

Commando praises Reagan for Grenada

United Press International
DENVER — The former commando chief who led a failed attempt to rescue American hostages in Iran in 1980 says President Reagan's speed of determination made a success of the recent U.S. invasion of Grenada.

"I see some of the same principles in our mission in Grenada that applied in Iran," Charlie Beckwith, a retired Army colonel, said during the weekend.

"The Reagan administration as prudent in going down there and biting it in the bud before all the students became hostages," he said, referring to mercenaries attending medical school in the tiny eastern Caribbean nation. "It could have been the same thing all over again."

Beckwith, in Denver Saturday to promote "Delta Force," is a book about the unsuccessful hostage-rescue mission in Iran, and the U.S. invasion of Grenada

was a success because Reagan moved quickly and decisively.

"The weapons we captured in Grenada indicate an extreme excess that existed there, and some of those weapons could have found their way to this country," he said. "Our government today, because of what happened in Iran, doesn't suffer from apathy when it comes to terrorists or aggression."

Beckwith, a veteran of 28 years in the Army, also defended his decision to scrap the Iran hostage-rescue mission in the Iranian desert April 24, 1980, after three of his eight helicopters malfunctioned.

"There was no other choice," he said. "It would have been totally ludicrous to go to Tehran with only five helicopters. I wasn't about to be a part of the murder of America's finest soldiers."

Beckwith, now president of

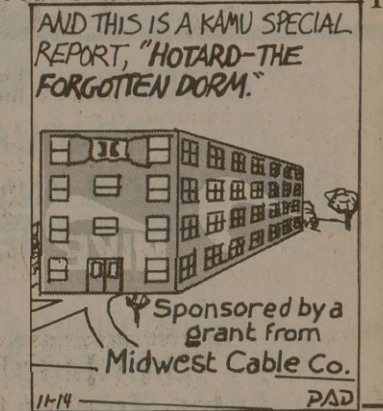
SAS of Austin, a security consulting firm, said the mission would have succeeded had it not been for bad luck.

"I'm convinced it would have succeeded," he said. "Without a shadow of doubt, some people would have been hurt, but it would only have been a handful. It wouldn't have been 50. I figure we might have lost about four or five Delta Force men and maybe one or two hostages."

He said he based his conviction on careful interviews with the hostages after they were freed in January 1981.

"We asked each of them where they were when Delta Force was to have gone over the wall (at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran)," Beckwith said. "After talking to them and evaluating what they said, I was sure we could have pulled it off."

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Shelling

Rebels violate cease-fire again

United Press International
TRIPOLI, Lebanon — Syrian-backed Palestinian rebels killed Yasser Arafat's last stronghold in the Beiddawi refugee camp Sunday and rejected the PLO chief's conditions for leaving north Lebanon a "time-gaining gimmick."

In Beirut, tensions ran high after the state-run radio announced Lebanese President Amin Gemayel had postponed official talks with Syrian President Hafez Assad on the withdrawal of Syrian and Israeli forces from Lebanon.

U.S. F-14 Tomcat fighter jets made reconnaissance flights over the capital as Lebanese army positions, 5 miles east of Beirut, took mortar fire. A Lebanese soldier was killed in clashes with oslem Druze militiamen, the duo said.

Gemayel postponed a planned trip to Damascus Monday after Assad was taken to the hospital for treatment of an unspecified illness. The radio said the discussions would be held when Assad's health improves.

The talks were to have been Gemayel's first with Assad, who backs the anti-government militias in Lebanon as well as the Palestinian dissidents opposed to Arafat's rule of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Despite pledges by the warring factions to spare Tripoli further bloodshed, artillery exchanges in the north punctuated the tenuous 4-day-old cease-fire. A statement from Arafat's command said loyalist forces repelled a three-pronged attack by Syrian commandos and Palestinian rebels overnight. Beirut radio reported two more attempted assaults on Beiddawi during the day.

From the northern edge of Tripoli, rebel shells could be seen falling on the Beiddawi refugee camp. Arafat's men fired

back — at Mount Terbol to the east and Khoura to the south where the Syrian-backed rebels are entrenched.

Sporadic shelling continued throughout the day, setting ablaze another tank at the coastal oil refinery, where fires have been raging for the past 11 days.

It was not clear who started the renewed violence, the worst violation of the Wednesday night cease-fire mediated by the Arab Gulf states.

"We expect (all-out) fighting to resume soon," said Mohammed Shaker, a spokesman for Arafat. "The Syrians came here to try to eliminate us, and they are not going to stop midway."

The Palestinian dissidents, who have trapped Arafat in Tripoli with Syrian help, dismissed his conditions for leaving northern Lebanon and accused him of provoking further fighting by fortifying his positions inside the city.

In a news conference Saturday, Arafat said he would not leave Tripoli unless assured of the safety of the nearly 60,000 Palestinians in the region. His exact whereabouts were not known.

Arafat is worried about a repeat of the massacres at the Sabra and Chatila refugee camps in Beirut where hundreds of people were killed by Christian Phalangist forces in September 1982.

Arafat did not elaborate on the guarantees he wanted, but one of his aides said the guerrilla leader wanted an Arab observer force, withdrawal of the Syrian-backed dissidents from the Tripoli region and lifting of the 11-day-old siege of Beiddawi.

"Arafat's demands and preconditions for leaving Tripoli are nothing but a time-gaining gimmick," said a rebel spokesman in Damascus. "Let us hope he does not seriously believe the Arab states will send observers

to Tripoli." An exodus from the Beiddawi refugee camp continued Sunday. Heavy rains have made the deep underground shelters uninhabitable, and the lack of electricity and running water in the camp has created acute hardship for those remaining.

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