

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

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CHRON FILE

February 21, 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

From: George P. Shultz *gjs*
Caspar W. Weinberger *alt*

Subject: Warning to Iran to Prevent Harm to American Hostages in Lebanon

A telephone caller purporting to represent the Islamic Jihad terrorist organization told the Associated Press office in Beirut on February 16 that one of the American Hostages had been sentenced to death. The caller declined to identify him, but said that "when he is executed, you will all know about it."

We have substantial grounds to believe that decisions on the hostages are strongly influenced by elements in the Iranian Government. On January 15, a caller claiming to be from the Islamic Jihad, had indicated that the hostages would be put on trial. In response the Swiss, as our protecting power in Tehran, informed the Iranians on our behalf that we would hold Iran responsible and would take all appropriate measures if the hostages were harmed. The Iranian Foreign Ministry handed the note back to the Swiss as rejected on January 30. We strongly believe, however, that the message, combined with demarches from a number of our friends and allies, had a useful effect since we observed an increased Iranian concern for the safety of the hostages since then.

The present new threat of execution most likely applies to hostage William Buckley. To take every step possible to avert its being carried out, and in light of our intention to retaliate should any of the hostages be harmed, we believe that a repeated warning of unmistakable clarity to the Iranians is called for.

We therefore seek your approval to transmit the attached cable of instructions to our Embassy in Bern for delivery to the Iranian government in Tehran.

Although our message and intent is unequivocal, we do not want to suggest to you that our response would be automatic. As we move to retaliate, we would need to consider carefully the timing, mode and location of our specific retaliatory act to ensure that our interests are best protected, and of course we would await your decision.

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DECL: OADR

BY LOT NARA, DATE 10/28/03