

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 7

NEW YORK POST
17 September 1985

SYRIA PREZ BRAINS BEHIND ISRAELI CAR BOMBS



PRESIDENT ASSAD
Plag for martyrdom.

By MICHAEL J. BERLIN

SYRIAN President Hafez Assad is the driving force behind the growing number of kamikaze car-bomb attacks in Lebanon, intelligence sources told *The Post* yesterday.

The attacks have been aimed at Israeli troops and their Lebanese allies in the Israel-Lebanon border area.

The officials provided excerpts from three of Assad's recent speeches, in which he told groups of teachers and students that "the death of martyrs" in Lebanon was vital to "defend the homeland" and "repel aggression."

Syria had denied any links to earlier terror attacks by Shiite Moslem extremists against American, Israeli and French targets in Lebanon — including the bombings of the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Marine base in Beirut.

But it has openly publicized and praised the latest string of suicide bombings.

Since the Israeli pull-back to its border zone with Lebanon last spring, there have been at least eight suicide strikes by Lebanese terrorists from Syrian-sponsored groups.

They all were aimed

at the checkpoints run by Israeli troops and their allies in the South Lebanon Army (SLA).

The "martyrs" — both men and women — belonged to either Lebanon's "Syrian National Socialist Party" or the Lebanese Baath Socialist Party, both of which are financed by and allied with Assad's Baath Party in Syria.

Intelligence officials now have established that although the Lebanese parties recruit the kamikaze volunteers, they are trained and equipped by Syrian agents in Lebanon.

The timing and targeting of their missions is determined in Damascus, the officials said.

The training camps are near Baalbek, in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, which is controlled by Syrian troops.

One of the bases, in the Bekaa town of Shtoura, was bombed by the Israeli Air Force on Aug. 2.

The training program is run by Ghazi Canaan, the chief of Syrian intelligence for Lebanon, the sources said.

Syria provides driving lessons for the suicide bombers, the explosive charges with which

their cars are packed, ideological indoctrination and false IDs.

Assad's role has been to encourage personally the terror tactics, and to inspire the recruiting of volunteers with his own statements.

In a May 4 speech to the Syrian Students' Union — reported by the Syrian party journal, *Al Baath* — Assad confided that he had told a party meeting:

"I hope that my life would not come to an end unless by martyrdom, and I pointed out the preference and priority of this death over any other one."

In the same speech he revealed that, because "I believed in the greatness of martyrdom," he had urged "the necessity that the [Syrian] state set up suicide squads of air pilots; we used the well-known Japanese word 'kamikaze.'"

A month later, after the first of the suicide car-bomb attacks in the Israel-Lebanon border zone, Assad told a group of religious teachers ("ulemas") at a banquet marking the end of the Ramadan holiday fast, that "the Lebanese have committed heroic deeds."