

Marines battle Lebanese militiamen in Beirut

By MONA ZIADE
Associated Press Writer

BEIRUT, Lebanon — U.S. Marines battled Lebanese militiamen — believed to be Shiite Muslims — for 90 minutes yesterday in the first firefight involving American forces since their arrival last year, a Marine spokesman reported.

He said the battle broke out about 4:30 p.m. when a joint Marine-Lebanese army checkpoint in the Haye Es-Sulum section of south Beirut came under attack.

"The outpost received two RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades) and some small arms fire, and the Marines returned the fire," the spokesman said.

He said about 30 Marines were manning the outpost along with a smaller number of Lebanese soldiers.

"There were no casualties among the defenders, the spokesman said, and he did not know if the attackers

suffered any losses.

Marine officers assumed the attackers were from the Shiite Muslim militia group, Amal, which had fought Lebanese army troops in Beirut's southern districts and near the international airport south of the capital yesterday afternoon.

That fighting forced the closure of the airport — the second time this month that the country's only international, commercial airport has been shut down because of sectarian fighting.

In Santa Barbara, Calif., where President Reagan is vacationing, a White House press secretary C. Anson Franklin issued a statement saying, "There was an arms fire in the area of the Marine emplacement. At one point, they returned fire briefly. There were no American casualties. The president was informed and will continue to be informed."

Three mortar rounds fell earlier in the area of the

airport held by the 1,200-man U.S. Marine contingent of the multinational peacekeeping force, but no Americans were injured, U.S. Marine spokesman Maj. Robert Jordan said.

The radio broadcast said passengers in the airport rushed to underground shelters to avoid ricochets from the fighting in the Hay Es-Sulum, Bourj el Barajneh and Maamourah neighborhoods.

One civilian was killed and scores were wounded, the station reported. It said one Lebanese army officer was wounded and five Lebanese soldiers were kidnapped in the fighting that tapered off in the evening.

The three poor neighborhoods near the airport are inhabited by Shiite Muslims and were the strongholds of pro-Iranian gunmen before the Lebanese army moved into the area last October.

The Shites have been critical of Christian President Amin Gemayel's government, saying it was biased in

favor of the Christian militias that fought against the Muslims and their Palestinian allies during the country's civil war in 1975-76.

Beirut's international airport was closed for six days starting Aug. 10 during fierce fighting between the rightist Christians and leftist Druse militiamen in the Israeli-occupied hills overlooking Beirut.

The fighting broke out yesterday morning when a group of Shites were fired on by gunmen as they posted up posters of their missing spiritual leader, Imam Musa Sadr, on storefronts in Hay Es-Sulum.

Lebanese soldiers rushed to the scene but were fired on by inhabitants of the area.

Imam Sadr disappeared in August 1978 while on a trip to Libya. The Libyan government claims he left the country safely but many Lebanese Shites believe he is still being held by the regime of Col. Muammar Khadafi.

Begin's resignation announcement was sudden but not unexpected

By MARCUS ELIASON
Associated Press Writer

TEL AVIV, Israel — Menachem Begin's resignation announcement yesterday was startling, but many Israelis had seen hints of change for months. The prime minister has not seemed the combative, tough-spirited man he once was.

Although Begin gave his colleagues time to try to change his mind, he looks very much like a man who has had enough.

Throughout 1982, he has seemed a pallid shadow of the man the world has learned to love or abhor. The flame of his oratory is down to a flicker. He is known to be despondent over the death of his wife, Aliza, in November.

Begin's mood has closely paralleled the shifting fortunes of the Lebanon war.

Last summer, with Israeli forces pounding the Palestine Liberation Organization, Begin was in his element — thundering at his enemies, castigating his enemies as anti-Semitic, mocking Yasser Arafat, and telling President Reagan that his troops were besieging "Hitler and his henchmen."

But as the Israeli army became mired down and the dreams of peace with Lebanon evaporated, Begin seemed to recede physically from the scene.

"The fact that Mr. Begin is in a grave personal crisis cries out to high heaven," columnist Yoel Marcus wrote recently in the daily Haaretz.

Begin's standing in the polls has waned, with a survey in mid-July showing 30.9 percent of the public a drop of 15 percent in six weeks — choosing him as best suited for the premiership.

