

# U.S. MARINES IN LEBANON 1982-1984



HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION  
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

*FRONT: Capt Richard C. Zilmer leads his Company F, Battalion Landing Team 2/8 Marines ashore from the landing ship Saginaw (LST 1188) at the port of Beirut on 29 September 1982. (U.S. Navy Photo)*

# U.S. MARINES IN LEBANON 1982-1984

by  
Benis M. Frank



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# Foreword

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This book is a straightforward account of the deployment of Marines to Lebanon in the period 1982-1984. The story begins with the landing of the 32d Marine Amphibious Unit (32d MAU) in Beirut in August 1982 at the request of the Lebanese Government to assist, together with French and Italian military units, in supervising the evacuation of the Palestine Liberation Organization. It ends in February 1984 with the withdrawal of the 22d Marine Amphibious Unit following the effective end of its mission and the nearly complete breakdown of order in Lebanon. In between is an ambiguous Marine mission of presence of 18 months' duration. Together with the British, French, and Italian members of the Multi-National Force, the Marines attempted, as "peacekeepers," to assist the Lebanese Government in achieving stability and ending the factional fighting which has all but destroyed Lebanon as a viable political entity.

For any number of reasons, none of which are the concern of this book, the mission of peacekeeping failed, and in the process, those who were there to help Lebanon achieve the peace so many Lebanese wanted—but too many others did not—were sorely tried and severely mauled. As a history strictly of the Marines' role in Lebanon, this book does not deal with the major, high-level decisions of the administration which put and kept Marines in that country. Nor does the book deal with American diplomatic efforts in the Middle East in this period except in those instances when the MAU Marines were directly involved. This is simply the story of Marine Corps presence and operations in Lebanon for the period concerned. It draws no conclusions.

The author, Benis M. Frank, is the head of the Marine Corps Oral History Program. As such, in two trips to Beirut and three to Camp Lejeune, he interviewed the major members of the staffs and commands of the three MAUs (22d, 24th, and 32d) which were deployed to Beirut. For his second trip to Beirut in October 1983, he went by way of Grenada, where he joined the 22d MAU in transiting the Atlantic, conducting interviews about the Grenada operation en route to Lebanon. Mr. Frank graduated from the University of Connecticut in 1949 with a bachelor of arts degree in history. His schooling was interrupted by World War II, in which he served as an enlisted Marine with the 1st Marine Division in the Peleliu and Okinawa operations and the occupation of North China. He was a candidate for a master of arts degree in international relations at Clark University when he left school in 1950 to return to active service in the Korean War as a commissioned officer, again serving with the 1st Marine Division.

Mr. Frank joined the Marine Corps Historical Program in 1961. He is the coauthor of *Victory and Occupation*, the final volume of the official five-volume series, *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, and author of *Halsey*; *Okinawa, Touchstone to Victory*; *Okinawa: The Great Island Battle*; and *Denig's Demons and How They*

*Grew: A History of Marine Corps Combat Correspondents, Photographers, and Artists.*  
He pioneered the Marine Corps Oral History Program and has headed it since 1966.

In the interests of accuracy and objectivity, the History and Museums Division welcomes comments on this history from interested individuals.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "E. H. Simmons". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "E".

Edwin H. Simmons  
Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)  
Director of Marine Corps History and Museums

# Preface

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*U.S. Marines in Lebanon, 1982-1984*, is based primarily on the monthly command chronologies and biweekly situation reports of the Marine amphibious units which were deployed to Lebanon as well as other related official documentation, all of which resides in the archives of the Marine Corps Historical Center. Although none of the information in this history is classified, some of the documentation on which it is based remains so. A considerable number of "issue-oriented" oral history interviews concerned with the deployments were also used in the preparation of this book.

Following the return of the 32d MAU from Lebanon and before its redeployment in early 1983, the author began a series of interviews with the key personnel in all the MAUs deployed to Lebanon to augment the paper record of this 18-month period in Marine Corps history. Before *U.S. Marines in Lebanon* was completed, a total of 119 interviews had been conducted. They are now accessioned in the Marine Corps Oral History Collection.

The author is grateful to a number of individuals for their professional, administrative, and moral support during the research and writing phases for this book. First, Mrs. Alexandra B. Chaker, his assistant in the Oral History Section, prepared the initial manuscript for typography and was in all other ways entirely supportive. Mrs. Ann A. Ferrante, of the Reference Section, responded nobly when called upon to research the voluminous Lebanon files in the section. Similarly, Mrs. Joyce Bonnett, the Center archivist, consistently provided pertinent documentation as soon as it arrived in the Center, as did Miss Evelyn A. Englander, head librarian.

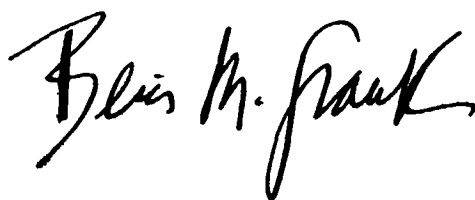
The various production phases this volume went through before publication were professionally handled by the head of the Publications Production Section, Mr. Robert E. Struder. His able associate, Mrs. Catherine A. Kerns, set the manuscript in type. Mr. William S. Hill, the History and Museums Division graphics specialist, is responsible for the design and layout of this book. The author prepared the index.

The author gratefully acknowledges the support of the Director of Marine Corps History and Museums, Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, who conceived of this project and kept the author's "feet to the fire" to ensure completion of a publishable, factual, and objective manuscript. Two Deputies for Marine Corps History, Colonels John G. Miller and James R. Williams, also read, commented on, and shepherded the project to its completion. Gratitude is also extended to Mr. Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Chief Historian, who was the author's mentor and coauthor many years ago in writing *Victory and Occupation*, and who unfailingly and continually offered his considerable expertise in Marine Corps history, research and writing, and his extensive editorial guidance.

The author also extends his appreciation to the former commanders of the 22d, 24th, and 32d Marine Amphibious Units—Brigadier Generals Jim R. Joy and James M. Mead, and Colonels Thomas M. Stokes, Jr., and Timothy J. Geraghty—for having reviewed and commented on the draft manuscript of this book and for their hospitality and cooperation when he visited their commands to conduct oral history interviews. Major Jack L. Farmer, Assistant S-3 in the 32d MAU and S-3 of the 22d MAU, read the draft, was interviewed several times for the history, and provided considerable background information to enhance the story, as did Commander George W. Pucciarelli, CHC, USN, 24th MAU chaplain at the time of the Beirut tragedy. The expert reviews and comments of both J. Robert Moskin, author of *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, and Larry Pintak, former CBS Mid-East correspondent who covered Beirut during the Marine deployments there are noted with deep appreciation. Similarly, the author is grateful to Major Fred T. Lash, who headed the MAUs' Joint Public Affairs Bureau in Beirut, for having hosted and guided him when he was in Lebanon and for lending his collection of photographs and political cartoons for use in this book. Three members of the Department of Plans, Policies, and Operations at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps—Colonel Gerald J. Oberndorfer and Lieutenant Colonels Arthur S. Weber, Jr., and Robert P. Mauskapff—were also quite helpful in reviewing the draft manuscript. The author also acknowledges with gratitude the cooperation and insights given by all of those serving Marines who were interviewed about their Beirut experiences, and those who read and meaningfully commented on the draft. This is, in a large way, really their history.

It would be totally ungracious for the author not to acknowledge the considerable moral support he received from his wife Marylou, as he wrote this history. She read the draft manuscript and made cogent recommendations which were sage, pertinent, and gratefully accepted. The author, however, is responsible for the contents of this work and any errors of omission or commission which appear.

Finally, this book is dedicated to those United States Marines, sailors, and soldiers who gave “presence”—and their lives—in Beirut and are now no more.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Benis M. Frank". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

BENIS M. FRANK



# Table of Contents

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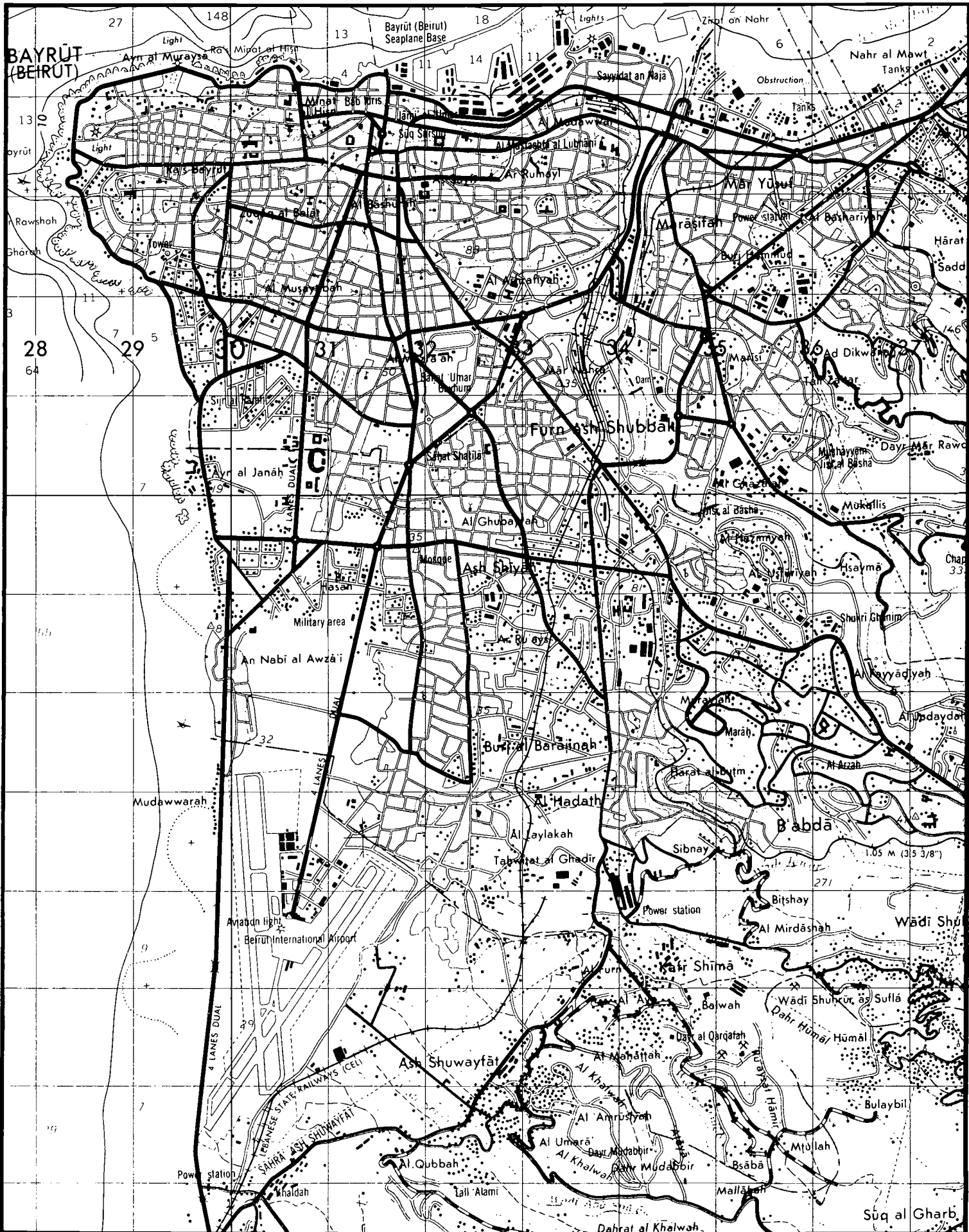
Foreword .....	iii
Preface .....	v
Table of Contents .....	vii
Maps .....	ix
CHAPTER 1 The Bombing .....	1
CHAPTER 2 Beirut I—Evacuating the PLO, 25 August-10 September 1982 .....	6
CHAPTER 3 Beirut II—The Mission of Presence, 29 September-1 November 1982 .....	22
CHAPTER 4 Beirut III—An Expanded Experience, 1 November 1982-15 February 1983 .....	36
CHAPTER 5 Beirut IV—Circumstances Change, ‘Presence’ Remains, 15 February-29 May 1983 .....	49
CHAPTER 6 Beirut V—Disaster Strikes, 30 May-19 November 1983 .....	70
CHAPTER 7 The Investigation .....	106
CHAPTER 8 Beirut V Goes Home .....	111
CHAPTER 9 Beirut VI—End of the USMNF, 20 November 1983-26 February 1984 .....	116
Notes .....	141
Appendices	
A. Chronology: Marines in Lebanon, 1982-1984 .....	149
B. Marine Command and Staff List .....	154
C. Foreign Multi-National Force Units .....	161
D. Remarks by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Senate Armed Services Committee, 31 October 1983 .....	163
E. Long Commission Conclusions and Recommendations .....	172
F. American Deaths in Beirut .....	178
G. Unit Commendations .....	185
Index .....	191



# Maps

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Beirut and its environs.....	x
Route taken by terrorist bomber, 23 October 1983.....	2
Tactical dispositions of 32d MAU, 25 August 1982.....	14
The zones of the Multi-National Force, September 1982.....	29



*Beirut and its environs.*

# CHAPTER 1

## The Bombing

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Dawn broke over Beirut at 0524 local time on Sunday, 23 October 1983.<sup>1</sup> The temperature was already a comfortable 77 degrees F, but perhaps a bit warm for 24th Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) sentries posted around the perimeter of the MAU headquarters compound at Beirut International Airport. They were in full combat gear—helmets, upper body armor—and carried individual weapons. Since it was Sunday, the compound was relatively quiet for a modified holiday routine was in effect. Reveille would not go until 0630, and brunch would be served between 0800 and 1000. In the afternoon, there would be time to write letters, read, and perhaps toss a football about. In the afternoon there might be a barbecue—hamburgers, hot dogs, and all the trimmings.<sup>2</sup>

Relatively little traffic was observed in the early morning hours on the airport road which runs between Beirut and the airport terminal. This road is just west of and runs parallel to the MAU compound. The Ma-

rines had been warned to be alert for suspicious looking vehicles which might, in fact, be terrorist car bombs. And so Lance Corporal Eddie A. DiFranco, manning Post 6 (See Figure 1), one of the two posts in front of and south of the building housing the headquarters compound and attached elements of BLT 1/8 (Battalion Landing Team 1/8, built around the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines), closely watched a yellow Mercedes Benz stake-bed truck, which entered the parking lot south of his post. The truck circled the lot once, then departed, turning south at the gate and heading towards the terminal.

A little less than an hour later—it went down in the reports as 0622—DiFranco saw what appeared to be the same truck enter the same parking lot. This time, the vehicle accelerated to the west, circled the lot once, then headed toward the wire barricade separating the parking lot from the BLT building. Turning right, it ran over the wire barricade and sped

*A low oblique of the BLT headquarters building, before the October bombing.*

Photo from the *Long Commission Report*



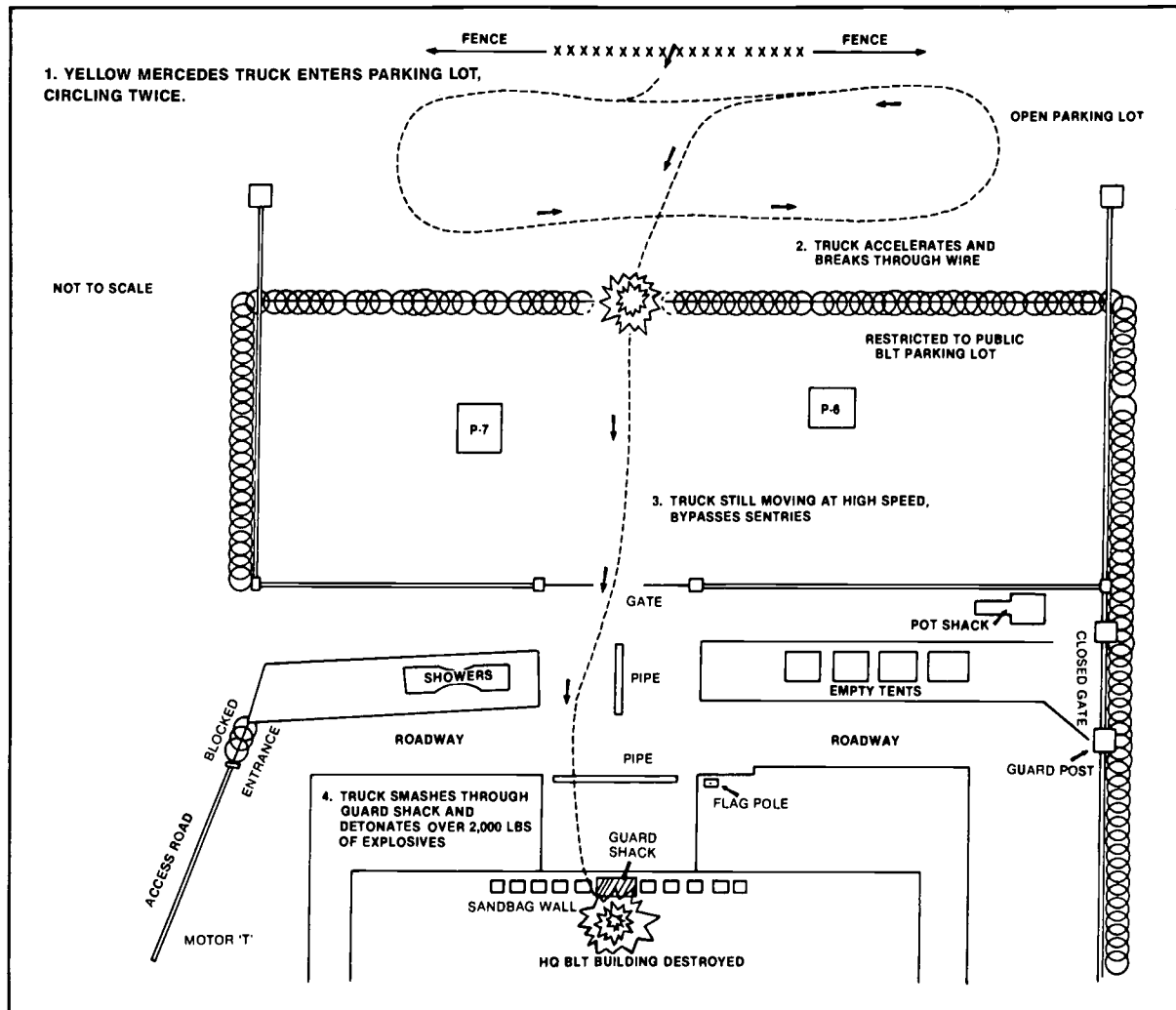


Figure 1

From Long Commission Report

*Sketch map of the route taken by the terrorist bomber on the morning of 23 October 1983.*

between Posts 6 and 7 into the lobby of the building, where it detonated with the explosive force of more than 12,000 pounds of TNT.

Manning Post 7 was Lance Corporal Henry P. Linkkila, who heard the truck as it sped across the concertina fence. He inserted a magazine into his M-16 rifle. He chambered a round and shouldered his weapon, but could not fire. The truck had already entered the building.

Lance Corporal John W. Berthiaume was guarding Post 5, at the fence just below the southwest corner of the BLT headquarters. He correctly guessed the truck's mission, but could not react in time either to fire at the truck or to take cover in his guard bunker. He was knocked to the ground by the explosion.

Sergeant of the Guard Stephen E. Russell was at the main entrance of the building at his post, a small sandbagged structure that looked toward the back entrance

to the building, when he heard the truck as the driver revved up its engine for the dash into the lobby. Russell turned to see the vehicle pass through the permanent fence encircling the compound, and head straight for his post. He wondered what the truck was doing inside the compound. Almost as quickly, he recognized that it was a threat. He ran from his guard shack across the lobby toward the rear entrance, yelling, "Hit the deck! Hit the deck!" Glancing over his shoulder as he ran, he saw the truck smash through his guard shack. A second or two later the truck exploded, blowing him into the air and out of the building. Severely injured, Russell regained consciousness and found himself in the road outside the BLT headquarters with debris from the explosion all around him.

It had finally happened. An explosive-laden truck had been driven into the lobby of a building billet-



USMC Photo by SSgt Robert E. Kline

*The front entrance of the BLT headquarters building in August 1983 when occupied by BLT 1/8. The truck bomb entered at the point where the jeep is shown parked.*

ing more than 300 men, and detonated. The explosion had collapsed the BLT building, reducing it to rubble in seconds.

When the last body had been retrieved from the ruins and the final death count had been tallied, it reached a total of 241 Americans. Of this number, 220

were Marines; the remainder, Navy medical personnel and soldiers assigned to the MAU. For the Marines, this was the highest loss of life in a single day since D Day on Iwo Jima in 1945.

