

Date and Time: Saturday, May 4, 2024 2:38:00AM EEST

Job Number: 223498821

Documents (100)

1. [*Hizbullah's 'political Jujutsu': Using its leverage in Lebanon*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

2. [*Hizbullah's successful prisoner swap 'promotes armed struggle'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

3. [*Suspicious flare as Hizbullah hands over assailant in fatal helicopter shooting*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

4. [*Ministers wrangle over official stance on Hizbullah's arms*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

5. [*Thousands join Hizbullah rally against Israel 's siege of Gaza*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

6. [*'Miracle tree' seen as divine sign in museum celebrating Hizbullah victory*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

7. [*Hizbullah will keep on winning until Israel plays by a new set of rules*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

8. [*IDF begins preparations for exchange with Hizbullah*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

9. [*US applauds assassination of senior Hizbullah leader*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

10. [*Israel : Hizbullah deal may toughen Hamas demands for Schalit. Zahar: Kuntar's release will pave way for freeing prisoners with 'blood on their hands'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

11. [*Israel 's recipe for crime without punishment*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

12. [*Hezbollah's museum of hate*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

13. [*Hezbollah Threatens Attacks on Israeli Targets*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

14. [*To Fuel Quest, Hezbollah Harnesses Youth Piety*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

15. [*Hezbollah solace in Olmert's pain*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type

Narrowed by

News

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

16. [Hezbollah: Crackdown declaration of war](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

17. [PA wants 'festive' funeral for coastal road killer. Israel urged not to give Hizbullah the body of 'symbol of Palestinian women's struggle'](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

18. [Top Australian Muslim backs Hezbollah, calls Israel 'terrorists'](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

19. [Hezbollah's foundation is youth Complex network builds deep loyalty](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

20. [Hezbollah's foundation is youth Complex network builds deep loyalty](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

21. [*Hezbollah's foundation is youth Complex network builds deep loyalty*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

22. [*Hezbollah's foundation is youth Complex network builds deep loyalty*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

23. [*Future of Hezbollah lies in scouting programs Complex network builds deep loyalty*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

24. [*Israel Set To Release More Palestinian Prisoners to Hezbollah*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

25. [*Eli Hurvitz: Our poor education is more dangerous than Hizbullah and Hamas Teva chairman: The Jewish state suffers from ignorance and thuggery.*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

26. [Israel is braced for next attack a year after war with Hezbollah](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

27. [Israel caused civilian deaths: report; Hezbollah Conflict; 'Issuing Warnings Does Not Make Indiscriminate Attacks Lawful'](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

28. [50,000 celebrate 'divine victory'; Hezbollah chief warns Israel against attacks](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

29. [Hezbollah leader warns Israel against attacking; Ceasefire Anniversary; 'Reserving A Surprise For You,' Nasrallah Says](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

30. [ISRAELI FORCES CAUSED CIVILIAN DEATHS: STUDY; Hezbollah Conflict; 'Issuing Warnings Does Not Make Indiscriminate Attacks Lawful'; Why They Died: Civilian](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

31. [*Hezbollah supporters flock to see 'miracle tree' in war-battered town; A dead tree dedicated to 43 Hezbollah fighters killed in last year's war with Israel sprouted leaves just in time for the anniversary, writes Borzou Daragahi in Bint Jbeil.*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

32. [*Two crazy ladies and Hezbollah give baby sea turtles a fighting chance*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

33. [*Antiwar group backs working with Mideast radicals; Canadians come away from Cairo meeting urging solidarity with Hezbollah, Hamas*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

34. [*Nation unites for heroes' homecomings*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

35. [*Pelletier stuck in Lebanon ; Quebec tennis player caught in middle of Hezbollah actions*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to

Jan 31, 2009

36. [*Hezbollah chief boasts of recovered Israeli soldiers' body parts; Hassan Nasrallah marks Shiite holy day with condemnation of Bush, threats of new confrontation with Israel over Lebanon*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

37. [*International: Special report: Lebanon one year on: Fear and fragile peace: a long-suffering people prepare for a new war: Last July the country was plunged into a 34-day conflict that left it in ruins. Amid the reconstruction, fighters are digging in again*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

38. [*Lebanese leaders agree deal for unity government*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

39. [*A death fit for a terror chief: Imad Mughniyeh \(1962-2008\) Hezbollah security chief honed suicide bombings*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

40. [*Local demonstrations flay Israel over Gaza onslaught*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type

Narrowed by

41. [Local demonstrations flay Israel over Gaza onslaught](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 200942. [Beirut divided in mourning for fallen leaders](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 200943. [Schalit talks set to resume in Cairo this week - Israel . Hamas, Islamic Jihad threaten to end cease-fire](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 200944. [Why Israel 's incursion into Gaza will not change much](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 200945. [Eyewitness 14.02.08: Beirut: One city, two protests: Beirut's deadly divide](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

46. [One city, two protests - Beirut's deadly divide](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

47. [Gaza protests come in several colors, shapes and sizes](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

48. [Can the Lebanese agree on a defense strategy?](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

49. [The way to exit from Lebanon 's morass](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

50. [Sarkozy's Shebaa Farms gambit has much to recommend it](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

51. [The way to exit from Lebanon 's morass](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

52. [*Comment & Debate: Truce or bloodbath: Ignoring its own people's wishes in attacking Gaza, Israel leaves Hamas no choice but to fight back*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

53. [*Lebanon 's grand ayatollah a moderate with millions of followers*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

54. [*Multiple views may prove barrier to final electoral law*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

55. [*Tiny protesters lament Gaza bloodshed*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

56. [*Tiny protesters lament Gaza bloodshed*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

57. [*Resilient, go-ahead Lebanon at peace with itself for the moment*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

58. [*Tensions rise as rockets hit Israel from South Lebanon*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

59. [*Nassib Lahoud outlines March 14's goals in dialogue*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

60. [*Northern mayor offers advice to the south*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

61. [*The Hajj assassination and Lebanon 's reality deficit*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

62. [*Instability undermines human rights in Lebanon*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

63. [*Instability undermines human rights in Lebanon*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

64. [*The Hajj assassination and Lebanon 's reality deficit*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

65. [*'It was like falling back into the grave'. Slain soldier Keren Tendler's mother shocked by news of remains*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

66. [*Preparing for 'the day after'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

67. [Defeating the enemy](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

68. [Israeli attacks blamed for bulk of Lebanon war fatalities; Findings released by Human Rights Watch](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

69. [The folly of calling brothers enemies](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

70. [Beirutis wonder how 10 MiG-29s - and upkeep - can benefit Lebanon](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

71. [The folly of calling brothers enemies](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

72. [Put them to death](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

73. [Beirutis put little faith in protest as means of ending Israeli war on Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

74. [Freedom beckons for kidnapped Israeli soldiers](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

75. [Family of Dalal Mughraby awaits return of remains](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

76. [Israel blamed for bulk of civilian deaths; Rights group calls attacks on Lebanon 'indiscriminate'](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

77. [Poll: Israel isn't top priority for US voters, including Jews. McCain backers are more likely to support Israel than their Democratic counterparts](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

78. [*Freedom beckons for kidnapped Israeli soldiers*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

79. [*Most Israelis ignore rare 'general' travel warnings*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

80. [*Israel 's disconnect*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

81. [*Troops patrol tense Beirut but factions clash in north*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

82. [*Thousands of reservists on move as Israel watches its back - GAZA INVASION*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

83. [*6 Are Killed in Sectarian Fighting in Northern Lebanon City*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

84. [*Air strikes decried; Rights group rips Israel for civilian deaths*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

85. [*Israeli air strikes caused civilian deaths: report; At least 300 of the 510 people investigated were women, children*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

86. [*Honor and killings*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

87. [*Iran behind Iraq attack in January, U.S. says*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

88. [Israel kills terror chief with headrest bomb](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

89. [As Israeli Forces Withdraw From Northern Gaza, Hamas Celebrates Its Rocketry](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

90. [Israeli PM's handling of conflict a 'severe failure'; Public reception of panel report likely to decide Olmert's fate](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

91. [Lebanon in need of strong leadership to overcome conflict](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

92. [Sectarian fighting kills 6 in Lebanon ; Religious, political tensions have been running high since militant group overran parts of Beirut in May](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

93. [*Fears of war build out of peace*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

94. [*Lebanon war rebuke 'nonsense,' Israelis say*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

95. [*Winograd , latest act in a long play*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

96. [*Winograd , latest act in a long play*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

97. [*Israeli forces condemned for civilian deaths: report*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

98. [*The tendency towards multilateralism is greater than ever'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

99. [*Gaming: Tactical Advantage*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

100. [*Growing rift between the U.S. and Iran LEBANON : Hate the U.S. , And Head For It*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Apr 15, 2007 to Jan 31, 2009

Hizbullah's 'political Jujutsu': Using its leverage in Lebanon

The Jerusalem Post

August 20, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 705 words

Byline: BRENDA GAZZAR; AP contributed to this report.

Highlight: Analysis

Body

The accord that Lebanon's Shi'ite **Hizbullah** group signed this week with some local Sunni factions to defuse sectarian tension is a strategic political move intended to signal its leverage and its ability to build bridges with even the most unlikely of allies, experts say.

"This shows how good **Hizbullah** is at capitalizing on the politics of the moment, to show how responsible it is, how effective it can be... what leverage it has in stretching across the Shi'ite-Sunni divide, and particularly amongst the groups that have been most problematic for Lebanon's stability," said Magnus Ranstorp, a **Hizbullah** expert at the Swedish National Defense College.

Monday's agreement prohibits any Muslim group from attacking fellow Muslims. It was signed by the Iranian-backed **Hizbullah** and some Salafist groups, followers of a radical form of Sunni Islam. Many Salafists consider Shi'ites to be heretics.

Hizbullah are the masters of "political Jujutsu"; absorbing their attackers' energy and using it against them rather than directly opposing it, Ranstorp said. They roll and weave deeper into the political, social and military fabric of Lebanese society, he said. In addition to allying itself with Salafists, **Hizbullah** has allied itself with the prominent Christian lawmaker Michel Aoun and has reached out to Sunnis and other non-Shi'ites in its fight against Israel.

With the recent accord, "They are signaling, 'you leave us in charge and we'll sort things out for you,'" Ranstorp said. "Leave the resistance to us."

The memorandum of understanding is consistent with **Hizbullah**'s policy of expanding its resistance or jihadist network to include members of the Sunni community in order to give the impression that it's a pan-Islamic movement, says Bilal Saab, a research analyst at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Washington DC-based Brookings Institute.

"This is consistent with its old policy and that of Iran, making it clear the resistance is much bigger than a Shi'ite one," Saab said. Even if the accord is merely a symbolic move, "it still tells us that **Hizbullah** is really interested in reaching out to these communities that have their own grievances against it."

The memorandum, however, excludes one of the most relevant Salafist figures in the country, Sheikh Dai al- Islam al-Chahhal, the founder of the Salafist Movement in Lebanon.

Hizbullah's 'political Jujutsu': Using its leverage in Lebanon

Al-Chahhal, who believes the Shi'ites are infidels, has said the accord does not represent the Salafist community and is devoid of any content.

Some Salafist groups have signed the accord perhaps because it allows them to side with the political winner, **Hizbullah**, and because they have more flexible ideological convictions than other Salafists, Saab said.

Although they are small in number, there are reportedly some 50 different Salafist groups in Lebanon. "They can work with (**Hizbullah**) against the common enemy, which is the US and Israel," he said. "The others can't let go of that ideological conviction. They really see them [**Hizbullah**] as infidels."

By allying itself with Salafists who have influence in the north, the memorandum also allows **Hizbullah** to gain strategic military and political influence in case of a second round of fighting with Israel, Saab said.

Some contend that Sunni radicals are a growing political force in Lebanon that **Hizbullah** and other political players cannot afford to ignore.

"Until recently, Islamist arguments did not resonate with the majority of Lebanon's Sunni Muslims," wrote Omayma Abdel-Latif of the Beirut-based Carnegie Middle East Center in a January report on the issue. "However, turbulent events and an incoming tide of public opinion following the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the assassination of former prime minister Rafiq al-Hariri in February 2005, a rising tide of sectarianism across the region and the Israeli war against **Hizbullah** and Lebanon in July 2006 have all given Islamists a framework for advancing their agenda among Lebanon's Sunna. They are no longer an irrelevant political force."

This year has seen Lebanon's worst sectarian violence since the 1975-90 civil war, with street battles in Beirut, its suburbs, the central mountains and the northern city of Tripoli that have killed more than 100 people.

Graphic

Photo: SUNNI MUSLIM **women** hold balloons at a sit-in for the release of their husbands, brothers and fathers in front of the United Nations headquarters in downtown Beirut yesterday. (Credit: AP Photo/Hussein Malla)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Hizbullah's successful prisoner swap 'promotes armed struggle'

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

July 22, 2008 Tuesday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 848 words

Byline: IRIN News.org

Body

Hizbullah's claim to victory over Israel in its July 16 prisoner swap undermines moderate Arab states and leaders, and may encourage armed struggle across the region at a time of upheaval in the relations between the West and the Middle East, a number of observers have said.

NAQOURA: **Hizbullah**'s claim to victory over Israel in its July 16 prisoner swap undermines moderate Arab states and leaders, and may encourage armed struggle across the region at a time of upheaval in the relations between the West and the Middle East, a number of observers have said.

"This sends a very dangerous message that Israel only makes concessions if you use violence against it," said Amal Saad Ghorayeb, an expert on **Hizbullah**, the Lebanese Shiite political party. "The exchange has also laid bare that, in Lebanon at least, national power is not in the hands of the state, but with a non-state actor."

Speaking to a crowd of thousands of ecstatic supporters in the southern suburbs of Beirut on July 16, **Hizbullah** leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, making his first public appearance in a year, said the release of Samir Kontar and four **Hizbullah** fighters marked the dawn of a new era.

"The era of defeats has ended and now we embark on an era of victories," said Nasrallah, who has become a revered leader - in a region beset by corrupt and ineffectual politicians - since **Hizbullah** fighters drove Israeli forces out of Lebanon in 2000.

An overwhelmed looking Kontar, jailed for nearly 30 years in Israel for the murder of three Israelis during a 1979 raid, told the crowd he had "returned from Palestine, only to return back to Palestine" and said he looked forward to the destruction of Israel.

"The resistance has turned into a power that will never be defeated," said Kontar, an icon of armed struggle in the Arab world, but reviled in Israel for allegedly bludgeoning a 4-year-old girl to death.

"The resistance's weapons have become a culture that will build a country of resistance. This is the culture of the next generation that will fulfill our dream to destroy this oppressive entity."

Hizbullah's successful prisoner swap 'promotes armed struggle'

Ahmad Moussalli, professor of political science at the American University of Beirut (AUB), said Hizbullah now represented a regional fighting force whose integration into the Lebanese state security services could only come from a regional settlement.

"Hizbullah is bigger than Lebanon and the issue of its weapons can now only be dealt with through a regional settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict," said Moussalli.

In scenes unthinkable just two months ago when a threatened crackdown on Hizbullah by the US-backed government brought the country to the brink of civil war, Prime Minister Fouad Siniora stood at Beirut's military airport shoulder to shoulder with Naim Qassem, Hizbullah's deputy leader, to greet Kontar and the four Hizbullah fighters captured during the summer 2006 war with Israel.

Israel launched the July-August 2006 war in response to a cross-border raid by Hizbullah fighters who captured two Israeli soldiers, whose bodies were returned to Israel in the July 16 exchange.

Israel's aerial strikes of South Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs killed 1,200 Lebanese, mainly civilians. Also killed were 157 Israelis, mostly soldiers who invaded South Lebanon.

The prisoner exchange also included the return to Lebanon of seven dead Hizbullah fighters and the remains of Dalal Mughrabi, a famous female Palestinian fighter, and four of her team who died in a 1978 raid into Israel.

Nearly 200 other bodies of Lebanese and Palestinians, as well as militants from Tunisia to Yemen, captured or killed fighting Israel between the 1970s and 2000 were also returned to Lebanon, underlining Hizbullah's credibility as a regional force.

A poll of nearly 4,000 non-Palestinian Arab respondents in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Morocco, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, published on July 16 by the Brookings Institution in Washington, found Nasrallah to be the most admired leader by Sunni and Shiite Muslims, as well as members of other faiths.

Some observers saw Hizbullah's successful deal-making with Israel as a major blow to moderate Arab leaders, such as Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who is pursuing failing US-backed peace talks with Israel. "Peace talks have led to nothing tangible, but force has," said AUB's Moussalli. "There is a mood among the new generation that Israel can be taken on and defeated. Islamist movements will see their recruitment increase."

Hamas, the Palestinian Islamist movement controlling Gaza, said the Hizbullah deal strengthened its own hand in demanding freedom for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, captured by the group in June 2006.

