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A Change in Policy: The Impact of the 1983 Beirut Bombing on United States Foreign Counter-Terrorism Policy

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A Change in Policy: The Impact of the 1983 Beirut Bombing on United States Foreign Counter-Terrorism Policy

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This paper examines the 1983 Beirut barracks bombing and its impact on United States foreign counter-terrorism policy. This research was conducted first by establishing a baseline as to what was U.S. counter-terrorism policy from the years of 1976-1981, and then looking into what changes occurred following immediately after the 1983 bombing. What was found was that there was a recommendation for a change of policy towards a more proactive approach to counter-terrorism. Then through looking at how the idea of a proactive policy shaped the new laws and bills, and reactions to terrorist incidents during the Reagan administration. This showed that the idea of a proactive policy was in fact adopted. Then to see if there was an impact of this policy change years later in U.S. policy research was conducted into the counter-terrorism policies of President Clinton. What was discovered was that when faced with the threat of terrorism, President Clinton
responded by using counter-terrorism policies that modeled along the same lines as the proactive policy adopted under President Reagan.
Introduction

It was October 23, 1983 in Beirut, Lebanon. Marines stationed at the Beirut International Airport (BIA) remember that day as being a “a typical Beirut morning, the sunrise bright and beautiful”. At 6:22 A.M. a yellow Mercedes truck barreled through the protective chain-link fence of the compound. For those Marines that were stationed on early morning duty, they were stunned at first for what occurred. This very truck was similar to the ones that employees at the BIA used to transport goods, although this one was different, for it had broken through an important protective barrier for the Marine barracks stationed there. This very act at alone would startle anyone. After coming back to their senses from this unusual occurrence, the Marines stationed on duty notice the driver. The driver was a man “swarthy bearded man...dressed in a dark blue or green shirt.” After registering the driver in their minds eye the Marines raised their M-16 rifles to fire, but before they get a chance to fire the truck and the driver had already made it past their position and farther into the camp were Marines were sleeping. With the truck speeding into the camp, unaware of what its intentions, were but only that they were not good, some of the soldiers being to run away from the vehicle and in the process warn their fellow men of the impending crisis. One such man, a Sergeant Russell, noticed the yellow Mercedes speeding right at him and he turned and ran into the very building that the driver was headed towards. While he was running Russell was yelling at the top of his lungs to anyone he passed saying such things in the heat of the moment as, “Get the fuck outa here!” As he made it to the Marine’s barracks at the BIA, Russell yells to everyone and yet no specific person to “HIT THE DECK!” a total of three times. As Russell continued
forward warning his fellow Marines he made it through the barracks, and noticed another Marine and yelled to him to get down. The time is 6:22 A.M. and eighteen seconds. As Russell looked back and noticed that the truck has stopped, he noticed that the driver is not moving and wonders if he may be injured. The next thing that Russell saw was “a bright orange-yellow flash at the grill of the truck” and he felt “a wave of intense heat.”

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The yellow Mercedes truck had about 12,000 pounds of high explosives wrapped in canisters of flammable gases. At the time of this incident it was said that this explosion
had been the largest nonnuclear blast ever detonated on the face of the earth. The blast alone sent out a shockwave, causing the collapse of the barracks. The initial blast caused the four-story building to be lifted up into the air. Then the building fell in upon itself. Following this due to the explosives wrapped in canisters of flammable gases, a large ball of flaming gas was hurled in every direction. Also a shockwave created from the explosion damaged surrounding buildings. (look to the appendix to figure 2, to see a layout of the building) Sergeant Russell, the only man to have seen the blast itself was hurled fifteen to twenty feet. Russell came away from the blast with a twisted leg, a laceration to the head, and a large portion of his skin blown off. Ultimately though he did survive. The blast itself created a crater that measured thirty-nine feet by twenty-nine feet, and was eight feet eight inches in depth. As stated in The Root by Eric Hammel, at the time this was considered to be the largest nonnuclear blast ever detonated.2

On October 23, 1983 in Beirut, Lebanon 241 United States military personnel (-220 Marines and 21 Navy medical personnel-) were either killed or mortally wounded by the initial explosion, the collapse of the building, or the flaming gas. These Marines and sailors were on a peacekeeping mission to Lebanon, whose goals were: 1) to facilitate the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, 2) to protect a sovereign, independent Lebanon, and 3) to secure a southern border with Israel. These Marines and Navy medics were killed by terrorist from the Islamic Jihad Organization, a group associated with

Hezbollah, which hoped to remove Israeli, U.S., and other foreign influences in the country and set up a Muslim dominated.\(^3\)

