

Kerry slams Hezbollah over 1983 US embassy bombing

BEIRUT: U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry slammed Hezbollah Thursday over the 1983 suicide bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut that killed 52 people.

“Hezbollah, and other terrorist organizations like it, hoped through these violent attacks to deter the United States from maintaining our strong relationship with the Lebanese people, and from working with all elements of Lebanese society to insure the stability and sovereignty of Lebanon,” Kerry said.

“Today, on the 30th anniversary of the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, the United States celebrates close cooperation with the people of Lebanon that proves the enemies of democracy failed,” he said from Washington.

“This act of terrorism killed 52 American diplomats, military personnel, and Lebanese Embassy colleagues. It also wounded more than 100 Americans and Lebanese,” he recalled.

“As we reflect on that day, we also remember another terrorist attack later that year against the U.S. Marine Barracks in Beirut, as well as a third attack on the Beirut Embassy a year later.”

“Yet, the last 30 years of close cooperation between the United States and Lebanon - especially at the people-to-people level - proves the terrorists' goals were not achieved,” Kerry added.

“They underestimated the resolve of the United States to fight terrorism and to bring terrorists to justice wherever they may lurk, resolve renewed this week following the cowardly bombings in my hometown of Boston,” he said.

Kerry said Washington “just as it did 30 years ago, today steadfastly supports the Lebanese people and their continued advance toward a sovereign, stable, independent, and prosperous nation.”

For her part, U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Maura Connelly said the bombing opened a new chapter in America’s history in the Middle East.

“The first of what would be three attacks on Americans, and Lebanese colleagues in Beirut in 17 months, it was a bloody rite of passage,” she said in a statement published on the U.S. Embassy website.

“In 1983, the staff of Embassy Beirut came in peace but a terrorist group chose them as its target and killed 52 people,” she recounted.

Connelly said the explosion taught Americans that “peaceful intentions were not enough to protect us from those who would use terror to achieve their aims in the Middle East.”

“It taught us the stakes of involvement in this region,” she added.

“But ultimately the terrorists failed because Embassy Beirut re-established itself here, on this compound, and went back to work.”

“And when terrorists chose to attack us again in 1984, they found it was harder to kill us,” Connelly said.

“We went back to work again and we have worked hard ever since, day in, day out.”

Connelly said embassy staff will continue their work in Beirut, Afghanistan, Libya and around the world.

“The work we do is too important to allow mere terrorists to stop us,” she said.

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