Bassam Kontar, Samir's brother, told IRIN the prisoner exchange would boost the credibility of armed resistance across the region. "This exchange will raise the big question: Is resistance a way to liberate land, to secure sovereignty and, at least in Palestine, to negotiate with some power in your hands in order to reach your goals? The answer is yes." - IRIN

Load-Date: October 23, 2008

Suspicious flare as Hizbullah hands over assailant in fatal helicopter shooting

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

August 30, 2008 Saturday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 842 words

Byline: The Daily Star

Body

Hizbullah handed over to military police Friday the suspect who fired at a military helicopter a day earlier, as the Lebanese army held a funeral for the officer who was slain in the shooting. "**Hizbullah** has handed over the person who fired at the helicopter to the Military Investigative Magistrate in the case Jean Fahd.

Hizbullah handed over to military police Friday the suspect who fired at a military helicopter a day earlier, as the Lebanese army held a funeral for the officer who was slain in the shooting.

"**Hizbullah** has handed over the person who fired at the helicopter to the Military Investigative Magistrate in the case Jean Fahd," a judicial source told The Daily Star, adding that Fahd gave orders to the military police to interrogate him "and everyone related to the incident."

The source said that **Hizbullah** was "fully cooperating" with the judiciary.

First Lieutenant Samer Hanna, 25, was killed when his helicopter was hit by gunfire on Thursday during a training mission in the Sejd Hills, a region known as a **Hizbullah** stronghold in Southern Lebanon.

In a statement issued on Friday, **Hizbullah** described the incident as "unfortunate and distressing," adding that the group will "fully cooperate with the Lebanese Army and the judiciary to uncover the truth."

"We call on all political parties to refrain from baseless speculation on the incident whose circumstances remain unknown," the statement said.

Hizbullah also extended its "deepest" condolences to the family of Hanna and to the Lebanese Army. "First Lieutenant Hanna is not only a martyr of the Lebanese Army but also a martyr of the resistance," the **Hizbullah** statement added.

Meanwhile the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) bid farewell to Hanna during a solemn funeral Friday in his hometown of Tannourine in the northern province of Batroun.

Black-clad **women** threw red flowers at the Lebanese-flag-draped coffin carried by his Hanna's colleagues.

Suspicions flare as Hizbullah hands over assailant in fatal helicopter shooting

Representatives of Lebanon's three top officials attended the funeral at Tannourine's Notre Dame Church.

Talking to reporters on Friday before joining a Cabinet meeting, Defense Minister Elias Murr said handing over culprits who opened fired on the LAF Gazelle helicopter "is the minimum that we could accept."

"The Lebanese Army and the Resistance [Hizbullah] are not two separate camps. We are in the same camp confronting Israel," he said.

On Friday, Hizbullah's second in command Sheikh Naim Qassem said "confusion" still surrounds the incident, adding that the event had no political or security implications.

Pro-opposition As-Safir newspaper reported on Friday that Hizbullah opened fire on the Lebanese Army helicopter mistaking it for an Israeli craft.

As-Safir quoted anonymous sources as saying the gunmen mistook the helicopter for an Israeli aircraft dropping off troops in the South and opened fire Thursday, killing the navigator.

As-Safir said the shooting incident was caused by a "lack of coordination" on the helicopter flight. The LAF and Hizbullah often inform each other of their movements.

Another pro-opposition newspaper, Al-Akhbar, said a joint committee from the army and Hizbullah opened an investigation into the incident shortly after it happened.

The incident has raised political tensions in the country, with the ruling coalition increasing their demands for Hizbullah to surrender its arms.

Head of the Democratic Gathering MP Walid Jumblatt said Thursday's targeting of a LAF helicopter, required "the immediate discussion" of Lebanon's defense strategy during upcoming dialogue sessions chaired by President Michel Sleiman.

Jumblatt described the shooting as a "heinous act," and called for an immediate investigation into the incident "in order to reveal culprits."

Jumblatt said discussing Lebanon's defense strategy would allow Lebanon to "better fight the Israeli enemy."

The head of the Progressive Socialist Party also called on all political parties to "avoid any acts that would undermine military strength and unity and condemn any attacks on the army."

Premier Fouad Siniora condemned the incident Friday, describing it as "painful and sad."

"But we should not get discouraged and we should double our efforts to strengthen state institutions," he told reporters following the Friday prayers at the Grand Serail. "We should operate under the umbrella of state and work for a comprehensive and

conclusive investigation,"

he added.

Meanwhile Justice Minister Ibrahim Najjar, said that it was unlikely that the incident had been premeditated.

The minister also urged the Lebanese "not to rush to conclusions and allow the judiciary to perform its job."

Former Premier Salim al-Hoss, who is considered close to the Hizbullah-led opposition, pointed the finger of blame at Hizbullah. "The area where this distressing incident took place is, as everybody knows, under the control of the Resistance," Hoss said.

Suspicious flare as Hizbullah hands over assailant in fatal helicopter shooting

"**Hizbullah** must explain and not justify what happened, because the death of a brilliant officer cannot be justified whatever the circumstances of the incident," the former premier added. - The Daily Star

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Load-Date: October 23, 2008

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Ministers wrangle over official stance on Hizbullah's arms

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

July 25, 2008 Friday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 1174 words

Byline: Nafez Qawas

Body

Debate over the future of Hizbullah's weapons hindered a seventh effort on Thursday to draft a ministerial statement for the new national unity government. Following a meeting headed by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora at the Grand Serail of a committee of ministers drafting the policy platform, Information Minister Tarek Mitri told reporters.

BEIRUT: Debate over the future of Hizbullah's weapons hindered a seventh effort on Thursday to draft a ministerial statement for the new national unity government. Following a meeting headed by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora at the Grand Serail of a committee of ministers drafting the policy platform, Information Minister Tarek Mitri told reporters that "all discussion of problematic issues is suspended." Mitri said the committee would meet again at 5:30 p.m. on Friday.

"We have agreed on several matters including foreign policy, economic and social policies, justice, women's issues, and the issue of the displaced among other things," Mitri said.

"However," he added, "issues of national concern still need further discussion."

According to media reports on Thursday, Hizbullah and Amal ministers in the committee insisted on dealing with the issue of the resistance and Hizbullah's arms "the same way it was dealt with in previous ministerial statements."

Ministers from the March 14 Forces, meanwhile, firmly rejected the clause related to Hizbullah arms that was included in the previous policy statement.

"A formula which was applicable three years ago is no longer applicable especially in light of major events witnessed in Lebanon over the past three years and recent circumstances," Mitri told reporters on Thursday.

Following a visit to President Michel Sleiman on Wednesday, Speaker Nabih Berri stressed that the ministerial committee's "primary task is to draft a policy platform for the new government, but is not the proper forum for a national dialogue."

Ministers wrangle over official stance on Hizbullah's arms

"The delay in putting out a statement has, until now, been within an acceptable range, especially since governments are legally accorded one month to draft [a platform]," the speaker added. "Nevertheless, any significant further delays may prove unbearable."

Berri attributed the delay in drafting a statement to issues related to "the 'resistance' and relations with Syria."

Sources close to head of the Democratic Gathering MP Walid Jumblatt told The Daily Star that the Druze leader endorsed Berri's suggestions to have controversial files, such as Hizbullah's arms, "discussed during upcoming dialogue sessions rather than meetings to compile the ministerial statement."

The March 14 Forces on Wednesday stressed "the impossibility of coexisting" with Hizbullah's arms during a workshop entitled "Civil Peace and the Building of an Independent State" at the Bristol Hotel.

"Illegitimate arms and the state cannot possibly coexist together," the workshop's moderator former MP Fares Souaid said.

Souaid also accused Hizbullah of working to "paralyze the Lebanese state and slide Lebanon toward a new civil war."

"Coexisting with Hizbullah's arms proves to be impossible, especially after those arms have been directed toward fellow Lebanese," Souaid said, referring to clashes in early May that saw Hizbullah and its allies take over most of West Beirut.

Also commenting on the efforts to draft a ministerial statement, Saudi Ambassador to Lebanon Abdel-Aziz Khoja said that nobody knows how to solve Lebanon's problems better than the Lebanese themselves.

Khoja, following a meeting with Lebanese Foreign Minister Fawzi Salloukh on Thursday, said he did not discuss the ministerial statement in detail during his meeting with Salloukh, telling reporters, "We discussed general matters, but minister Salloukh reassured me that the ministerial statement will be announced very soon."

He added that Saudi Arabia "does not interfere" in the drafting of the ministerial statement, which he described "as a strictly Lebanese matter."

Khoja said his country encouraged the establishment of good Lebanese-Syrian relations, adding that he hoped relations between the two countries, in light of Lebanese President Michel Sleiman's upcoming visit to Damascus, "will move to the best." He added that a good relationship between the two neighboring countries is "only normal."

Meanwhile, the Presidential Palace in Baabda began preparations to hold a national dialogue conference that President Michel Sleiman is to sponsor after the drafting of a ministerial statement, media reports said on Thursday.

Sleiman's political adviser Nazem Khoury made visits on Wednesday to the speaker and prime minister in this regard.

On Thursday, Sleiman held talks with Justice Minister Ibrahim Najjar and Social Affairs Minister Mario Aoun, who both briefed the president about the activities of their respective ministries.

In separate developments, parliamentary majority leader and head of the Future Movement MP Saad Hariri hailed the "sacrifices made by southerners to protect Lebanon."

During a meeting with the families of "martyrs" from the southern village of Marwahin, who visited him in his residence in Qoreitem on Thursday, Hariri reiterated his continuing commitment to his father's path and to the preservation of the unity and independence of Lebanon.

Hariri also underlined the Future Movement's commitment to the reconstruction of what "Israeli treachery" had demolished in South Lebanon.

Ministers wrangle over official stance on Hizbullah's arms

Hariri also saluted the "steadfastness" of the people of Marwahin and their resistance against Israeli attacks and "expansionist ambitions."

"The heinous crime committed in the town of Marwahin [during the 2006 war] added to Israel's terrorist record ... Yet despite the atrocities, the people remained steadfast in their land and their nation and were the first line of defense," Hariri said. - additional reporting by Maher Zeineddine

US ratifies Sison ambassadorship

BEIRUT: The Foreign Affairs Committee of the United States Congress ratified on Thursday the appointment of Michele Sison as US ambassador to Lebanon. Sison said Lebanon was an important part of US efforts to encourage democracy, human rights and freedom in the Middle East. "The Lebanese people have benefited from the Doha agreement," Sison said during a hearing in front of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Sison said Hizbullah has only one minister in the Lebanese Cabinet but added the party and its allies secured a blocking minority inside the next government "which is not a good thing," as "the government usually works on the basis of consensus."

She raised concerns about the party's surveillance of Rafik Hariri International Airport as well as the party's private telecommunications network and said she believed a diplomatic solution to the Shebaa Farms issue would erode "the so-called resistance of Hizbullah." She said it was hard for her on the personal level to watch the longest-serving Arab detainee in Israeli prisons Samir Kontar being released from an Israeli prison this month and to receive the jubilant welcome from the Lebanese masses, because "he is not a hero." - The Daily Star

Load-Date: October 23, 2008

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Thousands join Hizbullah rally against Israel's siege of Gaza

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

December 20, 2008 Saturday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 671 words

Byline: Andrew Wander

Body

Thousands of people took to the streets in Beirut's southern suburbs on Friday to join a **Hizbullah**-led protest against Israel's brutal blockade of the Gaza Strip. The demonstration was organized by the Shiite group after its leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, called earlier this week for action "until the Gaza siege is lifted."

HARET HREIK: Thousands of people took to the streets in Beirut's southern suburbs on Friday to join a **Hizbullah**-led protest against Israel's brutal blockade of the Gaza Strip. The demonstration was organized by the Shiite group after its leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, called earlier this week for action "until the Gaza siege is lifted." Thousands of protesters waved **Hizbullah**, Amal and Palestinian flags as they marched through the party's stronghold of Haret Hreik.

Speakers blasted music and speeches as sections of the crowd chanted "Death to Israel, Death to America." Two enormous Palestinian flags were carried by **women** clad in black chadors, while uniformed members of **Hizbullah**'s youth wing also joined the march.

Several demonstrators brandished their shoes above their heads in a tribute to Iraqi journalist Muntazer al-Zaidi, who threw his shoes at George W. Bush during the US president's visit to Iraq on Sunday.

Others said they considered it their duty to attend the protest. "I've been fighting the Israelis for more than 20 years," one middle-aged man said. "I'm here for my father, who is sick and can't come."

The demonstration was tightly run by **Hizbullah** security members, who shepherded protesters through the streets during the demonstration, ensuring that they did not deviate from the planned route.

The crowd gathered in front of a stage, where **Hizbullah** number two Sheikh Naim Qassem told them that it was their duty to reclaim land taken from Palestinians. "We are responsible, like all Arabs and Muslims, to completely liberate Palestine, from the river to the sea," he said. "The Palestinian cause is a just cause."

But Nasrallah himself did not make an appearance, nor did he address the crowd through a pre-recorded or televised speech as he has in the past. His absence sparked rumors that plans for him to speak had been abandoned because of a security threat, but **Hizbullah** officials denied this was the case, noting that Nasrallah had never announced that he would appear at the demonstration.

Thousands join Hizbullah rally against Israel 's siege of Gaza

Speaking to The Daily Star, Hizbullah spokesman Hussein Rahhal said: "Some journalists expected Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah to speak, but we had made no official announcement that he would. We decided that Naim Qassem would speak instead. There were no security problems."

A source close to the group said he was not surprised that Nasrallah had not appeared at the demonstration in person. "Because people thought this was important, they thought he might speak, but it was decided he would not," he said.

Simultaneous demonstrations were held across the country to protest against the blockade. At Nijmeh Square in Sidon, hundreds of protesters gathered and an effigy of Bush was punched and spat at by the crowd, who cursed the US president and other world leaders.

The Imam of Sidon's Al-Quds Mosque, Maher Hammoud, told the crowd that Arab leaders were also to blame for the suffering of people in the Gaza Strip: "The siege is not only a Zionist siege, it's a Saudi, Egyptian and Arab siege." He added that Nasrallah was "always right," prompting cheers from the crowd.

Nasrallah's call for protest was heeded as far away as Bahrain, where riot police broke up a massive rally using tear gas and rubber-coated bullets.

Meanwhile in Gaza the situation remained tense, as a six-month-old cease-fire between Israel and Hamas which was signed in June expired.

Hamas have said they will not renew the Egyptian-brokered truce, which had brought relative calm in and around Gaza since it was inked in June. The truce largely held until November 4, when Israel invaded Gaza in an offensive that killed seven Hamas members. - With additional reporting by Mohammed Zaatari and agencies

Load-Date: December 19, 2008

End of Document

'Miracle tree' seen as divine sign in museum celebrating Hizbullah victory

The Irish Times

August 15, 2007 Wednesday

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Section: WORLD; Other World Stories; Pg. 9

Length: 694 words

Body

MIDDLE EAST: Lebanese Shias are paying homage to a dead tree that appears to honour 43 Hizbullah militants killed in last year's war with Israel, writes Borzou Daragahi in Bint Jbeil, Lebanon

Some would say Fatmeh Shaheen should know better. The 45-year-old psychologist is trained to recognise how a desperate mind might override its own sensibilities in search of solace. But here she is, piling into this chapel-like building in southern Lebanon with hundreds of other Lebanese Shias to pay homage to a miracle tree.

A dead, varnished poplar trunk somehow sprouted leaves after it was adorned with the names of the 43 fighters for militant Islamic group Hizbullah. They were killed in the war with Israel last year, a conflict that left hundreds of Lebanese dead and destroyed huge swathes of the country's Shia Muslim heartland.

"Can you have any doubts now?" the well-educated, trilingual professional asks as she stares, eyes aglitter, at the bright green leaves wiggling out of the dark brown tree trunk. Hizbullah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah declared the war a "divine victory" for Lebanese guerrillas fighting against one of the most powerful armed forces in the Middle East. With yesterday's anniversary of the war's end approaching, Hizbullah pulled out all the stops to reinforce its version of history.

In mostly Shia southern Beirut, a ruined district of the capital subjected to Israeli air strikes last summer, Hizbullah has opened the "House of the Spider" museum to celebrate the "divine" victory and demonise Israeli armed forces.

It includes the re-creation of a Hizbullah guerrilla base, with mannequins in camouflage uniforms looking at maps of northern Israel and punching Israeli grid co-ordinates into laptop computers.

Visitors navigate past the wreckage of Israeli tanks, captured Israeli walkie-talkies, a downed helicopter and bloodied boots. A television screen loops a video game in which a Hizbullah fighter hunts down enemy armour. Footage of exploding Israeli tanks and crying Israeli soldiers plays inside a darkened theatre.