This paper examines the 1983 Beirut barracks bombing and its impact on United States foreign counter-terrorism policy. Many historians and scholars have written abundantly on the recent United States war on terrorism yet relatively little has been written on the United States war on terrorism, from 1981 to 1989, and the ever evolving U.S. foreign counter-terrorism policy. What was the impact of the 1983 Beirut barracks bombing on United States foreign counter-terrorism policy? Analyzing the impact of major terrorist events on U.S. policy should contribute significantly to the larger debate on the United States ongoing battle against terrorism. My investigation of United States government documents and writings on the Beirut bombing suggest that there a change in U.S. foreign counter-terrorism policy through the use of the Long Commission and the National Security Decision Directive 138. Following the 1983 Beirut barracks bombing, United States policy did change to a proactive policy but it wasn’t implemented for years due to the non-active role that the president, internal problems in the Reagan administration, through the problems and disagreements of Reagan’s Secretary of State and Defense Secretary on policies. It wasn’t until the final years of the Reagan administration that an impact could be seen in U.S. policy in that the implementation of said policy was finally accomplished when President Reagan took an active role in counter-terrorism policy. This change in U.S. policy to a more proactive policy helped

\(^3\) Willis, *The First War*, 49 and 62-63.
shape the policies under President Clinton, whose policies followed a similar course of action.

Terrorism is not a new trend or a phenomenon. It is a concept that has been in existence since Biblical times, even documented within the Christian Bible. At the same time it has become an important topic in today’s studies because of the September 11, 2001 World Trade Center terrorist attack. As such there has been a renewed interest in terrorism due to the World Trade Center terrorist attack, although 9/11 has become the focus point of scholarly research on terrorism, yet there was still large amounts of terrorist attacks against the United States prior to the September 11, 2001 attacks. That is why it is important to analyze the impact of terrorist events and see their specific contributions to U.S. policy so as to analysis the effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness of U.S. policy over the years.

_Historiography and Sources_

The historiography available on this subject may be divided into three related aspects of the topic: works that take a broad look into counter-terrorism and the changes in United State’s policy, those that focus on United States and it’s battle against terrorism, and President Reagan’s actions against terrorism. There are a number of works that address critically the effects of terrorism on the United States from 1975-2000, and how it
specifically affected U.S. policy. Of these many great monographs, only a select few can be reviewed here. Robert Kumamoto’s *International Terrorism & American Foreign Relations 1945-1976*, reflects the ideas of the influence of terrorism on U.S. policy within an older paradigm. He stresses that during this time period that terrorist and the idea of a “freedom fighter” were often but not always synonymous with one another for the United States, but it did depend on the side to which the terrorist was allied with. As such the United States tended to side with the “freedom fighter” or took a specific stance of neutrality. Either way he focuses more on the issue of the concept that the U.S policy itself was shaped around the international law of the time, and as such the United States policy was ill defined because it was not a major concern to the United States. Other historians like David Willis and Lawrence Freedman contend that terrorism was not a major concern to the United States because terrorism was only directed towards American business and not the citizens. They then state that kidnappings and other such activities became a popular form of terrorism because of the large increase of Americans abroad in other nations.⁴

In addressing the United States and it’s many and varied battle on terrorism there seems to be a large collection of these works. Although at the same time these works either focus on terrorism as being a form of freedom fighting for better rights, trying to

elude to the American Revolution, focus on state-sponsored terrorism, or as independent networks of terrorist cells that came out of the Cold War. There are few works on the elusion that terrorism is a form of freedom fighting and that the United States aided these groups because the works on State-Sponsored Terrorism have been the norm for the longest of time when dealing with terrorism during the Cold War. Works by Mahmood Mamdani, Steven L. Spiegel, and Samir Khalaf focus on the idea that the because the United States and the Soviet Union were grasped in a power battle that neither could either push forward individually. As such the sponsoring of terrorism, specifically by the Soviet Union, became a popular mode of attacking each other’s interest in the eternal power struggle that occurred during the Cold War. In Patrick Tyler’s work *A World of Trouble: The White House and the Middle East-from the Cold War to the War on Terror* he contends that because the Cold War was over state-sponsorship stopped becoming the norm. Tyler does say that there were still sponsors of terrorism but they became far and few between, due to the increase in international law against the act. Instead he points to the privatization of terrorism through independent financial ventures and financiers that independently run terrorist cells became the norm. He contends that this actually made it harder for the U.S. to deal with because they were not associated with one state and as such became harder to fight.\(^5\)

