

More Americans May Die in Lebanon

By Daniel Pipes

The Lebanese groups that have attacked Americans over the past two years have repeatedly made clear their intention to eliminate the American presence from Lebanon. Yet the American reaction has been to disbelieve them. This is a serious mistake that has cost many lives and, unless repaired, promises to consume many more.

Americans must recognize that the terrorists mean just what they say — and must face up to the stark choice that this poses. Appeasing the terrorists would mean withdrawing every American from Lebanon. Deciding to stay, however, would commit the United States to use all means necessary, including ones costly and unpleasant, to protect American citizens and interests in Lebanon.

Consider the following sequence of

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events. In 1983, the United States Embassy in Beirut and the Marine barracks were bombed. In the first 10 months of 1984, the president of the American University in Beirut was assassinated, the embassy was bombed a second time and three Americans — a missionary, a television correspondent and a diplomat — were kidnapped.

In November 1984, a Shiite group tied to many of these attacks threatened to continue the violence. "We, the Islamic Jihad organization, warn . . . that we shall blow up all American interests in Beirut and any part of Lebanon. . . . We address this warning to every American individual residing in Lebanon."

In the next two months, a librarian was abducted and two Americans were tortured and killed by Lebanese Shiites in a hijacked plane. The American Embassy in Rome would have been bombed but for superb police work. Finally, an American priest, the Rev. Lawrence M. Jenco, was kidnapped in Beirut on Jan. 8.

Three days later, Islamic Jihad renewed its threat: "After the pledge that we have made to the world that no Americans would remain on the soil of Lebanon and after the ultima-

tum we have served on American citizens to leave Beirut, our answer to the indifferent response was the kidnapping of Mr. Jenco. . . . All Americans should leave Lebanon."

In reply, a State Department spokesman declared: "The U.S. is not going to be forced out of Lebanon." Islamic Jihad then answered that all five American hostages taken in the past months would be tried on charges of spying.

Islamic Jihad has repeatedly declared its goal to be the complete extirpation of the American presence in Lebanon — commercial, educational, journalistic and religious as well as governmental.

Although this intention could hardly be stated more emphatically or pursued more directly, American observers hesitate to take Islamic Jihad at its word. The audacity of its goal makes it seem implausible. Americans are accustomed to enmity based on political differences, not to hatred of their culture. The belief persists that the attacks are connected to specific policy goals. That Islamic Jihad aims to root out American influence, not change Washington's policy, remains unrecognized.

Ignoring Islamic Jihad's explicit

ambition fits a long tradition of paying inadequate attention to statements of intent that sound too strange to be plausible. Adolf Hitler spelled out his intentions in "Mein Kampf" but they were considered too outlandish to be taken seriously. Likewise, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini detailed his plans for an Islamic government in writing, but very few took him at his word.

Must the Islamic Jihad's vision of eliminating American influence be treated in similar fashion? That its aims do not fit familiar rubrics is no reason to discount them.

Americans must own up to the choice they face — withdrawing or resisting with every means at hand. If they decide to stay, they must be prepared to do combat with a determined enemy, by violent means if necessary, at considerable cost in American lives.

Should the price of staying be deemed too high, America should withdraw now, before more lives are lost. If standing firm be the choice, as the State Department seemed to indicate, then the threat posed by Islamic Jihad and other terrorist organizations must be countered. □

What Made the Lebanese Anti-American

To the Editor:

Daniel Pipes's Jan. 27 Op-Ed article, "More Americans May Die in Lebanon," is a striking example of a modern genre of political essay — the minute examination of a fragment of a problem without any mention, much less adequate discussion, of its history or context — that has been typical of press treatment of the Middle East in recent years.

Like those who discuss Israel's problems and achievements without mentioning the Palestinian people, Professor Pipes discusses the new anti-Americanism of some Lebanese without mentioning its causes: Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the ensuing two-and-a-half-year occupation (no more benign than the Israeli occupation of the West Bank) and America's well-known role as weapons supplier, diplomatic champion and financial rescuer of Israel.

This new anti-Americanism may well be so established that no change in our policy can correct it, but it is certain that it arose because of American policy. Before 1982, for example, the American University of Beirut made many friends for America. But America, by its cooperation with Israel in the 1982 invasion, chose to become an enemy. Before 1982, the uni-

versity's presidents were celebrated, not kidnapped and murdered. In the days before American-made cluster bombs fell on Lebanese civilians, the Lebanese thought as well of us as we thought of ourselves.

Professor Pipes is surely correct in saying that Americans will have to decide whether to leave Lebanon, to stay and die, or to stay and fight. But Americans must decide as a nation whether our foreign policy for the Middle East is to be determined after full and public discussion of American interests in that region; or whether the policy of militarism and uncritical support for Israel, contrived without public review, is to continue unchanged.

Let us hope our Government, our press and our public will choose open discussion.

PETER BELMONT

Lexington, Mass., Jan. 27, 1985

The writer is a steering-committee member of Search for Justice and Equality in Palestine/Israel.

Finding Lebanon Terrorism Roots in Iran

To the Editor:

In his Feb. 7 letter, Peter Belmont of Search for Justice and Equality in Palestine/Israel says the root causes of anti-American terrorism in Lebanon and of the terrorists' determination to eliminate the American presence in that country are the Israeli operation in Lebanon and U.S. support for Israel. Mr. Belmont is barking up the wrong tree.

As announced by the Administration and widely affirmed by area specialists, the bombing attacks on the U.S. installations in Lebanon were masterminded in Teheran. Their occurrence after June 1982 was far less related to the Israeli operation than to a calamitous Syrian move.

In December 1979, Iranian Revolutionary Guards arrived in Syria as "volunteers" to help the Palestine Liberation Organization in Lebanon. Vigorous protests by the Lebanese Government temporarily persuaded Damascus to keep them in Syria. In June 1982 the Syrians sent them into Lebanon, and they have since played a pivotal role in carrying out Iran's terrorist designs and in radicalizing Lebanon's large Shiite community.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's

quarrel with the U.S. is not over Israel. The Iranian leader's original grievance was American support for the Shah, and his principal objective is eliminating U.S. influence in the entire Middle East. The bombings, assassinations and kidnappings of Americans in Lebanon, immeasurably facilitated by the presence there of the Revolutionary Guards, were merely the opening moves in implementing the Ayatollah's grand design against the "Great Satan."

Hence, Mr. Belmont's diagnosis and his prescription are fallacious. The terrorist attacks on American targets in Lebanon were not caused by American cooperation with Israel. And even if the U.S. were to end support for Israel as Mr. Belmont suggests, the attacks would doubtless continue.

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