Large photographs of US president George Bush, secretary of state Condoleezza Rice and Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert accompany embarrassing quotes.

"Hassan Nasrallah won't forget the name of Amir Peretz," says the former Israeli defence minister, who was pushed out of his job largely for his handling of last year's war.

And then there is the miracle tree.

'Miracle tree' seen as divine sign in museum celebrating Hizbullah victory

A Hizbullah official, who gives his name only as "Abu Muhammad," stands on a stage and tells the story of the tree. Hizbullah officials, he says, commissioned an artist to make a monument for the war dead of this border town. The artist carved their names on wooden placards and nailed them to the tree trunk. He sprayed it with chemicals and placed it on a block.

Suddenly, about two weeks before the one-year anniversary of the war, the monument began sprouting leaves, even though it wasn't getting any water or sunlight, Abu Muhammad says. Exactly 43 leaves sprang to life, one for each of the town's combat casualties, he maintains.

Hizbullah's al-Manar television began spreading word of the phenomenon and the visitors flocked to see a miracle.

"Let this be proof to all those who doubt the divine victory," Abu Muhammad says over the loudspeaker. "The pure blood of the martyrs has watered the Earth." A recording of martial music fills the hall during a break. Abu Muhammad mingles with the crowd.

"Are roots growing, as well?" one woman asks Abu Muhammad.

"What are you going to do with it if it grows big?" another asks as she takes photographs with her mobile phone. "God knows," says Abu Muhammad.

"I saw it on television," says Aida Roz, a Beirut accountant visiting with her two daughters. "I couldn't believe it. Now I believe it."

Ms Shaheen drove with her two teenage sons for more than an hour from the coastal city of Tyre this morning. Then she came again by herself to marvel at the tree. She says she's not particularly religious. Unlike many of the women here, she doesn't even don the hijab signifying Muslim piety.

"You have to live in the south to understand," she says. "You have to be from south Lebanon."

Load-Date: August 15, 2007

Hizbullah will keep on winning until Israel plays by a new set of rules

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

July 17, 2008 Thursday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 568 words

Byline: The Daily Star

Body

Hizbullah did more than honor a promise when it wrapped up its exchange of prisoners and bodies with Israel on Wednesday: The resistance movement also closed yet another chapter in the long history of its struggle with the Jewish state - and, again, did so in a manner that prevented the Israelis from dictating the outcome.

Editorial

Hizbullah did more than honor a promise when it wrapped up its exchange of prisoners and bodies with Israel on Wednesday: The resistance movement also closed yet another chapter in the long history of its struggle with the Jewish state - and, again, did so in a manner that prevented the Israelis from dictating the outcome. The only issues still outstanding are ones of real estate, and here the potential for **Hizbullah** and the Lebanese state to work in concert is considerable. There is a good chance that now, having repeatedly been bested in a game whose rules they authored, the Israelis will be more susceptible to the genuine diplomacy that their governments have traditionally disdained. That may or may not entail negotiations of some sort, but it must include a retreat from the logic of force and, therefore, compliance with multiple UN Security Council resolutions by withdrawing from Lebanese territory it still occupies.

President Michel Sleiman has begun to lay the groundwork for this next stage by meeting with his Syrian counterpart, Bashar Assad, in Paris. Coordination with Damascus is a virtual prerequisite for any effort to regain the Shebaa Farms, for instance, and both the Lebanese and the Syrian bargaining positions would be strengthened if the two countries were acting in unison. Several **Hizbullah** leaders have stated that although they have little confidence in the likelihood that diplomacy can end the occupation of Lebanese soil, the party is willing to let others try to accomplish the task.

The unspoken corollary, of course, is that the resistance will remain in reserve as a proverbial stick to prod the Israelis if they refuse to take the carrots tacitly offered to them by the Lebanese government. There are those who are so blinded by hate that they cannot see the opportunities at hand and would still like to see **Hizbullah** and its supporters exterminated by the Israelis, but larger minds know better. These will recall that during the 1990s, when the Israelis still held their occupation zone in South Lebanon, the partnership between the state and the resistance was greater than the sum of its parts. Nonetheless, because the scope and the nature of the struggle have been

Hizbullah will keep on winning until Israel plays by a new set of rules

profoundly altered - again, thanks to **Hizbullah**, and at a terrible cost to Lebanese civilians and their economy - the emphasis of the partnership must change too.

For the Israelis Wednesday had to have been a humiliating experience. They slaughtered more than 1,200 Lebanese, the vast majority of them civilians, after **Hizbullah** ambushed a patrol and carried off two Israeli troops on July 12, 2006. They dishonored themselves, betrayed their faith, and violated the norms of civilized warfare by venting their frustration on innocent **women** and children. They added insult to injury by littering the South with millions of cluster munitions that continue to kill and maim. In the end, however, they did precisely what **Hizbullah's** leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, said they would. Hopefully, when the humiliation wears off, they will have learned a valuable lesson.

Load-Date: October 23, 2008

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IDF begins preparations for exchange with Hizbullah

The Jerusalem Post

July 7, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 395 words

Byline: YAAKOV KATZ

Body

In the first step the IDF took ahead of a planned prisoner swap with *Hizbullah* likely to take place next week, OC Northern Command Maj.-Gen. Gadi Eizenkot declared a cemetery near Safed where bodies of enemy fighters are buried, a closed military zone on Sunday afternoon.

Eizenkot is the IDF officer in charge of implementing the prisoner swap for abducted IDF reservists Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, which officials said would likely take place at the Rosh Hanikra border crossing in the North. Government officials said that details regarding the swap still needed to be finalized by Israeli negotiator Ofer Dekel and that it was unlikely the exchange would take place this week.

IDF sources said that soldiers have begun clearing weeds and bushes that have grown over the graves in the cemetery near Safed. The bodies of several dozen Lebanese and Palestinian guerrillas will be returned to Lebanon under the deal, which was approved last Sunday by the cabinet.

On Friday, members of the IDF Rabbinate received emergency call-up orders. These reservists will participate in exhuming the bodies from the cemetery, although IDF sources stressed that such orders have yet to be issued.

Under the deal, Goldwasser and Regev, both believed to be dead, will be exchanged for Lebanese terrorist Samir Kuntar, several *Hizbullah* guerrillas caught during the Second Lebanon War, as well as the release of an unspecified number of Palestinian prisoners.

While government officials in Jerusalem said the swap would take place next week, the Palestinian news agency Ma'an reported Sunday that the first stage of the prisoner swap would indeed begin on Thursday, citing "informed Palestinian sources."

According to the news agency, the first stage would include the release of Kuntar and three other detainees. Regev and Goldwasser would also presumably be released during this stage. The news agency further reported that one of the Palestinian bodies slated to be returned under the second phase of the deal would be that of Dalal Mughrabi, a *female* terrorist who took part in the killing of 36 Israelis and one US citizen in 1978.

According to the report, Mughrabi's remains would be received "in a large official ceremony" organized by Fatah which would "showcase the pride that people feel for Mughrabi and her fellows for their heroic resistance against the Israeli occupation."

IDF begins preparations for exchange with Hizbullah

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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US applauds assassination of senior Hizbullah leader

The Irish Times

February 14, 2008 Thursday

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Section: WORLD; Other World Stories; Pg. 13

Length: 814 words

Byline: Lara Marlowe

Body

US: The assassination in Damascus on Tuesday night of one of Hizbullah's most senior commanders, Imad Mugnieh, long on the US's most-wanted list for attacks on Israeli and western targets, was last night applauded by the US.

Hizbullah, which is backed by Syria and Iran, accused Israel of assassinating him by planting a bomb in his car. Tehran blamed Israel but Israel denied any involvement.

"The world is a better place without this man in it. He was a cold-blooded killer, a mass-murderer and a terrorist responsible for countless innocent lives lost," US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said. "One way or another he was brought to justice."

Mugnieh (45) was the Osama bin Laden of his day, though he was responsible for the deaths of far fewer people than the founder of al-Qaeda. I interviewed him in a dingy hotel room in Tehran on October 20th, 1991, on the periphery of an Iranian-organised international conference for the support of the Intifada.

There were five people in the room: Mugnieh, another Lebanese, a woman in a chador who interpreted, myself and Robert Fisk of the London Independent. The interpreter took notes on paper crested with a Kalashnikov and the name of Allah.

We were allowed to write that we had interviewed a member of Islamic Jihad, but were forbidden to name Mugnieh, already known in the west as the group's "mastermind". A cell within the Lebanese Hizbullah, Islamic Jihad had blown up the US marines and French paratroopers in Beirut and US and French embassies in Beirut and Kuwait. They had hijacked several aircraft, including a TWA flight in 1985 when the body of a US Navy diver was dumped on the tarmac of Beirut airport.

Mugnieh was of stocky build, with medium brown hair and beard. I best remember his eyes, which appeared dead, without light. In the days that followed, I several times felt them watching me. He would hover around the phone booths from which foreign journalists called their editors.

Islamic Jihad was behind most of the kidnappings of westerners in Lebanon in the 1980s, and we wanted to ask Mugnieh about our colleague Terry Anderson, held by the group since March 1985.

US applauds assassination of senior Hizbullah leader

"In the name of Allah the merciful, the beneficent and with his help," Mugnieh began. Speaking slowly, as if dictating a communique, he said the West's only concern in Lebanon was the supremacy of Lebanese Christians and the security of Israel. There was, he added, an "American plan to eradicate Islamic existence and resistance to Israel in Lebanon".

When we finally managed to place our first question, about the situation of the remaining western hostages in Lebanon, Mugnieh mocked our impatience. The crisis in Lebanon was ending, he said, thanks to the intervention of then secretary general of the United Nations Javier Pérez de Cuéllar.

But what of Terry Anderson? "We treat him better than you treat yourself," Mugnieh claimed. When Anderson was freed six weeks later, he would tell us of the seven years spent in dank cells, often chained to a radiator, how he was wrapped mummy-like in masking tape to be transported in a car boot.

What did he feel about the hostages? "My feeling towards the mental pain of Terry Anderson is the same as my feeling towards the Lebanese hostages in Khiam [the prison then run by Israel and its militia allies in southern Lebanon], with the exception that the Lebanese hostages go through both mental and physical torture," Mugnieh said.

"Taking hostages is wrong," he continued. "It is an evil. But it is the only choice . . . There is no other option." Mugnieh spoke of the detention of thousands of Lebanese civilians in southern Lebanon in the Ansar prison camp and then Khiam. "I don't mean just Israel, because the 1982 invasion was financed by America, which also supplied the weapons," he said.

The CIA station chief William Buckley, whom Islamic Jihad had kidnapped, "was the de facto president of Lebanon," Mugnieh alleged. Buckley's bones were later found in a bag by the roadside in Beirut's southern suburbs.

The litany of grievances continued. The Iranian airliner that the US shot down over the Persian Gulf in 1988 "was filled with innocent men, women and children", he noted. "The US government didn't admit to having done wrong . . . They did not even pay . . . the families of the victims."

In April 1988, I had covered the hijacking of a Kuwaiti airliner to Algiers by Islamic Jihad for The Irish Times. Mugnieh is believed to have been one of the hijackers. At the end of his three-week ordeal, the flight superintendent said the worst moment was when the hijackers took over the plane. "When they look at you and hold a gun to your face . . . Have you ever seen a shark in the water? The eyes, exactly. It has no expression. A cruel face and very steady hands."

More than 16 years after I interviewed Mugnieh, I still feel certain that he was that "shark in the water".

Load-Date: February 14, 2008

Israel: Hizbullah deal may toughen Hamas demands for Schalit. Zahar: Kuntar's release will pave way for freeing prisoners with 'blood on their hands'

The Jerusalem Post

July 1, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1565 words

Byline: YAAKOV KATZ, KHALED ABU TOAMEH and BEN SALES; Herb Keinon contributed to this report

Highlight: Lead Story

Body

Fears mounted in Israel on Monday that Hamas would toughen its stance in the negotiations for the release of kidnapped soldier St.-Sgt. Gilad Schalit in response to the cabinet's decision a day earlier to release murderer Samir Kuntar in exchange for reservists Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser, who were abducted by **Hizbullah**.

These fears seemed justified as Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar said on Monday that Israel's decision to free Kuntar and other Lebanese prisoners in the context of a prisoner exchange with **Hizbullah** would pave the way for the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners "with blood on their hands."

Regev and Goldwasser are believed to be dead, and as a result officials warned that Hamas might decide to increase its previous demand of 450 prisoners since Schalit is alive and Israel might be willing to pay more.

"They want to take advantage of the deal with **Hizbullah**," a defense official explained. "They see what price we are willing to pay for bodies and think they can now get more for Schalit, who is alive."

"Something important has happened, and there's no ignoring the fact that it [the cabinet decision] is a major development. Israel has agreed to release prisoners who it says have blood on their hands. We must therefore seize the opportunity and seek the release of our prisoners," Zahar said. "There should be no difference between the case of Schalit and the case of Kuntar."

Hamas and other Palestinian armed factions in the Gaza Strip expressed hope that the decision to free Kuntar signaled a change in Israel's policy of not releasing prisoners who were involved in killings.

They see the decision as a "big victory" for **Hizbullah** because Israel was eventually forced to succumb to the organization's demands.

Abu Mujahed, spokesman for the Popular Resistance Committees, an alliance of various armed groups in the Gaza Strip, said Monday that his group was now hopeful that Israel would release Palestinian prisoners serving lengthy sentences for their role in fatal terror attacks.

The Popular Resistance Committees was one of the groups that claimed responsibility for Schalit's abduction two years ago.

Israel : Hizbullah deal may toughen Hamas demands for Schalit. Zahar: Kuntar's release will pave way for freeing prisoners with 'blood on their hands'

"The Zionist enemy must learn the lesson," Abu Mujahed said. "If they want to see the soldier again, they must accept all our demands as they did with Hizbullah. We continue to insist that they release prisoners serving lengthy sentences, in addition to women and minors."

He expressed confidence that the release of Kuntar would be the first step toward releasing hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

"The Lebanese resistance has triumphed," he added. "Soon our imprisoned heroes will be freed."

In a related development, Egypt has summoned Hamas representatives to Cairo next week for talks on a prisoner exchange with Israel, an Egyptian diplomat said Monday.

The diplomat said the two sides would also discuss ways of resolving the ongoing dispute between Hamas and Fatah and the current cease-fire in the Gaza Strip.

"Egypt has decided to focus its efforts on solving the case of Gilad Schalit," the diplomat told The Jerusalem Post. "As of next week, we will hold intensive talks in Cairo with all the concerned parties until we reach an agreement over a prisoner deal."

Zahar confirmed that his movement had received an invitation from the Egyptians to dispatch a delegation to Cairo for talks on Schalit. He said the talks would start as early as next week and would also deal with Hamas's demand to reopen the Rafah border crossing and release Hamas prisoners from Egyptian jails.

Israeli officials also said it was likely that Ofer Dekel, Israel's negotiator on the captives issue, would travel to Cairo to participate in the talks.

Meanwhile, senior defense officials revealed on Monday that according to recent intelligence information, Hamas was taking military action in Gaza to prevent breaches of the cease-fire. The information came even as a Kassam rocket landed in the Sha'ar Hanegev Regional Council area, causing no casualties or damage.

The officials said Hamas forces were being deployed in open fields frequently used in the past by rocket and mortar squads and have even arrested several terror operatives affiliated with the Islamic Jihad.

"They are taking action on the ground, and this is indicative of how important the cease-fire is for them," one official said. "They know that if they don't rein in the other factions, Israel will not keep its part of the deal, either."

Commenting on the prisoner swap, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said that its approval was justified, despite negative consequences, because it would bring the captive soldiers home and would help catalyze similar indirect negotiations with Hamas over the return of Schalit.

"I stand behind this decision with all of my strength and all of my faith," said Olmert of the exchange with Hizbullah. "Alongside that, we continue to concern ourselves, with all of our strength and all of our courage, with the return of Gilad Schalit. That is also not a simple story, and it won't be an easy decision. We need to remember that."

According to the terms of the Hizbullah exchange, Israel will release Kuntar, along with four other Hizbullah fighters, an undetermined number of Palestinian prisoners, dozens of Hizbullah and Palestinian bodies, and information on the disappearance in Beirut in 1982 of four Iranian diplomats, in exchange for Goldwasser and Regev and a Hizbullah report on the fate of missing navigator Ron Arad.

Dekel, who negotiated the deal through German mediator Gerhard Konrad, is scheduled to head to Berlin later this week to sign the agreement, officials said Monday. Konrad will then take the agreement to Beirut to obtain a Hizbullah signature.

Defense officials said it was likely that the swap would take place in the next two weeks, although a final date had yet to be set.