\(^5\) Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004); Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Steven L Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America’s Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* 8
President Ronald Reagan’s administration has been written about abundantly but comparatively there has been little work done on Reagan’s specific actions against terrorism, relatively compared to the history of the United States and terrorism. Although within the work that has been written there is a general consensus that Reagan took little action against terrorism but the policies that he did enact were very important in combating terrorism. There is two schools of thought when written about terrorism during the Reagan administration: you are either critical of what he did/didn’t do or you write in favor of what Reagan did during his administration and praise him. Martin and Walcott’s work is a prime example of being critical of the lack of actions that Reagan took to diffuse and combat terrorism. They repeatedly state that Reagan took little to no action and merely put forth policy, which was never fully enforced or stressed. Comparatively Marc A. Celmer’s work focuses on the idea that Reagan did take appropriate action and that the policies he did enact were instrumental, but the fault of effectively combating terrorism did not work to the greatest effect due to such agencies as the CIA; but nonetheless Reagan did take appropriate action against the continuous threat of terrorism.

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Although President Reagan's tenure as President of the United States ended over twenty years ago, his documents and papers from his administration have yet to be declassified so I am without key primary documents from his administration that could deal with terrorism and his policies. As such then to establish the specific policies that where in effect during the Reagan administration I will use a number of prominent documents with some of the most notable and comprehensive of these coming from the United States Central Intelligence Agency and the United States Department of State. Also I will use the writings of Ronald Reagan and the National Security Decision Directives (NSDD) to show an understanding of the time of the 1983 Beirut Bombing and its immediate impact. For example, the Department of State makes many extensive references to terrorism; it’s effects on the areas of the world, and certain suggestions to counter the progression of terrorism and the militants behind the attacks. Only through a thorough investigation of all of these collections can it be shown the impact of the 1983 Beirut bombing on U.S. counter-terrorism policy. 


In order to better understand the change in policy resulting from the 1983 Beirut bombing, I will first examine what policy was before the incident, especially in the 1970s and early in the Reagan administration. Within the following text of my paper I will use chronology to establish the paper. As such I will note the specific policies from 1976-1981, the policies during the Carter administration, so as to establish a baseline of U.S. policy. Then I will note how the 1983 Beirut bombing affected the Reagan policies. Finally to note what/any the long-term effects of the 1983 Beirut bombing on United States policy, one has to research farther into the future. To accomplish this I will discuss the policies after the Reagan administration, 1989-2000. This is based off of the premise that U.S. policy is always evolving and changing, yet it has to evolve off of specific existing policies. By looking at the impact either short or long-term one can ascertain the importance of such a topic as the impact of the 1983 Beirut bombing and see possibilities for it’s greater importance in the study of the evolution of U.S. policies, specifically counter-terrorism policy.

_U.S. Counter-Terrorism Policy, 1976-1981_

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During this time terrorist incidents were dramatically different than they were after 2001. In 1976 the Central Intelligence Agency noted some specific trends: 1) the hijacking of commercial aircraft had experienced modest revival, 2) incidents of terrorism were on the rise, and 3) burden born by U.S. commercial facilities and their employees abroad increased markedly. Although there were the traditional actions of terrorism (bombings, armed assaults, assassinations, and incendiary attack), terrorists were not interested in these actions. Terrorists were more concentrated on United States business and their employees abroad. This is because despite a “no concessions” policy by the government U.S. business decided to cooperate with terrorist demands. U.S. business would pay off the terrorist demands, which usually were about a ransom for a specific employee. At the same time terrorists also targeted U.S. owned business abroad which said business would give into the demand of the terrorist or the business would hire private antiterrorist paramilitary squads to deal with the terrorists and their demands. As shown by Figure 3, the largest attacks against the US by terrorists in 1976 were against US business facilities or commercial aircraft. Using data from 1976 is a good indicator of not only the type of terrorist attacks against the US during the 1976 to 1981 period that this section is highlighting but it also is a good indicator of the type of terrorist attacks prior to 1976. It was more economical for terrorist organizations to target US business because the business were willing to go against US policy and pay off the terrorists.\(^8\)

### Table 1. International Terrorist Attacks on US Citizens or Property in 1976, by Category of Target.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Number of Incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US officials (civilian or military) or their property</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US installations or property</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US businessmen</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US business facilities or commercial aircraft</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign employees of US firms</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US private citizens</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As previously noted business had hired antiterrorist paramilitary squads to deal with their terrorist problems. As such these antiterrorist mercenaries had actually deterred terrorists from holding hostages for extended period of time. Although the US policy of “no concessions” with terrorists still was in existence. To combat airplane hijackings by terrorists, which had actually been on the rise, greater regional cooperation among nations was called for. The greatest of these cooperation’s came form the Bonn Economic Summit Conference in July of 1978. It was here that the seven participants (Canada, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, and United States) “agreed to
cut off air commerce with nations refusing to extradite or prosecute hijackers and/or to return hijacked plans.\footnote{9}