For the past month, his coalition has been threatened by a small splinter faction which says it will pull out unless the economy — marked by an inflation rate that may reach 100 percent this year — is reined in by increasing taxation of the rich. Should the faction withdraw, Begin would be left with a virtually unmanageable one-member majority in the Knesset, Israel's parliament.

Thus Begin's move could be a ploy to force the minority TAMI Party into line. If it is, as some analysts have speculated, it is the kind of bold stroke at which Begin is always excelled.

Born Aug. 16, 1913, in Poland, Begin was arrested by the Nazis during World War II for his Zionist activities. He was released in a 1942 amnesty but learned, after emigrating to Palestine, that his parents had been killed by the Nazis.

In Palestine, he quickly rose to lead an extremist guerrilla group, the Irgun Zvai Leumi, which in its fight for Israeli nationhood blew up police stations, executed British soldiers, and dynamited the King David Hotel, killing more than 100

Arabs, Jews and Britons.

For the first 29 years of Israeli statehood he was the perennial outsider, losing seven elections to the Labor Party. But his fellow outsiders — the Sephardis, or Middle Eastern Jews of Israel — gradually became a majority and swept Begin to victory in the 1977 election.

Most thought that Begin, the fire-brand nationalist ideologue, would quickly plunge the nation into war for the sake of his dream of a greater Israel sprawling to its distant biblical borders.

Begin proved his critics wrong. Six months after he became premier, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat made his momentous decision to go to Jerusalem to talk peace. Begin seized the moment and 16 months later, with a beaming President Carter looking on, Begin and Sadat signed a peace treaty.

Begin shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Sadat but then embarked on a series of moves for which he was denounced as a warmonger.

He pursued an ambitious design to populate the occupied West Bank with Jews.

He annexed the occupied Golan Heights it had captured from Syria. Then, in June 1982, he sent his army into Lebanon in what became Israel's most unpopular war.

Soon after his election in 1977, he said he would retire at 70 and write his memoirs. He later said he had changed his mind and would serve his term. Begin's resignation announcement came just weeks after his 70th birthday.



Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, right, sits with President Jimmy Carter, center, and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat following the signing of the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt on March 26, 1979. Begin announced yesterday he intended to resign.

U.S. expects no major policy change if Begin leaves

By R. GREGORY NOKES
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — State Department officials believe Prime Minister Menachem Begin is serious about wanting to resign, an action that should lead to smoother U.S.-Israeli relations but probably little change in Israel's basic policies.

Although officials questioned yesterday didn't rule out that Begin might be threatening a resignation as a ploy to rally support for his policies, they thought it more likely the 70-year-old prime minister intended to resign, if not immediately then in the near future.

"My own feeling is he has just had enough, and he is hanging it up," said one Middle East expert who insisted he not be identified.

Begin canceled a trip to Washington to meet with President Reagan in July, citing personal reasons. That led some State Department experts to conclude a resignation might not be far off.

But officials here and with the president in Santa Barbara, Calif., said they were not informed in advance of Begin's announcement of his intention to resign, made to a meeting of his Cabinet Sunday. Larry Speakes, the White House deputy press secretary, said U.S. officials first learned of the development through news reports.

State Department spokesman Sandra Mc-

Carty said, "This is an internal Israeli political matter and it would not be appropriate for us to comment on this issue."

Begin is thought here to have been in a weakened physical and mental state since the death of his wife last year. There also is informed speculation that he has been depressed by the outcome of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which he supported, and the large number of Israeli casualties, the criticism of the invasion in Israel and Israel's difficulty in extricating itself from Lebanon with its goals only partly realized.

Israeli Ambassador Meir Rosenne said yesterday he thought there would be "a final attempt" by the Israeli Cabinet to try and talk Begin out of resigning at a meeting today.

Rosenne said on ABC-TV's "This Week With David Brinkley" that even if there is a resignation, the government becomes a transitional government until there are elections or someone else forms a new government. He said Begin's Likud coalition would try to name a successor if Begin resigns. The other major party is the Labor party, headed by Shimon Peres.

"I think in foreign policy there isn't much difference between the two parties," Rosenne said, an obvious reference to the feeling among many U.S. officials that Labor party would be more reasonable in trying to work out an agreement to end the Israeli occupation

of the West Bank.