The suicide attack by a single terrorist changed the course of American presence in Lebanon.

*The rear (north) side of the BLT building immediately after the bombing.*







## CHAPTER 2

# Beirut I—Evacuating the PLO

## 25 August-10 September 1982

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Marines had been in Beirut before—in 1958, to be exact.<sup>1</sup> In July of that year, Lebanon was threatened by a civil war between Christian Maronites and Muslims. Additionally, Lebanon faced a potential Syrian invasion in support of the Muslims. Accordingly, on 14 July, in response to the internal and external threats, Lebanese President Camille Chamoun requested American and British assistance. That same day, President Dwight D. Eisenhower consulted with the Joint Chiefs of Staff about the Lebanon crisis, studied their recommendations, and ordered the deployment of U.S. troops to Lebanon.

As a matter of happenstance as well as of contingency planning, three Marine battalion landing teams were then in the Mediterranean. Afloat just north of Malta was Lieutenant Colonel John H. Brickley's BLT 1/8, its Mediterranean deployment near an end, ready to be relieved by the recently arrived BLT 3/6, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert M. Jenkins, on board ships steaming from Crete to Athens. The third BLT was 2/2, Lieutenant Colonel Harry A. Hadd commanding, off the coast of Crete and closest of the three to Lebanon. Another Marine command in the Mediterranean was Brigadier General Sidney S. Wade's 2d Provisional Marine Force, which had been formed from troops of the 2d Marine Division at Camp Lejeune in January for a planned combined exercise with the British Royal Marines and the Italian navy on Sardinia. As the situation unfolded in Lebanon and the Marines landed, General Wade eventually took command of all units which had landed.

President Eisenhower's order to deploy the Marines was passed through the chain of command, directing BLT 2/2 to land at 1500 on 15 July on Red Beach. Four miles south of Beirut, just west of Beirut International Airport, and just north of Khaldah, Red Beach would be the scene of another Marine landing nearly 24 years later.

Lieutenant Colonel Hadd's BLT 2/2 landed on time. Before its four rifle companies reached their objective, Beirut International Airport, they were forced to pick their way gingerly through beach obstacles presented by bikini-clad sunbathers and vast numbers of soft drink and ice cream vendors. At the airport, the Marines set up a defense perimeter for the night.

The next day, BLT 3/6 began landing at Red Beach

at 0730. At the same time, Hadd's battalion prepared to move into Beirut. After some delays, BLT 2/2 finally left the airport at 1230, and by 1900 had reached the city, where it took control of the dock area and posted security guards around the American Embassy as well as critical bridge sites.

On 18 July, BLT 1/8 landed over Yellow Beach, near Juniyah, four miles north of Beirut. Concurrently, elements of the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, which had been airlifted from Camp Lejeune by way of Cherry Point, began arriving at Beirut International Airport. Also arriving was the U.S. Army 24th Airborne Brigade which had flown in from Germany and was commanded by Major General Paul D. Adams, who eventually was named Commander in Chief, American Land Forces, comprised of all American troops in Lebanon.

The turmoil in Lebanon settled down after national elections on 31 July. General Fuad Chehab, commander of the Lebanese army, was elected president and on 23 September took office as the head of a coalition government including dissident parties which had been opposed to the previous administration. In mid-August, the first of the Marine BLTs left Beirut, and by 18 October, with the exception of the Security Guard Marines at the American Embassy, all Marines had left Lebanon. While the 2d Marine Division units were in country, there had been only minor confrontations with the Lebanese army and the rebels. A few shots had been fired by both sides, but there were no casualties.

In July 1976, when protracted factional fighting in Beirut threatened the lives and safety of American citizens, Marines were called upon once more, this time to assist in a non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO). The 12-man detachment of the Marine Security Guard at the American Embassy in Beirut, and the naval attache, Marine Colonel Forrest J. Hunt, had radio communication with the evacuating unit, Task Force 61. They controlled the orderly evacuation of 160 American civilians and 148 foreign nationals on 27 July.

Despite efforts of the international community to alleviate the bloodletting in Lebanon, the fighting continued, fluctuating with the fortunes and the strength of each of the factions. The Marines entered



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A17458

*Marines of Battalion Landing Team 2/2 form a LVT and tank column on the beach road for the move into Beirut on 16 July 1958. They were the first of the 2d Provisional Marine Force to enter the city on this date. The Mediterranean is in the background to the left.*

Lebanon once again in June 1982, destined to play a larger role than they had ever anticipated.

On 25 May 1982, the 32d MAU, commanded by Colonel James M. Mead, a veteran Marine aviator known as "Large James" because of his height, embarked in the ships of Commodore (Captain, USN) Richard F. White's Amphibious Squadron (Phibron) 4 at Morehead City, North Carolina, for deployment to the Mediterranean as the landing force of the Sixth Fleet.<sup>2</sup> The MAU was comprised of Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 2/8 (Lieutenant Colonel Robert B. Johnston), Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron (HMM) 261 (Lieutenant Colonel Graydon F. Geske), and MAU Service Support Group (MSSG) 32 (Major William H. Barnetson). In all, it had a total of 1,746 Marines and 78 Navy personnel. The BLT included several elements from its parent 2d Marine Division: an artillery battery, a tank platoon, an assault amphibious vehicle (AAV) (amtrac) platoon, a reconnaissance platoon, an antitank (TOW) section, and a communications section.<sup>3</sup>

Like the aviation combat element of other MAUs deployed to the Mediterranean, HMM-261 was a composite squadron. As such, it was comprised of 12 Boeing Vertol CH-46E "Sea Knights," 4 Sikorsky CH-53D "Sea Stallions," 4 Bell AH-1T "Sea Cobras," and 2 Bell UH-1N "Iroquois," more often known as the "Huey."

During the Atlantic crossing, the MAU headquarters continued planning and preparing for a joint amphibious exercise in Portugal, 21-26 June. The staff also began preparing the MAU input to a Task Force

61/Task Force 62 operation order for contingency operations in Lebanon.<sup>4</sup> As the task force neared the Atlantic coast of Spain, however, events in the eastern Mediterranean were combining to disrupt the original deployment schedule. At 0930 on 6 June, the 32d MAU reached Rota, where, at a later date, it would relieve the 34th MAU as the landing force of the Sixth Fleet.\*

As Colonel Mead later wrote:

Within a few hours of tying up at Rota, the message traffic was swelling with stories of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) attacking into southern Lebanon. At first, the Israeli objectives seemed limited to a 40-kilometer artillery buffer zone in southern Lebanon to protect northern Israel from the shelling of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). A few days later, the Israelis would attack Syrian surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites in the Bekaa Valley of central Lebanon and eventually encircle the capital city of Beirut in an attempt to destroy the PLO and thereby neuter their political and military influence in the region.<sup>5</sup>

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\*To identify them more clearly as units of II Marine Amphibious Force, the 32d and 34th MAUs were later redesignated 22d and 24th MAUs, respectively. For the 34th MAU, the redesignation took place on 7 July 1982 at Camp Lejeune when it reverted from operational control of the Commander, Sixth Fleet to that of the Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet/Commander, Second Fleet (CinCLantFlt/2d Flt) and then to Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic, (FMFLant) as noted in 24th MAU SitRep No. 1, dtd 12Jul82. Because it was an element of the Sixth Fleet in July, the 32d MAU did not become the 22d MAU until 1 December, when it was in Camp Lejeune and once again under FMFLant control. Simply put, FMFLant had administrative control of the MAUs while the numbered fleets had operational control.

Anticipating orders to evacuate American citizens from Lebanon, the MAU quickly rearranged the cargo holds of the Phibron 4 ships in order to support the evacuation operations. Also on 6 June, the MAU arrived at Rota where an informal turnover meeting was held with representatives of Phibron 8 and the 34th MAU.<sup>6</sup>

The elements of Task Forces 61 and 62 were placed on immediate alert and steamed out of Rota on 7 June at 0600, proceeding at maximum speed to their designated operating area in the Eastern Mediterranean approximately 100 miles off the coast of Lebanon.<sup>7</sup>

While underway during the next two weeks, the MAU and the Phibron conducted extensive planning and training in preparation for the evacuation of American citizens and foreign nationals from Lebanon. Reporting to Lieutenant General John H. Miller, commanding the Norfolk-based Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic (FMFLant), Colonel Mead stated that he had established effective liaison with the Fleet Marine Officer of the Sixth Fleet, Colonel Jim R. Joy, who was to play a major role in the Marines' Beirut experience. He further stated that, "At this point, we have a grasp of all problem areas and 32d MAU is ready to accomplish its mission."<sup>8</sup> On 17 June, Phibron 4 and 32d

MAU officially relieved Phibron 8 and 34th MAU as Task Forces 61 and 62 respectively of the Sixth Fleet.

Prior to their departure from the United States for deployment in the Mediterranean, the MAU and the Phibron had spent a good portion of their time training together practicing the evacuation of civilians from trouble spots. "The procedures were updated by increased training with the TACSIT (*Tactical Situations*) booklet, which provided a series of wargame type scenarios. . . ."<sup>9</sup>

In addition, the 32d MAU staff had reviewed the conduct of Operations Eagle Pull and Frequent Wind, the evacuation of civilians and military from Phnom Penh and Saigon in 1975 and had re-read the articles concerning these operations which appeared in the *Marine Corps Gazette*.<sup>10</sup>

On 15 June, the 32d MAU and Phibron 4 were placed on a three-hour alert to prepare for evacuation operations. Nine days later, they received the order to execute. The runways at Beirut International Airport had been heavily shelled and were considered not usable, and the road from Beirut to Damascus ran through the scene of heavy fighting. Accordingly, it was determined that the civilians would be evacuated from the port of Juniyah, approximately five miles northeast of Beirut. Initially, the MAU received reports

*A Navy landing craft, utility (LCU) carries civilian evacuees to Amphibious Squadron 4 shipping in the waters off Beirut during the emergency in Lebanon in June 1982.*





*Using makeshift table tops, evacuees dine with gusto on Navy rations en route to Cyprus.*

that there would be more than 5,000 evacuees, but this figure proved to be quite inflated.<sup>11</sup>

The first landing craft, an LCU, was at the dock in Juniyah at 0800 on 24 June. There was not an evacuee in sight; they had not assembled in Beirut at the designated time. When they did assemble, to aggravate matters, they brought too much luggage. There were not enough buses to carry both the evacuees and all their belongings, but by the end of the day, 580 evacuees had been boated to the ships *Nashville* (LPD 13) and *Hermitage* (LSD 34). Heavily involved in the operation was Major William H. Barnetson's MAU Service Support Group (MSSG) 32, which established an Evacuation Control Center where each evacuee's name and passport number along with other appropriate information were entered into a computer and sent to designated State Department agencies. The MSSG also provided health and comfort items (including toys for the children) from the Landing Force Operational Readiness Material (LFORM), a contingency block that each MAU takes to sea.<sup>12</sup>

Also playing a major role in receiving the evacuees on board the *Nashville* was Commander George A. Gunst, the MAU's Catholic chaplain. Father Gunst was asked to wear his civilian clothes with clerical collar,

so that his presence as a minister might have a calming effect on the evacuees, who had been uprooted from their homes in Beirut. Marines gave up their sleeping spaces for the overnight trip to Larnaca, Cyprus. Enroute, they delighted the children with magic shows and other forms of entertainment.<sup>13</sup>

After debarking the civilians at Larnaca, the *Hermitage* and *Nashville* rejoined the other ships of the Phibron. "Morale was sky high as all felt personal satisfaction for helping remove men, women, and children from the real danger of Lebanon where combat actions were intense in many sectors."<sup>14</sup>

On 23 June, Task Forces 61 and 62 were put on a two-hour alert to provide helicopter transportation in support of Department of State peace negotiators. HMM-261 soon became known as the "Cammie (camouflage) Cab Service," shuttling White House Special Envoy Philip C. Habib and Ambassador Morris Draper and their parties, between the flagship *Guam* (LPH 9) and Larnaca, Beirut, and Tel Aviv. During the next four months, the Marine helicopters would fly 62 missions in support of these diplomatic efforts to mediate a peace settlement.

Before long, it became evident that the situation in Lebanon would not be resolved quickly. It also be-

came apparent that the MAU and the Phibron would have to remain on station in the Eastern Mediterranean, not too far from Beirut. Because embarked Marines and sailors had been unable to go ashore for some time, Vice Admiral William H. Rowden, Sixth Fleet commander, sought to relax the alert status to permit some of the ships to visit major ports in the Mediterranean. The *Hermitage*, *Manitowoc* (LST 1180), and *Saginaw* (LST 1188) left the Phibron for Taranto, Italy, on 1 July for rest and recreation, rejoining the rest of the Phibron six days later. The *Nashville* and *Saginaw* were detached on 19 July for a port visit to Naples. The flagship could not leave the area, however. As a consolation, to celebrate 45 straight days of shipboard time, Marines on the *Guam* "spliced the mainbrace" with two cans of beer per man on 21 June in a special relaxation of the Navy's "no-alcohol-on-board-ship" policy. By 26 July, the political upheaval in the Middle East had relaxed sufficiently to permit the alert status to be increased to 72 hours, and the remaining three ships set course for Naples on 26 July. Before the ships left, two UH-1N helicopters from HMM-261, their crews, and maintenance personnel, were flown to the aircraft carrier *Independence* (CV 62), where they would continue to transport Habib and Draper.

Earlier, when the two diplomats had been flown to and from the *Guam*, they kept Commodore White and Colonel Mead, and their staffs, abreast of events and decisions then underway. Colonel Mead recalled:

In these discussions, Ambassador Habib and Mr. Draper were most candid with us concerning the progress of peace negotiations. Integral to all their plans and options was the use of our team afloat and ashore.

The discussions . . . focused on utilizing 32d MAU in the roles of disengagement; disarming; destruction of weapons; and assembling, processing, and transport/escort of PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization). The obvious concerns of inserting some portion of the 32d MAU between 30,000 Israelis and 15,000 PLO and Syrian fighters were well recognized.<sup>15</sup>

While the MAU and the Phibron remained ready in Naples to conduct contingency operations, whatever and wherever they might be, Ambassador Habib continued his shuttle diplomacy between Tel Aviv and Beirut, ". . . seeking a political solution that ultimately required some multi-national force involvement."<sup>16</sup>

Ambassador Habib requested that General Bernard W. Rogers, the Commander in Chief, U.S. Forces, Europe (USCINCEUR), provide him with a military liaison team, preferably made up of French-speaking officers, to arrive in Beirut no later than 7 August to assist and advise him with respect to military matters. Lieutenant Colonel Robert B. Johnston, commander

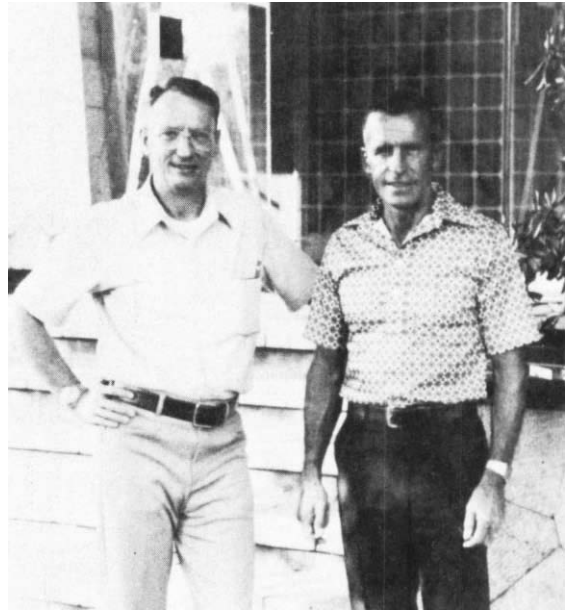


Photo courtesy of Col Robert B. Johnston, USMC  
Col James T. Schulster (left), EUCOM liaison officer to Ambassador Habib, and LtCol Robert B. Johnston, Battalion Landing Team 2/8, 32d Marine Amphibious Unit commander, in front of the U.S. ambassador's residence in Yarze, east Beirut, in August 1982.

of BLT 2/8, was designated the 32d MAU representative, because he was fluent in French, ". . . and while I was a little rusty, I certainly could understand everything and could speak reasonably well. That, plus the fact that I was the BLT commander, a ground officer, really, almost made me the perfect candidate to go in what was called the Habib Mission."<sup>17</sup> Coincidentally, the two representatives General Rogers ordered to Beirut from his headquarters were both Marine officers—Colonel James T. Schulster, who was to be the liaison team chief, and Lieutenant Colonel Edmond D. Gaucher, Jr., like Lieutenant Colonel Johnston, fluent in French. Together with Lieutenant Colonel Johnston, the team was to undertake the following:

(1) Provide liaison between Special Envoy Habib, USEUCOM Hq, and the operating forces in planning for executing the deployment of U.S. forces of no larger than battalion size to assist the LAF (Lebanese Armed Forces), and possibly forces from other nations in the Beirut area, after the evacuation of PLO combatants was well underway.

(2) Advise Special Envoy Habib on the feasibility of military operations and employment of U.S. forces. [In this regard the team provided full, straightforward advice to Mr. Habib, but had no inherent decision making authority. Every proposed military tasking was released to Hq EUCOM and passed, as required, to higher authority for decision.]

(3) Establish direct, secure voice communications with Hq EUCOM and the operating forces.

(4) Provide daily situation reports and updates to Hq EUCOM.

(5) Perform such tasks as directed by Hq EUCOM.<sup>18</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Johnston was briefed in Naples on 6 August and left the same day with the rest of the EUCOM team for the *Forrestal*, then steaming off the coast of Beirut. The next day the Marines were flown to Juniyah instead of Beirut, because the latter was still under Israeli fire. They were met by the resident defense attache in Beirut, Marine Colonel Winchell M. Craig, Jr., who suggested that the liaison team wear civilian clothes instead of uniforms because of a potential sensitivity to a foreign military presence that early in the planning.<sup>19</sup> The team was also required to return each night to the *Forrestal*. As the team returned by helicopter on the evening of the 7th, it was buzzed by two Israeli F-16s, in response to which the United States lodged an official protest. It was to be the first of a number of confrontations the Marines were to have with the Israelis. As Lieutenant Colonel Johnston recalled, "I thought quite frankly the pilots were hotdogging, but as you know, a jet just by [its]

sound and speed can blow a helicopter out of the air without shooting at it. So it was of some consequence, I suppose."<sup>20</sup>

When the team landed the next day, it was met by an Israeli colonel who refused to permit the Marines to continue on to Beirut until they identified themselves and stated what the purpose of their trip was. Colonel Craig protested. "And after about 20 minutes, [we] gave them our name, rank, and serial number and indicated simply that we were there to provide support to Ambassador Habib."<sup>21</sup> About 45 minutes later, the team was allowed to continue on its way. During the ensuing days, Ambassador Habib quickly established the organization of the political and military committee, which was to exist for the following two weeks and prior to the entry into Lebanon of a multi-national force. On the military side, there were to be U.S., French, and Italian liaison teams. They did not work independently, but met every day—often more than once a day—in a group session chaired by Ambassador Habib. They discussed the political negotiations concerning the plans for evacuating the

*Members of the Military and Political Committees pose before their meeting with Special Envoy Habib in August 1982: 1) American Ambassador Morris Draper; 2) French BGen Jacques Granger; 3) Italian Ambassador Franco Olitteri; 4) U.S. Special Envoy Philip C. Habib; 5) Col James T. Schulster, USMC; 6) French Ambassador Paul Henri; 7) LtCol Edmund D. Gaucher, Jr., USMC; and 8) LtCol Charles R. Smith, Jr., USMC.*

Photo courtesy Col James T. Schulster, USMC



PLO by sea and/or land, and considered the kind of options that were available.<sup>22</sup>

At the end of each day's meetings, Lieutenant Colonel Johnston briefed Commodore White and Colonel Mead by radio message to keep them fully abreast of what was transpiring in the meetings and how the Phibron and the MAU would potentially be employed in the anticipated withdrawal of the PLO. Lieutenant Colonel Johnston's report also concerned the diplomatic side of the discussions and alerted his superiors to the mission statement that was being prepared by Ambassador Habib, French Ambassador Paul Henri, and Italian Ambassador Franco Olitteri.