On November 4, 1979 fifty-two US citizens were held hostage in Tehran, Iran resulting in probably the most notable hostage crisis recent memory occurred for the United States. Out of this hostage situation came various resolutions to discuss terrorism. In November of 1980 the North Atlantic Treaty Organizations (NATO) parliamentary assembly adopted a resolution on terrorism. Within this document greater cooperation as well as information sharing was urged upon member nations. Also it sought cooperation on joint measures against subversive groups that may be responsible for terrorism or providing financial support to international terrorists. The other notable document that came from the Iran hostage crisis was the adoption of the Declaration on Terrorism and the US Hostages in Iran in December of 1980 by fifteen NATO foreign ministers. Here the declaration condemned terrorist acts, as well as calling for intergovernmental cooperation. Other similar, but less notable declarations emerged from the Iran hostage crisis, but they all had the same message: the condemnation of terrorism and acts perpetrated by terrorists as well as greater cooperation among governments of the world.\footnote{10}

During the period from 1976 to 1981 the institution of antiterrorism expanded within the United States government. There were eleven additional agencies and


departments created, as well as the restructuring of the command structure and the establishment of Delta Force, an elite special forces unit that primarily deals with counter-terrorism. However during this period there were notable policy weaknesses. Although President Carter did his best to address these, the incident of the Iran hostage crisis as well as the failure of Operation Eagle Claw brought into question the effectiveness and the capabilities of U.S. counter-terrorism policies, and the dramatically changing nature of world politics and crisis, as other issues besides the Cold War became increasingly important.  

At the conclusion of the Carter administration and on the cusp of the Reagan administration there were specific guidelines established by the United States in reaction to terrorism, as compiled by the Executive Committee on Terrorism, which was established by the National Security Council in 1979:

- We condemn all terrorist actions as criminal, whatever their motivation;
- We take all lawful measure to prevent terrorist acts and we will not accede to terrorist blackmail because to grant concession only invites further demands;
- We look to the host government when American are abducted overseas to exercise its responsibilities under international law to protect all person within its territories, and to insure the safe release of hostages;
- We maintain close and continuous contact with the host government during terrorist operations, supporting the host

government with practical intelligence and technical services;

- We understand the extreme difficulty of the decisions governments are often called upon to make during terrorist operations; and

- International cooperation to combat terrorism is important. We intend to pursue all avenues to strengthen such cooperation.\(^{12}\)

As you can see there were very clear weakness within the U.S. policy when dealing with terrorism. The only clear items established were that terrorism was a crime, the United States would not tolerate it, and that the U.S. would cooperate with other governments to combat terrorism. There was a need for change, and change would be met on the very first day that the next president, Ronald Reagan, assumed the highest office in the United States.

Counter-Terrorism Policy under the Reagan Administration, 1981-1989

Proceeding after his commencement as the President of the United States, Ronald Reagan devoted a portion of his inaugural address to specifically discuss the issue of terrorism. His address specifically said, "[terrorism] is a weapon that we as American do have. Let that be understood by those who practice terrorism and prey upon their

The reason that Reagan discussed terrorism during his inaugural address was because a major reason that he had been elected; as president was because of the way that President Carter had handled the Iranian hostage crisis. Specifically during his campaign, Reagan had made promise to direct large amounts of resources if he was elected to combating terrorism. On the sixth day of his administration, January 26, 1981, Ronald Reagan had a meeting. In his own personal journal President Reagan noted that he had, “a meeting on terrorism with heads of F.B.I.-S.S.-C.I.A. Sec’s of St., Defense & others. Have ordered they be given back their ability to function.” Effectively Ronald Reagan felt that the most effective manner of combating terrorism was by giving control back to each respective department. From this action one can see the importance that Reagan had placed on the issue of combating terrorism abroad. By giving control of combating terrorism back to each individualized agency Reagan gave them great autonomy instead of a central command structure, which is contrary to today’s combat against terrorism were the Homeland Security Act created by President George W. Bush is the central command structure.

As the focus of this paper the United States became involved with sending U.S. forces as members of the Multinational Force in Lebanon (MNF). These soldiers had the mission as peacekeepers to oversee the withdrawal of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). This was because in 1975 a civil war erupted throughout all of

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13 Willis, 2

Lebanon, and in 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon to specifically target the PLO that was within the Lebanese’s border. To ease the tensions that had erupted in Lebanon over the invasion by Israel, in 1982 the MNF was created.

