

as a tentative, personal request. There were dangers involved, Casey admitted, but he needed someone he could trust to do the job, and Buckley was really the only one.

Hesitantly, Buckley yielded to the request, though he knew that Casey was acting well outside normal CIA procedures. The Company's internal rules say that an agent who's been identified in one part of the world has to take another assignment for at least five years before he returns. In addition, a senior team has to review the assignment and assess its danger.

In fact, Casey had little choice when he selected Buckley; the CIA's intelligence agents throughout the Near East had been identified when the U.S. embassies in Tripoli, Islamabad, and Tehran were taken over. Even if Casey had looked around for someone else to take the assignment, he wouldn't have found anyone. The CIA's best agents were running for their lives, and precious few had gotten out alive.

Casey was desperate; he was sure he could rely on Buckley, that his request would have an impact. Buckley had always agreed to such "requests" in the past; he knew an order when he heard one.

AT THE END OF AUGUST 1982 BUCKLEY stood in a crowd of marines at Beirut's waterfront watching the PLO's militias depart from the city. The PLO fighters, who'd met the Israelis in combat, waved their weapons in the air and shot off the last of their ammunition in a celebration of their victory. What was left of Beirut had been turned to rubble.

In a last-ditch effort to stave off a house-to-house battle, President Reagan had dispatched U.S. forces to guarantee the safety of the Palestinian civilians who remained in the city; Buckley was on hand as an observer and a trainer for the small Lebanese armed forces. For weeks he'd planned the PLO's withdrawal, negotiating a series of agreements with Beirut's welter of militias. Now, with his plan nearly completed, he wondered whether the CIA would play it safe and order him back to Langley. For several weeks he'd felt that his cover had been blown. With his Western dress, his rugged American looks, and his plain suits, he "had CIA written all over him," according to one American.

When the marines left Beirut in September 1982, Buckley went with them. He returned to Washington, where Casey told him that he'd next be responsible for coordinating the Reagan administration's anti-

terrorism policy. The job was a reward for his years in the field; for the first time in his career, he'd be responsible for a CIA policy. Casey told Buckley that he'd be the policy's chief architect and would report to the director of central intelligence through the head of what was then called the Domestic Terrorism Group.

For six months Buckley and government officials hammered out a policy. The Agency would be responsible solely for foreign intelligence, he insisted, leaving domestic security in the hands of the FBI.

"It was a delicate job," a former CIA analyst says. "Buckley not only had to come up with a policy that everyone could agree to, he had to make sure it would work. He offended some people, but I think he was right. When the Federal Emergency Management Administration and some of those others thought they should have a piece of the counterterrorism pie, he told them, 'No way. You're going to have nothing to do with it.' You know, he told them to go to hell."

After months of work, Buckley presented his counterterrorism plan to Casey. It included a recommendation that the Domestic Terrorism Group change its name to the International Antiterrorism Group. The name change was significant: Buckley was signaling his concern that the CIA could be accused of domestic spying, which had caused trouble in the 1970s. Buckley's plan called for a coordinated effort to combat security breaches under the leadership of the National Security Council's director, who'd be in charge of monitoring the agencies that were responsible for domestic law enforcement. According to a government security official, Buckley's recommendations were "straight down the middle. There was nothing really creative about what he said. He just made it clear that all of these people who wanted to have something to do with it were better off watching their own shops. He called them 'those crazies.'"

Despite Buckley's concern that the CIA assiduously follow his plan's mandates, many of his recommendations were later weakened. According to a number of Pentagon officials, the Domestic Terrorism Group later became part of a secret Pentagon intelligence unit that was then coming under scrutiny, the Intelligence Support Activity. Buckley had been part of the Intelligence Support Activity during the planning for the hostage rescue operation in 1979. It ran intelligence operations in Libya and participated in the rescue of General James Dozier, who'd been kidnapped by Italy's Red Bri-

gade. Buckley watched the slow disintegration of his plan with frustration; it was more proof that the best intentions can be undone by a hellish bureaucracy.

Despite these frustrations, Buckley finished his special assignment with a sense of relief; he had only a few years left until retirement. But his relief was short-lived. In March 1983 an Islamic terrorist detonated an explosive outside the U.S. embassy in Beirut. It was perhaps the most serious breach of security in the CIA's history. Sixteen Americans were killed, including the Agency's Near East Division chief, Robert Ames. Ames, who'd been sent to Lebanon for a meeting with Agency operatives, had been in the country for only 24 hours. The photographs of the collapsed embassy sent shudders through the operations directorate at Langley.

"We were ripped apart over there," says a retired Agency official who spent his career at Langley. "They took us out in Iran, got all those files. We had embassies on fire everywhere. It makes sense that they would get our files. But Ames was a loss. Hell, no one wanted to be there. It was a major disaster."

In June, Casey told Buckley that he wanted him back in Lebanon, this time as the CIA's station chief in Beirut. Beck, who served with Buckley on this assignment, remembers Buckley's reaction. "He knew his duty," Beck says. "Things were rough, but he knew the dangers. He never shied away from anything."

The situation in Lebanon had become far worse than it was during Buckley's first assignment. Shackley believes that Buckley knew he was in an extremely vulnerable position. "Anyone in that part of the world has to know he's a target," Shackley says. "I'm sure Bill did. You know, it's like playing Russian roulette."

BUCKLEY CULTIVATED INFORMANTS IN an attempt to get information about Beirut's disparate political factions. His job once again meant that he'd eventually be burned by some of our nation's fiercest enemies.

The years hadn't eroded Buckley's fearlessness. In the midst of a firefight, Beck says, Buckley stepped into the street and demanded that the combatants lay down their weapons.

"I just couldn't believe it," Beck says. "Everyone stopped shooting and just looked at him. He stood there for a while, then went into a nearby café, where he was meeting a militia leader. He looked at this guy and said, 'Now that's more like it.'"