

New U.S. Embassy in Beirut put on hold

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. State Department has shelved plans to build a new embassy in Beirut based on security concerns, ABC News reported Thursday. While the State Department official in charge of embassy construction, retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Charles Williams has been insistent the embassy be built, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was urged by Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman to scrap the plan, the network reported. The U.S. government bought the site for \$22 million in 2005. It is less than a quarter mile from the scene of fierce fighting last summer between Hezbollah and Israeli forces. Hezbollah is suspected of responsibility for two attacks on the U.S. Embassy in Beirut and an embassy annex in 1983 and 1984 that killed 87 people. Former State Department security official Tony Diebler told ABC "it boggles the mind" the site would be recommended. "Any reasonable person that looks at that site, does their homework and sees who controls the area would determine that it's a foolish, dangerous idea to build the embassy there," he said.

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