As previously stated, the Islamic Jihad Organization targeted and bombed the Beirut Barracks in October of 1983. The Islamic Jihad Organization did so with the clear goal in mind of causing the removal of the foreign soldiers, even peacekeepers, from Lebanon. The Islamic Jihad Organization’s goal was accomplished because on February 2, 1984 the Marines were ordered to begin to withdraw from Lebanon by President Reagan, and the withdrawal was completed by February 26th.

Following the 1983 Beirut barracks bombing; the Department of Defense (DoD) conducted an independent inquiry into the bombing that would come to be known as the Long Commission Report. The DoD’s focus was on the security of the United States forces within the MNF, as well as looking into and assessing the terrorist incident. This commission was composed of Admiral Robert L. J. Long, USN (Ret), Chairman; the Honorable Robert J. Murray; Lieutenant General Lawrence F. Snowden, USMC (Ret), Lieutenant General Eugene F. Tighe, Jr, USAF, (Ret), and Lieutenant General Joseph T. Palastra, Jr, USA.15

The report concluded on December 20, 1983 that terrorism against military personnel and facilities was becoming more frequent and that there was a growing lethality

in terrorist incidents. The DoD report recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Joint Chiefs of Staff to develop a broad range of appropriate military responses to terrorism, as well as political and diplomatic actions be created.\(^\text{16}\) This idea came from the concept that:

Combating terrorism requires an active policy. A reactive policy only forfeits the initiative to the terrorists. The Commission recognizes that there is no single solution. The terrorist problem must be countered politically and militarily at all levels of government. Political initiatives should be directed at collecting and sharing intelligence on terrorist groups, and promptly challenging the behavior of those states which employ terrorism to their own ends. It makes little sense to learn that a State or its surrogate is conducting a terrorist campaign or planning a terrorist attack and not confront that government with political or military consequences if it continues.\(^\text{17}\)

As noted from the DoD report the United States needed to change its policy. It notes that the United States had a reactionary policy when dealing with terrorist incidents. The U.S.'s typical policy prior to 1983 was to deal with a terrorist incident after it had occurred. Instead the Commission was reporting that the United States needed to shift away from this policy. They recommended that the U.S. adopt a proactive policy. Reactionary policy was based on the idea of defense against a terrorist attack through the use of military force. Instead a proactive policy was meant to be a preemptive offensive policy. In the case of using the term “offense”, this policy was not solely directed at using large amounts of military force combat terrorism as well as preemptively strike against

\(^{16}\) *Report of the DOD Commission*, 124, 129.

\(^{17}\) *Report of the DOD Commission*, 128.

Following the DoD’s Commission report, on April 26m 1984 the White House sent to Congress National Security Decision Directive 138 (NSDD 138). “It signaled the Reagan administration’s desire to deter and prevent terrorism.”\footnote{Celmer, 63.} Specifically NSDD 138 stated, “perpetrators of terrorist acts are brought to justice” and for “anti-terrorism training and in some cases equipment, to foreign governments.” Also so too came the urging from President Regan that Congress pass: The Act for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime and Hostage-Taking which extended the “Federal jurisdiction over any kidnapping in which a threat is made to kill, injure, or continue to detain a victim in order to compel a third party to do or to abstain from doing something”. Also the Aircraft Sabotage Act, which Reagan hoped Congress would pass to cover the unlawful seizure of aircraft, covers certain offenses or acts committed aboard an aircraft, and establishing jurisdiction over certain offenses affecting the safety over civil aviation. The last act determining jurisdiction of certain offenses hadn’t in 1982 been ratified and Reagan was urging Congress to pass the legislation to satisfy the United States obligation under international law. The Final two provision urged by President Reagan under NSDD 138 were: the Act for Rewards for Information Concerning Terrorist Acts which created a reward system to
pay for information regarding terrorist acts either in the United States or against the United States abroad. Finally, the Prohibition Against the Training or Support of Terrorist Organization Act of 1984. Within this bill the Department of Justice was given greater ability to prosecute persons involved in supporting a group and states engaged in terrorism. It also prohibited individuals and groups from supporting or cooperating by helping recruit, solicit, or to train people to engage in terrorist activities.

With the Long Commission’s report already establishing the need for a shift in policy, NSDD 138 shows that the change that was called for was being followed. The Long Commission Report called for a greater use of the resources at the disposal of the United States. As such NSDD 138 started to show this trend of being more proactive. With the inclusion of the Justice Department, the creation of a reward system for money, and others NSDD 138 shows that following the 1983 Beirut bombing, U.S. foreign counter-terrorism policy had changed and was still changing to effectively combat the threat that was state-sponsored terrorism within the 1980’s.