The U.S. mission, as it finally evolved after many days of discussion in the military committee, as well as with the government of Lebanon, was to:

Support Ambassador Habib and the MNF committee in their efforts to have PLO members evacuated from the Beirut area; occupy and secure the port of Beirut in conjunction with the Lebanese Armed Forces; maintain close and continuous contact with other MNF members; and be prepared to withdraw on order.<sup>23</sup>

In Naples, the MAU and the Phibron remained on a 72-hour alert as the discussions in Beirut continued. Although sufficient time was allowed for liberty for all hands, training and preparations for the Lebanon deployment continued. The MAU headquarters also conducted naval gunfire support and close air support communications exercises with respective elements of the Sixth Fleet tasked to provide those missions. At the same time, the BLT trained in fire support coordination and emergency evacuation procedures. HMM-261 conducted gunnery shoots with its Cobras, and technical training for its avionics and corrosion control personnel. And Marines would not be Marines if they didn't participate in physical training daily. As Colonel Mead commented, "Marines and sailors continue to work together in a team spirit that is enhanced by imminent mission."<sup>24</sup>

On 16 August, the Sixth Fleet commander, Vice Admiral Rowden ordered the Phibron to a designated location off the coast of Lebanon, prepared to land embarked Marines on order, perhaps as early as 20 August, as part of the Multi-National Force (MNF). On being given 20 August as the possible L-Day, Commodore White, ". . . requested both a mobile medical augmentation team (an eight-man team which would provide . . . care for surgical emergencies) and a nine-man Environmental Preventative Medicine Unit to assist with field sanitation."<sup>25</sup>

At the same time, Colonel Mead asked FMFLant to augment the MAU with interrogators/translators, AN-

GLICO (Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Company) teams, and additional intelligence personnel. All of these elements reported to the MAU within 36 hours after having been requested.<sup>26</sup>

The military committee concluded that the French would go into Beirut first and that the Americans would land only when Ambassador Habib was satisfied that the evacuation was proceeding well and smoothly. The Italians were scheduled to land the day after the Americans. An arbitrary ceiling had been established by Ambassador Habib for the size of the force to be employed—800 French, 800 Americans, and 400 Italians.<sup>27</sup>

Mead and Johnston accommodated to the 800-man ceiling by bringing in, primarily, the rifle companies and the battalion headquarters, and some elements of the MAU headquarters.<sup>28</sup>

The plan called for elements of the Multi-National Force and the Lebanese Armed Forces to be located together at points between the Syrians and the PLO forces in west Beirut, and the Israeli and Lebanese Christian Phalangists deployed in east Beirut. All governments and parties to the plan had agreed to support it, which led ultimately to its successful culmination with but few hitches.

The scheduled day of the landing was slipped because of the inability of the diplomats to achieve a complete ceasefire in Beirut. On 21 August, Lieutenant Colonel Charles R. Smith, Jr., 32d MAU executive officer, was flown from the *Guam* to Juniyah to relieve Lieutenant Colonel Johnston, who returned to the *Guam* the next day, where he resumed command of his BLT. Before leaving Beirut, Lieutenant Colonels Johnston and Smith reconnoitered the port area where the Marines were to be deployed. They selected possible helicopter landing zones, and concluded, based on their observations, that a surface landing of the MAU could be conducted as planned. Upon reaching the *Guam* on the 22d, Lieutenant Colonel Johnston briefed Admiral Rowden, Commodore White, and Colonel Mead, and their staffs.<sup>29</sup>

With H-Hour and L-Day set at 0500 on 25 August, the MAU began final intensive training in such matters as field sanitation, crowd control, and relations with the media, all of which were to be of great concern in the coming days. Field sanitation was especially important in view of the large number of cases of dysentery suffered in the 1958 landing. Because the MAU was landing in Lebanon on a peacekeeping mission in a permissive environment—i.e., one which was not hostile—Colonel Mead decided he would not need his tanks, his artillery, or his attack helicopters ashore



at this time. The squadron's transport and utility helicopters would be employed for logistical support.

On the 24th, an advance party from the MAU headquarters flew into the port to reconnoiter the area and to meet with the French, whom the Americans were to relieve. Later that day, Lieutenant Colonel Johnston and his company commanders also conducted a reconnaissance of the port area. That same day, two messages were sent to Colonel Mead on the *Guam*, and relayed to all hands over the loudspeakers of all ships in the Phibron. The first was from Commandant of the Marine Corps General Robert H. Barrow, which read:

Personal for Colonel Mead from General Barrow:

Please convey the following message to all 32d MAU Marines. You will soon be engaged in carrying out an extremely important mission in Beirut. Clearly, it is also a most difficult and delicate one. Your soldierly virtues, especially discipline, will in all likelihood be severely tested.

At this critical hour you will serve as the primary instrument of our national will to further the course of peace in that troubled region.

As Marines you will meet the challenge and acquit yourselves, not only honorably, but with distinction. The eyes of your countrymen will be on you as surely as their hearts are with you. Beyond that, speaking for myself and your fellow Marines, be assured we have every confidence that as professionals you will superbly represent our Corps and country.

*32d Marine Amphibious Unit Marines remain alert while manning a checkpoint during their supervision of the evacuation of the PLO from the port of Beirut in late August 1982.*

U.S. Navy Photo by PH3 R. P. Fitzgerald

The second message was from President Reagan:

You are about to embark on a mission of great importance to our nation and the free world. The conditions under which you carry out your vital assignment are, I know, demanding and potentially dangerous. You are tasked to be once again what Marines have been for more than 200 years—peace-makers.

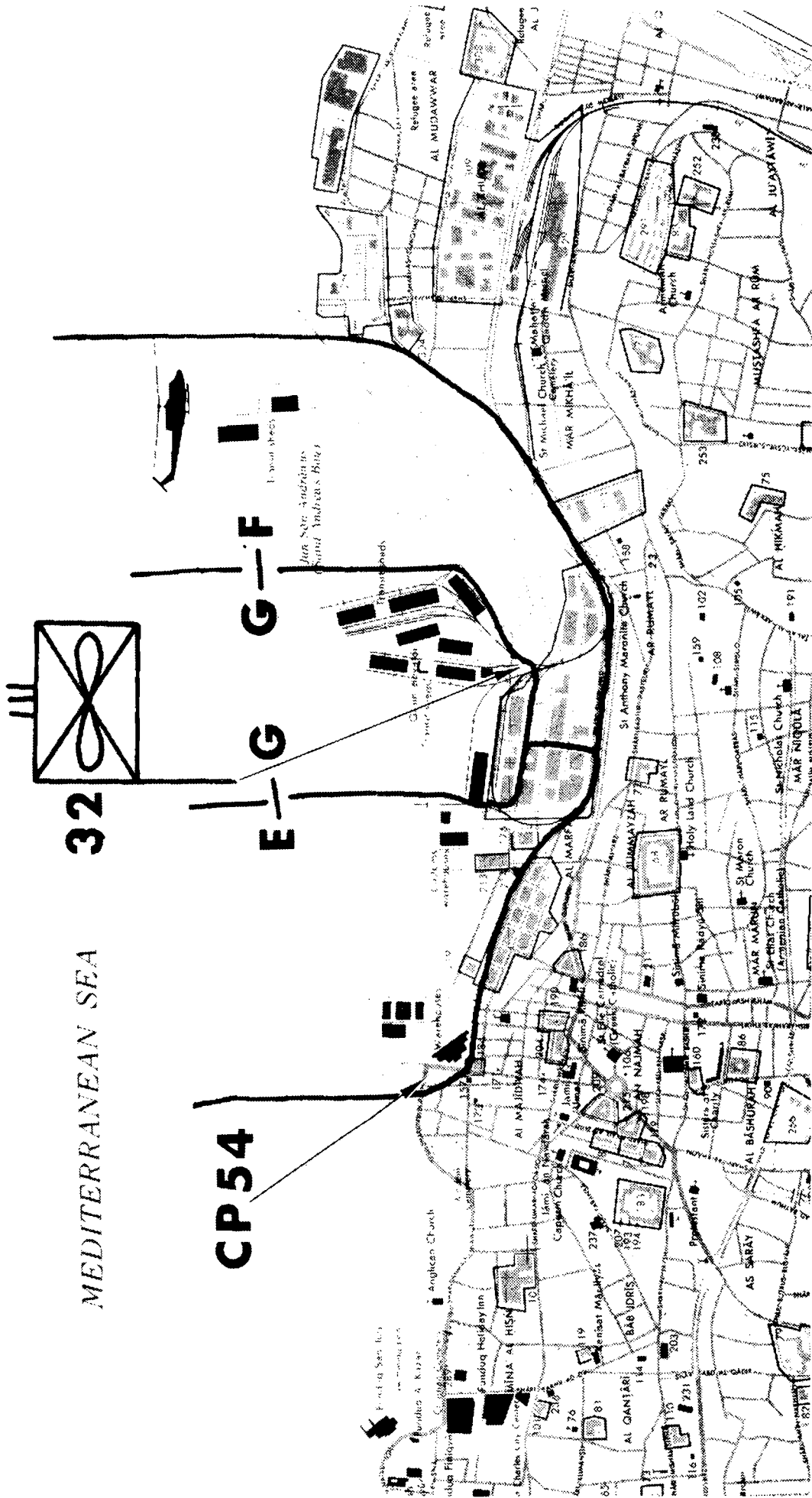
Your role in the Multinational Force—along with that of your French and Italian counterparts—is crucial to achieving the peace that is so desperately needed in this long-tortured city.

I expect that you will perform with the traditional esprit and discipline for which the Marine Corps is renowned. God-speed. Ronald Reagan

At 0500 on the 25th, the first LCU landed at the port of Beirut and Captain Kenneth T. McCabe's Company E (Reinforced) marched ashore with the MAU colors flying, to be met by a large press contingent, as well as by Ambassador Habib; U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Robert S. Dillon; the French and Italian ambassadors; the Lebanese Armed Forces' commander, Lieutenant General Victor Houry; and a host of other dignitaries. Twenty-two minutes later, Captain Richard C. Zilmer's Company F (Reinforced) landed.

At 0600, French Brigadier General Jacques Granger officially turned the port area over to the Marines. On the way in, Colonel Mead noticed the French tricolor

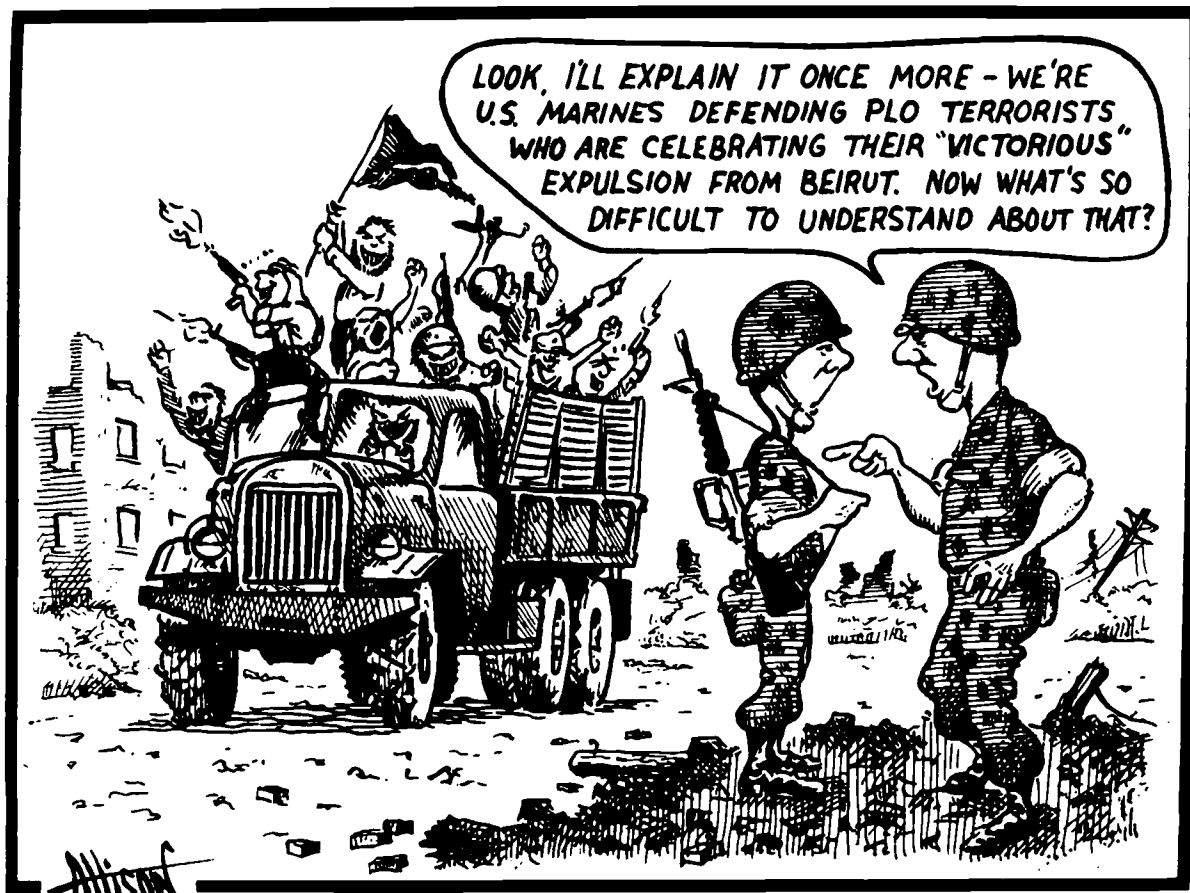




Tactical dispositions of 32d MAU after initial landing at Beirut Port 25 August 1982.

Map courtesy of Marine Corps Gazette

Figure 2



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flying over the port, and “. . . as soon as we relieved the French . . . the first thing we did was strike their flag and run up the Lebanese flag,”<sup>30</sup> an act that was immediately noticed by the Lebanese and commented upon favorably in the Arab-language press. By 0730, Lieutenant Colonel Johnston had relieved his French Foreign Legion counterpart and accepted command of the port area and all checkpoints therein.<sup>31</sup>

Surrounding the area the MAU occupied was a high fence approximately two kilometers long. Captain McCabe’s company was ordered to man strongpoints in the western half of the Marine area, while Company F was similarly deployed in the eastern portion. Captain Alfred J. Karle, Jr., and his Company G were assigned to internal security and to provide a reserve force (See Figure 2). Meanwhile, the headquarters elements of the MAU and the MAU Service Support Group were set up ashore, while the squadron remained on board the *Guam*.

After Company E landed, Captain McCabe inspected his lines and checkpoints, and noted that everybody was settled in and doing a fine job.<sup>32</sup> McCabe tasked his company gunnery sergeant with finding a

building for use as company headquarters, which, not too coincidentally, turned out to be the same building the French had occupied. When the French command was relieved, it left one platoon behind at Checkpoint 54, the entrance to the port through which the PLO troops were evacuated.

The Greek ship *Sol Georgious* docked at 0915 that first morning and immediately began taking on board those who were to be evacuated by sea. The Marines checked a total of 1,066 PLO personnel that day. Before the evacuation ended, they were to pass a total of 6,436 Palestinians through their checkpoint.

The following report which Commodore White sent Admiral Rowden vividly describes the departure of the Palestinians from West Beirut:

My helicopter landed at Landing Zone [LZ] Barrow which is ideally located for ship-to-shore logistics. The LZ is controlled by a Marine team in a most efficient manner. I was met by Col Mead, who took me to the MAU Command Post [CP]. The CP is well set up in a small port office building. Communications are terminated in the building which makes for excellent command and control both among units ashore and with the flagship. The gist of the discussions with Col Mead was that all was well and operating effectively.

At approximately 1000, LtCol Johnston, BLT 2/8 com-



Photo courtesy Maj Fred T. Lash, USMC (Ret)

*Marines remain alert as members of the PLO, firing their weapons wildly into the air, leave Beirut headed for the port in trucks provided by the Lebanese Armed Forces.*

*32d MAU Marines and members of the French 2d Foreign Legion Airborne Battalion form a joint security guard during the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut, Lebanon.*

Photo courtesy Maj Fred T. Lash, USMC (Ret)



mander, took me in his command jeep to Checkpoint 54, the entrance to the port used by PLO evacuees. En route we passed at least two ships which had been sunk at the piers (time of sinking unknown). Checkpoint 54 looks out to an area which looks like pictures I have seen of Berlin at the end of World War II. Looking up the street which leads into the checkpoint, I was greeted with the view of a PLO [Syrian?] tank with its gun trained at us at a distance of about 700 yards. (Needless to say, I wore a helmet and body armor during this portion of the tour.) Very soon after my arrival, cars started arriving outside the checkpoint with PLO supporters. During this period the occasional small arms and automatic weapons fire began to increase in frequency and intensity. Shortly thereafter the first series of trucks carrying the PLO fighters came down the street to the accompaniment of gunfire, RPGs [rocket propelled grenades], etc. The fire (all directed skyward) came in some cases from the crowd, the trucks themselves, and for the most part, positions in the rubble I could not see. The trucks belong to the LAF and are driven by LAF drivers.

The trucks containing the PLO are allowed into the sandbagged checkpoint one at a time. They contained males, some females, and children as young as a year or two. There were boys as young as 12 or so dressed in fatigues and armed with automatic weapons. Once inside the checkpoint, the truck is given a very cursory inspection by a Lebanese official (in civilian clothes) along with an LAF officer. The U.S. Marine company commander is present at the truck. The street is blocked by a squad of Marines who also are positioned in and on buildings overlooking the checkpoint. I would estimate 15 LAF soldiers man the checkpoint. When the Lebanese official indicates to the Marine company commander that the truck inspection had been completed successfully, the Marine squad moves aside, and the truck proceeds through and rounds the corner out of sight to await another four truck loads. At this stage, the PLO have their automatic weapons and ammunition in their possession. LtCol Johnston led the first convoy of five trucks to the processing area on the pier. A lieutenant (with me along) led the second convoy. At the pier, the PLO are offloaded and processed through any one of about eight stations manned by the LAF. Processing appears to consist of taking names only. The evacuees then walk to the ship's sterngate (*Sol Georgious* in this case). They enter the vehicle side, leave their weapons and ammo (I could not see into the ships to observe this process). Upon completion, they proceeded up the ramp to the main deck which had awning-covered seats/benches for the trip. Both Marines and LAF are at the embarkation point. One altercation took place while I observed. A PLO fighter did not want to give up his weapon. LAF officers handled the situation forcefully (though not physically other than blocking his way) and well. I did not remain for the complete onload. The ship was underway about an hour after I left.

I can sum up my impressions by saying that the Marines have landed and the situation is well in hand.<sup>33</sup>

The MAU went ashore armed with unloaded individual and crew-served weapons, for a deliberate decision was made to demonstrate that the Americans were on a peace-keeping mission. Additionally, they had to show that they trusted the Lebanese Armed

Forces to maintain security. The absence of a single military commander in charge of the Multi-National Force created problems in coordination for the respective MNF commanders. This situation prevailed despite the fact that the French and Americans—and the Italians after they landed on 26 September—exchanged liaison teams.<sup>34</sup>

As an example of the confusion that existed, on several occasions French and Italian military convoys passed through the western port area at the same time PLO evacuation convoys were being escorted to the docks.<sup>35</sup> Another problem which arose early was that of identifying friendly forces, as most of them, as well as the Lebanese Armed Forces, Israelis, and some of the PLO, like the Marines, wore camouflage utilities. The BLT later recommended that each force deployed to a similar type of operation be issued a contingency block of U.S. flags which could be flown on vehicles and “brassards with attached flag” to be worn by U.S. forces ashore.<sup>36</sup>

EUCOM peacetime rules of engagement dictated that the Marines were to carry unloaded weapons, although it does not take long to insert a magazine into a weapon and chamber a round. The rules also dictated that the on-the-scene commander had the right to determine what the appropriate response would be if there was a hostile act committed against Marines. Primarily, it would be rifle against rifle, and the like. “The inherent right of self-defense prevailed.”<sup>37</sup> As far as Colonel Mead was concerned, the Marines were “. . . comfortable with our rules of engagement, which had been kept simple and therefore readily understandable.”<sup>38</sup>

The living conditions in the Beirut port area were rudimentary at best. Most of the units lived in buildings which had been damaged six years earlier in the civil fighting of 1976, and never repaired. Being a port area, it was infested with many rats. The Navy preventative medicine unit worked full time to reduce the infestation, but it was a losing war. Potable water was not available, so it had to be brought in from Phibron shipping, which also provided fresh fruit and sandwiches to the Marines ashore, and thus added variety to their diet of C-rations.

