terrorism by highly professional non-Lebanese elements. In my view, these acts

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8. (S) Before proceeding with a discussion of the initiatives which are and can be taken to improve our security against this new threat, it might be appropriate to provide a few words comparing the Embassy bombing on 18 April with the recent incident. The dissimilarities far outweigh the similarities. At the Embassy a lone car pulled up in front of the building and exploded. This could not have occurred with the security which existed at the Marine headquarters building. In the instant case, a high speed, 5-ton vehicle assaulted the Marine defensive security, and by sheer weight and speed breached all obstacles. Forcible entry by explosives-laden vehicles is a new technique.

9. (U) With that said, I examined the following options with all commanders on the scene:

a. (S) Move out of Beirut International Airport and consolidate our forces on the high ground. While this may have been a viable option when we first deployed into Beirut, it must be recognized that the high ground is now contested. Moreover, all support for forces on the high ground would have to be by helicopter, and it would be only a matter of time before the safety of these helicopters would be threatened. In our opinion, this is not a viable option.

b. (S) Reembark all forces aboard ships, and move ashore when required. While this option would provide safety to our Marines while they are aboard ship, they would still be vulnerable during periodic activities ashore. Further, we believe that such a concept would cause the MNF to collapse. If, in the remote chance such a collapse did not happen, we believe that in time the LAF would become unravelled. This option must be weighed carefully for its long term foreign policy implications.

c. (S) Remain at Beirut International Airport, but undertake significant improvements to our security, ones which are designed to counter this new form of terrorism. In this regard, I believe it important to note the following:

(1) The LAF has the primary responsibility for the security of Beirut International Airport.

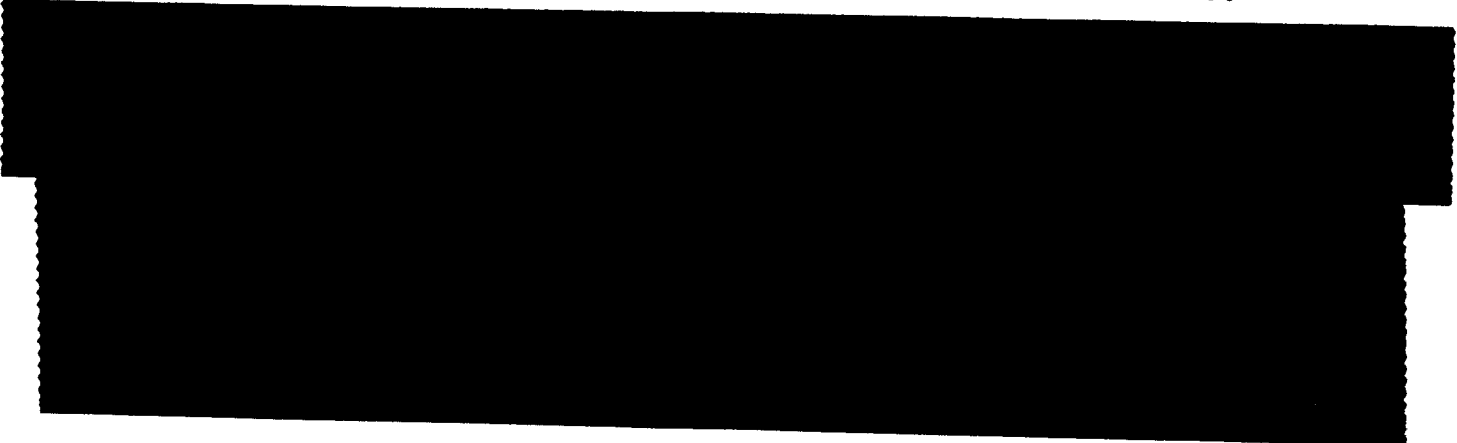
(2) Beirut International Airport is an active commercial airport, therefore the ability to tactically disperse Marine elements in their present location is extremely limited.

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(3) Marines will have to seek Lebanon civil authority to disrupt the normal flow of activity within the airport complex if required to improve their self-defense.

