

ABC World News Tonight
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KUWAIT/BOMBINGS JENNINGS: The Iranian government went out of its way today to say it had nothing to do with the bombings in Kuwait. The foreign ministry said blaming Iran is part of a plot by the United States and its agents against the Islamic revolution. Well, the kind of evidence against Iran that you'd like to have in a court does not appear to be readily available. As John McWethy reports, however, Washington's view on the subject is firm.

MCWETHY: April 18, a car bomb at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut kills 63, 17 Americans. October 23, a truck bomb at U.S. Marine headquarters in Beirut kills 240 American servicemen and a second bomb at French headquarters kills 58 there. December 12, yesterday, a truck bomb at the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait kills five, no Americans. The French embassy is also hit. Question: Who is responsible? A radical terrorist group called Islamic Jihad or Islamic Holy War has claimed credit. Intelligence sources say the group draws most of its members from fanatic Iranians who have been sent throughout the Arab world by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini. Their mission: spread Islamic revolution. High-ranking U.S. government sources say they have every reason to believe, but still lack conclusive proof that Iran, with help from Syria, is encouraging, equipping and directing these terrorists on their suicide missions. Syria helps, sources say, but Iran appears to be calling the shots, at times intimidating Syria with hints that its government might also be overthrown. Question: Why are they attacking U.S. facilities? From the early days of Iran's revolution, hatred of the West and what the Ayatollah calls the great Satan, America, has been an important motivator and rallying cry. Hussein Musawi is a leader of an Islamic faction in Lebanon. Some say he has organized Iranian acts of terrorism against the U.S. and his country. In an interview Sunday, he said in French that the Islamic Holy War will continue until the U.S., France, and Israel have been driven from Lebanon, and the U.S. backed government of Amin Gemayel in Lebanon has been overthrown. Question: What can the U.S. do to stop the terrorist attacks? Though many American officials admit there is little the U.S. can do, Secretary of State Shultz said today: SHULTZ: If the offenders can be clearly identified, then I think there would be ways of getting at them. CASPAR WEINBERGER (Secretary of Defense): The defenses against terrorism when they come as a surprise to the terrorists.

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MCWETHY: U.S. military sources say for more than a month the Pentagon has had a target list of Iranian strongholds in Lebanon. U.S. sources say those could be hit, but the real source of fanaticism, Iran itself, will not be a military target. American officials said that yes, the U.S. does have contingency plans to strike Iran, but those are old plans based on the possibility of a Soviet invasion of Iran that would require a U.S. response. Question: What are the prospects for the future? Since the Marine headquarters in Beirut was destroyed in October, U.S. intelligence officials have been warning the president and his Cabinet to expect more of the same. Question: How serious is the threat to the U.S. itself? The barricades that have recently been put around the White House and today at the State Department indicate that security officials take the potential threat very seriously. Even though most terrorist groups have avoided hitting targets inside the U.S. because of fear of the FBI and local police forces. Intelligence officials warn, however, that 1984 will be a year of high vulnerability for the U.S. with major candidates campaigning for national office with two national political conventions, the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, and a World's Fair in New Orleans. John McWethy, ABC News, Washington.