While the Marines had instructions not to deal directly with the Israelis, the MAU operations officer, Lieutenant Colonel Dennis R. Blankenship, did have a hot line to the Israeli liaison officer who was situated in a 15-story structure, the Electric Building, which, though outside the port area, had very good observation of the evacuation proceedings.<sup>39</sup>

The Israelis frequently disrupted the evacuation

operation by blocking the port entrance, refusing entry to commercial shipping coming in to remove the PLO. Israeli gunboats often held the ships outside the port until noon. This created a backup of the PLO, which was being formed and organized in groups of 1,000 for the exodus, and shooting wildly into the air all the while. "The longer you held them, the greater potential for problems existed."<sup>40</sup>

During the entire course of the evacuation, Lieutenant Colonel Johnston was present at the dock, directing it.

I always made a point of standing right at the ship. I would actually bring the first group of trucks, they had 17 vehicles in all, and they would come in groups of five into the checkpoint. When they were behind the checkpoint within the Marines' positions and we were sure they had no contraband, RPGs, large weapons, my vehicle would guide them to the embarkation point and I stayed there and subsequent convoys came through. So, I was really standing there observing every PLO go aboard the civilian ships.<sup>41</sup>

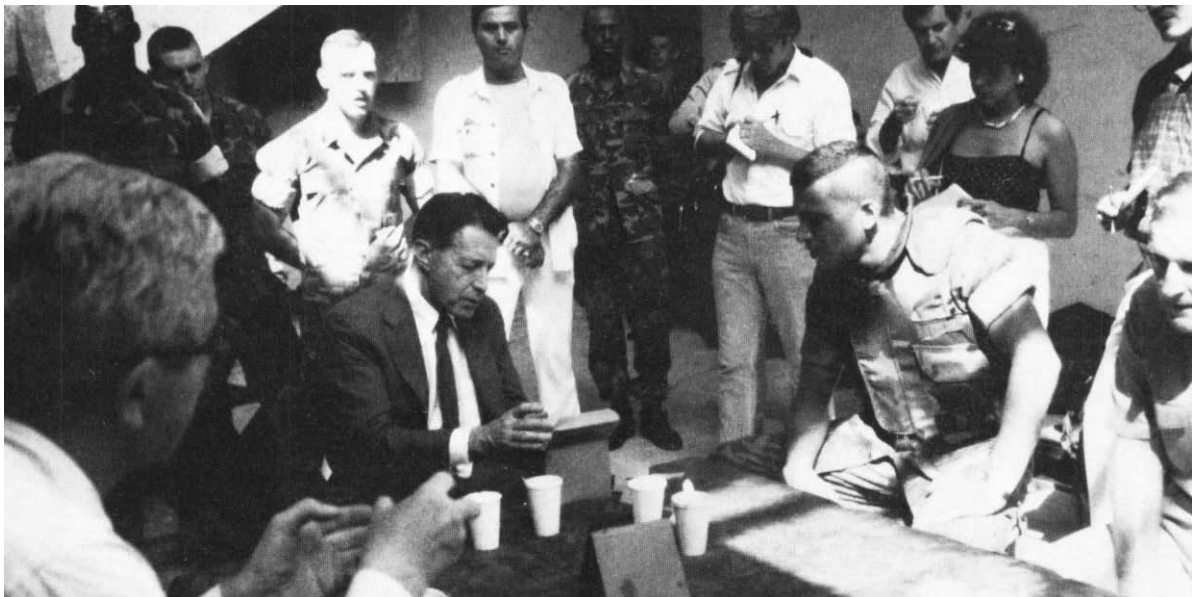
The highlight of the evacuation was the departure of PLO leader Yasser Arafat from Beirut. There was some question of whether he was going by air or by ship, and given the potential volatility of the situation, exactly when and how he was to depart was very closely held. On 29 August, the day before he was to leave from the port, the Marines were informed of his impending departure. Accordingly, on the 30th at 0500, the BLT made a final security sweep. By 1000, the *Atlantis*, the ship that was to carry him out, had

docked, and was ready for Arafat's scheduled appearance at 1100.

According to the plan, he was to be driven to Checkpoint 54 by car, instead of by truck, and from there escorted by the Marines to the evacuation point, about 3/4ths of a mile away. Although his time of departure was supposed to have been a secret, by 1000 a large crowd of media, well-wishers, and hundreds of PLO dependents were on hand to witness the departure. When he neared the checkpoint, Arafat got out of his car to accept the flags of several of his PLO units. His entourage was ". . . led in by the French ambassador, Paul Henri, and a contingent of French troops with armored carriers; a truck full of troops, and they jumped out on their side of the checkpoint as though they were protecting him and making sure there were no snipers."<sup>42</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Johnston stood in front of the checkpoint, preventing the entourage from proceeding further, and had fairly lengthy discussion with Henri, asking him why he thought the French troops were needed when there were 800 Marines present who were perfectly capable of seeing Arafat to the ship that was waiting for him. According to Lieutenant Colonel Johnston, Ambassador Henri replied that Ambassador Draper had agreed to the presence of French troops at the evacuation. Johnston then spoke to Draper over his walkie-talkie, saying that he knew nothing of this agreement and that the excessive number of French forces were creating a problem.<sup>43</sup> It appeared to Lieutenant Colonel Johnston that the

*Surrounded by reporters and his security guards, Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger, joins 32d Marine Amphibious Unit Marines in dining al fresco on C-rations.*

Photo courtesy Maj Fred T. Lash, USMC (Ret)



French were providing Arafat a guard of honor in the midst of a highly combustible situation.

Present at this confrontation in addition to Johnston was Colonel Mead, Captain McCabe, and a squad of Marines, plus a second squad, all whom physically pushed the crowd back. A concession was made to let some of the French vehicles through, but the Marines were determined that the French “. . . were not going to lead Arafat . . .” into the port area.<sup>44</sup>

Arafat's vehicle entered the port area first, escorted by about 25 PLO bodyguards, all of whom appeared concerned that they were going to relinquish protection of their chief to the Marines. The PLO slapped their rifles and made threatening gestures to the Marines, and actually attempted to push themselves through the Marine checkpoint. The Marines in turn pushed the bodyguards back. Adding to the tension was an accidental discharge by one of the French troops. Fortunately nothing happened.

Observing the evacuation operation at the port was Colonel Craig, who sent the following message to the Commandant:

I was on hand today at the checkpoint manned by Echo Company, 8th Marines. When Arafat came through enroute to his departure, they handled themselves with a coolness and professionalism that I have seldom seen in my nearly 30 years' experience. They were calm under the pressures of a situation that could have been a disaster. Confrontation occurred with the French as well as a mob of Palestinian admirers of Arafat, most of them armed and excited. The resulting peaceful solution was a credit to Captain McCabe, Lieutenant Colonel Johnston, and MAU commander, Colonel Mead.

It was evident in my hour-long visit that officers and NCOs knew what they were doing and were able to convey their intent to the Marines in their charge. The troops were disciplined and responded smartly. At no time did I see any Marine behaving in any manner but with full concentration on the tactical situation at hand. They were a credit to their country and their Corps.<sup>45</sup>

After this, the evacuation operation continued on *pro forma* with the Marines maintaining port security. By 3 September, Colonel Mead noted a significant change in the atmosphere. In Beirut, the lights were on again at night with restoration of the city's power plant. There was increased traffic in the streets, shops were reopening, and the Lebanese were seen repairing damaged buildings and cleaning up the rubble. As of the 3d, all PLO and Syrians had been evacuated and the Marines began to be visited by such luminaries as Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger, Senator Charles H. Percy, and Congressmen Edward J. Derwinski and Stephen J. Solarz, as well as the Embassy's new Deputy Chief of Mission, Robert L. Pugh, a former Marine.

There was much work for the MSSG, as it began repairing vehicles and doing preventive maintenance on them, purifying water, and providing other logistical services, such as distributing rations. The squadron was also kept busy flying Ambassador Habib and his associates on “shuttle diplomacy” missions as well as ferrying visiting VIPs from ship to shore and back, and from either ship or shore to Larnaca.

Initially, the MAU staff thought that once its port security assignment was completed, it would man checkpoints on the Green Line, which geographically and historically separated Muslim west Beirut from Christian east Beirut and ran south to a point below the port area. Lieutenant Colonel Johnston and his BLT 2/8 staff visited the checkpoints they thought they would have to man. However, this mission never materialized and the MAU remained in the port enclave until it began reloading on board Phibron shipping on 9 September.

In their after-action reports of this evacuation operation, Colonel Mead and his subordinate commanders made a number of recommendations and noted several lessons learned. Notable was the assertion that, “The operation was distinctively unique from virtually any point of view. Most significant, from a military vantage point, was the fact that military forces from the United States, France, Italy, Lebanon, Syria, and Israel, as well as the PLO forces themselves, cooperated in the relatively small geographic area of Beirut, without the benefit of a Combined or United Command Military Headquarters to direct the operation.”<sup>46</sup>

The MAU found that augmentation personnel, who were flown to Beirut upon request of Colonel Mead and Commodore White, often arrived without their personal records and personal field equipment, such as helmets, web gear, weapons, and the like. Additionally, in response to a request for essential elements of information required by the MAU commander to prepare his estimate of the situation ashore, Colonel Mead was given very little tactical intelligence concerning the location of sites of weapons which might have placed indirect fire on the Marines had the permissive environment in Beirut changed. Accordingly, Colonel Mead recommended that, should the MAU face a similar deployment ashore, it should be provided with accurate and timely target intelligence.<sup>47</sup>

Commenting on BLT operations, Lieutenant Colonel Johnston noted that his planning process was greatly hampered by the lack of a current port and



*Beautiful Martyr Square, in west Beirut, before 1976.*

*Martyr Square in 1983. Marines of 24th MAU began patrolling in the ruins here on 4 November 1982.*

Photo courtesy Lt Paul E. L. Holdom, Royal Marines







*32d MAU Marines board their LST on 10 September 1982 following the PLO evacuation from Beirut.*

beach study for Beirut.<sup>48</sup> He also noted that his BLT Marines conducted the entire evacuation operation without inserting magazines or chambering rounds, and there were no accidental discharges. However, he also reported that, "During critical periods, selected marksmen had magazines inserted, rounds chambered, and were ready to engage any threat."<sup>49</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Johnston commented favorably on the

enthusiastic support and cooperation of the Phibron and its beachmasters in supporting the Marines ashore with such services as regular mail, laundry, bag lunches, fresh fruit, pay call, and religious services. Finally, the BLT commander remarked that the success of his BLT benefitted from the fact that half of his troops were on a second Mediterranean deployment.<sup>50</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Geske's squadron played an important role in the operation, providing logistical support to the MAU, to the Phibron, and to the diplomatic mission in flying its various members about the Middle East. In addition, the Cobras were kept on standby in case they were needed for close-in fire support. Later, CH-53s and CH-46s often had to make overwater logistic support flights of up to 150 miles one way, generally to Larnaca. These flights were conducted safely, supported by shipboard radar on board the large carriers located below the horizon at a distance from Beirut, and guided by E-2C airborne control aircraft.<sup>51</sup>

The success of the MAU was further recognized on 10 September, when both the President and the Secretary of Defense telephoned Colonel Mead to compliment him on the performance of the Marines as part of the Multi-National Force.<sup>52</sup> Said Colonel Mead after these calls, "only then did it dawn on me that I had received only three orders during the whole operation. There were to go in, to stay off the Green Line, and to come out!"<sup>53</sup>

After having withstood the pressures of international attention, the MAU Marines and the Phibron sailors exhibited a certain air of self-satisfaction for a job well done as they sailed from Beirut on 10 September. They could not be faulted. Nor, at this time, could they anticipate that they would be revisiting Beirut shortly.

## CHAPTER 3

# Beirut II—The Mission of Presence

## 29 September-1 November 1982

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As the MARG ships bearing the Marines to the Italian ports of Naples and Taormina neared their destinations—where there would be liberty for all personnel, interrupted only by normal training and necessary ship's maintenance—the MAU and Phibron staffs prepared for their next task—conducting Operation Display Determination 82 in Saros Bay, Turkey, on 25 September. The Marines also spruced up for an impending visit by their Commandant, General Barrow.

A day away from Italy, however, on 14 September, all hands were shocked to learn of the assassination of President-Elect Bashir Gemayel, who, just five days earlier, had reviewed a combined MNF honor guard and had visited with Colonel Mead. The Americans perceived that a return commitment to Beirut was imminent. This perception was sharpened by the news of the massacres on 16 September in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in west Beirut.

These two developments impelled the new President, Amin Gemayel, brother of the slain Bashir, to request the return of the Multi-National Force to ensure the safety of the population of west Beirut until the Lebanese Armed Forces were able to undertake this mission on their own. In addition, the MNF presence in Beirut would facilitate the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Beirut to the south and east.<sup>1</sup>

The MARG was ordered to return to the eastern Mediterranean to await further orders, and early in the morning of 22 September, it steamed from Naples (*Manitowoc* from Taormina) for the waters off Beirut. The next day, 32d MAU Executive Officer Lieutenant Colonel Smith was flown from the *Guam* to Larnaca and then on to Beirut to function once more as the MAU representative to the Multi-National Force Liaison Committee, which again included the two Marines from EUCOM, Colonel Schulster and Lieutenant Colonel Gaucher.<sup>2</sup>

While underway, the MARG was visited on 26-27 September by Vice Admiral Rowden and General Barrow, who in a ceremony on the *Guam*, presented Navy Unit Commendations to Phibron 4 and the 32d MAU for their performance during the PLO evacuation.<sup>3</sup> During the course of the short sea trip to Beirut, the Sixth Fleet was alerted to the possible participation of the 32d MAU in a Lebanon Multi-National Force peacekeeping mission.

Of particular interest in the document establishing the U.S. peacekeeping mission was the statement concerning rules of engagement. The 32d MAU was told that if its assigned area or lines were infiltrated by units other than those of the Lebanese Armed Forces, the intruders were to be warned that they were in an unauthorized area and could proceed no further. If the intruders failed to withdraw, the MAU commander was to be informed of the incident and would decide what further action was to be taken. Only if Marines and any accompanying Lebanese Armed Forces were fired upon, could the Marines return fire to insure their safety and that of the Lebanese. Finally, the Sixth Fleet commander was to be prepared to extract American forces from Beirut, if it became necessary.<sup>4</sup>

The question of the MAU providing other than internal security (i.e., other than for its own positions) was addressed early on and had to be faced as the Marines' mission unfolded. Because of the low threat initially confronting the Marines in Lebanon, the anticipated early capability of the Lebanese Armed Forces to provide security, and the provision in the initial deployment order to be prepared to withdraw when directed, there was no need to change the overall mission, the concept of operations, or the rules of engagement until September 1983.<sup>5</sup> As the Long Commission noted later, there “. . . was no perceived need to change the USMNF role in response to the development of a combat situation, since USCinCEur had been tasked to protect U.S. forces and, on order, to be prepared to extract U.S. forces. Under the circumstances of the combat resulting for USMNF personnel, NCA [National Command Authority, i.e., the President] would be consulted concerning withdrawal.”<sup>6</sup>

The commander of each MAU deployed to Beirut made certain all his troops were thoroughly briefed and fully cognizant of the rule of engagement.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Habib was once more in the midst of negotiations and in a most difficult and trying mission—attempting to develop a plan agreeable to the governments of Lebanon, Israel, France, and Italy. From this plan evolved the 32d MAU's mission which was to provide “. . . a presence in Beirut, that would in turn help establish the stability necessary for the Lebanese government to regain control of

OK, MARINES—WE'RE FACED WITH DRUZE AND SHIA MUSLEMS BEING BACKED BY THE SYRIANS AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN PHALANGISTS. THE DRUZE AND SHIAS ARE DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES, AS ARE THE CHRISTIANS. THE ISRAELI PULLOUT IS LEAVING A GAP THAT THE "LEBANESE ARMY" PROBABLY CAN'T FILL AND THE PLO IS CREEPING BACK IN... NOBODY LIKES US, AND IT'S ALL PRECEDED BY 2000 YEARS OF BLOODSHED. ANY QUESTIONS?



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their capital. This mission required the 32d MAU to occupy positions in the vicinity of Beirut International Airport and establish and maintain close continuous liaison with the French, Italian, and Lebanese forces.”<sup>7</sup>

During the 18 months in which Marines were deployed to Lebanon, this mission was not much changed. As the Long Commission later concluded: “The ‘presence’ mission was not interpreted the same by all levels of the chain of command and perceptual differences regarding the mission, including the responsibility of the USMNF [U.S. multi-national force; the Marine Amphibious Unit] for the security of Beirut International Airport, should have been recognized and corrected by the chain of command.”<sup>8</sup>

It was basically assumed that the Marines were going into a permissive environment, and for that reason, the mission, rules of engagement, and concept of operations, as well as force structure, were designed to maintain a balance between political and military considerations and requirements. The MAU’s location at the airport was considered to be the least threatened position of those held by MNF units and of serving both political and military necessities. The French and Italians would occupy far more dangerous areas, for the former were to be located in the city of Beirut

proper, with its narrow streets, teeming rabbit warren-like alleys, and always-heavy traffic, the best possible locale for terrorist activities. Even more ominous was the area assigned to the Italians, south of the city. It was chock-a-block with the ruins of the still heavily occupied refugee camps of Sabra, Shatila, and Burj al Barajinah, where smoldering hate, resentment, and hopelessness lingered.

As the MAU once again neared Beirut, the American mission of “presence” was repeatedly discussed and analyzed by Colonel Mead and his staff. The concept of “presence,” as such, was not taught in any of the military schools Marines have attended. Perhaps closest to this concept was the commonly accepted tenet in international law of “interposition,” which results when a major power provides military assistance in the form of troops at the request of a legally constituted and established government unable to protect foreign citizens and property. Certainly that was the basis for Marine presence in Central American countries during the 1920s and 1930s, Lebanon in 1958, and Santo Domingo more recently in 1965. However, this was not quite the case in 1982, and Colonel Mead determined that once ashore, he would establish hasty defenses at the airport and collocate his troops as soon as pos-

sible with the Lebanese Armed Forces to demonstrate visibly U.S. intentions to support the government of Lebanon.

Beirut II, as this second deployment was dubbed, would be considerably unlike Beirut I. In positions at the airport, the Marines would be in the midst of an area densely populated with Shiite Muslims, who had close religious ties with Iran and venerated the Ayatolla Khomeini. The landing force would be expanded to 1,200 Marines, who, while landing in a friendly environment, would still face the dual threat of individual acts of terrorism and a considerable number of unexploded munitions.<sup>9</sup>

The airport area, scene of heavy fighting, was littered with “. . . literally tens of thousands of pieces of unexploded munitions of 125 types from 19 different countries that had accumulated over the previous 8 years of fighting.”<sup>10</sup> Since the earlier personnel augmentation had returned to stateside units, Colonel Mead called once again upon FMFLant to provide him with combat engineer, interrogator/translator, explosive ordnance disposal, public affairs, preventative medicine, ANGLICO, and intelligence detachments. Again, it took less than 36 hours for these to join the MAU.

In conducting a map reconnaissance of the positions he was to occupy at the airport, Colonel Mead soon determined that he needed the high ground approximately five kilometers east of the airport to guarantee the MAU's safety should the situation ashore begin to deteriorate. However militarily sound the rationale for this plan, Colonel Mead soon learned the political realities of life in the Middle East. In the diplomatic discussions leading to the reinsertion of the Multi-National Force, Ambassador Draper and Israeli Minister of Defense Ariel Sharon mutually agreed to permit the Israeli forces to use the Old Sidon Road for resupplying their troops in the Shouf mountains east of the airport. The road just about paralleled the eastern perimeter of the airport and ran southwest to northeast between the airport and below the heights Colonel Mead wanted to occupy. If the Marines took up positions there, it would create a politically unacceptable perception that the United States was protecting Israeli resupply routes. Thus the Americans would be looked upon as anti-Muslim and certainly less than neutral with respect to the Israelis—an image completely opposite from that which the Marines wanted to portray.

