

30 NOV 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
VIA: Deputy Director for Intelligence
FROM: [REDACTED]
Acting Director of Global Issues
SUBJECT: Terrorist Threat to Western Interests in Lebanon

1. Action. Forward to the Long Commission.

2. Background. The attached memorandum was prepared in response to your request for an assessment of the terrorist threat to Western interests in Lebanon to be provided to the Long Commission. It has been coordinated with the Office of Near East and South Asian Analysis, [REDACTED] of the DDO, and Graham Fuller, NIO/NESA. The memorandum indicates that the threat to US facilities and personnel remains extremely high and could get worse if large numbers of radical Palestinians filter into Beirut once conditions in Tripoli settle down.

[REDACTED]

Attachment:
Terrorist Threat to Western Interests in Lebanon

[REDACTED]

GI [REDACTED]
November 1983

Copy [REDACTED]

DERIVATIVE CL BY [REDACTED]
DECL OADR
DERIVED FROM MULTIPLE

DECLASSIFIED IN PART

NLS F2001-120 #2

By LOJ, NARA, Date 1/21/04

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Terrorist Threat to Western Interests in Lebanon

Summary

The terrorist threat to Western interests in Lebanon remains very high. US and French Multinational Force (MNF) troops continue to be key targets at the same time that diplomatic personnel and facilities of those countries also are at great risk. We are especially concerned about signs of increased cooperation among individual Shia extremist groups, the increased filtering into Beirut of radical Palestinians returning from Tripoli, and indications [redacted] that Syria may be stepping up its support for radical Shia leaders involved in terrorist activities.

The most likely types of terrorist attacks to be attempted—car bombs, human "kamikaze" bombs, snipings, and kidnappings—require minimal material resources and manpower; they are, therefore, relatively easy for terrorists to execute. The environment in Beirut militates against attempts by the Lebanese authorities and security elements of the MNF to counter the threat of new terrorist violence. Beirut is an armed camp where radical Muslim and Palestinian groups that oppose the MNF presence can operate freely. The Shia in particular are prepared—even anxious—to sacrifice themselves as martyrs in terrorist operations.

This memorandum was prepared by the [redacted] Branch of the DDI's Office of Global Issues [redacted]

GI [redacted]
November 1983

Copy [redacted]

DERIVATIVE CL [redacted]
DECL OADR
DERIVED FROM MULTIPLE

DECLASSIFIED IN PART

NLS F2001-120 #3

By [redacted], NARA, Date 1/21/04

(b)(1)
(b)(3)

Terrorist Threat to Western Interests in Lebanon

The threat to Western interests in Lebanon continues at a high level, and may actually have increased since the bombings of the US and French MNF contingent headquarters.

Iran also is continuing to encourage its Lebanese allies to attack US and French interests and may be planning attacks of its own. Radical Shia groups seek to retaliate for the French and Israeli airstrikes against Shia camps in the Bekaa Valley. They see the United States as an accomplice in those airstrikes. Syria, for its part, is providing direct or indirect support to numerous groups willing to undertake terrorist acts.

DECLASSIFIED IN PART

NLS F2001-120 #4

TOP SECRET

By hjt, NARA, Date 1/21/04

Internally, Lebanon continues to suffer from violent political competition among a number of domestic sectarian groups, some of whom consider the MNF troops to be less peacekeepers than supporters of the Maronite Christian faction of the Lebanese ethnic fabric. This perception was strengthened when the United States demonstrated its willingness to use naval gunfire in support of the Lebanese Army in its battles against Muslim elements in the Shuf mountains in September.

Internationally, Lebanon serves as an arena for violence carried out by, or on behalf of, foreign governments (such as Syria and Iran), each of which has its own political and/or religious goals for the country and sees the MNF presence as impeding the achievement of these objectives. In addition, some of the more radical Palestinian factions in Lebanon are

considering anti-US attacks in an effort to generate domestic pressure for the withdrawal of MNF troops and to punish the US for its support of Israel.

Targets for Terrorism. Identifying specific targets is risky because terrorists--including those in Lebanon--usually will exploit the most vulnerable targets of opportunity. Nevertheless, some facilities or personnel will be particularly attractive. The US and French Multinational Force contingents will continue to be among those. These troops present highly visible representations of governments against whom a number of groups would seek to launch attacks that will carry messages concerning Lebanon and other international issues. In addition to the US Marine compound buildings in the vicinity of Beirut

~~TOP SECRET~~

airport and the French MNF facilities nearby, other targets of terrorist attacks could include:

- o US Embassy offices in the Durraford Building and in the adjacent British Embassy
- o the US Ambassador's residence in Yarze
- o US ships at anchor off the coast of Beirut

US and French military and civilian personnel and/or their dependents also could be tempting targets for kidnapping attempts.