Israel : Hizbullah deal may toughen Hamas demands for Schalit. Zahar: Kuntar's release will pave way for freeing prisoners with 'blood on their hands'

Following the signing of the agreement, Hizbullah is set to deliver its report on Arad, and Israel is to give its information on the fate of the Iranian diplomats, believed to have been killed by Christian Phalangists during Israel's invasion of Beirut in 1982.

If Konrad determines that the report on Arad lives up to acceptable standards, and Israel concurs, the prisoner swap will take place. Defense officials said the swap would take place at the Rosh Hanikra border crossing with Lebanon and not in Germany, the site of the previous swap with Hizbullah in 2004.

"Today there is a strong UNIFIL that can facilitate the swap at the border," a senior defense official said, adding that under the assumption that Goldwasser and Regev were dead, forensic teams would first test the bodies' DNA to confirm their identity before completing the swap.

Olmert, speaking to the Kadima faction, said that his primary reason for making the deal was to bring the soldiers back to Israel while he still had the ability to do so.

"I did it even though I knew criticism would be voiced and that it would be controversial in Israeli society, but I did it because I want the boys home and I wanted to release their families from this continuing and unrelenting torture," Olmert said regarding his approval of the exchange. "In no way can I say that this was a good decision. This isn't a good issue; this is a painful issue."

Although he stood by the decision, Olmert recognized the drawbacks of the deal, saying that the return of Kuntar meant that Hizbullah had achieved the original objective of the kidnappings.

"I cannot forget the fact that the actions of Hizbullah on July 12, 2006 that led to the kidnapping of our two soldiers and the killing of eight others, and what turned into the second Lebanon War, began with the intention of kidnapping people to get Samir Kuntar [back]," Olmert said. "It's not that Samir Kuntar is important, but that the circumstances surrounding this decision would create that reality."

Olmert chided the media for making it seem that no progress had been made in the negotiations until recently.

"You tried to create an impression in the public [sphere] that nothing was happening," Olmert said. "We had a need to manage this with sensitivity and intelligence, with a maximum understanding of all of the aspects of the systems we were dealing with."

Olmert said he wanted to ensure that Goldwasser and Regev were brought home, regardless of whether they were alive or dead. He said it was clear that Israel needed to push for the decision as it was, or contact with Hizbullah would be cut off and there would be no possibility of bringing them home - or if they were dead, for burial in Israel.

In completing the deal, Olmert said that the government was avoiding a repeat of what happened to Arad, who has been missing since 1986.

"I didn't want these circumstances to create a situation, God forbid, similar to that of Ron Arad. After 20 years we don't know exactly what happened to him, even though we keep looking," Olmert said.

Whatever the outcome of the exchange with Hizbullah, Olmert cautioned, Israel would encounter similar instances of captured prisoners and would have to stand strong in the face of those challenges.

"You also know this isn't the end of the road, that we're facing tough decisions and similar situations in the future, of soldiers that are in the hands of their captors," Olmert said. "A state that can devote everything to the saving of one life has a moral strength that creates solidarity that none of these other states has."

Graphic

Israel : Hizbullah deal may toughen Hamas demands for Schalit. Zahar: Kuntar's release will pave way for freeing prisoners with 'blood on their hands'

Photo: Gilad Schalit

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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Israel's recipe for crime without punishment

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

October 6, 2008 Monday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 1004 words

Byline: Marc J. Sirois

Body

For those who wonder why Israel has experienced so much trouble "fitting in" in the Middle East, and why it routinely gets away with mass murder, it is periodically helpful to be reminded. Witness the highly disturbing pronouncements made on Friday by one Gadi Eisenkot, the general who runs Israel's Northern Command.

First person by Marc J. Sirois

For those who wonder why Israel has experienced so much trouble "fitting in" in the Middle East, and why it routinely gets away with mass murder, it is periodically helpful to be reminded. Witness the highly disturbing pronouncements made on Friday by one Gadi Eisenkot, the general who runs Israel's Northern Command. Eisenkot's obvious goal was to intimidate and terrorize Lebanese civilians by threatening to punish them during any future conflict with **Hizbullah**. And as a bonus, the Western media coverage of his vile threats offered a free demonstration of how and why the Zionist project has always enjoyed blanket impunity for the war crimes it commits - and even acknowledges - on what, in historical terms, has been a regular basis.

"What happened in Dahiyeh [the suburbs south of Beirut where **Hizbullah** enjoys strong popular support] in 2006 will happen in every village from which Israel is fired on," Eisenkot said in an interview with the Yediot Ahronot daily, excerpts of which were carried by Western news agencies. "We will apply disproportionate force on [such villages] and cause great damage and destruction there. From our standpoint, these are not civilian villages, they are military bases."

"This is not a recommendation," the general added. "This is a plan. And it has been approved."

Where to begin?

First off, Eisenkot's recollection of the 2006 war is more than a little hazy, and the fact that he was appointed to the Northern Command job only after the fighting was over is no excuse. His warning is predicated on the wholly fatuous notion that villages in South Lebanon were somehow spared during that conflict - when anyone who saw that part of the country afterward knows full well that in relative terms, dozens of communities there were damaged every bit as badly as the Dahiyeh. Some of them, in fact, were devastated far more thoroughly than any but a few blocks in Haret Hreik, the Dahiyeh sector generally assumed to host the highest concentration of individuals and organizations connected to the resistance.

Israel 's recipe for crime without punishment

It is nothing short of preposterous to suggest, as Eisenkot did, that Israeli forces did not target villages from which they received fire in 2006, especially since they obviously had no qualms about ravaging ones from which they did not. As an aside, this raises the still-popular smear that Hizbullah systematically used civilians and their property as "cover" in the hope that rockets could be launched without fear of retaliation. While there were instances where the resistance fired from residential areas, the idea that its members would do so in hopes of staying an Israeli trigger finger (and not because of tactical necessities) would require that this sort of hesitance had been displayed with some degree of regularity in the past. Patently, it has not, and no one knows this better than Hizbullah fighters do.

During repeated visits to the South in 2006, I saw hundreds of circular scorches marking the sites from which Katyushas or other crude missiles had been launched toward Israel from hillsides and fields far from any homes; not a single one had been subjected to counter-battery fire. The odd ones still visible near built-up areas, on the other hand, were uniformly surrounded by scenes of utter ruin caused by air and artillery strikes.

Second, we have the question of disproportionality. Israeli officials doggedly denied the charge in 2006, even though they slaughtered more than a 1,000 civilians, including hundreds of women and children, and wrecked tens of thousands of homes in response to a relatively minor border incident. It will be difficult for them to make a similar argument in the future because Eisenkot has now openly stated that the next time, Israel "will apply disproportionate force" (as though that were not the case the last time). If nothing else, credit the son of a bitch for quasi-honesty on this score.

Third, there is the matter of premeditation. Even if one ignores all the facts and grants the benefit of the doubt to Israeli political leaders and military commanders in 2006 by allowing for the possibility that they did not deliberately target civilians - and therefore for the possibility that fouling farmers' fields with cluster bombs and trying to starve 4 million people do not constitute the war crime known as collective punishment - that will not be possible if and when they commence a new orgy of bloodletting and destruction. Why? Because the officer in charge of Northern Command has clearly articulated what has been Israeli policy for generations: Arabs are not entitled to the same protections as other civilians, and his desire to make them pay for the activities of combatants "is not a recommendation. It is a plan. And it has been approved."

Perhaps Eisenkot will be replaced before there is another round of hostilities; the plan, presumably, will remain firmly in place.

And how did the Western media report the general's criminal threats? The headlines of the three main wire services tell that story (although not the one that they should have dealt with): "Israeli general warns Hezbollah of harsh response," "Israel warns Hezbollah war would invite destruction" and "Israel general warns Hezbollah of harsh riposte." Nothing about the people Eisenkot was openly threatening: They, it seems, do not count.

This is why his threats stand a very good chance of being made good upon if and when Israel and Hizbullah come to blows again: The Israelis are not held to account for their atrocities, even when they go to the trouble of announcing them ahead of time.

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Load-Date: May 12, 2009

Hezbollah's museum of hate

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

August 21, 2007 Tuesday

National Edition

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Section: ISSUES & IDEAS; Pg. A11

Length: 966 words

Byline: Zvika Krieger, The New Republic

Dateline: BEIRUT, Lebanon

Body

BEIRUT, Lebanon -Last week, I found myself standing in the courtyard of Beirut's newest museum in front of the warped propeller of a Yasur CH-53 Sea Stallion helicopter. The propeller, a placard helpfully explained, had been "destroyed by the resistance" during last summer's war, a fate that had also befallen the half-dozen charred Israeli military vehicles surrounding it. A group of hijab-clad women nudged me out of the way so they could snap some photos with the propeller.

The downed helicopter is on display at the Spider's Web, Hezbollah's new war museum. The free exhibition commemorates the group's "divine victory" over Israel last summer by offering up a professional and slickly curated collection of war paraphernalia-- the work of over two dozen conceptual artists, graphic designers, engineers, musicians and lighting technicians. Since opening last month, it has become this summer's hottest tourist destination, attracting, mostly by word of mouth, over 200,000 visitors. "We don't even remember the war in the Christian area where I'm from, but I felt like it is something that should not be forgotten soon," explains Danya, a 26-year-old Christian financial consultant, as she made her way into the museum past a busload of schoolchildren. "Also, I wanted to see what all my friends were talking about."

Hezbollah has struggled to maintain its wartime popularity since it withdrew from the government last fall, occupied downtown Beirut and threw the country into political turmoil. It wants to present a fresh face. The Lebanese government has condemned Hezbollah, claiming it dragged the country into war. It has also refused to mark the war's anniversary this month. The Spider's Web, by contrast, won't let the Lebanese forget it.

Entering the museum, visitors are greeted by massive posters of the war's most reviled villains. A menacing picture of Condoleezza Rice announces that "This war is part of birth bangs [sic] of the new middle east [sic]," while a jester-like George W. Bush assures viewers that "[o]ur nation is wasting no time in helping the people of Lebanon." Former Israeli defence minister Amir Peretz, in Israel's crowning moment of the war, gazes pensively through capped binoculars. "Hassan Nasrallah won't forget the name Aameer Peretz [sic]," quotes the caption under his larger-than-life portrait.

The main hall is lined with a panorama of crisp, glossy photographs: scenes of the bombed-out al Manar building (Hezbollah's TV station); floor-to-ceiling portraits of Lebanese refugees bawling in front of their leveled homes; a couple taking their wedding pictures in the rubble of south Beirut. One of the installations contains photos of bloody Lebanese children and infants covered in bandages and IV tubing, all surrounding a teddy bear recovered from a

Hezbollah's museum of hate

bombed-out Lebanese house. Lest anyone fail to realize who could possibly be so bloodthirsty, another display -- which includes pictures of Israeli children excitedly signing missiles and a Hasidic man pumping his fist in front of an Israeli tank -- proclaims, "This is their culture, this is their belief."

The museum simultaneously tries to portray Hezbollah as helpless victims and brave warriors. The Spider's Web draws its name from a Nasrallah speech in which he boasted that Israel is "more feeble than a spider's web" -- a theme he reiterated in a speech to tens of thousands of screaming fans outside the museum last week. Throughout the exhibition, glass cases sunk into the ground display some of the Israeli spoils captured by Hezbollah: helmets, boots, machine guns, radios, oxygen tanks and even personal items such as iPods and tefillin (Jewish prayer straps) looted from dead Israeli soldiers. "Watch it burn," proclaims a poster of a capsized Israeli warship. "It will sink taking with it dozens of Zionist Israeli soldiers."

Perhaps fearing that the deaths of just dozens of Zionists won't make enough of an impression, the Spider's Web design team has made sure that pictures of bloodied and limbless Israeli soldiers make up the largest part of the exhibit. Some are digitally altered to be surrounded by hellish flames; others are rendered with anguished faces into art deco portraits; still others are engulfed in spider webs constructed with Koranic verses. "The invincible army!" gloats one of these montages. "It's Lebanon, you fools," reads another. A Warhol-esque portrait of Nasrallah presides contentedly over the display.

The museum's main event is a sound-and-light show around Hezbollah's prized artifact -- a Mer-kava tank bombed during the war -- displayed in a recreated bomb crater lined with mannequins of (what else?) dead Israeli soldiers. Every few minutes, the lights dim for an effects-laden video extravaganza that shows the explosion of the tank, up-close shots of Hezbollah militants launching Katyusha rockets and Hezbollah's missiles raining down on the Israeli city of Haifa. After the show, the lights come up on posters of crying Israeli soldiers.

Following this grand finale, visitors are quickly ushered out of the museum to a grassy, serene "Martyr's Oasis." This installation is filled with white pillars and a white staircase leading up to a white door frame, perhaps a subtle nod to the glorious fate in store for those who died fighting for Hezbollah last summer (and whose pictures line the streets surrounding the museum).

The museum's visitors, however, are relegated to worldly pleasures for the time being: The Hezbollah gift shop is located conveniently near the exit of the museum. For sale are fashionable Hezbollah hats, DVDs of Nasrallah's speeches, and Hezbollah's latest video game, Special Force 2: Tale of the Truthful Pledge -- available in Arabic, English, French and Farsi. - Zvika Krieger is a writer based in the Middle East.

Graphic

Black & White Photo: Marwan Naamani, AFP, Getty Images; Children climb on a destroyed Israeli armoured vehicle outside the Hezbollah museum in Beirut. ;

Load-Date: August 21, 2007

Hezbollah Threatens Attacks on Israeli Targets

The New York Times

February 15, 2008 Friday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 6

Length: 912 words

Byline: By ROBERT F. WORTH and NADA BAKRI

Dateline: BEIRUT, Lebanon

Body

Accusing Israel of killing one of his top commanders, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of *Hezbollah*, threatened Thursday to intensify his group's conflict with Israel and to retaliate against Israeli targets anywhere in the world.

Mr. Nasrallah, who has been in hiding since 2006 because of Israeli assassination threats, spoke to thousands of mourners via a televised image at an emotional funeral for the slain commander, Imad Mugniyah. He was killed in a car bombing on Tuesday night in Damascus, Syria.

"You crossed the borders," Mr. Nasrallah said. "Zionists, if you want an open war, let it be an open war anywhere."

Israel, which has denied involvement in the killing, ordered its military and embassies around the world to heighten security. No one has claimed responsibility for killing Mr. Mugniyah, a famously elusive militant suspected of planning bombings that killed hundreds of Americans in Lebanon during the 1980s.

Mr. Nasrallah's speech -- his most belligerent in many months -- coincided with another vast public gathering across town, in which *Hezbollah*'s Western-allied political adversaries commemorated the third anniversary of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri's killing in a huge car bombing.

Together, the two gatherings vividly illustrated the bitter political divisions that have crippled Lebanon's government over the past year and pulled it perilously close to open civil conflict.

In his speech, Mr. Nasrallah called the killing of Mr. Mugniyah a "big mistake" that would be avenged. "The blood of Imad Mugniyah will eliminate them," he said, referring to the Israelis.

If *Hezbollah* were to strike at Israel outside the borders of the two countries, it would be a sharp departure from the group's current policy. The last time it did so was in the mid-1990s, when Mr. Mugniyah was accused of planning bombings of Israeli targets in Argentina.

Such attacks are not seen as likely. *Hezbollah*'s patrons, Syria and Iran, "are pursuing strategies of their own, and *Hezbollah* is not really free to depart from those," said Paul Salem, director of the Carnegie Endowment Middle East Center in Beirut.

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Iran's close ties with Hezbollah -- and with Mr. Mugniyah -- were underscored Thursday when Iran's foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, spoke at the funeral, reading a letter from President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

"These are operations that will shorten their corrupt and filthy life," Mr. Mottaki said, quoting the letter, which was referring to the Israelis and the killing of Mr. Mugniyah. "Their smiles will not last long. The free people and the Lebanese people have lost one hero, but there are a million more Hajj Rudwans ready to join the ranks of the resistance." Mr. Mugniyah also went by the name Hajj Rudwan.

Outside the funeral hall, a cold, steady rain fell as thousands of mourners packed the streets, where uniformed Hezbollah militants and the group's youth brigade marched to martial music.

Inside, four black-clad Hezbollah guards stood beside Mr. Mugniyah's coffin, which was draped in a cloth of yellow, the militant Shiite group's color. A band played the Hezbollah anthem, then the Lebanese national anthem. After prayers and Mr. Mottaki's reading of the letter from Tehran, Mr. Nasrallah appeared on the screen, bringing the audience to its feet. Many wept.

At pivotal moments during the speech, audience members pumped fists in the air and chanted "Labayka, Nasrallah!" -- roughly, "Nasrallah, we are ready to fulfill your commands." Outside the hall, loud bursts of celebratory machine-gun fire echoed in the streets.

Among the crowd was Zahra Maladan, the editor of a women's magazine linked to Hezbollah.