In the week between the time Task Forces 61/62 left Naples and the day they arrived in Beirut, a large joint service public affairs team, headed by a Navy captain

from EUCOM, arrived to help the MAU and Phibron with press relations. Members of the 12-man team were sent to each of the Phibron ships to brief the Marines and sailors on what to expect from the large media representation expected at Beirut, and how to answer questions.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to briefing the Marines on press relations, the BLT operations officer, Major Raymond Cole, prepared and videotaped an orientation lecture to be shown on all the Phibron ships to all Marines. In this presentation, he discussed the upcoming mission, what it would be like to go “. . . into that kind of environment, some of the do's and don'ts, [while undertaking] permissive operations. . . .”<sup>12</sup>

Of prime consideration at this time is the fact that the rules of engagement received from higher headquarters were written in such constricted legalese that it was necessary to simplify them so that the lowest ranking Marine could readily and thoroughly understand what they meant. Said Lieutenant Colonel Blankenship, “Basically, it was minimal force necessary . . . we did not have magazines in, that was the decision that was made. Fortunately, as it turned out, it was a very right decision.” He continued, “Minimal force necessary and we did have a right to self-protection . . . we told our Marines, ‘If a guy shoots at you and you feel it is directed fire . . . then you use minimal force necessary to take care of the situation. If he is shooting at you with small arms, you can return the fire with small arms. . . . Just because a man is shooting at you with small arms doesn't mean that you can call in naval gunfire on them or a flight of F-14s with napalm or something like that.’”<sup>13</sup>

One of the preconditions for landing the Marines in September was that all Israeli forces had to be south of the airport and out of the MAU's assigned area of responsibility. Because this condition was not met on time, the Marine landing was delayed until mid-day, 29 September. The original MAU plan called for a typical Marine landing—two companies via air and one via surface with all supporting arms—into the vicinity of Beirut International Airport over what was then called Black Beach and subsequently renamed Green Beach.<sup>14</sup> Then the Marines would push forward, clearing the airfield to the foothills, which included the high ground at Kfar Shima and Shuwayfat, tying in with the Presidential Palace and the Ministry of Defense in the Baadba area.<sup>15</sup>

Major Jack L. Farmer, Assistant MAU Operations Officer in Beirut I and II, recalled that the staff was concerned whether its plan would work, for in considering the MAU's strength at the time, Marine lines

would be stretched out very thinly if the mission was a tactical one of defense against a hostile force. That the mission was diplomatic rather than tactical meant that reinforcement by an additional BLT was unnecessary. The MAU determined that it could accomplish its mission with the BLT and the MSSG augmentation it already owned, and that it had enough Marines to establish strong-points along a general trace going from Baabda, through Kfar Shima, Shuywayfat, and to the south of the airport at Khaldah. Additionally, the MAU would begin foot and motorized patrols to satisfy the requirements of its presence mission. Based upon political considerations and the diplomatic climate at the time, the MAU did not want to give the impression that it was securing the Old Sidon Road to protect the Israeli Force. As a result, the MAU reduced its perimeter by settling in west of the road and pulling in closer to the airport.<sup>16</sup>

It was decided to restrict the Marines to a location in the vicinity of and to the west of the unused railroad tracks at the southeastern portion of the airport perimeter, further reducing its lines. Actually, the reduction gave the MAU better internal lines of communication but it did raise subsequent questions by the Israelis about where the Marine lines actually were. The military importance of the high ground to the



U.S. Navy Photo  
*32d MAU commander Col James M. Mead watches as his Marines return to Lebanon on 29 September 1982 on board their LVTP-7 amphibious vehicles.*

east of the Old Sidon Road was reiterated to Ambassador Habib and his diplomatic assistants by Lieutenant Colonel Smith, who conducted a reconnaissance of the general area together with the

*A 32d MAU troop leader posts his Marines on the edge of Beirut International Airport, on the outskirts of Burj al Barajinah refugee camp shortly after their return to Lebanon.*

Photo courtesy of Claude Salhani





U.S. Navy Photo

*Capt Richard C. Zilmer leads his Company F, Battalion Landing Team 2/8 Marines ashore from the landing ship Saginaw (LST 1188) at the port of Beirut on 29 September 1982.*

embassy staff.<sup>17</sup> While Habib may have recognized the validity of the Marines' rationale to hold the heights, he still refused to permit the MAU to occupy them.

The territory the MAU was to occupy on the eastern portion of the perimeter also held built-up areas, in which there were located one Christian-oriented village—Kfar Shima—and one pro-Druze/Muslim village—Shuwayfat. Subsequently, after December 1982, these two villages were the locale of a considerable amount of the factional fighting of the period. Major Farmer believed that proximity of the villages to the Marine lines may have caused the MAU problems of internal security. On the other hand, he concluded, “. . . our presence there may well have been a stabilizing factor which would have allowed a more comprehensive solution, at least in the context of those two villages,” and would have prevented the problems which finally arose with the Israelis in that area getting caught in ambushes along the Old Sidon Road, resulting in subsequent confrontations between the Marines and the Israelis.<sup>18</sup>

Putting plans into action, at 1158 local time\* on the 29th of September, the *Manitowoc* tied up at the

\*Unless otherwise noted, all times stated in this monograph will be local time.

dock in the port of Beirut and Colonel Mead landed with his staff and Company F. The Marines were met by Ambassador Dillon, Lebanese officials, and a horde of media.<sup>19</sup> The *Saginaw* docked at 1340 to unload the vehicles which would carry the Marines to the airport, and at 1400, the first of the helicopter-borne troops landed at the airport. By 1700, all three rifle companies and other scheduled personnel and equipment were ashore. All organic firepower was brought ashore with the exception of artillery and tanks, which remained on board their shipping for the entire duration of Beirut II.

The next day, 30 September, the Secretary of Defense released the following message from the President:

At the request of the Government of Lebanon, I have ordered the Landing Force, Sixth Fleet, to return to Lebanon as a part of the Multi-National Force. I well recognize the requirements and demands that this places upon you—the members of the fleet. I also know the steadfastness and devotion to duty you have displayed throughout the ordeal of this tortured land. The cause of peace—and the interests of our nation—are being well served by all of you who go down to the sea in ships. Be assured that you have the unending gratitude of all who love freedom. God Bless You. Ronald Reagan.<sup>20</sup>

Two other events of note occurred on the 30th. The



USMC Photo by SSgt Robert E. Kline

*Green Beach is where Marines and their equipment landed in Lebanon first during the 1958 emergency and then 14 years later, when they gave "presence" in Beirut, 1982-1984.*

first was a Multi-National Force welcoming ceremony when President Amin Gemayel reviewed and spoke to representative groups of U.S., French, and Italian troops.\* The second event was sobering for it marked the first Marine death in Lebanon. From the time of its landing in country on 29 September and throughout its first deployment, the 32d MAU continually conducted an ordnance and disposal operation. While engaged in clearing the airfield, Corporal David L. Reagan was killed, and three other Marine engineers wounded, when a bomblet exploded. The casualties were quickly evacuated to the *Guam*, where they were treated by a special Camp Lejeune medical team attached to Phibron 4.

Also on 30 September, Green Beach was cleared of mines, but not completely of the bomblets. Nevertheless, Colonel Mead ordered his amtracs ashore as well

as the Service Support Group and the Navy beachmaster unit. The next day, the rifle companies began moving into their assigned positions to the south and east of the airport, while the Marines in the northernmost positions linked up with the Italians. An analysis of the terrain indicated that the 32d MAU should establish some forward observation and listening posts collocated with those manned by the Lebanese Armed Forces. The MAU also decided to dig positions to the rear of these posts, closer to the airport and the runways, to be occupied when and if Marines were attacked by a hostile force.<sup>21</sup>

The forward posts were located at key intersections of the nearby road network surrounding the airport—primarily those access roads which ran from the Old Sidon Road to the airport. A small string of checkpoints was located due east of the airport, with the

\*The initial French input to the Multi-National Force was comprised of a staff from the 11th Airborne Division and units from the 9th Marine Infantry Division, 2d Foreign Legion Airborne Battalion, 3d Marine Airborne Division, 9th Headquarters Support Battalion, and 17th Airborne Engineers Division, all commanded by Brigadier General Jacques Granger. The Italian unit initially deployed in Beirut was the 2d Bersaglieri Battalion "Governolo," which returned on 27 September with 300 paratroopers from the "Folgore" Airborne Brigade (two companies from the 1st Carabinieri

Airborne Battalion "Tuscania," and one company from the 9th Airborne Assault Battalion "Col Moschin"). These units were reinforced by additional personnel from the San Marcos Naval Infantry Battalion, commanded by Commander Pierluigi Sambo, Italian Navy. Both Commander Sambo and his battalion were well known and respected by Marines who had conducted combined landing exercises in the Mediterranean with the Italians. In overall command of the Italian MNF unit was Brigadier General Franco Angioni. For a complete order of battle of the foreign MNF units, see Appendix C.



U.S. Navy Photo

*Marines sweep the Green Beach area for mines and unexploded ordnance to secure it prior to the landing of the rest of the 32d MAU in September 1982.*

first post in the south subsequently designated Checkpoint 76. It was located on the access road that ran from Old Sidon Road to the airport past a Pepsi Cola bottling plant. Three other Marine posts were located with Lebanese Armed Forces positions, which ran all the way up north to the vicinity of the small Shiite village of Hay es Salaam (called "Hooterville" by the Marines) and on to Lebanese University, where the MAU had its forwardmost-deployed company set up in a building on campus. Here the Marines would be involved in civic action projects as well as giving "presence." As Major Farmer recalled:

It was along this section of our perimeter that we had the most problems with the Israeli Defense Forces, especially when [beginning in December 1982] [Israeli] convoys [were] ambushed on the Old Sidon Road and they would return fire.<sup>22</sup>

Southwest and west of the university were a string of outposts beginning at the airport itself. They were lightly manned due to the fact that they were near the Palestinian refugee village of Burj al Barajinah, a largely built-up area which did not lend itself to the establishment of forward outposts. Besides, that sector of the Marine area of operation was partially patrolled, and, in some cases, manned by the Italians at static checkpoints. The MAU maintained close coordination with the Italian-manned checkpoints, which

were actually strong points located on the northern perimeter itself. After the Marine artillery was landed in a later MAU deployment,<sup>23</sup> battery positions were set up in the northern perimeter in an area originally controlled by the Italians. There were also several U.S.-Lebanese checkpoints on the Beirut-airport terminal highway, including the main circle road next to the Mid-East Airlines building.

Further to the west was a randomly manned Marine position at the northern end of the north-south runway, and still another one located on the beach, where the MSSG landing support party and the beachmaster unit were located. These positions were maintained during the entire Marine stay in Lebanon. Between the beach position and the airport was a coastal highway which ran from Beirut down through Khaldah and then into the Old Sidon Road, going down to the city of Sidon in the south. The MAU could not cut off traffic on this highway or the airport highway without first coordinating with the Lebanese Armed Forces, for a disruption of these two routes would cause the Lebanese government domestic problems. However, during high threat situations—such as the terrorist attack on an Italian motorized patrol later in the deployment as well as a grenade attack on one of the Marine foot patrols—the MAU did close the roads.

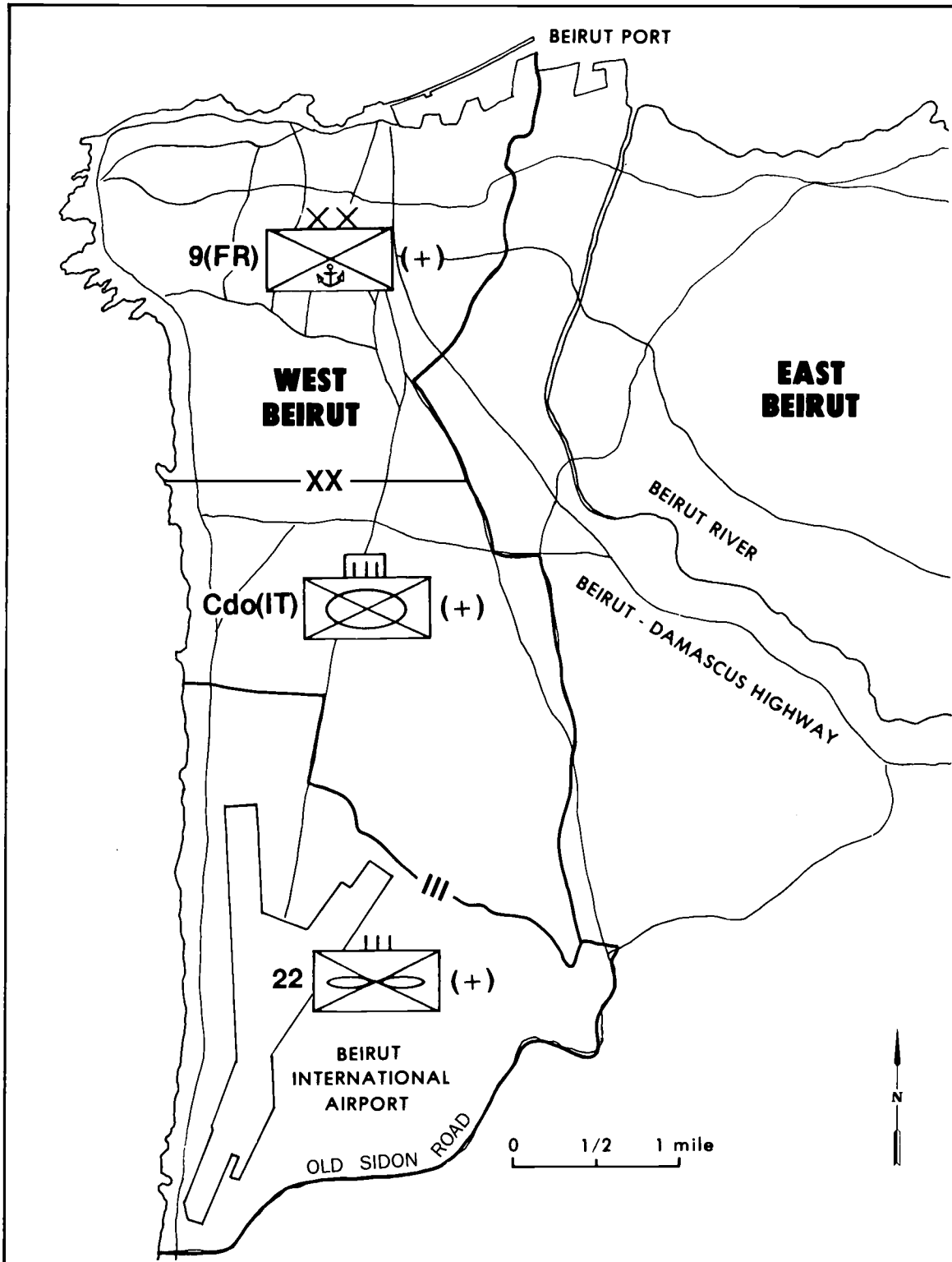
One highly visible post, really an interior guard post, was established at the head of the road leading off from the airport highway and past the MAU headquarters and the MSSG area down to the airport facilities. "We later named it 'Fort Apache' because of the design. Subsequently, sandbagged tar barrels were erected in April 1983, at the time of the embassy bombing, to counter terrorist threats."<sup>24</sup>

The Marines dug in in the conventional manner at the posts established around the perimeter. "I think we filled some 200,000 sandbags in 30 days, and built some pretty fancy defensive positions, particularly on the southern part of the airstrip. . . ."<sup>25</sup>

The MAU headquarters itself was located in the administrative area of the airport. Beirut had an active international airport which, in the two-week period prior to the 23 October 1983 bombing of the BLT building, serviced an average of 35 flights and 2,400 passengers daily.<sup>26</sup> Approximately 1,000 civilians were employed at the airport at this time and some 3,000 civilian and Lebanese military vehicles entered and left the BIA area every day.

The headquarters of the 32d MAU, and of those MAUs that succeeded it, was located in a two-story reinforced concrete building, which had formerly





Sketch map courtesy *Marine Corps Gazette*  
*The zones of the Multi-National Force in September 1982.*



USMC Photo by Sgt Kevin D. Dewey

*Aerial view of the Beirut International Airport administrative building used to house the Marine Amphibious Unit headquarters in 1982-1983. Note sandbagged vehicle bays.*

housed the airport's fire fighting school facilities. The ground floor of the building held vehicle bays, some offices, and an utility room. The MAU commander's office and sleeping quarters were on the second floor. The ground-floor vehicle bays had metal doors and served initially as sleeping quarters for MAU staff officers and staff NCOs. A ground floor room at the end of the building was used as a club for the officers, staff noncommissioned officers, visiting journalists, and VIPs. During Colonel Mead's two tours in Lebanon, this facility was dubbed "Large James' Tavern."<sup>27</sup>

The windows of the second floor offices had been blown out during the earlier fighting and they, as well as all exposed openings, were protected by sandbag walls. The roof, which could be reached by an exterior ladder, served the Marines as an antenna farm.

Immediately across the road from the MAU headquarters was the headquarters of the MSSG. It occupied a single-story, steel reinforced concrete building, whose exposed openings were also protected by sandbags.

The BLT occupied a bombed-out, fire-damaged, four-story reinforced concrete building, southwest of the MAU headquarters. Before the Israeli invasion, the

exteriors of the second through the fourth floors held large plate glass windows. By the time the Marines arrived, all windows had been damaged or blown out, and when the BLT Marines moved in, they filled the windowless gaps with an assortment of plywood, plastic sheeting, screen wire, and sandbags. The ground floor was a large open area, which the Marines enclosed with an extensive amount of barbed wire and sandbags. In the center of the building was an atrium, which in turn, was covered with louvered panels that allowed cooling and illumination as well as protection from the elements. Concrete stairwells were at the east and west ends of the inner court. This building had been successively occupied by the Government of Lebanon Aviation Administration Bureau, the PLO, and the Syrians, who used it as a hospital. When BLT 2/8 landed in September 1982, it set up its command post in this structure.

Along the airport road fence immediately to the west of the BLT building, several guard posts were established and sandbagged in. Along the fence also were two amphibious assault vehicles (AAVs or IVT-7s) which were used together as a mechanized command post by Lieutenant Colonel Johnston and successive BLT commanders. South of the BLT building was a

blacktopped parking lot, where there was overflow parking for travelers and airport employees. The Marines took up the northermost half of this area as an additional security buffer zone, and set in a barbed wire fence to divide it. They also sandbagged two bunkers for use as manned sentry posts. The bunkers couldn't be dug in because the parking lot had a macadam surface. Later a gate was put in to control vehicle access to the front of the BLT building.

Early on, the Marines at the checkpoints dug regular chest-high fighting holes, which were also sandbagged and rigged with overhead cover. "The main protection that we were trying to obtain here initially was from small-arms fire and overhead variable time fragmentation [ordnance] which might be used against the troops."<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, the Political/Military Committees for Beirut II were functioning differently from the way they did for Beirut I. During Beirut I, the Multi-National Force was assigned specific tasks, including evacuation of the PLO. Beirut II operations, on the other hand, were characterized by a lack of specific military tasking beyond that of military presence in specific operational areas. Ambassador Habib personally provided overall coordination and planning for the MNF during the first deployment. During the se-

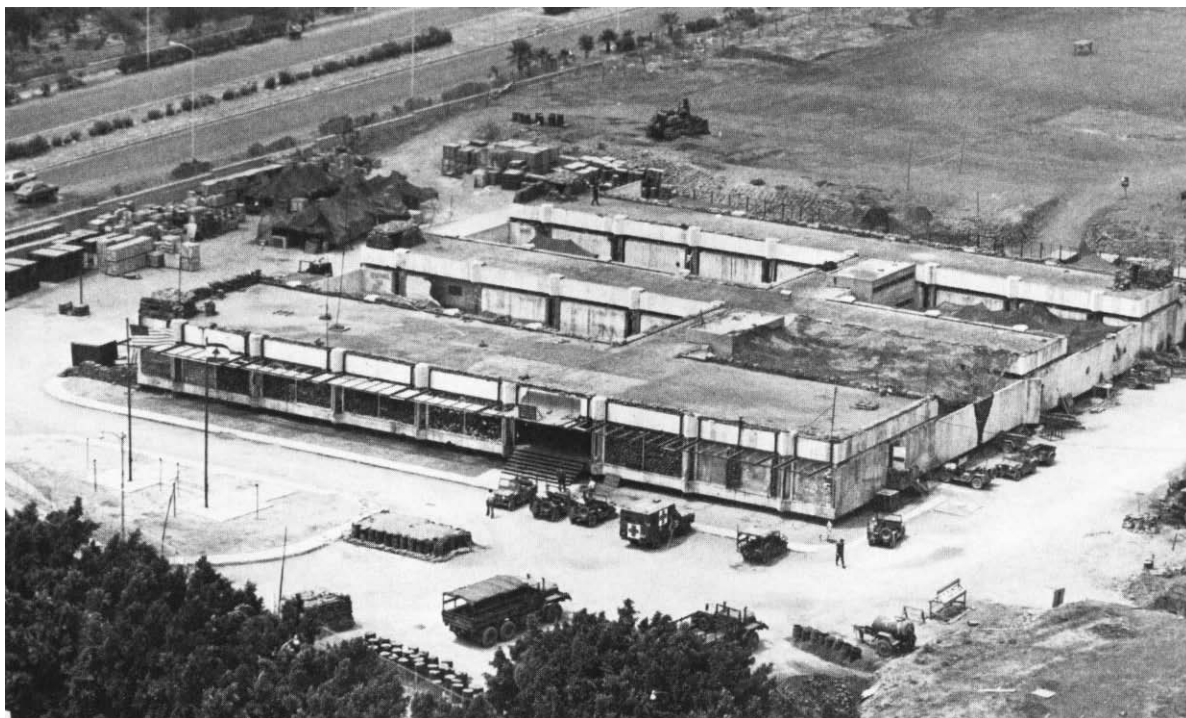
cond, however, ". . . in his absence, no specific individual provided the same degree of overall coordination and direction. As a result, the French, Italian, and U.S. contingents of the MNF conducted operations in their respective areas in accordance with directions received from the national authorities of each nation."<sup>29</sup>

Chaired by the Lebanese Armed Forces G-3, the Military Committee met daily from 1100 to 1200, and was comprised of representatives of each MNF contingent and the LAF general staff. As in the first deployment, there were no Israeli Defense Force representatives on the committee, for all contact and coordination with the Israelis was conducted by the Government of Lebanon or through diplomatic channels. Actually, the Military Committee functioned as no more than a conduit for the flow of information, rather than as a central point for coordinating military activities. During the entire period of Beirut II, Lieutenant Colonel Smith, the MAU executive officer, was the MAU representative to the committee.

