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ARTICLES

U.S. Ambassador, Economic Counselor and Embassy Driver  
Assassinated in Beirut

Francis E. Meloy, Jr., the U.S. ambassador to Lebanon; Robert O. Waring, the economic counselor; and Zuhayr Mughrabi, the ambassador's driver/bodyguard, were found shot to death in the Ramlet al-Beida section of Beirut on 16 June. The newly arrived ambassador, accompanied by Waring, was on his way to a meeting with President-elect Sarkis set for 1100 at the latter's home in the eastern sector of the city, which is Christian held. The men had left the embassy in the Moslem-controlled western section at 1040. The armor-plated car was not seen after passing the last checkpoint on the Moslem side. A security escort car had turned back before seeing the ambassador's car cross into the Christian section. Somewhere between the Moslem checkpoint and the Christian side the three men were abducted. This area is known as no-man's land, controlled by thugs and street gangs, many of which have some type of affiliation with the better known Palestinian groups such as the PFLP. At 1055 the embassy received a garbled radio message which was interpreted as the pre-arranged codeword to indicate safe arrival on the Christian side.

The first indication that something was amiss came when the driver's wife advised the embassy of a telephone call she had received. An anonymous caller said that Zuhayr had been kidnapped with two other people, but he was okay. They were after the two others and not Zuhayr. Mrs. Mughrabi said the telephone call was similar to the one she had received when her husband was kidnapped on a previous occasion, about a year ago. (See the 20 May 1975 issue.)

On 17 June the Palestine Liberation Organization announced that it had captured the killers and that they would be handed over to the joint Arab peacekeeping force, which had not yet arrived in Lebanon, for disciplinary action. The communique did not provide any details on the identities or the capture. Several unconfirmed press reports indicated that five men were in PLO custody and that they belong to the Arab Communist Organization, a radical leftist Lebanese group responsible for attacking American firms in the past.

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Some press accounts identified the killers as members of the Lebanese Socialist Revolutionary Organization, also known as the Shibbu gang, which is believed to have merged into the ACO. (See the issues of [redacted] (b)(3) [redacted] 29 July 1975.) At this point, it is not known what group is responsible for the murders.

The bodies of Francis Meloy and Robert Waring were carried out of Lebanon to Syria by a British-led convoy on 18 June. They were flown to the United States on 19 June for burial. (UNCLASSIFIED)

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