

# Embassy deaths called blow to CIA

By Frank Greve  
Inquirer Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The terrorist bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut virtually wiped out the CIA's key station in the Middle East, a congressional intelligence specialist on the Middle East said yesterday.

As many as nine American CIA agents and support staff personnel perished in the April 18 attack, the most devastating in CIA history, according to agency sources. Key Lebanese sources also are believed to have died.

"The loss would have been less if they'd gotten Habib and Draper," said the intelligence specialist, referring to special U.S. envoy Philip C. Habib and his assistant, Morris Draper. A senior White House official yesterday agreed that the CIA operation in Beirut was practically destroyed with the deaths of its personnel.

Officially, the CIA acknowledges only one death, that of Robert Clayton Ames, 49, who was director of the agency's Office of Analysis for the Near East and South Asia. Ames, a

Philadelphia native, had served with high visibility as a Middle East expert in the Carter and Reagan administrations. Secretary of State George P. Shultz and his predecessor, Alexander M. Haig Jr., both considered Ames a key analyst, and he personally briefed President Reagan on Lebanon a month ago.

Ames, making his first official visit to Beirut in five years, arrived there April 17 and apparently was meeting with CIA personnel at 1:02 p.m. Beirut time, when the blast occurred. The group had convened on a high

floor in a position directly above the site where more than 300 pounds of explosives were detonated. At least 49 people, including 17 Americans, were killed at the embassy.

The timing and precision of the attack have led to speculation in the intelligence community that Ames and his colleagues were targets of the terrorists. A White House official, who said he had reviewed cable traffic relating to the explosion, rejected that theory, however.

The Muslim Holy War, which

claimed responsibility for the bombing, is an underground group of Shiite Muslim fundamentalists in Lebanon who support Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and are trying to foment an Iranian-style revolution in Lebanon.

Ames, who served Richard Helms when he was U.S. ambassador to Iran and who later advised the Carter administration on the Iran hostages, would have been a prize target for the group.

Initial reports in the Lebanese press said that both Habib and Draper would have been in the embassy at the time of the blast had they not been delayed at the Lebanese presidential palace in Baabde. Habib and U.S. Ambassador Robert Dillon, himself slightly wounded in the explosion, have since denied the reports.

The first suggestion that CIA personnel other than Ames might have died in the attack emerged last week when the State Department offered only terse, gap-filled biographies of many victims. Traditionally, such vague biographies have been indicators of CIA employment.

Because many of the slain employees had worked as diplomats and representatives of other U.S. govern-

ment agencies, identifying them would cause great political embarrassment and gravely endanger sources and operatives. And because it fears such a result, the CIA traditionally has declined to identify personnel killed in the line of duty. This proved, however, to be an impossible task in the wake of the highly publicized bombing in Beirut.

To afford CIA and other intelligence agents further protection, Congress has made it illegal to disclose their identities in the press. The exception — Ames — was too widely known not to be linked to the agency.

Lebanese victims of the embassy attack also have been only vaguely and belatedly identified by U.S.

spokesmen in Beirut. This had led many intelligence experts to conclude that key Lebanese sources, as well as the American operatives, may have perished.

Among CIA officials, seven is the lowest estimate of agency dead, with two sources putting the number at nine. In 36 years of operation, there have never been as many CIA employees killed in a single accident, officials said. Before last week's deaths, only 38 intelligence officers had been killed in the agency's histo-

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## Convenient history by 'dime-store Kissinger'

"Power and Principle," by Zbigniew Brzezinski. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$22.50.

By JOE TRENTO

Brzezinski, the dime store Henry Kissinger of the Carter presidency, has brought us his memoirs. The 587-page book seems almost as long as that administration's time in power.

The reader must plow through a writing style that makes Jerry Ford seem like Hemingway. He is rewarded with Brzezinski's denial that he wanted to move from national security adviser to secretary of state and little useful information.

The best sections, on Iran and the Camp David meetings, are informative, as far as they go. Nothing new, really, just a fairly straightforward history without the previous hand-wringing we got from Carter's own memoirs.

The book is homogenized. It deals not a whit with the dirty games of real-life global politics. It ignores the fact that the Carter administration had some king-sized skeletons loitering in White House closets.

Considering Brzezinski's advertised candor on Iran, it is especially surprising that the bizarre relationship between the Carter administration and former CIA Director Richard Helms is left unexplained.

This is important because Helms was given a pass by Carter on a 12-count perjury indictment over lies he told Congress about the destabilization of Chile by the CIA.

After plea bargaining and getting two years probation, Helms ended up as an adviser to Carter on Iran. Since Helms and the Shah attended prep school together and Helms was paying off his legal bills by selling his influence with the Shah to American companies, it might have been nice to know what advice Helms gave Carter on Iran.

But the most notable absence in this convenient history is discussion of the role Brzezinski played in the Billy Carter scandal.

Billy's real difficulties started after National Security Agency chief Bobby Ray Inman took intercepts to the Justice Department that showed Billy had gotten hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Libyans. Brzezinski saw those intercepts, yet he writes not a word about the affair.

Brzezinski either managed to miss a great deal, or has developed an exaggerated sense of discretion that should endear him to Mr. and Mrs. Carter, if not the poor souls who shell out \$22.50 for his tome.

Joe Trento is a former reporter for the News-Journal papers who recently took a job with the Cable News Network in Washington.