

S E C R E T

The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC #7950-83
3 November 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: Charles E. Waterman
Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council

FROM : David Y. McManis
National Intelligence Officer for Warning

SUBJECT : Comment on the Adequacy of Warning in Beirut

1. The press is trying to establish a confrontation between the military and the Intelligence Community about the adequacy of warning of the bombing of the Marine Corps Barracks in Beirut. My views are as follows.

2. There clearly was a failure of warning in that the barracks was indeed blown up. However, that does not necessarily make either the Corps or the Community culpable. The NID did indeed contain a generic warning; however, as P. X. Kelley notes, no one warned of the specific incident. This highlights the warning dilemma. Early warning tends to be ambiguous and responsive action very costly in resource terms. The critical issue in the Beirut bombing is that the Commander who was on the scene was aware of the threat and took what he believed to be prudent actions against that generic threat. Had the warning been more specific he clearly would have taken more specific actions. However, as is too often the case with terrorist actions the warning was not specific, the actions were general security, and the result was significant loss of life. Thus the system worked but the warning failed and both the warners and the decision makers responded appropriately although inadequately.


David Y. McManis

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