

Remembering the 1983 Marine Barracks Bombing in Beirut

241 Americans killed by Iran-backed Hezbollah terrorists

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U.S. Marine Corps flag Remember Beirut 1983

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In 1920, following the First World War and the defeat of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, France received a League of Nations Mandate to govern Greater Syria, which included Lebanon. Lebanon remained predominantly Christian despite early Muslim dominance of Syria following the death of Muhammad in 632 and more than 400 years under the yoke of the Ottoman Empire. The French separated out the predominantly Christian Province of Lebanon, which was about 80 percent Christian, the majority being Maronite Catholic. To placate the ambitions of the highly secular Lebanese merchant class, they added to it the predominantly Muslim agricultural areas east of Mount Lebanon, diluting the Christian population to about 55 percent in the combined area of Greater Lebanon. But France intended to be the protector of Christian Lebanon regardless of its boundaries. A 1932 census indicated that the various Christian denominations constituted about 53 percent of the population of Greater Lebanon. The French withdrew in 1946, after Lebanon became an independent state of the United Nations.

Shiite Muslim migration from Syria and other predominantly Shiite areas of the Middle East began to further dilute the Christian majority. Because Iran is the great Shiite power of Islam, Iranian Muslim leaders began to dream of a Shiite empire spanning from Iran to the Mediterranean Sea, including Lebanon. Demographic changes resulted in a religious power struggle between Christians and Muslims. This led to a civil war from 1975 to 1990 that took at least 120,000 lives. The growing violence and Muslim dominance has caused about 750,000 Lebanese Christians to migrate to safer places around the world, including the United States. In 1983, a multinational military peace keeping force including French, British, Italian, and U.S. troops attempted an intervention to restore peace and order.

Meanwhile in Damascus, Syrian ambitions, Shiite radicalism, and Iranian hatred for the United States were framing a coalition of terror. At 1:05 in the afternoon of April 18, 1983, a large van carrying 2,000 pounds of explosives raced past a Lebanese police checkpoint in Beirut, accelerated up the circular driveway of the U.S. Embassy, and stopped in front of the Consular Section. Inside the Consulate was a long line of desperate Lebanese applying for visas to the United States as a way to flee the violence and hardships of the ongoing civil war. A few seconds later, an explosion equal to 500 pounds of TNT obliterated the van and brought the building down on its occupants. The blast was so powerful it shattered glass miles away and caused U.S. Navy ships off the coast to shutter. The attack left 58 people dead, including 18 Americans

The U.S. Navy bombardment and French Air Force bombing of Muslim positions threatening Lebanese Army units east of Beirut in September 1983 signaled a policy change that alarmed Syria. Syrian ambitions to control all of Lebanon began to focus on even more dramatic means for hastening the departure of the Multi-national Force (MNF) of American, French, Italian, and British troops. The new Syrian design for getting the Americans and French out of Lebanon had the zealous support of the radical Islamic government of Iran.

The U.S. government believes that the attack on the U.S. embassy in Beirut was planned in

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Damages were carried out by radical Shiite agents trained and backed by Iran. But this was only the beginning of a sinister partnership. According to a National Security Agency (NSA) intercept, later revealed in a U.S. Court, a message from Tehran also directed the Iranian ambassador to instruct Hussein Musawi, the leader of the terrorist group, Islamic Amal, **“to take a spectacular action against the United States Marines.”** Islamic Amal was a more militant breakaway faction of the Amal Shiite Islamists in Lebanon. It would later be called **Hezbollah** (the Party of Allah). Besides the ideological and religious enmity of Iran’s Islamic leaders toward the United States, U.S. intelligence analysts believe a major motivation for Iran’s collusion with Syrian plans was vengeance for U.S. backing of Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war.

The joint Iranian and Syrian plot to punish the U.S. for its interference in Lebanon and more generally in the Middle East was put into operation in the Syrian controlled Bekaa Valley in eastern Lebanon. Iranian Revolutionary Guard (IRG) troops involved in training Hezbollah terrorists were quartered at Baalbek in the northern part of the valley. They were reportedly assisted by Palestinian security experts. The IRG supplied the explosives and trucks to be used for Hezbollah operations in Beirut.