Following along the chronology of the Reagan Administration, there are also a number of items that showcase the impact that the 1983 Beirut bombing had. In 1984 came the creation of the Act to Combat International Terrorism. This act was highlighted in NSDD 138, but only came into fruition later that year by crating a program of rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of terrorists. In 1985, in the hope of

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improving security at U.S. diplomatic posts around the world Congress approved of a $110 million dollar bill to fund the project. Also in 1985 came the creation of the Foreign Assistance Authorization Act. This act expanded the jurisdiction of the Federal Aviation Administration to inspect airports outside of the United States and established a procedure for issuing travel advisories for airports that fail to meet the minimum-security standards. In 1986 came the creation of the Omnibus Anti-Terrorism Act. Among the most notable parts of this bill was that murder or assault against an American overseas would be considered a United States crime. It also prohibited Americans from providing training or other services to foreign authorities that would aid and abet international terrorism. As for in 1983 the United States created the Antiterrorism Assistance Program (AAP). This was created as a bilateral agreement since the United States was moving away from multilateral agreements due to the desire of constructing a framework of multistate bilateral cooperation. The AAP during the Reagan administration trained over 1,500 civilian officials from thirty-two U.S. friendly foreign governments in the first two years of its existence.²¹

Though following the initial meeting that President had on his sixth day in office, terrorism was an important to President Reagan. He felt that by giving autonomy and greater control back to the governmental department, he would not suffer the blunders that President Carter had faced by being the controlling figure in his counter-terrorism policy, Reagan though suffered from similar problems as President Carter.

²¹ Celmer, 106 and Beyond Iran-Contra Affair, 6
During the Reagan Administration there was continual progress on United States’ foreign counter-terrorism policy, but there were problems with implementation of these policies. When Reagan decentralized the issue of terrorism, he neglected to establish a structure of hierarchy. Though the idea of giving greater control to each government agencies was a good idea based off of President Carter’s way of control U.S. counter-terrorism policy, but there was a problem for Reagan. Reagan’s approach left him out of the loop when it came to knowing and implementing U.S. counter-terrorism policy. At the same time with the executive branch not at the epicenter of the hierarchical structure, there was a vacuum of power that needed to be filled. This vacuum was to be fought over by Reagan’s Secretary of State George Shultz and his Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger.

These two men, George Shultz and Caspar Weinberger, had conflicting ideologies when it came towards counter-terrorism policy. These conflicting ideologies are best exhibited in their reactions toward the 1983 Beirut bombing. Following the initial attack in Beirut, Shultz felt that the appropriate response was a retaliatory strike against targets in Lebanon. Weinberger on the other hand believed that the United States should not attack anyone in retaliation for the bombing in Beirut, and his plan to not retaliate was chosen as the mission plan to follow the Beirut barrack bombing. Secretary of State George Shultz later felt that, “our responses should go beyond passive defense to consider means of active prevention, preemption and retaliation. Our goal must be to prevent and deter future terrorist acts.” Both Shultz and Weinberger would exert influence whenever they

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22 Beyond Iran-Contra Affair, 6.
could in the realm of counter-terrorism policy. Both of these men felt that their respective opinions and ideologies were the better one with either side still vying for control within the vacuum that Reagan had created.\textsuperscript{23}

Though continually throughout his presidency Ronald Reagan's counter-terrorism policies continued to evolve and grow more complex, they still had the issue of effective implementation. Though this problem can be partially attributed to Shultz and Weinberger, as already stated the real blame also lies on the laurels of President Reagan. Though Reagan had made terrorism a major issue during his campaign for the presidency in the 1980 election, and effectively the start of his presidency. Though terrorism started off as a key issue over the years, based on the evidence of not being involved within the meeting and policy planning session for counter-terrorism, President Reagan had kept himself out of the counter-terrorism loop. Statistically speaking this could be because from 1980 until 1982 the number of terrorist attack were low, but between 1982 until 1986 there was a large spike in terrorist incidents. (See Table 2) Based on this evidence it would seem that when terrorism became a prevalent and noteworthy issue, the president became involved and accountable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Incidents</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,116</td>
</tr>
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Such incidents that were notable that caused the president to become active within terrorism policy was a car bombing that took place in Beirut in 1985. Also in 1985 there was the hijacking of the *Achille Lauro* ship. Finally, there was the bombing of the Trans World Airlines Flight 840 during its flight to Athens, Greece. While over Argos, Greece the bomb was detonated which resulted in the death of 4 American and the injury of countless others. These incidents marked the rise in terrorist attacks and couple with the Iran-Contra Affair in 1986, President Reagan was already being portrayed as not knowing what was occurring within his own Administration. As such Ronald Reagan too an active role with counter-terrorism actions and policies, while still maintaining the greater power that was given to the F.B.I., C.I.A., S.S., et cetera. Reagan had finally completed the implementation and the changes that had been labeled out within the Long Commission’s
report that had been created as a way to combat terrorism based on their findings from the 1983 Beirut bombing.\textsuperscript{24}

