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Judge awards \$1.2B in damages against Iran for 1983 Beirut bombing

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Heideman Nudelman & Kalik's Richard Heideman

Image: Legal Times / Roberto Westbrook

A Washington federal judge on Dec. 21 issued a final judgment of \$1.2 billion in damages against the government of Iran for its role in the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut.

U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth found the Iranian government liable for the bombing in December 2006. Since then, a special master has been working to come up with a figure for damages.

In the order, Lamberth approved \$227 million in compensatory damages under the state-sponsored terrorism exception to the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act, along with \$955 million in punitive damages.

"The Court concludes that defendants Iran and [Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security] must be punished to the fullest extent legally possible for the bombing in Beirut on October 23, 1983," Lamberth wrote, adding that, "this Court hopes that the victims and their families may find some measure of solace from this Court's final judgment."

The bombing killed 241 people and injured many more. Iran was accused of supporting Hezbollah, which was believed to have carried out the attack. The case at issue in Lamberth's order yesterday is one of several civil lawsuits brought against Iran since then. The plaintiffs are family members of those killed, along with service members who were injured.

Lead plaintiffs' counsel, Richard Heideman of Washington's Heideman Nudelman & Kalik said in an e-mail that, "this is an important victory for the Marines who lost life and limb as a direct result of the Iranian sponsored bombing of the Marine Barracks in Beirut."

"This judgment stands to hold Iran accountable for its unrelenting support of terrorism," Heideman wrote. "We are pleased that these American victims and their families have received their due justice from the Court and we will continue our efforts to fight for these victims and other American victims of terror."

Although Lamberth found Iran liable in 2006, the final judgment was delayed because in 2008, in light of legislation creating a new state-sponsored terrorism exception to the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act, the plaintiffs filed to have the new statute apply retroactively.

Alan Balaran of the Law Office of Alan L. Balaran in Washington was appointed as the

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LAW.COM sort out damages. Lamberth adopted the majority of the Balaran's conclusions, with minor departures.

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The government of Iran has never participated in proceedings. [As Lamberth has noted in other similar cases](#) against Iran for its role as a state sponsor of terrorism, collecting on judgments in these types of cases can be tricky.

Contact Zoe Tillman at ztillman@alm.com.

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