"I tell my son, if you're not going to follow the steps of the Islamic resistance martyrs, then I don't want you," she said.

A few miles away, in Martyrs Square in downtown Beirut, another crowd of thousands also gathered to hear speeches -- these delivered by Hezbollah's political enemies in the so-called March 14 alliance, which came together after Mr. Hariri's assassination and controls the majority in Parliament.

The commemoration was intended to recall the huge demonstrations that took place in the weeks after Mr. Hariri's death, for which, as with many other political assassinations in Lebanon since, Syria was widely blamed. The protests ultimately succeeded in pressing Syria to withdraw its military from Lebanon after a three-decade presence.

On Thursday, the city virtually closed down for the long-planned demonstration, with shops and restaurants shuttered and most streets blocked. Supporters streamed into the vast central square, some with Lebanese flags painted on their faces, some holding posters of Mr. Hariri.

Speaking to the crowd from behind a glass partition, Walid Jumblatt, the Druse chieftain, who is also a leader of the March 14 group, accused Syria of killing Mr. Mugniyah.

Many had expected Thursday's commemoration to set off violent confrontations with Hezbollah, especially after Mr. Jumblatt and another leader of the March 14 alliance made some warlike comments last week. But both public gatherings appeared to have gone peacefully.

"The crisis could be solved through politics," said Kamil Haydar, 26, who was at the pro-government rally in Martyrs Square. "But if it is not, we are going to do what we have to even if it is war, and if it is what our leaders want us to do, then we are ready to go to war."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Hezbollah Threatens Attacks on Israeli Targets

PHOTO: The coffin of a **Hezbollah** commander, Imad Mugniyah, was carried through Beirut on Thursday.(PHOTOGRAPH BY ANWAR AMRO/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE -- GETTY IMAGES)

Load-Date: February 15, 2008

End of Document

To Fuel Quest, Hezbollah Harnesses Youth Piety

The New York Times

November 21, 2008 Friday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1; GENERATION FAITHFUL

Length: 2720 words

Byline: By ROBERT F. WORTH; Hwaida Saad contributed reporting from Beirut, Lebanon.

Body

RIYAQ, Lebanon -- On a Bekaa Valley playing field gilded by late-afternoon sun, hundreds of young men wearing Boy Scout-style uniforms and kerchiefs stand rigidly at attention as a military band plays, its marchers bearing aloft the distinctive yellow banner of Hezbollah, the militant Shiite movement.

They are adolescents -- 17 or 18 years old -- but they have the stern faces of adult men, lightly bearded, some of them with dark spots in the center of their foreheads from bowing down in prayer. Each of them wears a tiny picture of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Shiite cleric who led the Iranian revolution, on his chest.

"You are our leader!" the boys chant in unison, as a Hezbollah official walks to a podium and addresses them with a Koranic invocation. "We are your men!"

This is the vanguard of Hezbollah's youth movement, the Mahdi Scouts. Some of the graduates gathered at this ceremony will go on to join Hezbollah's guerrilla army, fighting Israel in the hills of southern Lebanon. Others will work in the party's bureaucracy. The rest will probably join the fast-growing and passionately loyal base of support that has made Hezbollah the most powerful political, military and social force in Lebanon.

At a time of religious revival across the Islamic world, intense piety among the young is nothing unusual. But in Lebanon, Hezbollah -- the name means the party of God -- has marshaled these ambient energies for a highly political project: educating a younger generation to continue its military struggle against Israel. Hezbollah's battlefield resilience has made it a model for other militant groups across the Middle East, including Hamas. And that success is due, in no small measure, to the party's extraordinarily comprehensive array of religion-themed youth and recruitment programs.

There is a network of schools-- some of them run by Hezbollah, others affiliated with or controlled by it -- largely shielded from outsiders. There is a nationwide network of clerics who provide weekly religious lessons to young people on a neighborhood basis. There is a group for students at unaffiliated schools and colleges that presents Hezbollah to a wider audience. The party organizes non-Scout-related summer camps and field trips, and during Muslim religious holidays it arranges events to encourage young people to express their devotion in public and to perform charity work.

"It's like a complete system, from primary school to university," said Talal Atrissi, a political analyst at Lebanese University who has been studying Hezbollah for decades. "The goal is to prepare a generation that has deep religious faith and is also close to Hezbollah."

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Much of this activity is fueled by a broader Shiite religious resurgence in Lebanon that began after the Iranian revolution in 1979. But **Hezbollah** has gone further than any other organization in mobilizing this force, both to build its own support base and to immunize Shiite youths from the temptations of Lebanon's diverse and mostly secular society.

Hezbollah's influence on Lebanese youth is very difficult to quantify because of the party's extreme secrecy and the general absence of reliable statistics in the country. It is clear that the Shiite religious schools, in which **Hezbollah** exercises a dominant influence, have grown over the past two decades from a mere handful into a major national network. Other, less visible avenues may be equally important, like the growing number of clerics associated with the movement.

Hezbollah and its allies have also adapted and expanded religious rituals involving children, starting at ever-earlier ages. **Women**, who play a more prominent role in **Hezbollah** than they do in most other radical Islamic groups, are especially important in creating what is often called "the jihad atmosphere" among children.

'This Is **Women**'s Jihad'

As night fell in the southern Lebanese town of Jibchit, a lone woman in a black gown strode purposefully into the spotlight on a makeshift stage. Before her sat hundreds of Mahdi Scout parents, who had come to watch one of the central events of their young daughters' lives.

"Welcome, welcome," their host said. "We appreciate your presence here tonight. Your daughters are now putting on this angelic costume for the first time."

Munira Halawi, a slim, 23-year-old **Hezbollah** member with the direct gaze and passionate manner of an evangelist, was the master of ceremonies at a ritual known as a Takleef Shara'ee, or the holy responsibility, in which some 300 **female** scouts ages 8 or 9 formally donned the hijab, or Islamic head scarf.

For the girls, the ritual was a moment of tremendous symbolic significance, marking the start of a deeper religious commitment and the approach of adulthood. These ceremonies, once rare, have become common in recent years.

It was a milestone as well for Ms. Halawi, who had been practicing with the girls for weeks: she was now a qa'ida, a young **female** leader who helps supervise the education of younger girls.

Born in 1985, Ms. Halawi is in some ways typical of the younger generation of **female Hezbollah** members. She grew up after **Hezbollah** and its allies had begun establishing what they called the hala islamiyya, or Islamic atmosphere, in Shiite Lebanon. She quickly became far more devout than her parents, who had grown up during an era when secular ideologies like pan-Arabism and Communism were popular in Lebanon. She married early and had the first of her two children before turning 17.

As Ms. Halawi finished her introduction, the girls began walking up the aisle toward the stage, dressed in silky white gowns with furry hoods. Bubbles descended from the wings. White smoke drifted up from a fog machine. A sound system played **Hezbollah** anthems -- deep male voices booming to a marching band's rhythm. The parents applauded wildly, the mothers ululating.

The two-and-a-half hour ceremony that followed -- in which the girls performed a play about the meaning of the hijab and a bearded **Hezbollah** cleric delivered a long political speech -- was a concentrated dose of **Hezbollah** ideology, seamlessly blending millenarian Shiite doctrine with furious diatribes against Israel.

Again and again, the girls were told that the hijab was an all-important emblem of Islamic virtue and that it was the secret power that allowed **Hezbollah** to liberate southern Lebanon. The struggle with Israel, they were told, is the same as the struggle of Shiite Islam's founding figures, Ali and Hussein, against unjust rulers in their time.

Through it all, Ms. Halawi was the presiding figure on the stage, introducing each section of the evening and reciting Koranic verses and her own poetic homages to the veil.

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"Our veil is a jewel-encrusted crown, dignified and lofty, that God made to make us blossom," she said at one point, gazing out into the darkness with a look of passionate intensity. "He opened the door of obedience and contentment for us."

A few days later, relaxing over tea at her sister's house, Ms. Halawi, still dressed in a black abaya, an Islamic gown, expanded on the theme of the ceremony. Religious education now begins much earlier than it did in her parents' time, she explained. Islamic schools, some run by Hezbollah, begin Koranic lessons at the age of 4, and it is common for girls to start fasting and wearing a hijab at 8. In all this, the mother's guidance is the key.

"This is women's jihad," Ms. Halawi said.

Camp, With a Moral Portion

From a distance, it resembles any other Boy Scout camp in the world. Two rows of canvas tents face each other on the banks of the Litani River, the powder-blue stream that runs across southern Lebanon not far from the Israeli border. A hand-built wooden jungle gym stands near the camp entrance, where pine trees sway in the breeze and dry, brown hills are visible in the distance.

Then, planted on sticks in the river, two huge posters bearing the faces of Ayatollah Khomeini and Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, come into view.

"Since 1985 we have managed to raise a good generation," said Muhammad al-Akhdar, 25, a scout leader, as he showed a visitor around the grounds. "We had 850 kids here this summer, ages 9 to 15."

This camp is called Tyr fil Say, one of the sites in south Lebanon where the Mahdi Scouts train. Much of what they do is similar to the activities of scouts the world over: learning to swim, to build campfires, to tie knots and to play sports. Mr. Akhdar described some of the games the young scouts play, including one where they divide into two teams -- Americans and the Resistance -- and try to throw one another into the river.

The Mahdi Scouts also get visits from Hezbollah fighters, wearing camouflage and toting AK-47s, who talk about fighting Israel.

Mr. Akhdar led a visitor around the tents, where boys had been spelling out Koranic phrases like "the promise" and "the owner of time" using stones. There was also a meticulously arranged grave, complete with lettering and decoration. In place of the headstone was a small photograph of Imad Mugniyah, the Hezbollah commander who was killed in February and who was widely viewed in the West as the mastermind of decades of bombings, kidnappings and hijackings.

The Mahdi Scouts were founded in 1985, shortly after Hezbollah itself. Officially, the group is like any of the other 29 different scout groups in Lebanon, many of which belong to political parties and serve as feeders for them.

But the Mahdi Scouts are different. They are much larger; with an estimated 60,000 children and Scout leaders, they are six times the size of any other Lebanese scout group. Even their marching movements are more militaristic than the others, according to Mustafa Muhammad Abdel Rasoul, the head of the Lebanese Scouts' Union. While the Mahdi Scouts fall under the umbrella of the Lebanese union, they have no direct affiliation with the international scouting body based in Switzerland. Because of the Scouts' reputation as a feeder for Hezbollah's armed force, the party has become extremely protective and rarely grants outsiders access to them.

Still, Hezbollah officials often casually mention the link between the Scouts and the guerrilla force.

"After age 16 the boys mostly go to resistance or military activities," said Bilal Naim, who served as Hezbollah's director for the Mahdi Scouts until last year.

Another difference from most scout groups lies in the program. Religious and moral instruction -- rather than physical activity -- occupy the vast bulk of the Mahdi Scouts' curriculum, and the scout leaders adhere strictly to lessons outlined in books for each age group.

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Those books, copies of which were provided to this reporter by a Hezbollah official, show an extraordinary focus on religious themes and a full-time preoccupation with Hezbollah's military struggle against Israel. The chapter titles, for the 12- to 14-year-old age group, include "Love and Hate in God," "Know Your Enemy," "Loyalty to the Leader" and "Facts About Jews." Jews are described as cruel, corrupt, cowardly and deceitful, and they are called the killers of prophets. The chapter on Jews states that "their Talmud says those outside the Jewish religion are animals."

In every chapter, the children are required to write down or recite Koranic verses that illustrate the theme in question. They are taught to venerate Ayatollah Khomeini -- Iran has been a longtime supporter of Hezbollah, providing it with money, weapons and training -- and the leaders of Hezbollah. They are told to hate Israel and to avoid people who are not devout. Questions at the ends of chapters encourage the children to "watch your heart" and "assess your heart" to check wrong impulses and encourage virtuous ones. One note to the instructors reminds them that young scouts are in a sensitive phase of development that should be considered "a launching toward commitment."

Secular Influences

In the West, the image of Hezbollah is often that of its bearded, young guerrilla fighters, dressed in military camouflage and clutching AK-47s. But Hezbollah's inner core of fighters and employees -- its full-time members -- is a far smaller group than its supporters. This broader category, covering the better part of Lebanon's roughly one million Shiites, includes reservists, who will fight if needed; doctors and engineers, who contribute their skills; and mere sympathizers.

In that sense, a more representative figure of the party's young following might be someone like Ali al-Sayyed. A quiet, clean-cut 24-year-old, Mr. Sayyed grew up in south Lebanon and now works as an accountant in Beirut. Hezbollah has offered him jobs, but he prefers to maintain his independence.

But his entire life has been lived in the shadow of Hezbollah. He attended a Mustafa high school, one of a national network of schools affiliated with the party, where he spent at least five class hours every week studying religion and listening to his teachers pray for Hezbollah's fighters and Ayatollah Khomeini. After school and during the summers, he was with the Mahdi Scouts. Later he became a Scout leader.

He is extremely devout -- he will not shake hands with women -- and mentions his willingness to fight and die for Hezbollah as though it were a matter of course.

"They made us, so of course I would sacrifice my life for them," he said as he sat gazing through the glass wall of a Beirut cafe on an autumn evening. "Before, the Shiites were in a wretched condition."

Yet Mr. Sayyed's generation is also in many ways more exposed to the temptations of Lebanon's secular and often decadent society than its predecessors.

That shift is apparent even in the Dahiya, or Suburb, the vast enclave on the southern edge of Beirut where most of Lebanon's Shiites live and where Hezbollah has its headquarters.

Once an austere ghetto where bearded men would chastise women who dared to appear in public without an Islamic head scarf, the Dahiya is now a far more open place. There are Internet cafes, music and DVD shops, Chinese restaurants and an amusement park called Fantasy World. There is no public consumption of alcohol, but the streets are thick with satellite dishes and open-air television sets. Lingerie shops display posters of scantily-clad models in their windows, and young women walk past in tight jeans, their hair uncovered.

The cafe where Mr. Sayyed was sitting, on the outskirts of Dahiya, was typical. Hezbollah banners were visible on the street outside, but on the inside young people sat at aluminum tables sipping cappuccinos, eating doughnuts and listening to their iPods.

"Hezbollah tries to keep the youth living in a religious atmosphere, but they can't force them," he said, gazing uneasily at the street outside.

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Mr. Sayyed mentioned Rami Olaik, a former **Hezbollah** firebrand who left the party and this year published a book about his indoctrination and gradual disenchantment. The book recounts Mr. Olaik's struggle to reconcile his sexual yearnings with the party's discipline, and his disgust at the way party members manipulated religious doctrine to justify their encounters with prostitutes. Some unmarried **Hezbollah** members engage in "temporary marriage" to have sexual relationships, an arrangement allowed by some Shiite religious authorities.

Hezbollah officials say they cannot coerce young people, because it would only create rebels like Mr. Olaik. Instead, they leave them largely free in Lebanon's pluralistic maze, trusting in the power of their religious training.

But there is a limit to **Hezbollah's** flexibility. All young members and supporters are encouraged to develop a hiss amni, or security sense, and are warned to beware of curious outsiders, who may be spies.

After Mr. Sayyed had been talking to a foreign journalist in the coffee shop for more than an hour, a hard-looking young man at a neighboring table began staring at him. Suddenly looking nervous, Mr. Sayyed agreed to continue the conversation on the cafe's second floor. But he seemed agitated, and later he repeatedly postponed another meeting planned for the next week.

Finally, he sent an apologetic e-mail message explaining that he would not be able to meet again.

"As you know, we live in a war with Israel and America," he wrote in stumbling English, "and they want to war us (destroy) in all the way."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: Younger Mahdi Scouts waiting to march at a graduation ceremony for older scouts. The group is estimated to have 60,000 children and Scout leaders.

A scout gave a three-finger salute, known around the world. The group, though, has no direct affiliation with the international scouting body.

A portrait of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini at the camp Tyr fil Say. This summer the camp had 850 children, ages 9 to 15, a Scout leader said.(PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRYAN DENTON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)(pg. A16) MAP: The camp Tyr fil Say is one of the sites where the Mahdi Scouts train. Area of Jibchit is detailed. (pg. A16)

Load-Date: April 14, 2011

Hezbollah solace in Olmert's pain

Canberra Times (Australia)

May 4, 2007 Friday

Final Edition

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Section: A; Pg. 12

Length: 544 words

Byline: Robert Fisk

Body

So it has come to this. All those bodies, all those photographs of dead children more than 1400 cadavers are to be commemorated with the possible resignation of an Israeli Prime Minister who knew, and who cared, many Israelis suspect, little about war.

Yes, Hezbollah provoked last year's folly by capturing two Israeli soldiers on the Lebanese-Israel border, but Israel's response so totally out of proportion to the sin produced another debacle for the Israeli army and, presumably now, for its Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

Looking back at this futile war, with its grotesque ambitions to "destroy" the Iranian-supported Hezbollah militia a conflict to which, of course, George W. Bush immediately signed up as part of his war against Iran it is incredible that Mr Olmert did not realise within days that his grandiose demands would founder.