10. (TS) With the foregoing said, I will now discuss initiatives which are underway or contemplated for increased security. Before doing so, however, I want to once again emphasize my view that determined and professional terrorists are going to continue to exploit our vulnerabilities, and there is no way to provide absolute guarantees for the safety of our Marines in this environment.



b. (TS) We must press hard at the highest levels within the Lebanese government for a better exchange of intelligence. There have been allegations that the Lebanese may not be totally forthcoming. Ambassador Bartholomew is aware of the problem and looking into it.

c. (S) There must be far more Lebanese participation in the security at Beirut International Airport. I have made this point in the strongest terms with General Tannous, who has already taken some measures. I believe that Tannous is sincere, but, again, this may take emphasis at the highest levels. Improvements to security must include both physical security at the airport (barriers, etc.) and tactical security (troops) in close proximity.

d. (S) The 24th MAU is in the process of decreasing vulnerability associated with large concentrations of Marines. Specifically, I have expressed extreme concern over the 240 Marines at Beirut University. My concern was discussed in some detail with the French, the Italians, and General Tannous. While they will have tactical problems if we leave this position, I believe that they understand that we have no reasonable alternative. In any event, it is a vulnerable target which presents considerable potential for mass casualties. Moreover, the 24th MAU is now moving forward with a concept to redeploy around the airport in a more tactical mode rather than in a quasi-administrative one. All personnel not essential to a tactical disposition will go back aboard ship. There will be a number of administrative problems associated with this redeployment, so no one should view it as a "free lunch," but in view of the terrorism threat it appears necessary.

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e. (S) Definitive action is underway to strengthen the 24th MAU positions and to reduce vulnerability to terrorist attacks by isolating and barricading command and control and support areas. In this regard, I ask that we do not become too complacent and think that those who wish to do us harm are not clever. They are --- and they are suicidal, determined and professional. Although we will make every conceivable effort to enhance the protection of our forces, no amount of action on our part will make us totally immune to suicidal terrorism.

[REDACTED]

g. (S) We have modern and sophisticated SIGINT capabilities. I will work this via the chain of command with the Secretary of Defense to ensure that all means available are being effectively applied.

11. (U) In summary, Mr. President, I believe that:

a. (U) Our security measures were not adequate to stop a large, heavily laden, truck travelling at a speed of 60 miles per hour --- which executed the attack in approximately six seconds from start to finish.

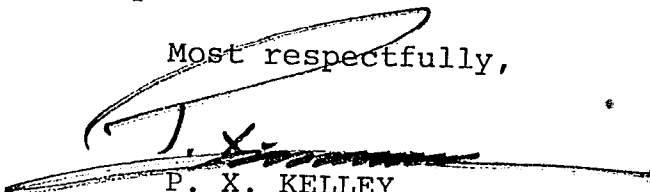
[REDACTED]

I must continue to emphasize, however, that under our current disposition, restrictions, and mission, we will always have vulnerabilities, and that the other side will make every effort to exploit them.

c. (U) Your Marines are the greatest human beings on earth, and that the free world should thank God that we have such men. I do --- every day of my life!

12. (U) Since my return, I have appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee and the House Armed Services Committee. At the enclosure is a copy of my remarks before the SASC. In addition to including much of the unclassified information above, it contains a summary of the changing atmosphere in Lebanon since our Marines landed at BIA on 29 September 1982. These views are mine, alone, and have not been coordinated with anyone.

Most respectfully,

  
P. X. KELLEY  
General, U. S. Marine Corps  
Commandant of the Marine Corps

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38643	MEMO	ROBERT MCFARLANE TO THE PRESIDENT RE GENERAL KELLEY'S REPORT <i>R 1/10/2013 M370/1</i>	3	ND	B1
38645	MEMO	CASPAR WEINBERGER TO MCFARLANE RE KELLEY'S REPORT (ATTACHMENT TO 38643) <i>R 1/18/2012 M370/1</i>	1	11/7/1983	B1
38646	MEMO	JOHN VESSEY TO WEINBERGER RE KELLEY'S REPORT (ATTACHMENT TO 38643) <i>R 8/6/2012 M370/1</i>	2	11/2/1983	B1
38647	MEMO	TRANSMITTING KELLEY REPORT (ATTACHMENT TO 38643) <i>R 1/10/2013 M370/1</i>	1	11/2/1983	B1
38648	REPORT	KELLEY REPORT RE BEIRUT SECURITY (ATTACHMENT TO 38643) <i>PAR 1/10/2013 M370/1</i>	5	11/2/1983	B1
38649	PAPER	RE MNF (ATTACHMENT TO 38643) <i>R 1/18/2012 M370/1</i>	3	ND	B1
38651	CHART	RE CALCULATIONS (ATTACHMENT TO 38649) <i>R 1/18/2012 M370/1</i>	2	ND	B1
38652	MEMO	WILLIAM CASEY TO POINDEXTER RE PAPER (ATTACHMENT TO 38643) <i>PAR 10/10/2012 M279/1</i>	1	12/2/1983	B1 B3

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