\textit{Counter-Terrorism Policy, 1990-2000}

After the end of the Reagan administration came the administration of President George H. W. Bush. During President Bush’s administration came the conclusion of the Cold War. With the conclusion of the Cold War also came the fall of state-sponsored terrorism. During the Cold War this type of terrorism was based on the premise that the Soviet Union and the United States sponsored terrorists and terrorist activity all for the idea of not letting either side of the polarized world advance past the other. Though state-sponsored terrorism has persisted since the end of the Cold War, the major form of terrorism during the height of the Cold War was state-sponsored terrorism and as such the end of The Cold War marked, for a few years at least, the decline in terrorist attacks against the United States.

At the conclusion of the Cold War, so to came the conclusion of the Cold War mentality. President H. W. Bush’s administration soon became the grounds for a reduction in spending on the military, weapons, covert actions, et cetera. All the items

\textsuperscript{24} Spiegel, \textit{The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict}: 74; \textit{Beyond the Iran-Contra Affair}, 20-22; Tyler, \textit{A World of Trouble}, 120-122.
that had helped the United States during the Cold War were deemed as to not be needed within the post-war era, at least in the large quantities that had persisted in the Cold War. At the same time the majority of the items that had helped the United States in the Cold War, had also helped the United States combat terrorism. As such this evidence can be used as that the United States didn’t perceive terrorism to be a large threat to them, and that major terrorist incidents were not being conducted against the United States.

It wasn’t until the presidency of Bill Clinton that a resurgence of terrorist attacks against the United States where conducted, and as such counter-terrorism measure became a major priority again. On February 26, 1993—thirty-six days after Clinton took office, terrorists who the CIA would later reveal were working under the direction of Osama bin Laden detonated a timed car bomb in the parking garage below Tower One of the World Trade Center in New York City. Clinton responded by ordering his National Security Council, under the direction of Anthony Lake, and the FBI to find and punish those responsible. In his 1995 State of the Union address, Clinton proposed "comprehensive legislation to strengthen our hand in combating terrorists, whether they strike at home or abroad."25 He sent legislation to Congress to extend federal criminal jurisdiction, make it easier to deport terrorists, and act against terrorist fund-raising. In June 1995, Clinton issued Presidential Decision Directive 39, which stated that the United States "should deter, defeat and respond vigorously to all terrorist attacks on our territory and against our citizens." Furthermore, it called terrorism both a "matter of national security" and a crime.

In 1998, Clinton appointed Richard Clarke—who until then served in a drugs and counter-terrorism division of the CIA—to lead an interagency comprehensive counter-terrorism operation, the Counter-terrorism Security Group (CSG). The goal of the CSG was to "detect, deter, and defend against" terrorist attacks. Additionally, Clinton appointed Clarke to sit on the cabinet-level Principals Committee when it met on terrorism issues. In the final years of Clinton's presidency the CSG drafted a comprehensive policy paper entitled "Strategy for Eliminating the Threat from the Jihadist Networks of al Qida: Status and Prospects." The paper outlined a method to "roll back" al Qaeda over "a period of three to five years." 26

As the new threat of terrorism faced the United States with the deaths of its citizens, the president, Bill Clinton, responded in kind. (See Table 3, on next page, for U.S. Citizens Casualties) Following along the same lines that Ronald Reagan had, as suggested in the Long Commission, Bill Clinton adopted a proactive policy. Clinton used existing legal avenues, as well as the implementation of creating new avenues to combat terrorism. President Clinton used the F.B.I. to investigate terrorist attacks, such as the embassy bombings in 1998. As such instead of using military measures, Clinton associated terrorism as a crime and so he used governmental agency that specializes in criminal investigations. Also when Clinton used his State of the Union Address, he publicized the need to combat terrorism. Finally, the creation of the Counter-Terrorism

