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Vice President confirms Buckley was tortured and killed

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A Vice President George Bush last night confirmed for the first time that a U.S. Embassy official taken hostage in Beirut in 1984 had been tortured and killed.

He also reaffirmed the Reagan administration's anti-terrorism policy and said the United States was prepared to "go the extra mile" to free other Americans held hostage in Lebanon.

In doing so, Mr. Bush told a meeting of some 700 counter-terrorism and security experts, "you should know the concern the president feels, that we all feel, when an American in terrorist hands is tortured and, in the case of William Buckley, killed."

Mr. Buckley, reportedly the CIA's top Middle East counterterrorist expert, was kidnapped by pro-Iranian Shi'ite terrorists. According to published accounts, he was tortured by his captors and may have revealed the identities of some CIA personnel involved in counterterrorist activities.

Intelligence sources said the agency erred in sending Mr. Buckley to Lebanon since his cover had been blown and his identity had been revealed to pro-terrorist forces in the Middle East.

Islamic Jihad, the group claiming responsibility for kidnapping Mr. Buckley, announced on Oct. 4, 1985, that he had been executed.

The organization released a photo it said showed Mr. Buckley's body but the corpse was not found and his

death was not confirmed by U.S. officials.

Mr. Bush also sought to clarify the administration's initiative to what he called certain factions in Iran, and to respond to criticism that President Reagan had compromised principles by secretly selling arms to Tehran in a deal to secure freedom for American hostages.

Three Americans were released from Lebanon following U.S. air shipments of TOW anti-tank missiles and spare parts for Iran's U.S.-made anti-aircraft batteries.

"... A widespread perception exists that this administration traded arms for hostages, thereby violating our own strong policy of making no concessions to terrorists," Mr. Bush told a conference on "Terrorism in a Technological World."

"But the American people should also know that the president is certain to this day that he did not authorize 'arms for hostages.' "

Mr. Bush, who headed a presidential task force on terrorism in 1985-86, said U.S. policy remains firm: "We do not make concessions to terrorists. We do not pay ransoms.

"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," he said.

"Out of adversity comes opportunity and we now have the opportunity to restore the credibility of our policy, give it new meaning and move forward with renewed commitment in our battle against the terrorist threat."