But a State Department official said Peres might be given the first chance to form a new government since Labor has more members in the Knesset, 50, than the Likud party, which has 48. The Likud rules through a coalition with smaller parties.

"I don't think Peres will be able to form a new government," said the official. "But he may be given an opportunity."

Several State Department officials, all of whom insisted on anonymity, agreed there would probably be little change in policy regarding the West Bank if Begin resigns, particularly since they expect Begin's Likud bloc would remain in power.

"Unless it begins to splinter from its more radical fringe elements, I think it (Likud) will be able to come together and maintain its control," said one.

President Reagan on Saturday criticized the Begin government's persistence in building settlements on the West Bank as harmful to the prospects for a negotiated Arab-Israeli peace.

The most likely successors to Begin in the opinion of several officials here are David Levy, the deputy prime minister, and Moshe Arens, the defense minister and former ambassador to Washington.

Yitzhak Shamir, the foreign minister, also is considered a leading candidate. However,

several officials said they think Shamir might head a coalition government until new elections could be held, after which either Levy or Arens would become prime minister.

There is considerable sentiment here in favor of Arens, since he is well-known from the period when he was ambassador to the United States. He succeeded the controversial Ariel Sharon as defense minister and is credited in working closely with Secretary of State George P. Shultz to help smooth over U.S.-Israeli relations after serious frictions developed in the aftermath of the invasion of Lebanon.

While less is known about Levy, it is thought Washington also could work well with him. Levy, however, has little foreign policy experience and has never served in the Israeli military, which could hurt his chances.

Several US officials, insisting they not be identified by name, said any of the likely successors to Begin would be easier to deal with than the prime minister, who was regarded here as difficult to deal with because of what was felt to be his combative, argumentative and stubborn personality.

It was once thought here that Finance Minister Yoram Aridor also would be a candidate to succeed Begin. But his economic policies have proved so unpopular in recent months in Israel, he is thought to have lost considerable ground.

Barry sputters out in sparsely populated area

BROWNSVILLE, Texas — Hurricane Barry lashed coastal Texas with gusty winds and a roiling surge of water before it slammed into Mexico at 80 mph yesterday, tearing through a fishing village before spinning out in a sparsely populated range and marsh country.

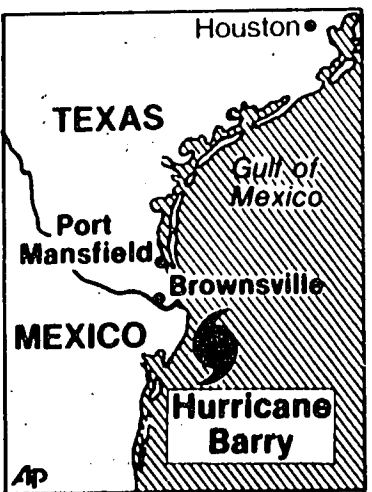
The center of the hurricane moved onto the Mexican coast, 30 miles south of Brownsville, about 12:30 p.m. CDT, but by 5 p.m. the strongest winds had dropped to 45 mph, and hurricane warnings were discontinued from Brownsville to Port Mansfield, Texas. The warnings stayed in effect along the extreme southern Texas coast from Brownsville, in the Mexican city of Matamoros, Capt. Manuel Leon Lopez said the storm first hit Puerto el Mezquital, crossed the Laguna

10 days after Hurricane Alicia struck the Texas coast, killing 21 people and more than \$1 billion in damage.

Barry was upgraded to a hurricane before dawn yesterday, growing into a 550-mile-wide wall of thunderheads and rain clouds after hosing coastal Florida to the Gulf of Mexico last week without causing major damage.

At 5 p.m. CDT, Barry was centered at latitude 25.4 north and longitude 98.3 west, in extreme northeastern Mexico about 65 miles southeast of Brownsville, Texas.

Across the Rio Grande from Brownsville, in the Mexican city of Matamoros, Capt. Manuel Leon Lopez said the storm first hit Puerto el Mezquital, crossed the Laguna



na Madre and struck Santa Teresa, a small fishing village south of Matamoros.

Shuttle set for first night launch

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A cloudless sky was forecast as a backdrop to the moonlight liftoff of the space shuttle Challenger tomorrow. The countdown toward launch was equally flawless.

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