

# Shiites want to release hostages, Jenco says

NEW YORK (AP) — The Rev. Lawrence Martin Jenco said Thursday he believes that the Lebanese Shiites who held him hostage for 19 months want to release three remaining American hostages, but first "they would like to get some benefits from this whole thing."

Jenco, in his first news interview since being freed July 26, also said he fears that tough rhetoric from U.S. officials might block progress toward the trio's release.

"When we get into rhetoric that closes doors... that's not beneficial," the Roman Catholic priest said.

Reagan administration officials have frequently denounced the kidnapers as "terrorists" and insisted the U.S. government will not accede to terrorist demands.

In the 90-minute interview with The Associated Press, the 51-year-old Jenco — weary, quiet, but quick to smile and laugh — said he was heartened by a recent communication, not authenticated, saying the kidnapers had scaled back their demands. And he told of long months in night quarters with his fellow captives, during which they recited poetry, exercised, worked jigsaw puzzles, argued, prayed and cried.

The remaining hostages are Terry A. Anderson, 38, chief Middle East correspondent for The Associated Press; David Jacobsen, 55, administrator of Beirut's American University Hospital; and Thomas Sutherland, 55, the university's acting dean of agriculture.

The Moslem kidnapers, who call themselves Islamic Jihad, claimed last October to have killed another kidnapped American, U.S. Embassy political officer William Buckley, 58. But no body was ever found.

The kidnapers said they freed Jenco because he was in ill health. The Joliet, Ill., priest, who has worked as a missionary since 1974, has a heart ailment, but he said Thursday his health has improved since returning home.

Again and again in the interview, the white-bearded cleric expressed sympathy for the young men who imprisoned him and the three others in a 12-by-15-foot room. Jenco has even proposed that Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. church agency he headed in Beirut, eventually establish a scholarship fund for Shiites.

"Where are they going to go when this is over with?" he asked.

Most have had no education since age 10.

He recounted "kindnesses" shown by his guards — making and sharing popcorn with him, providing necessary medicine, occasionally allowing a glimpse of the sun or moon.

Asked whether he thought they regretted the hostage-holding, he replied, "Very much so."

"There was a certain sense — they are trying to get rid of it right now," he said. "I really believe they are trying to resolve it. They would like to have everyone go. But they would like to get some benefits from this whole thing."

A two-page letter delivered to the AP bureau in Paris last Sunday said Anderson and Jacobsen would be freed if food aid was delivered to the poor Shiites of southern Lebanon. But the source and validity of the communication could not be determined.

Jenco said it "sounded like good news to me," since food shipments would be "such an easy option."

The kidnapers' key demand long has been release of 17 Shiites and others imprisoned in Kuwait for the bombings of the U.S. and French embassies there.

# U.S. may offer Soviet Union arms control compromise

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Reagan administration, set to open another round of nuclear weapons talks with a high-level Soviet delegation, may ease its proposal for a 50 percent reduction in strategic bombers, missiles and submarines, a U.S. official said Friday.

The revised approach would be an attempt to strike a compromise with the Soviets, whose latest negotiating position calls for more modest cutbacks in nuclear warheads and an overall cutback of 30 percent.

But it would still force the Soviets to make some hard choices about their arsenal of heavy land-based missiles and the destructive force, or throw-weight, of their nuclear armories.

The official, who discussed the issue on grounds of anonymity, said President Reagan had suggested a "less sweeping" strategic weapons cutback than 50 percent in the letter

he sent to Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev in July.

New ceilings would be set for various categories of weapons, including a limit of 7,500 intercontinental ballistic missile warheads and cruise missiles, the official said.

The Soviets had proposed a ceiling of 8,000, while the United States would have allowed no more than 6,000.

Gorbachev has yet to reply to Reagan's letter. But, in the meantime, Ron Lehman, the U.S. negotiator in charge of strategic nuclear weapons, worked out the new formula, the official said.

The proposal was discussed Wednesday at the Old Executive Building by senior arms control advisers and their aides from the State Department, the Pentagon and other branches of the government.

A final decision has not been made by Reagan, who is on vacation

in California. Hardliners in the Pentagon object to the new "consensus," but unless they block it, U.S. negotiators will be instructed to present the proposal to the Soviets in Geneva later this month, the official said.

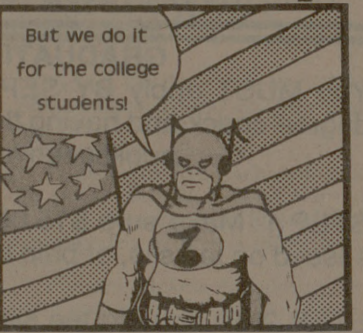
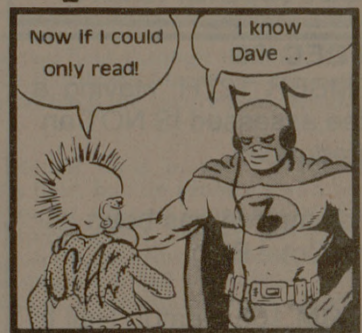
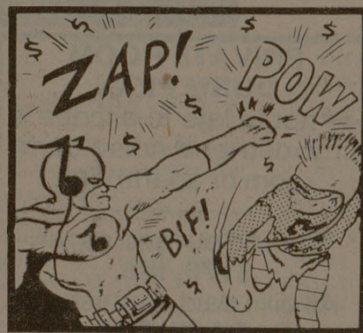
In the meantime, experts on both sides will open a two-day meeting Friday at the State Department to try to smooth the way to the negotiations, which open Sept. 18.

They held a similar discussion last month in Moscow without any visible sign of progress. The official described the meeting as "very negative" and said the Soviets continued to object to Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative.

Known popularly as "Star Wars," it is a program exploring the use of laser, X-ray and other futuristic technology as part of a shield against a missile attack. Gorbachev has portrayed the program as a dangerous extension of the nuclear arms race.



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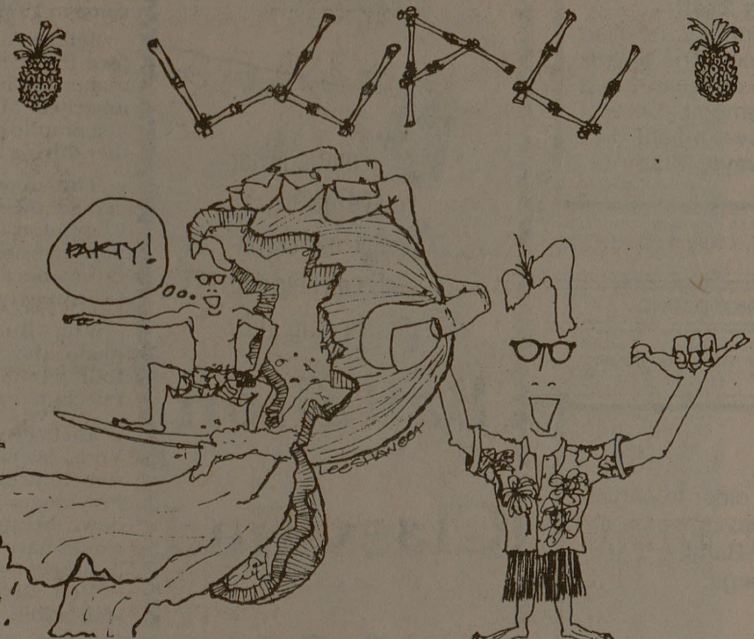
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