About 6:20 AM on October 23, 1983. A yellow Mercedes-Benz truck drove into the Beirut International Airport, where a battalion of the U.S. 2nd. Marine Division was headquartered. The sentries were expecting a water truck at that time, but it had been hijacked. Its replacement came from the Syrian-held Bekaa Valley—a high-explosives-packed truck provided by the Islamic Republic of Iran. The truck turned onto the access road leading to the Marine barracks and circled the parking lot. Perhaps, as is usual for Islamic martyrs, the driver was repeating to himself, “Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar” (Allah is the greatest). At the far end of the parking lot, he accelerated and crashed through the barbed wire fence that separated the parking lot from the four-story barracks. He passed between the two sentry posts, crashed through the gate, and barreled right into the lobby of the Marine headquarters. The sentries were too stunned and hampered by the diplomatically cautious rules of engagement to respond quickly.

In seconds, the suicide *mujahadeen* (*holy warrior*) detonated high explosives equivalent to 12,000 pounds of TNT. The tremendous force of the explosion lifted the entire four-story cinder-block headquarters and barracks into the air, causing the entire structure to collapse on itself. Moments later a massive shock wave and a ball of flaming gas hurled debris in all directions. The shock, fireball, and crashing rubble killed 241 military personnel and two Lebanese civilian caretakers. Of these, 220 were U.S. Marines. This was the largest Marine death total for a single day since 243 Marines were killed in the 1968 Tet Offensive in Vietnam.

Only 20 seconds later, a second truck drove down the ramp into a parking garage below a barracks of the 6th Parachute Regiment of the French Foreign Legion. The driver detonated his explosives and leveled the Legion headquarters and barracks building, killing 58 Legionnaires and a family of four Lebanese civilian caretakers.

France shortly thereafter retaliated by launching an air strike on Iranian Revolutionary Guard and

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Islamic Amal (Hezbollah) positions in the Syrian-held Bekaa Valley.

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On December 14, the awesome firepower and deadly accuracy of the Battleship New Jersey's 16-inch guns battered hostile positions inland of Beirut with its massive high-explosive projectiles.

On February 8, 1984, she rained down 270 shells on Druze and Syrian Muslim positions in the Bekaa Valley. Then 30 of her huge projectiles demolished the main Syrian command post, killing the Syrian commanding general in Lebanon and several other senior Syrian officers.

Despite earlier promises to stay the course in Lebanon, the U.S., France, Italy, and UK withdrew their forces from Beirut in February 1984. That was the same month that the Shiites took over West Beirut. About that same time the various Muslim terrorist groups initiated a wave of kidnappings against American officials and civilians in Beirut. On September 20, 1984, a car bomb exploded in front of the new temporary U.S. Embassy building in Beirut, killing 20 Lebanese civilians and two American soldiers.

Muslim birthrates and immigration are constantly advancing Islam's numerical predominance. According to the 2019 CA Factbook, Christians probably now represent no more than 36 percent of the 6.1 million population. Shia and Sunni Muslims each have about 29 percent, and the Druze about 5 percent, with the Muslim total at 63 percent. The same division of religious confessions prevents the Lebanese Army and police from being effective in keeping civil order. Effective control lies in the hands of over 40 militias protecting the various regional combinations of religious and political interests. Syrian troops were not withdrawn from Lebanon until 2006. Some level of conflict is ongoing in Lebanon, especially political assassinations and kidnappings. Like Israel, Lebanon is a prime Middle East flashpoint. The Lebanese Constitution provisions that protect Christian parliamentary and executive power in Lebanon are likely to be swept away with an increasing Muslim majority.

Lebanese Christians are a besieged people. Their political and religious liberties are in continuous jeopardy of annihilation by a growing Muslim majority within Lebanon and the religious ideological fanaticism of Iran and her allies in Iraq and Syria.

Often circumstances beyond human control place nations and peoples in terrible peril. But who would place their own homeland in the path of such fearful dangers? Yet many Western leaders, guided by false and foolish worldviews, are leading their nations headlong into similar calamity. They fail to see the moral and political dangers of witless multiculturalism or the inevitable fruits of extraordinarily imprudent immigration policies. They refuse to see the true nature of Islam clearly taught in the Koran and the teachings of Muhammad. Like Esau, they despise their own heritage and pursue cultural madness and self-destruction.