Little has been said so far about HMM-261 operations. Except for a CH-46 based at the airport for use in emergency medical evacuations, the entire squadron remained on board the *Guam*. In any case, not all the aircraft were needed ashore, where they would have

*The reinforced concrete MAU Service Support Group headquarters building at Beirut International Airport. To the left (west) is the Beirut-Airport highway guarded by the LAF.*

USMC Photo by SSgt Robert E. Kline



provided a tempting target for terrorists. In addition to providing logistical support to TFs 61/62, the Marine helicopters kept busy operating the "Cammie Cab Company," ferrying Ambassador Habib and his associates.

During the period 29 September-1 November, the squadron flew 888 hours with a helicopter availability rate of 92 percent. The Marine pilots transported 7,011 passengers and hauled 1,139,090 pounds of cargo.<sup>30</sup>

The initial logistical support for Beirut II was provided through the Seaborne Mobile Logistics System. Essentially, this encompassed the seabased warehousing of MAU supplies, which would be sent ashore on call. Although this system worked well for operations ashore of two weeks' duration or less, it couldn't support longer ones.<sup>31</sup> The MAU Service Support Group handled all MAU logistics requirements. In addition, it set up two shower units ashore, a water point to provide water, and a laundry unit.<sup>32</sup> The MSSG was also responsible for maintaining all MAU ground equipment, as well as for setting up a 30-bed hospital ashore if needed. Major Barnetson's command included two dental units, which were sent ashore. The MSSG was also responsible for all shore party operations; for distributing all supplies which landed over Green Beach, as well as those which arrived by air; and distribution of rations to all hands.<sup>33</sup>

Of all the many media "color" stories which came out of Beirut during this deployment, the ones concerning the feeding of Marines stand out. According to the reporters, the Marines were issued only C-rations as their mainstay, while the French were dining a la haute cuisine, with coq-au-vin and the like for their main courses; and the Italians had tables laden with several types of pasta, meats, and sauces. On the tables of both the French and the Italians were bottles of wine. All that appeared to be missing were candlelight and violins. A story that the news and television reporters did not file was about the high rate of dysentery suffered by the French and Italians, and the relatively low rate of gastroenteritis amongst the Marines. Major Barnetson said, "Dysentery among the Marines was higher in Naples than it was in Beirut because in Beirut we ate C-rations."<sup>34</sup> In addition, the 32d MAU had studied closely the lessons learned from the 1958 deployment in Lebanon. Initially, C-rations were alternated with MREs (meals-ready-for-eating),<sup>35</sup> a relatively new series of foil-packed rations which the Marines liked because of their menu variety and because they were less bulky than the canned C-rations to carry in the field. As operations ashore progressed,

the Phibron ships provided the Marines with one hot meal a day, and soon two. In addition, good-hearted souls in the United States took pity on what they perceived as starving Marines, and sent thousands of frozen hamburgers and burritos to Lebanon. When possible, these were thawed and heated on the ships and distributed ashore.

In reviewing its activities in October 1982, the MAU reported, "Our efforts [to create an environment of stability by our presence] were successful as order was quickly restored and the confidence of the population gained to such an extent that rebuilding of homes and businesses commenced almost immediately."<sup>36</sup> For the first time in a number of years it was relatively peaceful in Beirut. There was some slight Marine concern about the Lebanese Army sweeps of west Beirut which invariably provoked large demonstrations by the Palestinian population north of the MAU positions, particularly at the site of a mosque just north of the airport. Marines were never directly fired upon by the Lebanese troops, but during Beirut II, the Marines received "errant" LAF small arms fire, generally activated by the Palestinian demonstrations.

Marine relations at this time with the Muslims who lived near the MAU area were noteworthy. The Muslims ". . . waved to, slapped hands with every Marine with whom they came into contact. They returned the wide smiles of our proud young peacekeepers. They cried!"<sup>37</sup>

During the remainder of October, the Marines continued to harden their positions and make "quality of life" improvements wherever possible. To facilitate a closer relationship with the other members of the MNF, 32d MAU Marines participated in several sporting events with them.

There was considerable American and international press interest in the Marine deployment, as evidenced by the plethora of stories filed from Beirut by the writing press and hundreds of videotape cassettes sent to home networks by the television media. In addition, many high officials and senior officers visited the Marines. On 12 October, Deputy Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci and his party arrived at the airport and toured the Marine positions. The next day, the FMFLant commander, Lieutenant General John H. Miller, visited the MAU, and was briefed by Colonel Mead and his staff. Later the FMFLant staff members accompanying General Miller met with their MAU counterparts to discuss matters of mutual interest. Congressman Charles Wilson of Texas arrived on 17 October for a tour, while Vice Admiral Ronald J. Hays, CinCUSNavEur, and Sixth Fleet commander Vice Admiral Rowden visited TFs 61/62 on the 20th, when they



*Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen Robert H. Barrow takes the salute of Nashville (LPD 13) sideboys during visit to 32d Marine Amphibious Unit and Phibron 4, late 1982.*

met with the Phibron and MAU commanders both on the *Guam* and ashore. At various times throughout October, the Marines were visited by American embassy and Lebanese government officials, all of whom were given a Cook's tour of the Marine positions and headquarters.

Preparations for the relief in place of the 32d MAU by the 24th MAU began on 17 October with the arrival of a small liaison team headed by Colonel Thomas M. Stokes, Jr., the 24th MAU commander. A relief in place would remove both MAUs from planned NATO exercises, but the 32d had already been extended beyond its planned rotation date, and it was due to go home. Nine days later, on 26 October, the 24th MAU advance party arrived in Beirut to work with the 32d MAU staff on the relief plan. As the 32d began loading its equipment on Phibron 4 ships, key members of the 24th landed and made a reconnaissance of the positions ashore with unit commanders they were to relieve.<sup>38</sup>

Beginning at 0830 on the 30th, 24th MAU Marines moved ashore to take their assigned positions. The

relief in place was completed nearly five hours later. The 32d completed reloading its equipment and personnel on board Phibron 4 shipping by 2300. At midnight on 1 November, Colonel Stokes relieved Colonel Mead as Commander, Task Force 62, whereupon Phibron 4 shipping steamed from Beirut, heading for Al Hoceima, Morocco, and an amphibious landing exercise on 9 November. The Marines backloaded from Morocco on the afternoon and evening of 10 November and celebrated the 207th Marine Corps Birthday in traditional fashion, complete with cake-cutting ceremonies. The MARG set a course for Rota, Spain, arriving there on the 14th, where the MAU landed and washed down all wheeled vehicles, heavy equipment, tanks, and AAVs. This washdown was required by U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations in order to remove Mediterranean snails from all Stateside-bound equipment. Several years before, a snail infestation of North Carolina had resulted in massive crop damage.

Two days later, the MARG headed west for the United States. While underway, Marines and sailors pre-

pared for unloading at Morehead City upon arrival on 24 November. A Virginia State Highway representative boarded ship at Rota, and while crossing the Atlantic, lectured extensively and distributed literature about safe driving. At the same time, the MAU chaplains held classes for all hands to prepare for homecoming and reunion with their families.<sup>39</sup> After all the official and media attention they had received in Beirut, the Marines of the 32d MAU had become fairly blasé about the press coverage of their activities. They were therefore unprepared—especially the Vietnam veterans who remembered their less-than-enthusiastic welcome home when they returned to the United States—for the tumultuous reception they received when they docked at Morehead City on 24 November. Captain McCabe, Company E commander, was on the hangar deck of the *Guam*, when one of his young Marines came up to him and said, “‘Hey, sir, you won’t believe it, go look!’ and I stuck my head out [and there were] two bands, these cheerleaders, girls, people all over the place, waving. It was moving. I’m getting chills just thinking about it now.”<sup>40</sup> In addition to bands at dockside, including the 2d Marine Division Band, playing “Semper Fidelis” and “The Marines Hymn,” there were senior 2d Marine Division and 2d Marine Aircraft Wing officers, led by the division commander, Major General Alfred M. Gray, Jr. There were also throngs of people, network and local television crews, and some family members. Cheering and waving their

hands, people were lined up along the route all the way back to Jacksonville. There were signs reading, “Welcome Back, 32d MAU. Good Job. Welcome Home Marines.” Said McCabe, “One lady ran out of the hairdresser’s with her hair in curlers, with the bib still on her, waving at us. And then her hairdresser walked out and started waving.”<sup>41</sup> The nation’s television screens that evening before Thanksgiving 1982 were filled with moving scenes of a heartfelt “welcome home” to the Marines for a job well done. Not since the return of the Tehran hostages—nearly two years earlier—had there been such an outpouring of patriotic fervor.

On the 24th, HMM-261 launched from the *Guam* for an official welcome as its helicopters touched down at Marine Corps Air Station, New River. The MAU headquarters, the MSSG, and the BLT were met by General Gray and their families as their buses pulled into Camp Geiger, home of the 8th Marines. To Lieutenant Colonel Blankenship, “. . . it was very uplifting. I think the welcome home helped all of us. Well, it did me, anyway, because I remember coming home from Vietnam three times . . . certainly to the young Marines it was just tremendous.”<sup>42</sup>

Official plaudits had come from the Commandant earlier in the month, after the MAU had left Beirut. He sent the following personal messages to Colonels Mead and Stokes:

*A causeway brings 24th Marine Amphibious Unit equipment ashore from Amphibious Squadron 6 ships off Beirut during the relief of the 32d MAU in November 1982.*

USMC Photo



For Colonel Mead: Please convey the following message to all 32d MAU Marines.

You have successfully completed your second deployment into Lebanon, acquitting yourselves honorably and with notable distinction. Your participation in the multinational force has brought stability to Beirut for the first time in 7 years and has given the Lebanese citizens the opportunity to begin rebuilding their city and to commence a return to a normal lifestyle. More importantly, your efforts in stabilizing Beirut have allowed the government of Lebanon to reestablish its authority, hold a presidential election and convene the National Assembly, all key to a stable and peaceful Lebanon. Your outstanding representation of our country and the successful execution of an extremely sensitive and difficult task have added another bright chapter to the history of our Corps. Your professional accomplishments will also enhance our 207th Birthday Celebration. I wish each of you success in your upcoming Phiblex [amphibious landing exercise] and Godspeed in your return home.

For Colonel Stokes: Please convey the following message to all 24th MAU Marines:

You have assumed the watch in a clearly dynamic and changing situation that involves the maintenance of a mission that is difficult and extremely important for peace in

Lebanon and the entire region. You will be required to maintain the momentum of your predecessors with expanded responsibilities and challenges. Restraint and discipline will be of the utmost importance in your very delicate situation. Diplomatic initiatives currently underway depend on the security and presence you provide in Beirut. Your superb ability to move rapidly from participation on the northern flank in Bold Guard 82 to the southern flank for Display Determination 82 epitomized your professionalism. Beyond that, speaking for myself and your fellow Marines, rest assured we have every confidence that you will superbly represent the country and Corps as a member of the Multinational Force.<sup>43</sup>

By 15 November, the 24th MAU had been two weeks into its deployment, while the 32d MAU, back at Camp Geiger, was getting ready with its newly joined elements, Battalion Landing Team 2/6, HMM-264, and MSSG 22, for a return to Beirut in early 1983. Meanwhile, the 32d MAU staff looked forward to Christmas at home, while the 24th MAU got ready for Christmas in the field, not many miles away from where it all began.

## CHAPTER 4

# Beirut III—An Expanded Experience

## 1 November 1982-15 February 1983

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Since 1948 in the post-World War II era, Marines have been in the Mediterranean in at least battalion strength. Then, during a crisis in Greece, President Harry S. Truman ordered the 8th Marines, at one-battalion strength, to join the Sixth Fleet as its landing force. In recent years, with the establishment of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) concept, Marine Amphibious Units—each comprised of a MAU headquarters, a battalion landing team (BLT) [reinforced infantry battalion], a composite helicopter squadron, and a service support group—have acted as the Sixth Fleet's permanent landing force. The presence of the MAU in the Mediterranean gave it an opportunity to conduct amphibious landing exercises with similar units representing NATO allies situated on the Mediterranean littoral. In addition, the MAUs participated in extensive NATO exercises in the northern tier, e.g., in Norway and Denmark, where Marines figure in NATO contingency plans.

The MAUs were generally deployed for six months at a time. While squadron and BLTs would change for each deployment, with the rotation of units, however, it was conceivable that a MAU could begin its second and succeeding deployment, or "pump" as they were called, within a year and a half of its last one. When Colonel Stokes' 24th MAU left Morehead City on 24 August 1982, 40 to 50 percent of his Marines were veterans of earlier Mediterranean deployments.

Before the BLTs and helicopter squadrons joined the MAU and then went aboard their assigned Phibron shipping for pre-deployment exercises, they had already spent approximately six months training separately at first and then together as a MAGTF. When a MAU finally departed for its semi-annual deployment, its units had been tested and were certified to be fully capable of conducting amphibious operations and other tasks they might encounter during their Mediterranean duty. By the time a BLT and a helicopter squadron returned from a six-month deployment, during which time they had conducted at least one amphibious landing exercise per month with forces of other nations, they rated among the best-trained and most combat-ready units of their kind in the Marine Corps.

Colonel Stokes' 24th MAU was comprised of BLT 3/8 (Lieutenant Colonel John B. "Black Jack" Mat-

thews), HMM-263 (Lieutenant Colonel William H. Barnes, Jr.), and MSSG 24 (Major David N. Buckner). Its strength was 1,929 Marines and 108 Navy. When the MAU arrived in Beirut, it was reinforced by 183 augmentees who had been previously attached to the 32d MAU.

The 24th MAU left the States on schedule. Since it had returned from its previous January-June 1982 deployment on 29 June, it experienced a short turnaround. The Marines were embarked on the ships of Amphibious Squadron 6, Commodore Vernon C. Smith (Captain, USN) commanding. The Phibron consisted of its flagship, the *Inchon* (LPH 12), the *Shreveport* (LPD 12), the *Fort Snelling* (LSD 30), the *La Moure County* (LST 1194), and the *Sumter* (LST 1181). The flotilla headed directly for its commitment, participation in NATO Exercises Northern Wedding and Bold Guard (East) in Scandinavia.

After the landings in the north, the MAU was scheduled to make port visits in Ireland, Holland, and Portugal before entering the Mediterranean to relieve the 32d MAU. However, as the 24th left Lolland, Denmark, it received word that these port visits were cancelled and that it would replace the 32d in Exercise Display Determination, a major NATO exercise on the southern flank of the NATO countries.<sup>1</sup> The MARG steamed south for the Mediterranean, where it came under the operational control of the Sixth Fleet on 30 September.<sup>2</sup>

Colonel Stokes was not unacquainted with the Lebanon situation, for all during his January-June 1982 float, his 34th MAU had been continually updating its intelligence and general information on Beirut, ready to undertake one of two, at that time plausible, missions: either ". . . to evacuate U.S. nationals in the embassy or reinforce the embassy."<sup>3</sup>

During the trip to Denmark and then later to Beirut, the BLT and squadron continuously conducted training when they were not involved in the landing exercises. The MAU intelligence section monitored incoming intelligence summaries and reports, and in turn conducted counterintelligence briefings that generally concentrated on terrorist activities. In addition, MAU S-2 personnel briefed the individual rifle companies and the MAU, BLT, MSSG, and squadron headquarters staffs on the situation in Lebanon, and





USMC Photo

*An exploded car-bomb littering the beach highway below Beirut unceremoniously greeted the arrival in Lebanon of the 24th Marine Amphibious Unit in November 1982.*

screened MAU personnel to identify French- and Italian-speaking Marines to be used as interpreters. With the eventual landing in Beirut in mind, each of the MAU commanders checked to see that their troops and equipment were ready.

On 11 October, the MAU/Phibron completed re-embarkation from Saros Bay, Turkey, after completion of Exercise Display Determination 82, and headed for a port visit to Naples. Concurrently, key 24th MAU staff and command personnel made a liaison visit to Beirut. An advance party flew from Naples to Beirut on 26 October, the same day that the Phibron left, to prepare for the relief of the 32d MAU. At this point, Colonel Stokes briefed his officers and staff non-commissioned officers in depth about the politico-military factions in Lebanon, rules of engagement, and standards of conduct for Marines in Beirut. Then the remainder of the Marines received a similar briefing.

As noted earlier, the relief took place in Beirut on 1 November. Under normal conditions, MAU reliefs in the Mediterranean were conducted at Rota, Spain. These were not tactical reliefs, but merely staff and organizational briefings, where “. . . you turn over certain contingency packages, maps, and Sixth Fleet plans, and then I salute Admiral Rowden and say, ‘I’m

ready to take over,’ and Jim Mead says, ‘I’m prepared to be relieved,’ and then he would sail on or vice versa.”<sup>4</sup>

Since this was not to be the case this time, Colonel Stokes prepared a landing plan wherein he would relieve the 32d’s three line companies in helicopter-borne and over-the-beach landings and then he:

. . . placed the requirement to have a mortar and anti-tank capability on the beach before—and my communications with the Navy and with the adjacent multinational force commands—I required those nets to be set up and that force to be on the ground before I said, ‘I’m ready to relieve you as Commander, U.S. Forces Ashore, Lebanon.’<sup>5</sup>

The relief went quite smoothly and all elements of the 24th MAU quickly established a firm work routine ashore. At 1115 this first day in Lebanon, the reality of Beirut was brought to the newly arrived Marines when an automobile car bomb exploded in the vicinity of the entrance to Green Beach. No faction claimed credit for the explosion nor was it ever discovered who did it.

