



~~TOP SECRET~~

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

(#)

CN-470-83
2 November 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Commandant of the Marine Corps Report on Security
in Lebanon (U)

1. (C) The enclosed report on security of Marine ground forces in Lebanon from the Commandant of the Marine Corps is forwarded as directed by the President at a 23 October National Security Council Meeting.
2. (S) In order to guard against further terrorist attacks of this nature against our forces in Lebanon, the following measures recommended by General Kelley are already in progress.
 - a. Improved coordination and exchange of information in areas of human intelligence as well as tactical intelligence and operational data among the multi-national forces and the Lebanese.
 - b. Improved physical security of the Marines' positions at airport such as:
 - (1) Restructuring the road access to the airport and limiting traffic flow.
 - (2) Limiting access through the Marines' perimeter.
 - (3) Establishing more stringent search procedures.
 - c. More aggressive security measures by the Lebanese Armed Forces near the airport. (LAF have already moved armored personnel carriers into the area.)
 - d. Increased passive defense measures (cover and deception, altering convoy routes and timing).
 - e. Increased dispersal of forces ashore to reduce target opportunity.
 - f. Accelerated turnover of exposed positions such as the Science Facility.
 - g. Movement of the logistical and support forces back to the ships off shore to the degree feasible.

Office of the Secretary of Defense ~~SECRET~~
 Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS
 Date: 20 May 2019 Authority: EO 13526
 Declassify: _____ Deny in Full: _____
 Declassify in Part: X
 Reason: 3.3(b)(1)(6)
 MDR: 18 -M- 1342

DECLASSIFIED IN FULL
 Authority: EO 13526
 Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
 Date: MAY 20 2019

~~TOP SECRET~~

18-11-1342

(Handwritten initials)

220-61-0000

~~TOP SECRET~~

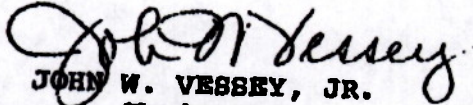
~~SECRET~~

3. (S) In addition to the above initiatives, the JCS are also examining a variety of additional security-related measures. Among them are:

- a. A measured escalation in response to attacks on MNF positions.
- b. Reducing area of physical coverage.
- c. Relocation to more defensible terrain or a less vulnerable area.
- d. Significant reduction in the number of personnel in tactical disposition ashore.
- e. Maritime exclusion zone around ships off shore and other maritime security measures.

4. (S) The foregoing actions should serve to improve significantly the security of our MNF contingent in Beirut. However, given the tenuous situation in Beirut and the fragility of the talks in Geneva, it is also imperative not only that our forces be protected against attack but that they be prepared to retaliate swiftly and decisively. I have so directed USCINCEUR to keep up-to-date reconnaissance, targeting, and counterfire/strike plans. The present ROE appear adequate but I have asked the CINC to advise me if he needs guidance or recommends change.

5. (S) Finally, it must be recognized that the political situation, i.e., the Lebanese factionalism and the Syrian and Israeli occupation is the root cause of the existing conflict creating the conditions which permit continued acts of terrorism against the MNF. It is urgent that the United States insist on progress on the political issues to include providing the scenario, if necessary, to the Lebanese Government, the Syrians and the Israelis.


JOHN W. VESSEY, JR.
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

Enclosure
a/s

DECLASSIFIED IN FULL
Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: MAY 20 2019

~~SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~



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

IN REPLY REFER TO

CNC:ogg
2 Nov 1983

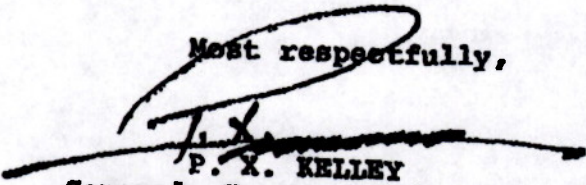
~~TOP SECRET - SENSITIVE~~

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

DECLASSIFIED IN FULL
Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: MAY 20 2019

~~TOP SECRET - SENSITIVE~~

DECLASSIFIED IN FULL
Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date:

MAY 20 2019

2 November 1983

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

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 Command 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

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~


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)



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

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

OSD 3.3(b)(6)

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

of violence will continue, and the perpetrators will carefully examine and analyze our vulnerabilities and make every effort to exploit them. In short, I firmly believe that the expertise for terrorism of the Soviet Union, Syria, Iran, and possibly Libya, will be focused upon our Marines in the months to come. Therefore I believe that we need to posture ourselves in Lebanon in such a way as to recognize and guard against a growing terrorist threat.

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.

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

(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. (S) 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.

a. (S) First, we must make every effort to have the multinational force both multinational and a force. I suggest that while we and our partners may describe it as multinational, the Soviets, Syrians, and others, look upon us as separate entities and treat us accordingly. A truly combined command and operation, to include multinational patrols, presents the other side with a far more difficult decision, e.g., it may prove less attractive an option to kill a Marine, an Italian, a Frenchman and an Englishman than it would be to kill four Marines. While I recognize the language problems, I believe that in many cases these can be accommodated. In any event, the system must be modified to include more day-to-day, direct interface between commanders. This problem is being addressed by USCINCEUR.

OSD 3.3 (b)(6)

b. (S) [REDACTED]

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 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.

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

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.

f. (S) Of personal concern is the safety of our resupply convoys between Beirut International Airport and our security force at the temporary Embassy. An effective terrorism technique, one which was used against us recently, is a parked vehicle full of explosives which are command detonated as our convoy passes. We can be as clever as circumstances permit, but there is no way to fully counter this threat. There are only so many alternative routes and hundreds of parked cars. We are very vulnerable in this area, and it is merely a matter of time before we become victims.

OSD 3.3.3(b)(1)(b)

g. (S) [REDACTED]

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

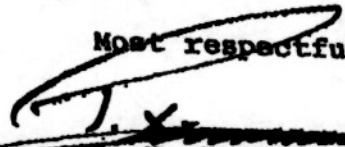
a. (U) Our security measures were not adequate to stop a large, heavily laden, truck travelling at a speed of 60 miles per hour --- which executed the attack in approximately six seconds from start to finish.

b. (S) We have recognized this new threat of highly professional terrorism, most likely sponsored by the Soviets, Syria and Iran, and are taking immediate steps to increase appropriate security. 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

DECLASSIFIED IN PART
Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date:

MAY 20 2019