



In October of 1983, when Ronald Reagan was America's President, a disastrous event involving U.S. Marines occurred in Lebanon when a suicide bomber visited the Marines' barracks in Beirut.

The exploding truck, and its suicide bomber, were vaporized. All that was left of the truck was its crankcase which Marines, searching for survivors, found in the explosion's crater.

One of the official histories, of the 23 October 1983 attack on the Beirut Marines, describes this photo of the gutted barracks:

A view of the crater made in the first floor of the BLT headquarters building by the explosion of the truck bomb which devastated the structure on 23 October 1983. The arrow points to a crankcase, all that remained of the truck after it was detonated. (US Marines in Lebanon 1982-1984, by Benis M. Frank, [page 96](#).)

Then came the gruesome task of locating those who had died.

Because so many of the men had been sleeping, when the building exploded, it was difficult to identify both the dead and the injured:

As rescuers continued pulling bodies from the building, they faced a major problem in identifying the dead and injured. Many of the men had removed their identification tags before going to sleep the night before. These dog tags, normally worn around the neck on chains, made sleeping uncomfortable.

Many of the troops slept in their gym shorts or other athletic gear, which were not marked with their names as uniform items were required to be. Compounding the problem was the fact that all of the BLT's service record books and medical records were in the battalion administration offices in the basement of the destroyed building.

Most were not recovered for several days. Some were never recovered. (US Marines in Lebanon 1982-1984, by Benis M. Frank, [page 99](#).)

Even as the [search-and-rescue](#) process moved forward, [snipers tried to kill more Marines](#). It became difficult for some (including 24th MAU [Chaplain George W. Pucciarelli](#)) to hold their emotions in check.

Click on the image for a better view.

See, also:

[Beirut Bombing - Marine Headquarters Before the Bomb](#)

[Explosion in Beirut - Marine Barracks Attacked](#)

[Destroyed Marine Barracks - Beirut, 23 October 1983](#)

Credits:

USMC photo of the destroyed BLT building and the crankcase from the truck bomb - 23 October 1983 - taken by SSgt Robert E. Kline.

Linked photos, and quoted passages, from *US Marines in Lebanon 1982-1984*, by Benis M. Frank - HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS, WASHINGTON, D.C. - [pp 96-99](#).

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Explosion-Crater-Marine-Barracks-Attacked-0>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Explosion-Crater-Marine-Barracks-Attacked-0>