On the 2d, Assistant Secretary of Defense Francis J. West, Jr., a former Marine, visited the 24th MAU headquarters to become the first of the VIPs to take the Beirut tour subsequent to the departure of the 32d

MAU. He was followed on the 5th by Congressmen John P. Murtha, Robert L. Livingston, and Nick J. Rohall. It soon became apparent to this and successive MAUs in Lebanon that a protocol officer would have to be appointed to meet the important visitors and guide them around, and that a command briefing would have to be developed. Vice Admiral Rowden also visited the Marines on 5 November. Two days later, Brigadier General Andrew W. Cooley, JCS representative to Ambassador Draper, visited the MAU. On 10 November, the 207th Marine Corps Birthday was celebrated in the field with traditional Marine Corps spirit; Ambassador Dillon was the honored guest. "Thru the combined effort of BLT 3/8 and USS *Inchon* food services personnel, over 1,400 sailors and Marines enjoyed an appropriate feast with which to celebrate the birthday."<sup>6</sup>

Members of the staffs of Senators Paul Laxalt and Howard H. Baker, Jr., visited the Marines on 20 November, while three days later, U.S. Ambassador to Cyprus Raymond C. Ewing arrived at the MAU headquarters. On 25 November, Colonel Stokes and



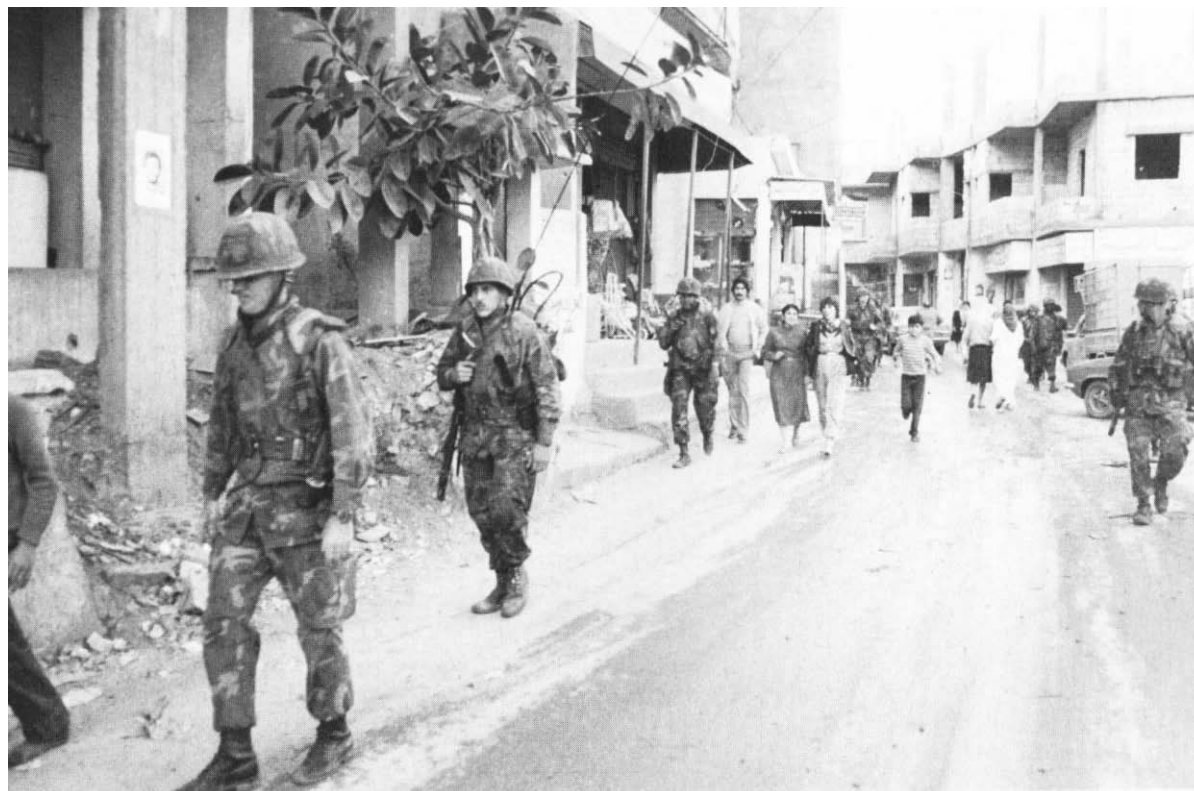
Photo courtesy of Col Thomas M. Stokes, Jr., USMC (Ret)  
*Col Thomas M. Stokes, Jr., 24th MAU commander, is seen with Col Elias Khalil, Lebanese liaison officer.*

his staff hosted JCS Chairman General John W. Vessey, Jr., who was accompanied by Admiral Rowden.

The MAU's mission was expanded on 1 November, when the Secretary of Defense approved the conduct of daylight motorized patrols, first to east Beirut and then in Baabda, and foot patrols later in Yarze. These

*Seemingly oblivious of the American presence, Lebanese civilians go about their business as Marines of the 1st Squad, 1st Platoon, Company K, BLT 3/8, conduct their first patrol in Hay es Salaam ("Hooterville"), outside of the Beirut Airport in December 1982.*

USMC Photo by Sgt Christopher Grey





USMC Photo

*HMM-263 headquarters ashore at LZ Rockpile at the north end of Beirut Airport.*

patrols began on 4 November after extensive planning and conversations between the U.S., French and Italian MNF officials, and Lebanese military authorities, who helped establish routes and timing of the patrols.<sup>7</sup> The first patrol consisted of four jeeps with machine guns mounted. Two jeeps went out first, followed five minutes later by two more. The patrol had “. . . 160s [radio set AN/GRC-160], thereby having the ability to talk inter-patrol on the VHF [net] and we used an HF net to talk back to the BLT and the MAU.”<sup>8</sup> A total of 15 Marines and a Lebanese liaison officer, acting as an interpreter, went on the patrol. Continuous communications between the patrol and the MAU headquarters were facilitated by the use of an automatic retransmitting station, airborne in a HMM-263 helicopter with a back-up manual retransmitting station at the Presidential Palace. The first patrol went out for two and a half hours on the afternoon of the 4th, the second went out for two hours the next morning. Both returned without incident.

Thereafter, patrols went out daily. By the end of November, 30 patrols had been successfully conducted. With JCS approval, the patrol routes had been expanded to cover northeast Beirut. Aside from the

military aspects of these patrols, there was another dividend, and that was one of giving the Marines a feeling that they were doing something historic, that “. . . they contributed . . . to the stability of the Beirut area and . . . to world history as Marines.”<sup>9</sup>

During November, the 24th’s intelligence section was augmented with the arrival of detachments from the Sensor Control and Management Platoon (SCAMP) and interrogator/translators from the 2d Marine Division at Camp Lejeune. This combination of human intelligence (HUMINT) and sensor assets was employed to provide adjacent, subordinate, and higher commands with a good variety of intelligence information. Colonel Stokes noted that “. . . this full-scale intelligence collection and dissemination program has satisfied the commander’s essential elements of information and other concerns in the 24th MAU area of responsibility.”<sup>10</sup>

The character and nature of the 24th MAU’s tour in Lebanon was different from the 32d’s—as a matter of fact, the tours of each of the MAUs differed from the others considerably, usually in four areas: weather; training emphasis; relationship with other forces in the area; and finally, the nature of the fighting in the

surrounding area. The weather which had been at first warm, then hot, when the 32d's Marines arrived, had become pleasantly fall-like when the 24th first came in and then became cold and wet in the succeeding winter months. The surf at Green (Black) Beach got quite heavy during the winter, and seriously disrupted over-the-beach supply operations. HMM-263 helicopters took up the slack by flying in needed supplies from shipboard to the landing zones at the beach and in the MAU perimeter. Despite the weather, however, the helicopters were able to fly in two hot meals a day from Phibron shipping.<sup>11</sup>

At first, the MAU had begun a limited training program with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). Then on 11 November, in response to a request from the Government of Lebanon, the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed that the Marines begin training a Lebanese Army rapid reaction force. The training would be conducted only if it did not interfere with the Marines' basic mission. On the 12th, the MAU provided a training plan for approval by higher echelons, gaining that approval on the 30th. Ground units and air crews to be trained were designated by the Lebanese government. Training began on 13 December.

The initial training was conducted in three one-week phases. Phase I consisted of training in general military skills and physical training, and an orientation briefing on Marine Corps weapons and equipment. The second phase consisted of helicopter orientation, live firing exercises, an overview of amphibious operations, a visit to Phibron 6 amphibious ships, and in-

*A 24th MAU Marine trains Lebanese Armed Forces soldiers in close combat techniques in December 1982.*

Photo courtesy of Claude Salhani



struction in antimechanized operations. Phase III training consisted of planning for helicopter-lifted assaults and extractions. Paralleling this instruction was training given to Lebanese air crews in all aspects of helicopter assault support. Phase III ended on 7 January with a demonstration of a vertical assault operation.

Some Lebanese officers had attended Army schools at Fort Benning and Fort Leavenworth, and although fairly well-versed in general military subjects, they were rusty in military skills. The most serious weakness in the Lebanese Armed Forces, however, was the inexperience of their non-commissioned officers.<sup>12</sup> Every senior Marine instructor was a gunnery sergeant, and as Lieutenant Colonel Matthews, BLT 3/8 commander, recalls:

... our goal was to allow the Lebanese Army to see how our NCOs function, and they function without officers and they saw that and ... in many cases absorbed that kind of demonstrated leadership, and they certainly absorbed a lot of our spirit.<sup>13</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Matthews also noted that his Marines trained battalion after battalion of the Lebanese Armed Forces in close combat and bayonet training, "... and they hear the arrugahs going, they seemed to enjoy it."<sup>14</sup>

To demonstrate the seriousness of its intent in rebuilding the LAF, on 11 December, the Government of Lebanon appointed as commanding general of Lebanese Armed Forces, General Ibrahim Tannous, a barrel-chested, war-scarred veteran. He seemed determined to rebuild an organization that really had not been out of its barracks since 1976 except to man permissive checkpoints. Lieutenant Colonel Matthews saw General Tannous as a carbon copy of his division commander, tobacco-chewing Major General Al Gray.

Lieutenant Colonel Matthews noted that Tannous':

... rapport with the troops is almost the same as General Gray's ... General Gray's got the capability of talking with the PFCs and they know he really cares about them. And that's the way General Tannous comes across, in my view, with the Lebanese Army. So, I think that's awfully good and healthy.<sup>15</sup>

Both the Marines and the Lebanese profited from the cross-training program. For the Lebanese, it meant a shaping-up of basic skills, if not, in fact, learning them for the first time. For the young Marines it meant sharpening their own skills, "... and working with the Lebanese soldiers gave our troops a very clear mission identification. The Lebanese whom they knew ... they worked with, squad leader to squad leader, ... did have a real strong desire to defend their country."<sup>16</sup>



USMC Photo

*A BLT 3/8 platoon leader demonstrates the TOW anti-tank missile launcher to members of the French MNF.*

During January, in preparation for artillery cross-training with Lebanese artillery units, Battery G, 10th Marines, the 24th MAU's artillery unit that came ashore on 3 December, began training in all aspects of its specialty. Cross training with the LAF began on 10 January. There was also cross-training in combat service support, for the Lebanese especially needed familiarization with the new vehicles and equipment the United States was supplying their army.

Cross-training also began with other MNF units in December. That month, the MAU's amtracs began using the Italian force's tracked vehicle course to maintain the proficiency of Marine drivers and mechanics. On the 14th, the Marines conducted a training exercise with 102 French paratroopers. The exercise included a heliborne assault demonstration, amtrac operations from the *Fort Snelling*, and weapons familiarization ashore. Later that month, the French paratroopers joined the Marines in a training session that involved rappelling from helicopters.

As soon as the 24th MAU's troops were settled in, their own unit training began. Much time was spent

learning about the culture and history of Lebanon. The political officer of the American embassy presented lectures to the Marine officers on the Lebanese political situation. Professors from Beirut University, from the American University in Beirut, and from the faculty of the Lebanese Science University talked to the officers, who in turn ". . . would impart that information to the troops and we'd go down and talk to the PFC and he's telling you about the Druze and the Phalange; you know, he had a crash course of 109 days in the history of Beirut proper and Lebanon in general."<sup>17</sup> The dividend from all this was the fact that the young Marine could go home after his tour in Lebanon and speak intelligently about his experiences.

Tours of historic Lebanese places, begun during the 32d's tour, were continued by the 24th. Although none of the Marines was allowed liberty in Beirut, Colonel Mead had introduced a program of getting his Marines out of the lines and into trucks for tours of Beirut, past the famous Museum Crossing which separated Muslim west Beirut from Christian east Beirut, and Martyr Square, and then to Juniyah. While the 24th MAU was in country, representatives of the Lebanese Ministry of Tourism also took Marines on tour of Byblos, an historic coastal village about 20 miles north of Beirut. Called Jubayl in olden times, it dated back to the days of ancient Phoenicia and contained historic ruins, remnants of its earlier splendor. The Marines also were able to go on one-day skiing excursions into the mountains.<sup>18</sup> Sailors from Phibron 6 and the carrier battle group were also invited to join in these trips. The situation ashore at this time also permitted the MAU to send some of its Marines on port visits with Phibron ships to Athens, Greece, and Antalya, Turkey.

While the Marines were performing their daily tasks on the ground, and the squadron's helicopters were busy with either logistic or diplomatic support missions, the MAU's doctors and corpsmen established a Medical Community Aid Program (MEDCAP) on 30 November, with the assistance of the Lebanese liaison officer to the MAU. In an area on the airport road north of the MAU compound, at a Lebanese checkpoint, the MSSG set up three general purpose tents on a hard-top site, 100 meters by 100 meters, and wired the tents for lighting. Three days each week, the MAU's medical platoon trucked medical supplies and dental equipment to the tents, and prepared to open sick call at 0900. Treatment was given to all Lebanese who sought it. On the medical end, the patients were diagnosed and treated, but no surgery was performed. The dental section, on the other hand, ". . . was able

to provide a level of dentistry that far exceeded anything that even the most affluent Lebanese could purchase in Beirut."<sup>19</sup> Initially, the Lebanese were hesitant to accept the services the Americans were providing, but before long, there were lines of patients waiting for treatment. Before the 24th MAU left Beirut, its MEDCAP had treated over 2,000 Lebanese nationals.<sup>20</sup>

During December, Colonel Stokes and his command were visited by General Tannous and President Gemayel, as well as by Major General Gray, and Terence Cardinal Cook, Military Vicar of the U.S. Armed Forces, who celebrated mass while ashore. Four British liaison officers visited Colonel Stokes in January, prior to the arrival of a British contingent for the MNF in February. Congressman Murtha revisited Beirut in January. Before the MAU left Lebanon in February, it also hosted two separate senatorial groups, one headed by Senator Dan Quayle and the second by Senator Dennis DeConcini, as well as permanent staff members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Military visitors to Task Forces 61 and 62 included Vice Admiral Thomas J. Kilcline, Commander, Naval Air Forces, Atlantic Fleet; the Inspector General of the French MNF contingent; Vice Admiral Charles R. Larson, Commander Task Force 60, *Nimitz* Carrier Battle Group; and Vice Admiral Edward S. Briggs, Commander, Naval Surface Forces, Atlantic Fleet.

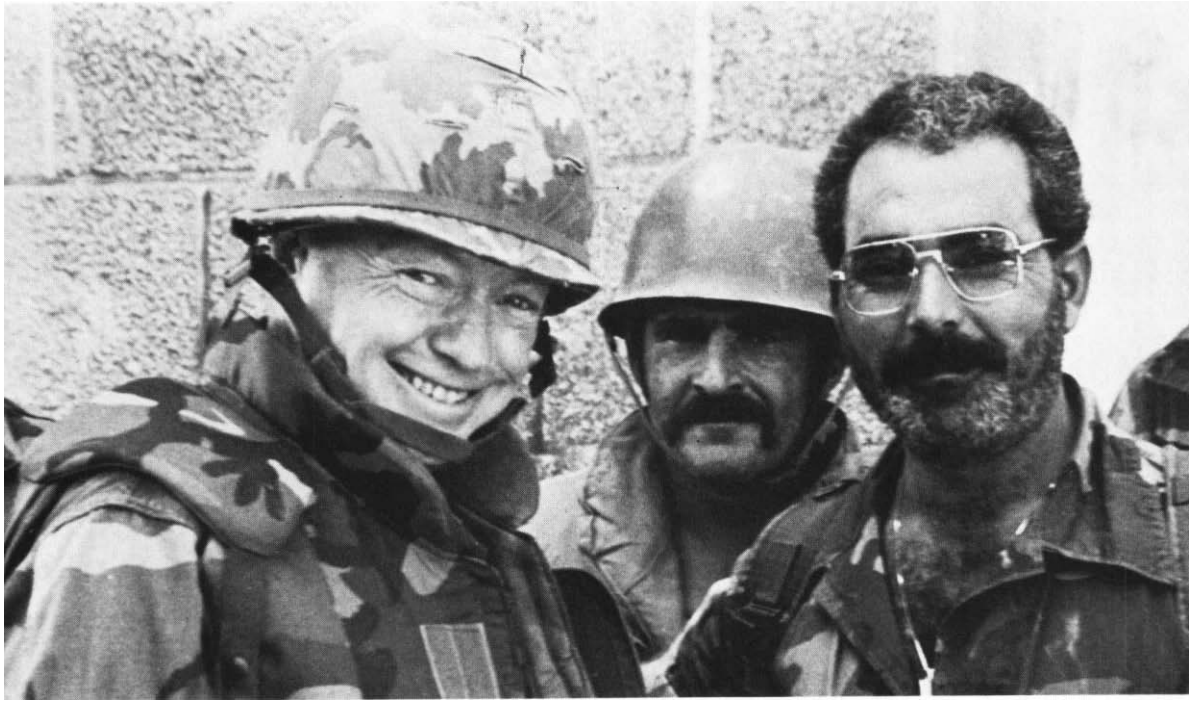


Photo courtesy Col Thomas M. Stokes, Jr., USMC (Ret) 24th MAU commander Col Thomas M. Stokes, Jr., escorts President of Lebanon Amin Gemayel (right) and Gen Ibrahim Tannous (left), Lebanese Armed Forces commander, as they make a Christmas Day visit to the 24th MAU in 1982. To the left of Gen Tannous is 24th MAU Sergeant Major Valdemar Vasquez.

*Terence Cardinal Cooke, Military Vicar of the Armed Forces of the United States, visits Marines and sailors of the 24th Marine Amphibious Unit, Beirut, New Year's Eve, 1982.*

Photo courtesy of Claude Salhani





USMC Photo by SSgt Robert E. Kline

*2d Marine Division commander MajGen Alfred M. Gray visits with Lebanese soldiers.*

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A matter of concern occurring during this deployment was the escalation of Marine-Israeli Defense Force confrontations. To Colonel Stokes, it was a real problem. He was not only worried about the possible loss of life, but also about the impact on Israeli-American confrontation would have on the Lebanese situation overall.<sup>21</sup>

The problem stemmed from the Israelis being assigned the Old Sidon Road to use as a main supply route for their troops in positions northeast of the Marines. In the latter part of November and through all of December, Israeli vehicles were being fired upon. The IDF then dispatched convoys with armed escorts. At the end of December, a high ranking Israeli officer was reportedly killed in an ambush. In early January 1983, the command vehicle of a convoy was destroyed with loss of life. The Israelis suspected that the attacks were being mounted by PLO personnel who emerged from Marine-occupied territory and then immediately retreated to what they considered sanctuary.