Insisting that the two captured Israeli soldiers should be released and that the militarily powerless Lebanese Government should be held responsible for their capture was never going to produce either political or military results favourable to Israel.

One would have to add that Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's demand for her Prime Minister's resignation sits oddly with her support for this preposterous war.

A close reading of the interim report of Judge Eliahou Winograd's report on the war shows clearly that it was the Israeli army which ran the military, strategic and political campaign.

Again and again in Judge Winograd's report it is clear that both Mr Olmert and Ms Livni failed to challenge "in a competent way" the plans of the Israeli army.

For 34 days after July 12, the Israeli air force systematically destroyed the infrastructure of Lebanon, repeatedly claiming that it was trying avoid civilian casualties while the world's press watched its aircraft blasting men, women and children to pieces in Lebanon. Israelis, too, were savagely killed in this war by Hezbollah's Iranian-provided missiles. But this only proved that the Israeli army, famous in legend and song but not in reality, could not protect their own people. Hezbollah was told by its own leadership that if it would just withstand the air attacks, it could bite the Israeli land forces when they invaded.

Hezbollah solace in Olmert's pain

And bite it did. In the last 24 hours of the war, 30 Israeli soldiers were killed by Hezbollah fighters and their land offensive, so loudly trumpeted by Mr Olmert, came to an end.

During the conflict, a Hezbollah fired missile almost sank an Israeli corvette and struck Israel's top secret military air traffic control centre at Miron. The soldiers captured on the border were never returned pictures of them, still alive, are flaunted across the border at Israeli troops to this day and Hezbollah is as powerful as ever.

And so one of the United States' last "pro-American" cabinets in the Middle East is now threatened by the very militia which Mr Olmert claimed he could destroy. After the 34 days of carnage, Mr Bush claimed that Israel had won the war, a sure sign that Israel had lost. Days ago, Hezbollah's spokesman in Lebanon said that the disastrous end to Mr Olmert's political career its words was proof of its victory. It will be speaking again within the next 24 hours about Ms Livni's demand. And it may be right. The Independent

Load-Date: May 3, 2007

End of Document

Hezbollah: Crackdown declaration of war

Irish Examiner

May 9, 2008 Friday

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Irish Examiner.com
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Section: WORLD

Length: 615 words

Body

Nasrallah issued his ominous statement on the second day of anti-government protests, with gunfights in several parts of the country, roads blocked and Lebanon's only international airport effectively shut down.

"The decisions [of the government] are tantamount to a declaration of war and the start of a war... on behalf of the United States and Israel," Nasrallah said.

The Lebanese government on Tuesday launched a probe into a Hezbollah communication network and reassigned the head of airport security over his alleged links to Nasrallah's powerful Shi'ite militant group.

"Our answer to this decision is this," Nasrallah said. "We have the right to confront he who starts a war with us by defending our rights and our weapons."

As the political crisis threatened to spiral out of control, at least eight people were reported wounded in clashes pitting mainly Sunni Muslim supporters of the Western-backed government against Shi'ite followers of the Hezbollah-led opposition.

The growing tension brought renewed expressions of support for Prime Minister Fuad Siniora from key Arab powers Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which warned Hezbollah against steps that might worsen the situation.

Armed men were seen in several mixed Sunni and Shi'ite neighbourhoods of Beirut, where troops and riot police spread and many schools and businesses were shut for a second day.

Protesters burned tyres and lit fires along the airport road, which remained blocked by large mounds of earth dumped by Hezbollah supporters when a strike over wages on Wednesday degenerated into sectarian violence.

An airport official said all flights had been cancelled and it was unclear whether traffic would resume later.

Government loyalists burned tyres and set up road blocks along various points of the main highway in the east of the country leading to Syria, forcing travellers to find alternate routes.

Five people were wounded, four of them women, a security official in the eastern town of Shtura said. Three people were wounded in the northern city of Tripoli in a shoot-out between rival factions.

Hezbollah: Crackdown declaration of war

An official with Hezbollah ally Amal warned the situation could get out of hand.

"It is clear the majority is seeking an escalation and wants to push the country toward a civil war," the official said. "What we are trying to do is calm down the situation."

As-Safir newspaper, close to the opposition, said the situation was a "stark reminder for the Lebanese of the dark days of the civil war. They thought such incidents were a thing of the past and now new demarcation lines, with confessional tones, are emerging".

The clashes erupted on Wednesday during a general strike called by the main labour union over price increases and wage demands.

The political crisis, the worst since the civil war, has left the country without a president since November, when pro-Syrian Emile Lahoud stepped down at the end of his mandate with no elected successor.

Egypt's foreign minister repeated support for Siniora and implicitly blamed the opposition of "pushing for confrontation."

"The party pushing for confrontation and which persists along this path with disregard for civil peace will surely bear the historic responsibility for its actions," he reportedly told Lebanese majority leader Saad Hariri.

Saudi Arabia also warned the opposition against an escalation.

"The kingdom urges the groups behind the escalation to reconsider their position, and to realise that leading Lebanon towards turmoil will not bring victory to any party except extremist external forces," the state news agency SPA reported.

The Syrian- and Iranian-backed opposition has vowed to keep up the protests until the government cancels its crackdown on Hezbollah.

Load-Date: May 9, 2008

PA wants 'festive' funeral for coastal road killer. Israel urged not to give Hizbullah the body of 'symbol of Palestinian women's struggle'

The Jerusalem Post

July 11, 2008 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 350 words

Byline: KHALED ABU TOAMEH

Body

The Palestinian Authority has asked Israel to hand over the remains of Dalal Mughrabi, the Palestinian woman who led the March 11, 1978 coastal road attack in which 36 people were murdered and 71 wounded.

Israel is planning to deliver Mughrabi's remains, together with those of scores of Palestinians and Lebanese, to **Hizbullah** in the context of the new prisoner exchange between the two sides.

The PA said in its request that it wanted to "honor" Mughrabi by holding a big funeral for her in Ramallah.

Azzam al-Ahmed, a senior Fatah official closely associated with PA President Mahmoud Abbas, described Mughrabi, whose family originally came from Jaffa, as "the first Palestinian woman to carry out one of the most courageous operations in Israel." He claimed that in her will, Mughrabi, who belonged to Fatah, had asked her family to see to it that she was buried in "Palestine."

"We want to turn Dalal's funeral into a national wedding, a major celebration," the Fatah official said. "The operation she carried out off the shores of her hometown of Jaffa was heroic and exemplary. She will always be remembered as a symbol for the Palestinian **women**'s struggle."

Even if Israel refuses to deliver her remains to the PA in Ramallah, Fatah officials said they were planning to hold big celebrations throughout the West Bank to coincide with her funeral in Lebanon.

Ahmed also praised Lebanese prisoner Samir Kuntar for carrying out another terror attack in Israel one year after the 1978 carnage. He described Kuntar as a "stubborn and firm fighter in the ranks of the Lebanese resistance who led a very courageous operation."

Since its inception, the PA has honored Mughrabi by naming many schools and various institutions after her.

An article published in Thursday's edition of the PA-funded Al-Hayat Al-Jadedda newspaper hailed Mughrabi as a "living legend and a wonderful example for all **women**."

The article criticized **Hizbullah** for agreeing to bury Mughrabi in Lebanon and not in the Palestinian territories. It said that someone like her deserved to be buried next to Yasser Arafat's grave in Ramallah.

PA wants 'festive' funeral for coastal road killer. Israel urged not to give Hizbullah the body of 'symbol of Palestinian women's struggle'

Graphic

Photo: Dalal Mughrabi

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Top Australian Muslim backs Hezbollah, calls Israel 'terrorists'

Times Colonist (Victoria, British Columbia)

June 23, 2007 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A18

Length: 315 words

Byline: Reuters

Dateline: SYDNEY

Body

SYDNEY(Reuters) -- Australia's top Shia Muslim cleric has said he supports the **Hezbollah** terrorist group and attacked the Australian government for "defending terrorism" because of its support for Israel.

Kamal Mousselmani, head of the Supreme Islamic Shia Council of Australia, told the Weekend Australian newspaper in an interview published today that Australia was encouraging people to "kill our people daily."

"If Australia supports Israel, they are defending terrorism. Because we believe terrorists come from Israel -- not from our people. I support **Hezbollah**," Mousselmani said in the interview, which the paper said was conducted in Arabic.

The comments come after a series of controversies involving Australian Muslim clerics.

Earlier this month, Sheikh Taj El-Din Hilaly stepped down as mufti of Australia after comments seen as justifying rape and his anti-U.S. stance were blamed for inflaming anti-Muslim sentiment.

Hilaly had likened unveiled **women** to uncovered meat during a Ramadan sermon last November. He subsequently told Egyptian television that Muslims had a greater right to be in Australia than white Australians of convict heritage.

Australia has about 280,000 Muslims, of whom about 30,000 are Shia.

Mousselmani said Australia's Shia community avidly supported **Hezbollah** and hated Israel, but insisted neither he nor **Hezbollah** condoned suicide bombings.

"We are against the suicide bombings going on around the world. And **Hezbollah** is against it. Our opinion is that **Hezbollah** is not a terrorist group."

The newspaper said the comments came as Australian security authorities were looking into transactions between the Shia community and groups overseas.

Mousselmani said the community had sent money to victims of last year's fighting between **Hezbollah** and Israel, but none of the money had gone to militants.

Top Australian Muslim backs Hezbollah, calls Israel 'terrorists'

He said the Shia community would oppose any attack on Australia.

Load-Date: June 23, 2007

End of Document

Hezbollah's foundation is youth; Complex network builds deep loyalty

The International Herald Tribune

November 21, 2008 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 2066 words

Byline: Robert F. Worth - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: RIYAQ, Lebanon

Body

On a Bekaa Valley playing field gilded by late-afternoon sun, hundreds of young men wearing Boy Scout-like uniforms and kerchiefs stand rigidly at attention as a military band plays, its marchers bearing aloft the distinctive yellow banner of Hezbollah, the militant Shiite movement.

They are adolescents - 17- or 18-year-old - but they have the stern faces of adult men, lightly bearded, some of them with dark spots in the center of their foreheads from bowing down in prayer. Each wears a tiny picture of Ayatollah Khomeini, the Shiite cleric who led the Iranian revolution in 1979, on his chest.

"You are our leader!" the boys chant in unison, as a Hezbollah official walks to a podium and addresses them with a Koranic invocation. "We are your men!"

This is the vanguard of Hezbollah's youth movement, the Mahdi Scouts. Some of the graduates gathered at this ceremony will go on to join Hezbollah's guerrilla army, fighting Israel in the hills of southern Lebanon. Others will work in the party's bureaucracy. The rest will likely join the fast-growing and passionately loyal base of support that has made Hezbollah the most powerful political, military and social force in Lebanon.

At a time of religious revival across the Islamic world, intense piety among the young is nothing unusual. But in Lebanon, Hezbollah - which means the party of God - has marshaled these ambient energies for a highly political project: educating a younger generation to continue its military struggle against Israel. Hezbollah's battlefield resilience has made it a model for other militant groups across the Middle East, including Hamas. And that success is due, in no small measure, to the party's extraordinarily comprehensive array of religion-themed youth and recruitment programs.

There is a network of schools largely shielded from outsiders. There is a nationwide network of clerics who provide weekly religious lessons to young people on a neighborhood basis. There is a group for students at unaffiliated schools and colleges that presents Hezbollah to a wider audience. The party organizes non-Scout-related summer camps and field trips, and during Muslim religious holidays it arranges events to encourage young people to express their devotion in public and to perform charity work.

"It's like a complete system, from primary school to university," said Talal Atrissi, a political analyst at Lebanese University who has been studying Hezbollah for decades. "The goal is to prepare a generation that has deep religious faith and is also close to Hezbollah."

Hezbollah's foundation is youth Complex network builds deep loyalty

Much of this activity is fueled by a broader Shiite religious resurgence in Lebanon that began after the Iranian revolution in 1979. But Hezbollah has gone further than any other organization in using this to build its own support base and to immunize Shiite youth from the temptations of Lebanon's diverse and mostly secular society.

Hezbollah's influence on Lebanese youth is very difficult to quantify because of the party's extreme secrecy and the general absence of reliable statistics.

It is clear that the Shiite religious schools, in which Hezbollah exercises a dominant influence, have grown over the past two decades from a mere handful into a major national network.

Hezbollah and its allies have also adapted and expanded religious rituals involving children, starting at ever-earlier ages. Women, who play a more prominent role in Hezbollah than they do in most other radical Islamic groups, are especially important in creating what is often called "the jihad atmosphere" among children.

As night fell in the southern Lebanese town of Jibchit, a lone woman in a black gown strode purposefully into the spotlight on a makeshift stage. Before her sat hundreds of Mahdi Scout parents, who had come to a central event of their young daughters' lives.

"Welcome, welcome," their host said. "We appreciate your presence here tonight. Your daughters are now putting on this angelic costume for the first time."

Munira Halawi, a slim 23-year-old Hezbollah member with the direct gaze and passionate manner of an evangelist, was the master of ceremonies at a ritual known as a Takleef Shara'ee, or the holy responsibility, in which some 300 female Scouts aged 8 or 9 formally donned the hijab, or Islamic head scarf.

For the girls, the ritual was a moment of tremendous symbolic significance, marking the start of a deeper religious commitment and the approach of adulthood. These ceremonies, once rare, have become common in recent years.

It was a milestone as well for Halawi, who had been practicing with the girls for weeks: she was now a Qa'ida, a young female leader who helps supervise the education of younger girls.

Halawi is in some ways typical of the younger generation of female Hezbollah members. She grew up after Hezbollah and its allies had begun establishing what they called the hala islamiyya, or Islamic atmosphere, in Shiite Lebanon. She quickly became far more devout than her parents, who had grown up during an era when secular ideologies like pan-Arabism and Communism were popular. She married early and had the first of her two children before turning 17.

As Halawi finished her introduction, the girls began walking up the aisle toward the stage, dressed in silky white gowns with furry hoods. Bubbles descended from the wings. White smoke drifted up from a fog machine. A sound system played Hezbollah anthems sung by deep male voices. The parents applauded wildly.

The two-and-a-half hour ceremony that followed - in which the girls performed a play about the meaning of the hijab and a bearded Hezbollah cleric delivered a long political speech - was a concentrated dose of Hezbollah ideology, seamlessly blending millenarian Shiite doctrine with furious diatribes against Israel. Through it all, Halawi was the presiding figure on the stage, introducing each section of the evening and reciting Koranic verses and her own poetic homages to the veil.

A few days later, relaxing over tea at her sister's house, Halawi expanded on the theme of the ceremony, still dressed in a black abaya. Religious education now begins much earlier than in her parents' time, she explained. Islamic schools, some run by Hezbollah, begin Koranic lessons at the age of 4, and it is common for girls to start fasting and donning the veil at 8. In all this, the mother's guidance is the key. "This is women's jihad," Halawi said.

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But planted on sticks in the river, come two huge posters bearing the faces of Ayatollah Khomeini and Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Hezbollah.

Hezbollah's foundation is youth Complex network builds deep loyalty

"Since 1985 we have managed to raise a good generation," said Muhammad al-Akhdar, 25, a Scout leader. "We had 850 kids here this summer, ages 9 to 15."

This camp is called Tyr fil Say, one of the sites in south Lebanon where the Mahdi Scouts train. Much of what they do is similar to Scouts' activities the world over. Akhdar described some of the games the young Scouts play, including one where they divide into two teams - Americans and the Resistance - and try to throw one another into the river. The Mahdi Scouts also get visits from Hezbollah fighters, wearing camouflage and toting AK-47s, who talk about fighting Israel.

The Mahdi Scouts were founded in 1985, shortly after Hezbollah itself. Officially, the group is like any of the other 29 different scouts groups in Lebanon, many of which belong to political parties and serve as feeders for them.

But the Mahdi Scouts are much larger; with an estimated 60,000 children and scout leaders - six times the size of any other Lebanese scout group. Even their marching movements are more militaristic than the others, according to Mustafa Muhammad Abdel Rasoul, head of the Lebanese Scouts' Union.

Because of the Scouts' reputation as a feeder for Hezbollah's armed militia, the party has become extremely guarded about the Scouts and rarely grants outsiders access to them.

"After age 16 the boys mostly go to resistance or military activities," said Bilal Naim, who served as Hezbollah's director for the Mahdi Scouts until last year.

Another difference from most scout groups lies in the program. Religious and moral instruction - rather than physical activity - occupy the vast bulk of the Mahdi Scouts' curriculum, and the scout leaders adhere strictly to lessons outlined in books for each age group.

