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Bush Confirms Death Of Hostage William Buckley

J By BRYAN BRUMLEY, Associated Press Writer

FILE ONLY

WASHINGTON

A Vice President George Bush, confirming for the first time the death of hostage William Buckley, said Tuesday night the U.S. embassy official kidnapped in Beirut in 1984 had been tortured and killed.

And, the vice president said the administration will "go the extra mile" to see that the remaining hostages are freed.

Buckley, identified in published reports as the head of the CIA station in Beirut when he was kidnapped on March 16, 1984, has been believed dead since the Islamic Jihad terrorist organization announced on Oct. 4, 1985, that it had executed him.

Islamic Jihad released a photo it says showed Buckley's body, but the corpse has never been found and U.S. officials had not confirmed his death. Buckley apparently died in June 1985.

Bush, in a speech delivered at a terrorism conference in Washington Tuesday night, did not specify which government agency Buckley worked for, did not say how he was sure that Buckley was dead, and did not give any details of his death. The vice president did not deviate from the prepared text released earlier and did not speak with reporters following the address.

The vice president, referring to the sale of U.S. anti-tank and anti-aircraft missile arms to Iran in 1985 and 1986, said that "the American people should know that the president is certain to this very day that he did not authorize 'arms for hostages.'" "At the same time you should know the concern that the president feels when an American in terrorist hands is tortured, and in the case of William Buckley, killed," Bush said.

Marlin Fitzwater, the vice president's press secretary, said the statement on Buckley's death "reflects an acceptance of the situation as we know it. The problem is Mr. Buckley's body has not been recovered. It has been difficult to acknowledge his death in the past," he added.

"The vice president feels there is enough evidence now to acknowledge it," Fitzwater said. He would not discuss what _ if any _ new evidence had been uncovered.

X In its fight against terrorism, Bush said, the administration would press for the extradition of Mohammed Ali Hamadi, a Lebanese arrested in West Germany last week in connection with the killing of U.S. Navy diver Robert D. Stethem by hijackers in June 1985.

"None of us are going to rest until Hamadi is brought to justice," Bush said. Earlier, State Department spokesman Charles Redman said the government had officially requested Hamadi's extradition.

Hamadi, 22, is wanted on U.S. charges of air piracy, murder and more than a dozen other crimes in connection with the hijacking of a TWA jet, commandeered between Athens and Rome and forced to land in Beirut.

In Beirut, new hopes were raised for the release of five Americans still held hostage. Anglican Church envoy Terry Waite canceled his flight home to England on Tuesday to stay in Beirut for face-to-face negotiations with representatives of the Islamic Jihad. Waite played an intermediary role in the release of three other American hostages.

To free the Americans, Bush said, the administration "will explore every channel, run down every lead. We will go the extra mile to free those hostages." Bush, who headed a presidential task force on terrorism in 1985-86, drew the distinction between contacting terrorists and bargaining with them, a point that has been made by other administration officials.

"I believe we must reaffirm our policy with a better understanding that there is a very thin and delicate line between talking with terrorists and negotiating with terrorists," Bush said.

"We do not make concessions to terrorists," Bush said, reaffirming a long declared U.S. policy. "We do not pay ransoms. We do not release prisoners. We do not encourage other countries to give in to terrorists. And we do not agree to other acts that might encourage future terrorism." The other Americans still held in Lebanon are:

Terry Anderson, 39, a native of Lorain, Ohio, chief Middle East correspondent for The Associated Press, abducted March 16, 1985.

Thomas Sutherland, 55, of Fort Collins, Colo., acting dean of agriculture at American University, kidnapped June 10, 1985.

Frank Herbert Reed, 53, of Malden, Mass., director of the Lebanese International School in Beirut, kidnapped Sept. 9, 1986.

Joseph Cicippio, 56, of Valley Forge, Pa., acting comptroller of American University, abducted Sept. 12, 1986.

Edward Austin Tracy, 56, of Rutland, Vt., a self-described writer of children's books. The date of his kidnapping is unclear. It was announced Oct. 21, 1986 by a group calling itself Revolutionary Justice Organization.

Islamic Jihad claims to hold Anderson and Sutherland. Revolutionary Justice Organization, another Shiite faction, claims to hold Cicippio and Tracy. Reed is believed held by a pro-Libya faction, the Arab Revolutionary Cells-Omar Moukhtar Forces.