

State and Local

"Forgotten hostages" still in Lebanon

Former hostage critical of media

By KIRSTEN DIETZ
Assistant City Editor



Jerry Levin discusses his experience in Lebanon with Mickey Quinones, a sophomore psychology major.

"A funny thing happened on the way to the office — I was kidnapped," Jerry Levin, former CNN Beirut bureau chief, told about 120 people Tuesday night at Texas A&M.

After the light beginning, Levin became serious as he first described his March 7, 1984 kidnapping by Islamic terrorists as he walked to work, his 11 months in captivity spent chained to a wall and his escape by climbing down the side of a building with a rope made from blankets.

But, he said, while he is free, five "forgotten hostages" remain in Lebanon — a fact he said the government and the American people haven't paid enough attention to.

This problem began when the government convinced the media not to discuss the reasons behind the hostages' kidnappings, he said.

"The government succeeded in persuading editors and, for a long time, the hostages' families, that press attention might get us killed," he said. "I didn't think it was true then, and I don't think it is now."

Levin said the government didn't feel obligated to tell the facts because the press didn't push for answers.

He credits his wife, Lucille "Sis" Levin, with making the public aware of the hostages by lobbying and conscience raising both in the United States and in the Middle East. She was the first to speak out on the hostages' captivity and the government's inaction on ending it, he said.

He said her actions helped obtain his release.

"It's possible, very possible, that the captors were convinced by the Syrians or by Sis to look the other way when I escaped," he said.

But, he said he and Sis think news coverage is protection. It helps the

hostages get out of trouble, he said, citing the recent Achille Lauro and TWA flight 847 hijackings.

"When the attention hasn't been there, it lets the administration go its own way and do things that are not in our interest," he said.

Also, he said the press only covered the kidnappings when they happened, not following the story or focusing on the motivations behind the acts. He said he was told by some journalists that there were too few hostages for the story to merit continued coverage.

"How many hostages does it take to energize the press . . . ?" he asked.

He said that, after he escaped, he was surprised to find out about the government's long silence on the Lebanon hostage situation.

He said he still thinks the the administration isn't doing enough to free the hostages.

"The administration is not doing all it can, it's doing all it chooses," he said.

He said he sees peaceful negotiation, not militant practices, as crucial for the release of the remaining hostages.

Gramm: Media gave budget law bad name

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sen. Phil Gramm admits it is politically risky to be a household synonym for budget cuts, but he told the National Press Club on Tuesday that the news media is responsible for giving the deficit reduction law he sponsored a bad name.

"I'm aware that every time there's a problem, whether a first sergeant at Fort Hood didn't order enough toilet paper or whether the potholes in front of your house don't get fixed, there are going to be two magic words in the next three or four years that are always going to be uttered that make everything all

right — 'Gramm-Rudman,'" Gramm, R-Texas, said during a good-natured appearance punctuated frequently by laughter.

"Gramm-Rudman," as it is called, was signed into law late last year. It was co-sponsored by New Hampshire Republican Warren Rudman and North Carolina Democrat Ernest Hollings. It mandates across-the-board federal spending reductions if Congress fails to meet specific yearly deficit targets.

The constitutionality of the measure has been challenged and will be argued before the Supreme Court this spring.

Gramm said, "I have marveled at

all the headlines that I have read around the country about Gramm-Rudman. Every headline has said 'Gramm-Rudman Cuts,' 'Gramm-Rudman Denies,' 'Gramm-Rudman Hurts.'

"I have never seen a headline that says 'Gramm-Rudman Saves Money in Such-and-Such an Area.'"

After Gramm's opening remarks, he was asked questions written on cards from the audience.

One of the first questions was whether Gramm feared the political implications of the new law.

"Well, if you're on the battlefield you're going to take some bullets," Gramm said. "Certainly there's no

doubt about the fact that any time that your name is used over and over with all of these 'cuts' and people who are being 'hurt' and there are no corresponding headlines saying you're doing the Lord's work and producing good things for the country, it's dangerous.

"But I have always believed that good policy is good politics. My guess is, if we can stay with this thing and make it work, that it's going to be good policy."

He was also asked if his home state would be affected by the budget reductions and if he attempted to exempt Texas from the law.

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- HEALTH CENTER ENDOWMENT:**
This endowment will be used to enhance and upgrade the salaries of the doctors at the A.P. Beutel Health Center. As state employees, the doctors salaries are regulated by the University system. The salaries are not competitive with other job opportunities for physicians. In order to entice the best doctors to come to Texas A&M, their salaries will have to be more competitive. This endowment would provide extra money to be used to reward and entice hard working doctors to the Health Center.
- SILVER TAPS MEMORIAL:**
A granite block similar to Military Walk placed between the Sully Ross memorial and the flag pole. A plaque attached will tell of the history and tradition associated with Silver Taps.
- FOUNTAIN OR STATUE IN THE NEW FORMER STUDENTS CENTER.**

Please bring this ballot and your I.D. to the table located in the MSC or Blocker

This Thursday, March 6, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

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