Security Group outlined the capabilities of using all of the available resources at the disposal of the United States to combat terrorism, and that the use of a proactive policy was a better choice of action compared to the previous policy of reaction to incidents and responding in kind with military force.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dead</th>
<th>Wounded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>66</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,611</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In conclusion, United States policies are ever changing and ever evolving. Overall they tend to be reactionary, specifically seen by the impact of the 1983 Beirut barracks bombing on United States policy. Although the policy changes were not seen for many years after the event, they did contribute to the establishment of clear and strong policy directives. United States policies, specifically those directed at countering terrorism were not strong and had many weaknesses prior to the 1983 Beirut bombing, and were reactionary without the potential to effectively deter terrorist actions against the United States except with the possibility of military force being used. Though the bombing did not cause counter-terrorism policies to become stronger by itself, it did have a hand in the contribution of their creation. There is very little scholarly research that has been done on the 1983 Beirut bombing and its influence on U.S. policy, let alone research done on how U.S. policy changes over time. With research like this accomplished there is a possibility for scholars to note how and why specific U.S. policies have changed over the years, and in the instance of counter-terrorism policy there is a great chance here to not the changes and why they occurred. The greatest lesson learned through studying the impact of the 1983 Beirut bombing on U.S. foreign counter-terrorism policy is that it shows that by pursuing ever possible measure imaginable, from intelligence gathering all the way to diplomacy, is the best possible way of combating terrorism today. The same was true during the administration of President Reagan and during President Clinton’s tenure. There is no finite way to combat terrorism, it has been around since Biblical times and will
be around for decades to come. The only effective way to combat terrorism is to pursue every possible avenue that a government can, in hope of protecting itself and its citizens.
Figure 2. Sketch map of the route taken by the terrorist bomber on the morning of 23 October 1983. Original map produced and compiled for the Department of Defense’s report on the 1983 Beirut Bombing, and taken from said report.
Bibliography

Primary Sources


President Bill Clinton, "Message to Congress Transmitting Proposed Legislation to Combat Terrorism," February 9, 1995


Secondary Sources


REQUEST FOR UNIVERSITY HONORS INDEPENDENT STUDY LEADING TO THE COMPLETION OF THE HONORS CAPSTONE PROJECT

COVER SHEET

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Semester of Registration

2/14/11
Date of Request

Summer 2011
Graduation Date
Proposal

1) Proposed Title: The Impact of the Bombing in Beirut, Lebanon in 1983 on the Development of the United States Counter-Terrorism Policy

2) I am researching the bombing in Beirut, Lebanon in 1983 and into the change (if at all) it had upon U.S. foreign counter-terrorism policy. Generally research into terrorism is looked at under a specific president, under a specific time period, following a specific organization or type of terrorism, or as a general history of terrorism itself. As such research is limited to an understanding of terrorism in a very general way. Instead my research is focusing on one specific issue, the Beirut Bombing, and how this event influenced U.S. policy directly. The hypothesis that I am putting forward is that the Beirut bombing influenced U.S. policy, and its influence can be seen for decades to come.

3) References:


4) This study into U.S. Counter-Terrorism Policy is being conducted through looking at both secondary and primary sources. I am using U.S. government documents from the Central Intelligence Agency as well as the State Department to ascertain trends in U.S. policy. I am also using bills and legislation presented to Congress, and the *Reagan Diaries* to also ascertain policy. I am specifically focusing on U.S. Counter-Terrorism policy from 1975-2000, to notice the change, if any, which occurred in policy from the Beirut Bombing. As for secondary sources I am focusing on works dealing with Counter-Terrorism and the United States by reputable and peer-reviewed authors. My study is a qualitative study, in that it is focusing on one key event during the Reagan Administration, researching into the impact it had on U.S. policy.

5) I am doing this capstone project in conjunction with my History 491, Senior Thesis, class. It is being taught by Dr. Aaron Fogleman, and as such all external dates for completion of specific phases are already determined in accordance with the syllabus for the class.

6) For expertise I have taken Modern American History courses that covert the time period for which I am researching. I have taken a Political Science Terrorism course with Dr. Kempton, as an Honor's Seminar course. I am currently taking, Spring 2011, a U.S. History course dealing with U.S. Foreign
Policy/Relations. Also I from 2007-2010 I was a three-time participant at the Harvard Model United Nations Conference as well as a three-time participant at the University of Pennsylvania Model United Nations Conference. I partook in these prestigious conferences as a member of the Rock Valley College Model UN team. During my tenure on the team when we went to conferences I was assigned to Committees that had as topics, terrorism in one form or another. As such I have gained an incalculable amount of knowledge about terrorism throughout the world, about the various organizations and their ideologies, and an understanding though that research of the history of terrorism.
Signature Page

Student Signature

Request Approved:

Aaron Fogelman
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16 Feb 2011
Date of Acceptance by Faculty Capstone Advisor

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24 Feb 2011
Date of Acceptance by Chairperson

University Honors Program Director

24 February 2011
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