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INQUIRY

A Beirut bombing could happen again

USA TODAY: Prior to the bombing of the American Embassy in Beirut, did you receive any intelligence from the Israelis?

SAYRE: We got a lot of intelligence and a lot of reports from a lot of places on threats to American interests, not only in Lebanon, but in other places. But I do not recall any specific warning by the Israelis of an attack against Americans in Lebanon.

USA TODAY: The steps that you have taken so far — would they prevent another Beirut from happening?

SAYRE: It is almost impossible. If somebody is prepared to give his life and to drive a truckload of dynamite up in front of a building and let himself be detonated with the truck — it is almost impossible to prevent that because it only takes five or ten seconds to do it.

USA TODAY: Is there any likelihood that something like the Iranian hostage situation could occur again?

SAYRE: Well, you know once someone sets a precedent like that, there is always a possibility that it can be repeated.

USA TODAY: Why did the

State Department feel that it was necessary to organize this type of office?

SAYRE: The office was organized in 1973 as a result of the massacre of the Israeli athletes in Munich; there was also a feeling on the part of the United States government that there really had to be an international response to these kinds of problems and that the United States had an obligation to take the leadership in doing this. We are in the process of reorganization because I really have two jobs. I am the chairman of the Inter-Departmental Group on Terrorism, which deals with international terrorism. Also, I am chairman of the State Department's policy group on securities policies and programs. We are trying to tie these two things together.

USA TODAY: How does your office function?

SAYRE: We try to develop policies, which are accepted throughout the United States government, on how we deal with terrorism issues, both domestically and in foreign affairs. Then we try to assure that the United States government is ready to deal with these problems across the board.

USA TODAY: Does your office exchange information with other U.S. intelligence agencies?

THE ISSUE: TERRORISM

Robert M. Sayre, 58, is coordinator for security policies and programs and director of the office for combatting terrorism at the U.S. State Department. A career foreign service officer, he was an ambassador in Uruguay, Panama and Brazil. He is an economist and a member of the bar of the District of Columbia. He was interviewed by freelance journalist **Stanley A. Blumberg.**



Robert M. Sayre

SAYRE: The inter-departmental group includes all of the agencies that would have a responsibility for terrorism — the Department of State, the Department of Treasury, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense, and so on. We also have, as a sub-committee of our inter-departmental group, one that looks at the intelligence problem and works on it; that particular sub-committee has on it all the intelligence agencies of the United States government.

USA TODAY: Does the State Department receive the cooperation of foreign governments in preventing and combatting terrorism?

SAYRE: For our diplomats overseas, it is the obligation of the foreign government, under the Vienna Convention, to protect our personnel, and foreign governments do quite well that. They are very respons

There are very few cases when they do not help us out and do what they are supposed to do. With respect to the exchange of intelligence, that is a daily matter.

USA TODAY: Can you recall an instance of how foreign intelligence prevented an act of violence against American personnel or property?

SAYRE: I think the best example of how a foreign government has made a maximum effort, using not only its police resources but all of its intelligence resources, was the recovery of Gen. Dozier in Italy. That just has to be regarded as a very outstanding effort on the part of the Italian government, using every capacity it had to get back an American who was working for NATO.