Although Italian troops suffered several minor injuries from terrorist incidents earlier this year, they and British forces have thus far avoided serious losses. Neither would appear to be a primary political target because the Palestinians and their supporters see London and Rome as being more even-handed in the Arab-Israeli dispute and less prone to favor one Lebanese faction over another. Moreover, both Great Britain and Italy have managed to remain farther removed than the United States and France from international quarrels with Syria or Iran. The British forces also have effectively kept a low profile while the Italians have sought to ingratiate themselves with local Muslims by establishing personal links through public service work. The proximity of British diplomatic facilities to those of the United States could, however, make them an incidental target in the event of an anti-US attack.

Sources of the Threat

The most immediate threats to US and other Western interests in Lebanon will emanate from:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] members of these groups are planning to use carbombs once again, as well as human "kamikaze" bombs, to strike at MNF targets.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Iran will continue to encourage and provide aid to these groups for the commission of acts of terrorism, particularly against US and French targets. Iran may also seek to use its own assets--the Revolutionary Guards resident in the Bekaa--where feasible to pull off terrorist acts. These irregular forces, if able to secure the assistance of Lebanese and/or Syrians in control of checkpoints, could get to Beirut where they would willingly sacrifice themselves in terrorist acts. In our view, Iran is more likely to provide support to and rely on its Lebanese surrogates because of their proven effectiveness and because this allows Tehran to mask its involvement.

The radical Shias, while acting on their own and with Iranian support, almost certainly have secured at least the acquiescence of Syria since they operate within and across Syrian lines. In addition, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the Syrian leadership may have promised additional support to radical Shia leaders to enable them to step up their anti-Western terrorism.

Syria can use a variety of radical Palestinian groups and has used them in the past to commit terrorist acts on its behalf. While many radical Palestinians, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] have been preoccupied with the fighting in Tripoli, others--both within and outside the [REDACTED]--have been filtering back into Beirut. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Should the Palestinian fighting in Tripoli wind down, the radicals could redirect their attention to Beirut, thereby significantly increasing the risk of Palestinian-sponsored terrorism there. Palestinian groups have their own reasons for seeking to hit Western--and particularly US--targets, and Lebanon presents them with an attractive locale. Moreover, they would have access to arms caches still secured in the Beirut environs.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] local Lebanese [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] forces and capabilities were seriously reduced by the Israeli invasion and occupation of the country.

[REDACTED]

local leftist groups [REDACTED] probably retain some capability for small-scale terrorist attacks--perhaps in coordination with radical Palestinian elements. The Druze have no record of terrorist activity and are unlikely to pose a threat to Western interests.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

southern Beirut, could be coopted by the radical breakaway factions to take part in terrorist activity.

Countering the Threat

We do not think the terrorist threat to Western interests in Lebanon can be readily eliminated. The environment--a nation beset by eight years of civil war, where competing ethnic groups and their militias have amassed and indiscriminately used arms to advance their goals--is not conducive to the creation of effective security, whether by local or foreign forces. In this already troubled milieu, disaffected Muslim groups who view the United States as the Gemayel government's protector also blame the United States for the continued Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. These groups hope that attacks against MNF forces might influence American public opinion and lead to the eventual withdrawal of those forces.

Beirut, in particular, is an armed camp in which indiscriminate killing is now commonplace. Nearly every household possesses firearms, and mortars and rocket-propelled grenades also are common. Radical groups have proved their ability to exploit the virtual freedom of maneuver that such a setting provides. They are, moreover, on familiar ground in a relatively permissive environment where the central government has been unable thus far to establish the kind of intelligence and security services that might intimidate terrorists. Finally, high casualty terrorist acts are relatively easy to perpetrate yet hard to stop. The types of attacks mounted thus far in Beirut--and those most likely to be attempted, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] require little in the way of material resources or manpower, making them particularly difficult to intercept in the planning stage.

~~TOP SECRET~~

[REDACTED]

SUBJECT: Terrorist Threat to Western Interests in Lebanon
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Distribution:

[REDACTED]

DDI/OGI/ [REDACTED]