Those books, copies of which were provided to this reporter by a Hezbollah official, show an extraordinary focus on religious themes and a full-time preoccupation with Hezbollah's military struggle against Israel.

The chapter titles, for the 12- to 14-year-old age group, include "Love and Hate in God," "Know Your Enemy," "Loyalty to the Leader" and "Facts about Jews." Jews are described as cruel, corrupt, cowardly and deceitful, and they are called the killers of prophets.

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In that sense, a more representative figure of the party's young following might be someone like Ali al-Sayyed. A quiet, clean-cut 24-year-old, Sayyed grew up in south Lebanon and now works as an accountant in Beirut. Hezbollah has offered him jobs, but he prefers to maintain his independence.

But his entire life has been lived in the shadow of Hezbollah. After school and during the summers, he was with the Mahdi Scouts. Later he became a scout leader.

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Yet Sayyed's generation is also in many ways more exposed to the temptations of Lebanon's secular society than its predecessors.

That shift is apparent even in Dahiya, the vast, crowded enclave on the southern edge of Beirut where most of Lebanon's Shiites live, and where Hezbollah has its headquarters.

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The café where Sayyed was sitting was typical. Hezbollah banners were visible on the street outside, but on the inside young people sit at aluminum tables sipping cappuccinos, eating donuts and listening to their iPods.

"Hezbollah tries to keep the youth living in a religious atmosphere, but they can't force them," he said, gazing uneasily at the street outside.

Sayyed mentioned Rami Ollaik, a former Hezbollah firebrand who left the party and earlier this year published a book about his indoctrination and gradual disenchantment. The book recounts the author's struggle to reconcile sexual yearnings with party discipline, and his disgust at the way party members manipulated religious doctrine to justify their encounters with prostitutes.

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But there is a limit to Hezbollah's flexibility. All young members and supporters are encouraged to develop a security sense, and are warned to beware of curious outsiders who may be spies.

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Length: 2066 words

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Dateline: RIYAQ, Lebanon

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It was a milestone as well for Halawi, who had been practicing with the girls for weeks: she was now a Qa'ida, a young female leader who helps supervise the education of younger girls.

Halawi is in some ways typical of the younger generation of female Hezbollah members. She grew up after Hezbollah and its allies had begun establishing what they called the hala islamiyya, or Islamic atmosphere, in Shiite Lebanon. She quickly became far more devout than her parents, who had grown up during an era when secular ideologies like pan-Arabism and Communism were popular. She married early and had the first of her two children before turning 17.

As Halawi finished her introduction, the girls began walking up the aisle toward the stage, dressed in silky white gowns with furry hoods. Bubbles descended from the wings. White smoke drifted up from a fog machine. A sound system played Hezbollah anthems sung by deep male voices. The parents applauded wildly.

The two-and-a-half hour ceremony that followed - in which the girls performed a play about the meaning of the hijab and a bearded Hezbollah cleric delivered a long political speech - was a concentrated dose of Hezbollah ideology, seamlessly blending millenarian Shiite doctrine with furious diatribes against Israel. Through it all, Halawi was the presiding figure on the stage, introducing each section of the evening and reciting Koranic verses and her own poetic homages to the veil.

A few days later, relaxing over tea at her sister's house, Halawi expanded on the theme of the ceremony, still dressed in a black abaya. Religious education now begins much earlier than in her parents' time, she explained. Islamic schools, some run by Hezbollah, begin Koranic lessons at the age of 4, and it is common for girls to start fasting and donning the veil at 8. In all this, the mother's guidance is the key. "This is women's jihad," Halawi said.

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But planted on sticks in the river, come two huge posters bearing the faces of Ayatollah Khomeini and Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Hezbollah.

Hezbollah's foundation is youth Complex network builds deep loyalty

"Since 1985 we have managed to raise a good generation," said Muhammad al-Akhdar, 25, a Scout leader. "We had 850 kids here this summer, ages 9 to 15."

This camp is called Tyr fil Say, one of the sites in south Lebanon where the Mahdi Scouts train. Much of what they do is similar to Scouts' activities the world over. Akhdar described some of the games the young Scouts play, including one where they divide into two teams - Americans and the Resistance - and try to throw one another into the river. The Mahdi Scouts also get visits from Hezbollah fighters, wearing camouflage and toting AK-47s, who talk about fighting Israel.

The Mahdi Scouts were founded in 1985, shortly after Hezbollah itself. Officially, the group is like any of the other 29 different scouts groups in Lebanon, many of which belong to political parties and serve as feeders for them.

But the Mahdi Scouts are much larger; with an estimated 60,000 children and scout leaders - six times the size of any other Lebanese scout group. Even their marching movements are more militaristic than the others, according to Mustafa Muhammad Abdel Rasoul, head of the Lebanese Scouts' Union.

Because of the Scouts' reputation as a feeder for Hezbollah's armed militia, the party has become extremely guarded about the Scouts and rarely grants outsiders access to them.

"After age 16 the boys mostly go to resistance or military activities," said Bilal Naim, who served as Hezbollah's director for the Mahdi Scouts until last year.

Another difference from most scout groups lies in the program. Religious and moral instruction - rather than physical activity - occupy the vast bulk of the Mahdi Scouts' curriculum, and the scout leaders adhere strictly to lessons outlined in books for each age group.

Those books, copies of which were provided to this reporter by a Hezbollah official, show an extraordinary focus on religious themes and a full-time preoccupation with Hezbollah's military struggle against Israel.

The chapter titles, for the 12- to 14-year-old age group, include "Love and Hate in God," "Know Your Enemy," "Loyalty to the Leader" and "Facts about Jews." Jews are described as cruel, corrupt, cowardly and deceitful, and they are called the killers of prophets.

In the West, the image of Hezbollah is often that of its bearded, young guerrilla fighters. But Hezbollah's inner core of fighters and employees - its full-time members - is a far smaller group than its supporters. This broader category, covering the better part of Lebanon's roughly one million Shiites, includes reservists, who will fight if needed; doctors and engineers, who contribute their skills; and mere sympathizers.

In that sense, a more representative figure of the party's young following might be someone like Ali al-Sayyed. A quiet, clean-cut 24-year-old, Sayyed grew up in south Lebanon and now works as an accountant in Beirut. Hezbollah has offered him jobs, but he prefers to maintain his independence.

But his entire life has been lived in the shadow of Hezbollah. After school and during the summers, he was with the Mahdi Scouts. Later he became a scout leader.

He will not shake hands with women - and mentions his willingness to fight and die for Hezbollah as though it were a matter of course.

Yet Sayyed's generation is also in many ways more exposed to the temptations of Lebanon's secular society than its predecessors.

That shift is apparent even in Dahiya, the vast, crowded enclave on the southern edge of Beirut where most of Lebanon's Shiites live, and where Hezbollah has its headquarters.

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restaurants and an amusement park called Fantasy World. There is no public consumption of alcohol, but the streets are thick with satellite dishes and open-air television sets. Lingerie shops display posters of scantily clad models, and young women walk past in tight jeans, their hair uncovered.

The café where Sayyed was sitting was typical. Hezbollah banners were visible on the street outside, but on the inside young people sit at aluminum tables sipping cappuccinos, eating donuts and listening to their iPods.

"Hezbollah tries to keep the youth living in a religious atmosphere, but they can't force them," he said, gazing uneasily at the street outside.

Sayyed mentioned Rami Ollaik, a former Hezbollah firebrand who left the party and earlier this year published a book about his indoctrination and gradual disenchantment. The book recounts the author's struggle to reconcile sexual yearnings with party discipline, and his disgust at the way party members manipulated religious doctrine to justify their encounters with prostitutes.

Hezbollah officials say they cannot coerce young people, because it would only create rebels. Instead, they leave them largely free in Lebanon's pluralistic maze, trusting in the power of their religious training.

But there is a limit to Hezbollah's flexibility. All young members and supporters are encouraged to develop a security sense, and are warned to beware of curious outsiders who may be spies.

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Load-Date: November 23, 2008

Hezbollah's foundation is youth; Complex network builds deep loyalty

The International Herald Tribune

November 21, 2008 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 2066 words

Byline: Robert F. Worth - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: RIYAQ, Lebanon

Body

On a Bekaa Valley playing field gilded by late-afternoon sun, hundreds of young men wearing Boy Scout-like uniforms and kerchiefs stand rigidly at attention as a military band plays, its marchers bearing aloft the distinctive yellow banner of Hezbollah, the militant Shiite movement.

They are adolescents - 17- or 18-year-old - but they have the stern faces of adult men, lightly bearded, some of them with dark spots in the center of their foreheads from bowing down in prayer. Each wears a tiny picture of Ayatollah Khomeini, the Shiite cleric who led the Iranian revolution in 1979, on his chest.

"You are our leader!" the boys chant in unison, as a Hezbollah official walks to a podium and addresses them with a Koranic invocation. "We are your men!"

This is the vanguard of Hezbollah's youth movement, the Mahdi Scouts. Some of the graduates gathered at this ceremony will go on to join Hezbollah's guerrilla army, fighting Israel in the hills of southern Lebanon. Others will work in the party's bureaucracy. The rest will likely join the fast-growing and passionately loyal base of support that has made Hezbollah the most powerful political, military and social force in Lebanon.

At a time of religious revival across the Islamic world, intense piety among the young is nothing unusual. But in Lebanon, Hezbollah - which means the party of God - has marshaled these ambient energies for a highly political project: educating a younger generation to continue its military struggle against Israel. Hezbollah's battlefield resilience has made it a model for other militant groups across the Middle East, including Hamas. And that success is due, in no small measure, to the party's extraordinarily comprehensive array of religion-themed youth and recruitment programs.

There is a network of schools largely shielded from outsiders. There is a nationwide network of clerics who provide weekly religious lessons to young people on a neighborhood basis. There is a group for students at unaffiliated schools and colleges that presents Hezbollah to a wider audience. The party organizes non-Scout-related summer camps and field trips, and during Muslim religious holidays it arranges events to encourage young people to express their devotion in public and to perform charity work.

"It's like a complete system, from primary school to university," said Talal Atrissi, a political analyst at Lebanese University who has been studying Hezbollah for decades. "The goal is to prepare a generation that has deep religious faith and is also close to Hezbollah."

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Much of this activity is fueled by a broader Shiite religious resurgence in Lebanon that began after the Iranian revolution in 1979. But Hezbollah has gone further than any other organization in using this to build its own support base and to immunize Shiite youth from the temptations of Lebanon's diverse and mostly secular society.

Hezbollah's influence on Lebanese youth is very difficult to quantify because of the party's extreme secrecy and the general absence of reliable statistics.

It is clear that the Shiite religious schools, in which Hezbollah exercises a dominant influence, have grown over the past two decades from a mere handful into a major national network.

Hezbollah and its allies have also adapted and expanded religious rituals involving children, starting at ever-earlier ages. Women, who play a more prominent role in Hezbollah than they do in most other radical Islamic groups, are especially important in creating what is often called "the jihad atmosphere" among children.

As night fell in the southern Lebanese town of Jibchit, a lone woman in a black gown strode purposefully into the spotlight on a makeshift stage. Before her sat hundreds of Mahdi Scout parents, who had come to a central event of their young daughters' lives.

"Welcome, welcome," their host said. "We appreciate your presence here tonight. Your daughters are now putting on this angelic costume for the first time."

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Load-Date: November 25, 2008

Future of Hezbollah lies in scouting programs; Complex network builds deep loyalty

The International Herald Tribune

November 22, 2008 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1358 words

Byline: Robert F. Worth - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: RIYQA, Lebanon

Body

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"It's like a complete system, from primary school to university," said Talal Atrissi, a political analyst at Lebanese University who has been studying Hezbollah for decades. "The goal is to prepare a generation that has deep religious faith and is also close to Hezbollah."

Much of this activity is fueled by a broader Shiite religious resurgence in Lebanon that began after the Iranian revolution in 1979.

But Hezbollah has gone further than any other organization in mobilizing this force, both to build its own support base and to immunize Shiite youth from the temptations of Lebanon's diverse and mostly secular society.

Hezbollah's influence on Lebanese youth is difficult to quantify because of the party's extreme secrecy and the general absence of reliable statistics in the country. It is clear that the Shiite religious schools, in which Hezbollah exercises a dominant influence, have grown over the past two decades from a mere handful into a major national network. Other, less visible avenues may be equally important, like the growing number of clerics associated with the movement.

Hezbollah and its allies have also adapted and expanded religious rituals involving children, starting at ever-earlier ages. Women, who play a more prominent role in Hezbollah than they do in most other radical Islamic groups, are especially important in creating what is often called "the jihad atmosphere" among children.

From a distance, it resembles any other Boy Scout camp in the world. Two rows of canvas tents face each other on the banks of the Litani River, the powder-blue stream that runs across southern Lebanon not far from the Israeli border. A hand-built wooden jungle gym stands near the camp entrance, where pine trees sway in the breeze and dry, brown hills are visible in the distance.

Then, planted on sticks in the river, two huge posters bearing the faces of Ayatollah Khomeini and Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, come into view.

"Since 1985, we have managed to raise a good generation," said Muhammad al-Akhdar, 25, a scout leader, as he showed a visitor around the grounds. "We had 850 kids here this summer, ages 9 to 15."

This camp, called Tyr fil Say, is one of the sites in south Lebanon where the Mahdi Scouts train. Much of what they do is similar to the activities of scouts the world over: swimming, building campfires, tying knots and playing sports. Akhdar described some of the games the young scouts play, including one where they divide into two teams - Americans and the Resistance - and try to throw one another into the river.

The Mahdi Scouts also get visits from Hezbollah fighters who talk about fighting Israel.

Akhdar led a visitor around the tents, where boys had been spelling out Koranic phrases like "the promise" and "the owner of time" using stones. There was also a meticulously arranged grave, complete with lettering and decoration. In place of the headstone was a small photograph of Imad Mugniyah, the Hezbollah commander who was killed in February and who was widely viewed in the West as the mastermind of decades of bombings, kidnappings and hijackings.

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But the Mahdi Scouts are different. They are much larger - with an estimated 60,000 children and leaders, they are six times the size of any other Lebanese scout group. Even their marching movements are more militaristic than the others, according to Mustafa Muhammad Abdel Rasoul, head of the Lebanese Scouts' Union. While the Mahdi Scouts fall under the umbrella of the Lebanese union, they have no direct affiliation with the international scouting body based in Switzerland.

Because of the Mahdi Scouts' reputation as a feeder for Hezbollah's armed force, the party has become extremely protective and rarely grants outsiders access to them.

Future of Hezbollah lies in scouting programs Complex network builds deep loyalty

Still, Hezbollah officials often casually mention the link between the Scouts and the guerrilla force.

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Another difference from most scout groups lies in the program.

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In every chapter, the children are required to write down or recite Koranic verses that illustrate the theme in question. They are taught to venerate the Ayatollah Khomeini - Iran has been a longtime supporter of Hezbollah, providing it with money, weapons and training - and the leaders of Hezbollah. They are told to hate Israel and to avoid people who are not devout Muslims. Questions at the ends of chapters encourage the children to "watch your heart" and "assess your heart" to check wrong impulses and encourage virtuous ones. One note to the instructors reminds them that young scouts are in a sensitive phase of development that should be considered "a launching toward commitment."

Load-Date: December 2, 2008

End of Document

Israel Set To Release More Palestinian Prisoners to Hezbollah

New York Sun (Archive)

July 23, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: FOREIGN; Pg. 5

Length: 233 words

Byline: BENNY AVNI -, Staff Reporter of the Sun

Dateline: UNITED NATIONS

Body

Even after handing over a high-value prisoner to Hezbollah in return for the bodies of two soldiers, Israel could soon release hundreds of Palestinian Arabs held in its jails, according to a letter from Secretary-General Ban.

In last night's letter to the U.N. Security Council, Mr. Ban sums up recent letters from the Israeli government's point man on prisoner exchanges, Ofer Dekel, and the secretary-general of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, in which both sides acknowledge that further Israel will make further concessions.

Mr. Ban quotes Mr. Dekel as saying Israel has agreed to release Palestinian Arabs subject to its "exclusive discretion concerning the quantity and characterization of the prisoners" and based on "humanitarian" consideration. Mr. Nasrallah demands in his letter that the release correspond to the "high number of innocent victims" in the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, and that as a "minimum requirement" Israel should release all minors, women, and elderly, which according to a nongovernmental organization he cites "go into hundreds" of prisoners.

Mr. Ban commends Israel's willingness to help resolve humanitarian issues stemming from the 2006 war. The government of Prime Minister Olmert has been criticized inside Israel and abroad for raising Mr. Nasrallah's statue by releasing a convicted Lebanese murderer, Samir Kuntar, in return for the two soldiers' bodies.