The first Marine-Israeli contact occurred on 5 January, when an Israeli tank entered Company K's positions in the eastern portion of the Marine perimeter. Claiming to be lost, the Israelis were quickly escorted out of the Marines' territory. Colonel Stokes happened to be visiting Company K that day, and he ". . . refreshed the [Israeli] tank company commander's memory on the extent of USMC boundaries around the Beirut International Airport and [on] land navigation."<sup>22</sup>

Again, on 6, 8, and 10 January, the Israelis attempted to enter U.S. positions and to set up direct conferences between Colonel Stokes and their commander. In each case, the Israelis were not allowed into Marine lines, and they were reminded that requests to confer with Colonel Stokes had to go through diplomatic channels. In commenting on this matter of dealing with the Israelis on a face-to-face basis, Colonel Stokes later expressed some of his frustrations and a military professional's point of view by saying:

Ground commanders do a much better job of dealing with and clarifying their own tactical matters than do staff officers and diplomats. If there had been a free and timely flow of required info between this officer and Brig Amnon [Lifkin, senior Israeli officer in the area] and LtCol Matthews [CO, BLT 3/8] and LtCol Landsberg [Israeli tank unit commander], the last 30 days may have been much quieter for us in south Beirut. The above may not be possible, but it is logical.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to the incursions into their territory, Marines had to contend with the repeated Israeli patrol practice of reconnaissance by fire, which they began on 9 January. "These patrols were characterized by intermittent firing of small arms, main tank guns (fir-

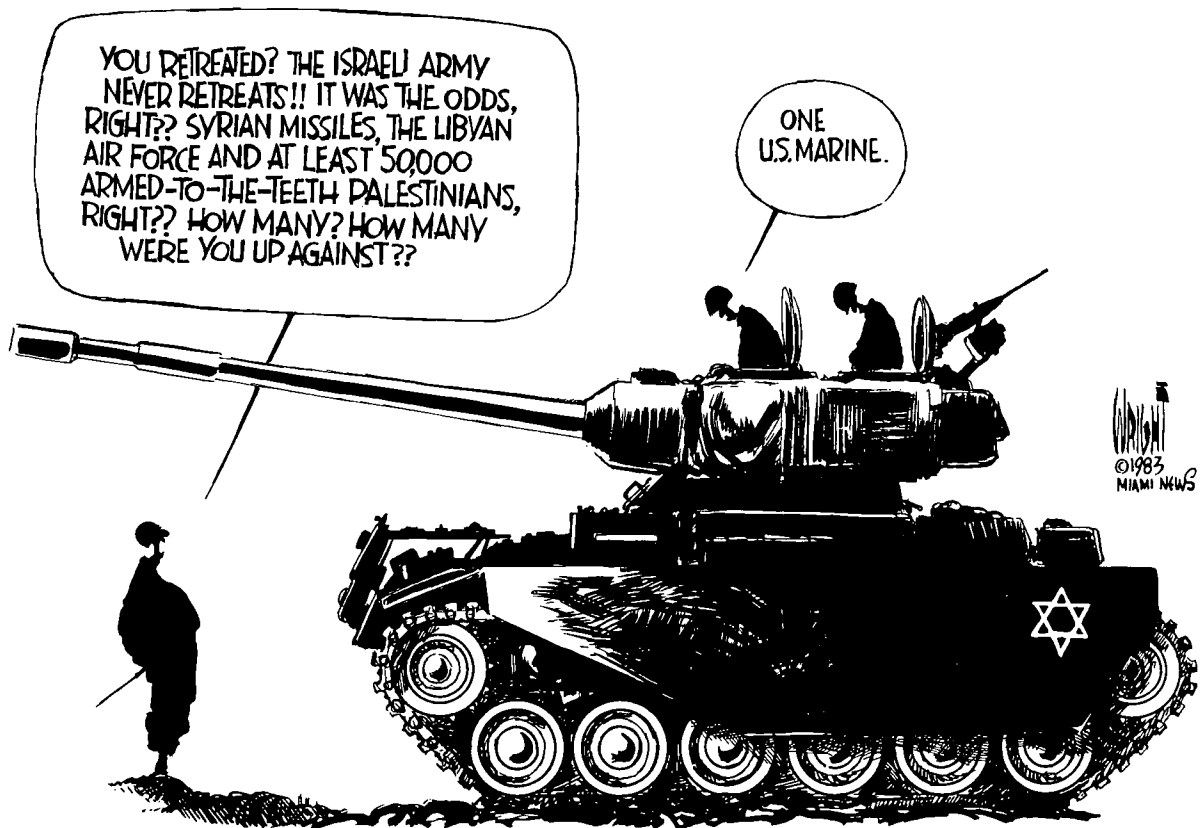


Photo courtesy of Claude Salhani  
*ICpl Roger E. Dery (l) and Cpls James Burnett (center) and Darrell A. Banks (r) contemplate the distances from Beirut to some places they would rather be.*

ing usually being directed toward vacant buildings and into open fields or tree groves both west and east of the Sidon Road)."<sup>24</sup> The Sidon Road patrols generally moved from south to north, and upon reaching the proximate position of Marine Company L, the patrol would move south and take up a position, where it remained all day. These patrols were generally comprised of one to four armored vehicles (armored personnel carriers or tanks), followed closely by 5 to as many as 14 dismounted soldiers. Although the patrols became predictable and routine, the firing clearly became a threat to the safety of U.S. forces. It was quite clear to Colonel Stokes that he had to discuss the matter face to face with the senior Israeli officer in the area, and so he insisted upon such a meeting. With the assistance of Ambassador Dillon, he was able to arrange one.<sup>25</sup>

Colonel Stokes met with Brigadier General Lifkin to discuss the Sidon Road problem and other matters of mutual concern. The Israeli general agreed to establish a direct radio link between his headquarters





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and that of the Marines. This was done on 30 January. Four days earlier, the Israeli practice of reconnaissance by fire had ended, although patrolling continued.<sup>26</sup>

In February, the understanding with the Israelis over boundaries and the conduct of patrols—which was thought to be a settled matter—was found to be not so clearly understood as originally thought. The single-most notable demonstration of this lack of understanding occurred on 2 February, when three Israeli tanks attempted to go through Captain Charles B. Johnson's Company L position.

At about 0800, from his observation post, Captain Johnson, together with the advance party of the British MNF contingent,<sup>27</sup> observed an Israeli patrol coming up Old Sidon Road from the south. This was normal. Half an hour later, he spotted a north-to-south patrol, which also was normal. It consisted of three tanks, two armored personnel carriers (APCs), and dismounted troops. "Again, we're seeing them about 3,000 meters off. We could see that far, all the way down the Sidon Road."<sup>28</sup>

The only thing that was unusual about this patrol was that the troops were dismounted, for the Israeli patrols in the previous two weeks had all been mounted. Captain Johnson then went on to say:

... sometime between 0830 and 0900, one of my surveillance people . . . spotted three additional tanks coming on the road . . . the one they had built along the railroad tracks, and then they [the tanks] broke off the road and they continued up the railroad tracks right up to the edge of the university grounds. . . . That's when I knew something was up. There were three tanks on the road. . . . There was no tactical reason for them to do that. . . . They brought tanks right through the middle of Shuwayfat, which is a Muslim area and it's relatively dangerous to do that.<sup>29</sup>

What Captain Johnson had spotted were three tanks coming from the north and three tanks coming from the south. He couldn't see them when they were in the town, but they were spotted shortly after as they left it and broke through the orchard on the western side of the Sidon Road into the buffer zone between the road and the university. The tanks were heading for a section of the fence where Captain Johnson had confronted an APC-mounted Israeli patrol on 20 January. The Company L commander quickly got in his jeep and went to the spot the tanks were approaching. Captain Johnson didn't think that:

... they would actually try to come through a joint Marine-Lebanese checkpoint like that. But once it developed, I was very concerned that if the tanks were allowed to move forward, there was a very dangerous situation, because the road they were on . . . went right through the heart of the

university . . . divided the Marine company and the Lebanese company.<sup>30</sup>

Johnson feared that if the tanks attempted to pass, a firefight might erupt between the Lebanese and the Israelis. If a fight ensued, the Marines would have to support the Lebanese. He wasn't worried about the Marines' fire discipline, but he was concerned about that of the Lebanese soldiers.

As the Israeli tanks approached the fence, Captain Johnson jumped out of his jeep, ran up to the tanks, and stood in the center of the road. The lead tank stopped about six inches in front of Johnson, who told the Israeli lieutenant colonel in the lead tank, "You will not pass through this position." After a short pause, the Israeli dismounted, spoke with Johnson, and then climbed back aboard the tank, saying that he was going through. Johnson later stated that he replied, "You will have to kill me first."<sup>31</sup> He drew his pistol, chambered a round, and held the weapon at the ready position. There was another pause as the Israeli officer apparently spoke over his radio to his headquarters. The lead tank then pulled slowly to the side of the road with Captain Johnson walking alongside and then the two others suddenly revved up their engines and whipped forward toward the fence.

The young Marine captain jumped on the lead tank, grabbed the Israeli officer, and yelled at him to order his tanks halted. The tank commander complied and then purportedly told Johnson, "One thing we don't want to do is kill each other." Johnson answered, "Yes, but if you keep doing things like this, the likelihood is going to occur."<sup>32</sup>

While the local Arab radio stations were telling and retelling the story of the American who stopped the three Israeli tanks singlehandedly, the Israeli press was accusing Captain Johnson of having liquor on his breath and being drunk. Worse, they called the whole affair a misunderstanding on the part of the Marines. Confronted by evidence, among other things, that Johnson was a teetotaler, the Israelis quickly toned down, and finally stopped such comments when they saw they were not going to be given credence.

Within a few minutes of the confrontation, Johnson's battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Matthews, arrived on the scene. He had observed part of what happened and asked Johnson for a full and immediate report, "And I gave him the whole thing . . . and we spent about 20 minutes walking the ground and so forth."<sup>33</sup> Matthews then said they should tell the whole story to Colonel Stokes, who went back to the fence area with Johnson and rewalked the area where the confrontation took place. The MAU com-

mander reported the incident through the chain of command. The next day, 3 February, Israeli and American diplomats met in Beirut, where they agreed to mark the boundary lines more clearly so there would be no future misunderstandings.

A routine, daily press conference was held at 1600 on the afternoon of the 2d at Colonel Stokes' headquarters. The most important topic concerned a ricochet 75mm tank round that had landed in Company I's positions. Nothing was said about Captain Johnson's experience until the press stormed back into the compound at 2300 that evening, undoubtedly having been queried by their home offices why stories had not been filed on the U.S.-Israeli affair. When the reporters asked Colonel Stokes why he hadn't told them about it, he replied that no one had asked, and said further, ". . . it's not my job to determine what's newsworthy and what's not. . . ."<sup>34</sup>

Normally a quiet officer despite his impressive military presence, Captain Johnson was told by his CO that he was going to have to submit to the questions of the print and television reporters at a press conference, much as he disliked the prospects of such an encounter. A by-product of this instant fame was heavy mail. A large number of former Marines and retired servicemen wrote and sent messages of support. "A lot of children wrote from schools and they were really nice letters. A lot of people wrote. I got hundreds of letters." Captain Johnson also received a message from the Commandant after the 24th left Lebanon. "It was a wonderful message to my men, how he was proud of the men," Johnson said. In retrospect, Johnson never felt that what he had done was wrong. "I had no doubt in my mind that what I had done was the right thing. . . . I had regret that it happened, but I did not have any regret in what I had done."<sup>35</sup>

During the month of January, the MAU prepared for its scheduled relief in February. Like the previous October's turnover, it would be a relief in place. The advance party of the 22d MAU arrived in Beirut on 9 February and each member was taken in hand by his 24th MAU counterpart. Since the first relief had gone so smoothly, there was little reason to believe that the second would be otherwise. It wasn't. At 0700 on 14 February, elements of the 22d MAU started landing and BLT 3/8 was relieved in place by BLT 2/6 by 1251, MSSG 24 was relieved by MSSG 22 at 1300, and HMM-264 relieved HMM-263 of the Cobra alert mission at 1326. Colonel Mead, commander of the 22d MAU, back in Beirut for a third time, assumed control of the forces ashore at 1515. The next day, 15 February, he assumed command of the U.S. Multi-



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo DN-SN-84-00723

*A Marine stands watch as other Marines jog on the Beirut International Airport perimeter road, with Burj al Barajinah, outside the fence, posing a threat in the background.*

*MAU Marines decorated "The Peacekeepers' Tavern," a spare but cool and safe refuge in the basement of the MSSG headquarters building at Beirut International Airport.*

Photograph by the author

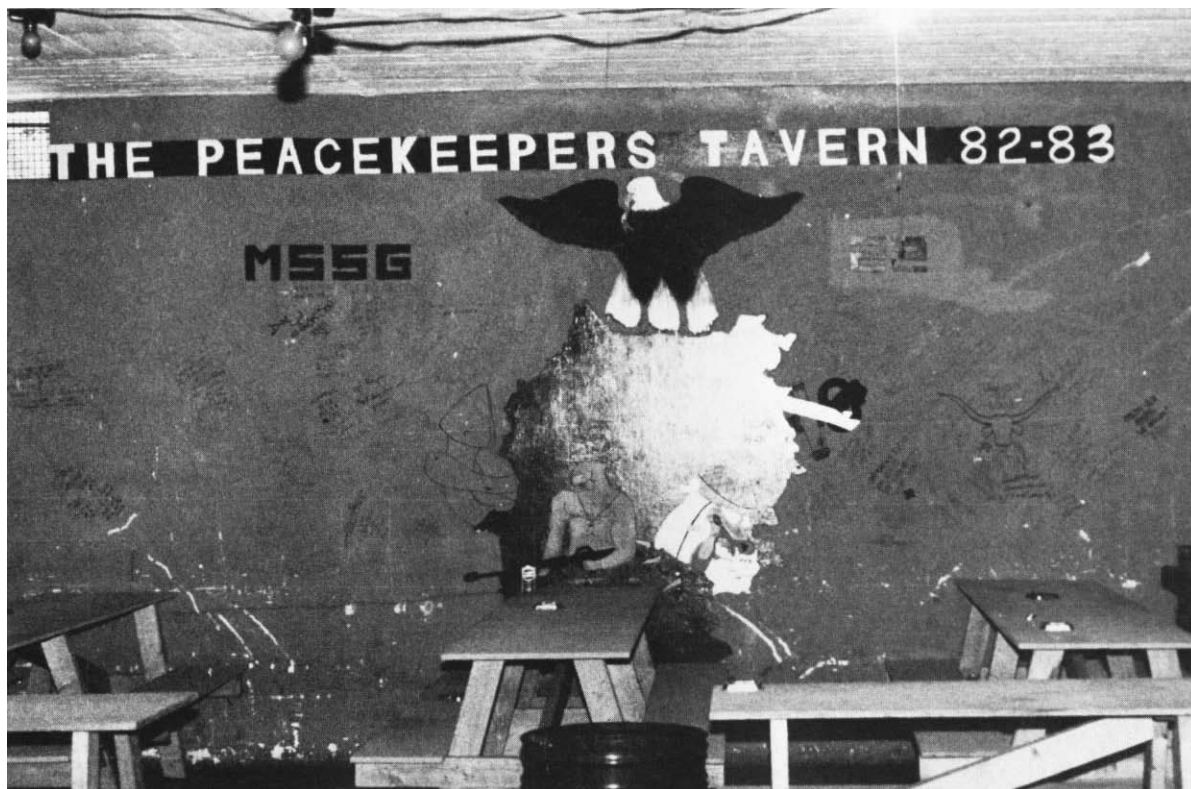




Photo courtesy of Claude Salhani  
*Senior Chief Journalist Tom Jones, USN, mans the control board on the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service broadcast module set up in the U.S. Multi-National Force compound at Beirut Airport.*

National Force in Lebanon, as Phibron 6 with 24th MAU embarked was steaming towards Rota and home.<sup>36</sup>

The 24th MAU carried out its washdown in Rota and sailed to Morehead City, where it arrived on 8 March to be greeted by bands, the media, and families. Colonel Stokes was relieved as CO by Colonel Timothy J. Geraghty on 17 March. Four days later, BLT 3/8 and HMM-263 were relieved as elements of the 24th MAU by BLT 1/8 and HMM-162. For service in Beirut, the 24th MAU was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation; Colonel Stokes was decorated with the Legion of Merit.<sup>37</sup>

The 24th MAU's deployment was not as spectacular as the 32d's deployment nor were its Marines in the international spotlight as much. But the MAU sailed home with a feeling of a difficult job well done in continuing the diplomatic mission of presence handed to it by its predecessor. Like the 32d MAU before it, the 24th MAU had been well supported by FMFLant. The response in terms of equipment, personnel, and the like was, according to Colonel Stokes, ". . . almost embarrassing it was so damned good and fast."<sup>38</sup> The cold, rainy weather had been wreaking havoc with the field boots of the Marines. The MAU sought to requisition an overboot to keep the Marines'

feet dry, ". . . and I had a couple of airplanes full of them before I could shake a stick. And . . . these same young kids whose mothers tried to put galoshes on them when they were about eight or nine years old—they wouldn't sell that pair of galoshes they put over their boots for \$100."<sup>39</sup>

The 24th MAU maintained an active physical training program. Marine runners used the airfield perimeter road, which measured six miles all the way around, and a number of them participated in a 10 kilometer race with the French and Italians two weeks after their arrival in October, and lost.

The Armed Forces Radio and Television Service arrived at Beirut on 17 December. Now the MAU Marines could listen to radio programs featuring the latest news or the "Top Twenty" popular tunes. Later in the Marine deployments, the AFRTS would broadcast television programs, in which the Marines could see themselves featured in network news shows and also watch commercial television programs, without commercials.

Meanwhile the Marine flyers could list some real achievements. HMM-263 flew 6,349 hours in logistic, VIP, and diplomatic missions. By the time the Marine flyers returned to New River, they had all qualified as helicopter aircraft commanders.

MSSG 24 was also well employed during its 108 days ashore in Beirut. With its 16 MA-13 five-ton trucks, Major Buckner's truck platoon logged 39,000 miles, as opposed to the usual 15,000 registered in a normal six-month MAU deployment in the Mediterranean.<sup>40</sup> Careful preparation and attention to detail led to the successful operation of the service support group in Lebanon, and, according to Major Buckner, his Marines ". . . just did a magnificent job. Very heartwarming to see. And when they left, they left with a real sense of fulfillment, whether the guy was a truck driver or mechanic, or a shore party man or a dentist or military policeman or an air delivery guy, a communicator, admin guy. You know, he felt that he had really done something worthwhile. And I'm sure they got a lifetime of memories out of it."<sup>41</sup>

Colonel Matthews had much the same reaction when he asked one of his Marines what he thought of Lebanon. The Marine replied, "Sir, it was an experience. . . . It was a good one, because I feel for the first time in my life I've done something that is positive. I feel that I contributed something to a country that wants to get on its feet."<sup>42</sup>

With this the general consensus, the 24th MAU returned home. And within weeks after the 22d MAU began Beirut IV, the 24th started preparations for its May 1983 deployment.

## CHAPTER 5

# Beirut IV—Circumstances Change, 'Presence' Remains—15 February-29 May 1983

Colonel Mead had been selected for promotion to brigadier general in January 1983 and there was speculation that he would be "frocked"<sup>1</sup> so that he would be equal in grade to the heads of the French and Italian MNF units in Beirut. As he later explained, if he had been promoted in January, and had he kept his command, the MAU would possibly have had to be upgraded to become a Marine Amphibious Brigade (MAB), with the possible addition of another battalion landing team.\*

In the minds of many, the prospect of the MAU becoming a MAB was not so far-fetched, for it was again speculated that if the Israelis pulled out of their positions and headed south, the void would have to be filled by extending the Marines to the south. That would require the MAU to be augmented by at least a BLT. As it turned out, all of this speculation was for naught. The 22d MAU remained a MAU and Colonel Mead was not promoted until June, after he returned to Camp Lejeune and relinquished command.

Like the 24th's turnaround, the 32d MAU's time between deployment was also of short duration. The 32d MAU returned to Camp Lejeune on 24 November, detached the BLT and the squadron, sent its personnel on holiday leave, joined up its new elements, and left Morehead City for Beirut on 27 January 1983.

The 32d Marine Amphibious Unit was redesignated 22d MAU on 1 December 1982<sup>2</sup> for its second trip to Beirut and began its predeployment training with Amphibious Squadron 2, Commodore (Captain, USN) George Bess, commanding. The MAU had already been joined by its new ground and air element, BLT 2/6, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Donald F. Anderson, and HMM-264, Lieutenant Colonel Richard J. Kalata in command. MSSG 22 had a new commander, Major Albert E. Shively. The MAU-Phibron combination quickly melded into a solid Navy-Marine Corps team, as Colonel Mead's Marines looked forward to their Beirut deployment; 45 percent of the MAU staff had been there before. The intelligence and operations section continually monitored the Lebanon situation as well as the situa-

tion in the Caribbean, either or both of which might impact on the 22d MAU's deployment.

Particularly busy during the predeployment period was the MAU Service Support Group, which is tasked with providing all the combat service support required by a deployed MAU. While its strength is generally only 278-280 Marines, the MSSG is a uniquely diversified organization made up of varied platoons and detachments from the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing, the 2d Marine Division, and the 2d Force Service Support Group—the three major commands of Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic.

The MSSG is responsible for management of the MAU's LFORM (Landing Force Readiness Materiel) block, as well as the Operational Deployment block, which itself requires seven days to be moved from Camp Lejeune to Morehead City and then loaded on board Phibron shipping and stowed properly.<sup>3</sup> In the case of the November 1982 to February 1983 deployment of the 24th MAU, MSSG 24, under Major Buckner, devised a Rapid Deployment Block made up of anticipated high usage items which would be needed ashore. When the block was brought to the beach in Lebanon and warehoused, it provided 79 percent of the items needed by the 24th MAU. The ready availability of those items cut down on the number of logistic support flights needed, freeing the squadron's aircraft for other chores.<sup>4</sup>

To ensure self-sufficiency, the MSSG also included a maintenance platoon comprised of Marines with highly specialized talents. "You name it, the maintenance platoon is charged with fixing whatever breaks."<sup>5</sup>

With all Marines and equipment loaded, the Phibron steamed out of Morehead City on 27 January on board the *Guadalcanal* (LPH 7), the Phibron flagship; *Raleigh* (LPD 1); the *Pensacola* (LSD 38); the *Spartanburg County* (LST 1192); and its sister ship, the *Fairfax County* (LST 1193). The first night out, the Phibron experienced high seas and 60-knot winds, which resulted in, as Colonel Mead noted later, "Marines getting their sealegs fast."<sup>6</sup>

On 7 February, the 24th MAU liaison officer arrived on the *Guadalcanal* with turnover packages for Colonel Mead, while two days later, Lieutenant Colonel Ronald R. Rice, 22d MAU executive officer, led an advance

\*Colonel Mead comments to author, 23May83. However, when Brigadier General Jim R. Joy became CO of the 22d MAU in November 1983, the 22d remained a MAU.