Load-Date: July 23, 2008

Eli Hurvitz: Our poor education is more dangerous than Hizbullah and Hamas; Teva chairman: The Jewish state suffers from ignorance and thuggery.

Globes [online] - Israel's Business Arena

December 10, 2007 Monday

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Length: 291 words

Byline: Ran Rimon

Body

Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. (Nasdaq: TEVA; TASE: TEVA) chairman Eli Hurvitz voiced scathing criticism of Israel's educational system during his address to the "Globes" 2007 Israel Business Conference yesterday. "In recent years, every time there was a budgetary shortfall, there was a mutual agreement, we won't pay and you can cut the number of tuition hours. It wasn't long before standards started falling as well. Today, the Jewish state suffers from a combination of ignorance and thuggery. We have bad education, which is becoming more dangerous than Hamas and Hizbullah," he said.

"The poorest groups in Israel get the worst education and they do not participate in the building of the Israeli economy," Hurvitz continued. "They don't work, and as long as this remains the case, we have no chance of reaching high rates of growth. There is only one way this can be achieved, and that is by a high percentage of employment in the economy. The figures are exceptionally dire amongst haredim (ultra orthodox), and Arab women."

Turning his attention to current macro economic policy Hurvitz remarked, "Once, from the founding of the state to 1973, Israel had GDP per capita growth of 5.7% a year. There was a highly disorganized culture of getting the job done quickly. We increased the budget recklessly. Since 1985, everything we've done through reform was worth the price. Since then, we've seen an average GDP per capita growth in any given long-term period of 1-1.5%. The last two years have made us confident that things have changed. This is the result of sound macroeconomic policy."

Published by Globes [online], Israel business news - www.globes.co.il - on December 10, 2007

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Load-Date: December 10, 2007

Israel is braced for next attack a year after war with Hezbollah

The Times (London)

August 15, 2007, Wednesday

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Section: OVERSEAS NEWS; Pg. 31

Length: 691 words

Byline: James Hider

Body

* Assault from Lebanon 'just a matter of time'

* Dispute with Syria adds to military concern

The memorial is more like a crime scene than a monument. On the road along the border with Lebanon a painted black rectangle marks the outline of an army lorry with the names of the passengers where they sat: Razeq, Toma, Eldad and Udi.

After the last are the words "My beloved" -a cry of grief for Ehud "Udi" Goldwasser, one of two Israeli soldiers kidnapped in an ambush here, triggering war with Hezbollah.

A year later, Israeli patrols like Udi's crawl past this spot watchful for any attempt by Hezbollah to launch an ambush similar to the one that left four of their comrades dead, two wounded and two kidnapped -and still missing. Many Israelis believe that a new war with Hezbollah is inevitable, and military analysts fear that the next conflict could be complicated by the emergence of Gaza -run by Hamas and already styling itself on Hezbollah's model of a well drilled, professional guerrilla army -on Israel's southern flank.

Worse, the Government is anxious that the intensive retraining of the Israeli Army in the Golan Heights could trigger fighting with Syria, from whom it seized the land.

The Lebanon border remains tense, despite the presence of more than 13,000 United Nations peacekeepers with a mandate to prevent Hezbollah from rebuilding their rocket bunkers in the frontier zone. "It's just a question of time. They'll try to attack Israel," a reservist, Colonel Kobi Marom, former deputy commander of the border's eastern sector, said. "As a guerrilla organisation they have to continue to raise the flag of resistance against Israel. Otherwise they're just another political party in Lebanon."

Laura Shukralla, who runs the Beirut Nights restaurant in the border village of Jish, also fears a renewed onslaught of Katyusha rockets against the Israeli north. "There's going to be another war," said the 38-year-old Arab Israeli, who saw rockets fired into the fields next to her village last year. Her clientele has been reduced to passing Israeli soldiers heading for the front. "The people talk about it all the time. They say it will be in September."

Few in the Israeli command think that a war will come that soon. Hezbollah lost at least 650 fighters in last summer's conflict, a heavy blow to a movement of about 3,000 guerrillas that recruits youths from mosques and grooms them for years into tightly disciplined units. Israeli commanders believe that Hezbollah has restocked its

Israel is braced for next attack a year after war with Hezbollah

supplies of short-range missiles from Syria and Iran, but that the UN-patrolled border zone has prevented them from being deployed within range of most of Israel.

The retraining of Israeli forces has raised the temperature with Syria. President Assad has been sending mixed messages to Israel, calling for negotiations to retrieve the strategic Golan plateau, which Israel took in 1967, but also threatening "resistance" alongside his Hezbollah allies.

Israel has emphasised that it does not want a war with Syria. Colonel Marom said that there was a chance that if hostilities were renewed with Hezbollah and Hamas, Syria could join a limited conflict to force Israel back to the negotiating table.

The Israeli Cabinet has been meeting every week to discuss the issue and the dangers of a Syrian "miscalculation". Brigadier-General Yossi Baidatz, the head of the research division of military intelligence, was reported to have told the Cabinet that Syria was preparing for a war; increasing production of long range missiles and positioning anti-tank missiles closer to the border. Meanwhile, Israeli forces remain on high alert. At the army listening post of Zarit, on the rocky border, an Israeli unit made up entirely of young women watches video cameras monitoring frontier sectors 24 hours a day. Some days the women replay the video that captures the beginning of last year's war. On it, a Hezbollah guerrilla, his head covered in a scarf, approaches a hilltop security camera, wielding a rocket-propelled grenade. He takes aim and fires. The camera goes blank. The war has begun.

* For breaking news from the Middle East timesonline.co.uk/mideast

Load-Date: August 15, 2007

Israel caused civilian deaths: report; Hezbollah Conflict; 'Issuing Warnings Does Not Make Indiscriminate Attacks Lawful'

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

September 6, 2007 Thursday

All But Toronto Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. A12

Length: 792 words

Byline: Steven Edwards, CanWest News Service

Dateline: UNITED NATIONS

Body

UNITED NATIONS - Israel was thrown on the defensive yesterday as Human Rights Watch charged "indiscriminate air strikes" by Israeli forces caused most of the estimated 900 civilian deaths in Lebanon during last year's conflict with **Hezbollah**.

Drawing on findings of a five-month-long HRW study, the New York and Washington-based monitoring group says a "simple movement of vehicles or persons -- such as attempting to buy bread or moving about private homes -- could be enough to cause a deadly Israeli air strike."

Why They Died: Civilian Casualties in Lebanon during the 2006 War adds that at least 300 of the 510 civilian deaths investigated had been **women** and children.

"Israel wrongfully acted as if all civilians had heeded its warnings to evacuate southern Lebanon when it knew they had not," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of HRW.

"Issuing warnings does not make indiscriminate attacks lawful."

The 249-page report follows one on **Hezbollah** last month in which HRW said the guerrilla group fired "thousands of rockets indiscriminately -- and at times deliberately -- at civilian areas in northern Israel" during the July 12 to Aug. 14, 2006, conflict.

Israel highlights the deliberate targeting distinction in a response HRW includes in the new report, adding **Hezbollah** used civilians as human shields.

"**Hezbollah** ... deliberately targeted Israeli civilians, while attempting to use the cover of civilians and civilian structures in order to stockpile its weapons, hide its fighters and fire missiles in Israel," the country says.

"Israel, on the other hand, held itself bound to apply the principles of humanitarian law, even while facing an opponent who deliberately flouted them."

Israel launched operations against **Hezbollah** after the group seized two Israeli soldiers, who remain missing. At least 1,125 Lebanese died before a United Nations-ordered ceasefire ended the fighting, says the HRW report.

Israel caused civilian deaths: report; Hezbollah Conflict; 'Issuing Warnings Does Not Make Indiscriminate Attacks Lawful'

HRW disputes Hezbollah systematically used civilians as human shields "as claimed by Israeli officials," but acknowledges the guerrilla group may have sought cover behind various UN bases installed to monitor an earlier ceasefire in southern Lebanon.

"Hezbollah commanders may have at times selected those positions for firing because the presence of UN personnel made it more difficult for Israel to counterattack," says the report

"Insofar as [such a] consideration motivated Hezbollah combatants, that would constitute shielding."

Canada's Major Paeta Hess-von Krudener was one of four UN observers killed when an Israeli precision-guided missile hit their base at Khiam July 25, 2006. While the United Nations said at the time there had been no Hezbollah presence near the base just ahead of the strike, an e-mail from the major days earlier said the guerrilla group had been active there, and Israeli air strikes close to it had "not been deliberate targeting."

HRW says its investigations show the Israel Defence Forces deliberately targeted far more than just the militant wing of Hezbollah, charging that strikes on the group's non-military institutions in southern Lebanon would violate international humanitarian law.

"HRW research indicates that a large number of private homes of civilian Hezbollah members were targeted during the war, as well as a variety of civilian Hezbollah institutions, such as schools, welfare agencies, banks, shops, and political offices, in addition to Hezbollah militants and the homes of Hezbollah combatants," says the report.

It acknowledges the civilian death toll from such attacks was low because Hezbollah officials and even many of their neighbours had evacuated the respective areas in anticipation of strikes. But Mr. Roth said such a policy would set a "dangerous precedent."

"To accept the argument that any part of Hezbollah can be targeted because it aids the military effort would be to accept that all Israeli institutions that aid the IDF can be targeted," he said.

Although the report focuses on Israeli and Hezbollah military operations during the war, some commentators say the wider context of the conflict needs to be continually emphasized.

"The war itself was not between two internationally legitimate entities," explained Hillel Neuer, executive director of the Geneva-based monitoring group UN Watch.

"Hezbollah should by that time have disarmed according to international law, and its actions in seizing the Israeli soldiers were also illegal."

The UN Security Council ruled in 2004 that the Lebanese government should establish sovereignty over the southern part the country, thereby displacing Hezbollah and ending the group's ability to strike Israel from the region. This followed the UN's 2000 ruling that declared Israel had fully ended its former occupation of southern Lebanon.

Graphic

Black & White Photo: Dave Chan, Reuters; The casket of Major Paeta Hess-von Krudener arrives in Trenton, Ont., last August. The UN observer was killed when an Israeli missile struck his base. ;

Black & White Photo: Eric Gaillard, Reuters; A Lebanese woman sits amid the rubble of a building that was damaged during last summer's conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. The Human Rights Watch group yesterday

Israel caused civilian deaths: report; Hezbollah Conflict; 'Issuing Warnings Does Not Make Indiscriminate Attacks Lawful'

reported in a 249-page document that "indiscriminate air strikes" by Israeli forces caused most of the estimated 900 civilian deaths in Lebanon. ;

Load-Date: September 6, 2007

End of Document

50,000 celebrate 'divine victory'; Hezbollah chief warns Israel against attacks

Ottawa Citizen

August 15, 2007 Wednesday

Early Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A11

Length: 464 words

Byline: Salim Yassine, Agence France-Presse

Dateline: BEIRUT

Body

BEIRUT - **Hezbollah** leader Hassan Nasrallah yesterday warned Israel against launching new attacks against his militant group, in a speech marking the anniversary of the end of the war with the Jewish state.

"If you, the Zionists, are considering attacking Lebanon, I am reserving a surprise for you that will change the fate of the war and the region," Mr. Nasrallah said in a televised speech at a mass rally in his stronghold in the Beirut southern suburb of Sfeir.

"By saying this, I and the resistance realize the responsibility we are taking on," he added during the hour-long address that capped celebrations by his militant group commemorating its "divine victory" over Israel.

Mr. Nasrallah said renewed conflict would prove costly to Israel, and thanked those who had stood by his group in its war against the Jewish state and the United States.

"God willing, in the same way we were victorious in August 2006, I warn them that here in Lebanon there is a resistance, an army and a people ... that reject humiliation and fear only God," he said to applause and cheers by the crowd estimated at more than 50,000, many of them **women** and children waving the yellow **Hezbollah** flags.

Mr. Nasrallah said **Hezbollah** had provided \$380 million U.S. in emergency aid to assist 28,300 families affected by the war, most of them in southern Lebanon. He did not say where the money came from, but **Hezbollah** is widely believed to be bankrolled by Iran.

His address marked the third of a series of speeches he has made in recent weeks to mark the Aug. 14 anniversary of the ceasefire that ended the devastating 34-day war with Israel.

The last time the charismatic leader, considered Israel's enemy No. 1, appeared in public was on Sept. 22, 2006, when he made a speech in the same neighbourhood to proclaim victory following the war.

The conflict ended after a UN Security Council resolution led to a ceasefire.

The war resulted in the deaths of more than 1,200 Lebanese civilians, one-third of them children, as well as 160 Israelis, mostly soldiers. It destroyed more than 25,000 homes and 50,000 other buildings, notably in the country's south.

50,000 celebrate 'divine victory'; Hezbollah chief warns Israel against attacks

Israel failed in both its stated aims for launching the war: to stop rocket fire on northern Israel and to recover two soldiers captured by **Hezbollah** in a deadly cross-border raid.

Also yesterday, the UN mine clearance agency criticized Israel for failing to co-operate in providing data on the location of areas where it dropped cluster bombs during the war. The UN Mine Action Co-ordination Centre said 126,000 unexploded sub-munitions, or bomblets, had been located and destroyed.

The UN believes that up to one million of the bomblets failed to detonate on impact. At least 28 people have been killed and 177 injured by the weapons since the conflict ended.

Load-Date: August 15, 2007

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**Hezbollah leader warns Israel against attacking; Ceasefire Anniversary;
'Reserving A Surprise For You,' Nasrallah Says**

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

August 15, 2007 Wednesday

National Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A3

Length: 501 words

Byline: Salim Yassine, Agence France-Presse

Dateline: BEIRUT

Body

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"Come on Nasrallah. We are waiting for you Nasrallah," chanted thousands of people as they waited for him to speak and as an orchestra of white-suited men whipped up the crowd with patriotic music. A fireworks display was also organized.

Giant screens were set up in the suburb controlled by the Shiite group amid speculation on whether Nasrallah would appear in person.

Hezbollah leader warns Israel against attacking; Ceasefire Anniversary; 'Reserving A Surprise For You,'
Nasrallah Says

The conflict ended after a UN Security Council resolution led to a ceasefire.

Since then, Nasrallah has made a number of speeches that were always broadcast.

"We are here because Hezbollah is the only one that managed to defeat Israel, despite the high price we paid," said Hassan Korkomaz, who gathered with his family yesterday to listen to Nasrallah's speech.

Siham Karout, a 22-year-old student, said she was attending the rally as Hezbollah represented "the country's future."

"It defeated Israel and showed the poor and dissaffected of this country that it could beat the most powerful army," Ms. Karout said.

Israel's war with Hezbollah resulted in the deaths of more than 1,200 Lebanese civilians, a third of them children, as well as 160 Israelis, mostly soldiers.

It destroyed more than 25,000 homes and 50,000 other buildings, notably in the country's south.

Israel failed in both its stated aims for launching the war: to stop rocket fire on northern Israel and to recover two soldiers captured by Hezbollah in a deadly cross-border raid.

Load-Date: August 15, 2007

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ISRAELI FORCES CAUSED CIVILIAN DEATHS: STUDY; Hezbollah Conflict; Issuing Warnings Does Not Make Indiscriminate Attacks Lawful'; Why They Died: Civilian

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

September 6, 2007 Thursday

National Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. A14

Length: 787 words

Byline: Steven Edwards, CanWest News Service

Dateline: UNITED NATIONS

Body

UNITED NATIONS - Israel was thrown on the defensive yesterday as Human Rights Watch charged "indiscriminate air strikes" by Israeli forces caused most of the estimated 900 civilian deaths in Lebanon during last year's conflict with **Hezbollah**.

Drawing on findings of a five-month-long HRW study, the New York and Washington-based monitoring group says a "simple movement of vehicles or persons -- such as attempting to buy bread or moving about private homes -- could be enough to cause a deadly Israeli air strike." Casualties in Lebanon during the 2006 War adds that at least 300 of the 510 civilian deaths investigated were **women** and children.

"Israel wrongfully acted as if all civilians had heeded its warnings to evacuate southern Lebanon when it knew they had not," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of HRW. "Issuing warnings does not make indiscriminate attacks lawful."

The 249-page report follows one on **Hezbollah** last month in which HRW said the guerrilla group fired "thousands of rockets indiscriminately -- and at times deliberately -- at civilian areas in northern Israel" during the conflict of July 12 to Aug. 14, 2006.

Israel highlights the deliberate targeting distinction in a response HRW includes in the new report, adding **Hezbollah** used civilians as human shields.

"**Hezbollah** ... deliberately targeted Israeli civilians, while attempting to use the cover of civilians and civilian structures in order to stockpile its weapons, hide its fighters and fire missiles in Israel," the country says.

"Israel, on the other hand, held itself bound to apply the principles of humanitarian law, even while facing an opponent who deliberately flouted them."

Israel launched operations against **Hezbollah** after the group seized two Israeli soldiers, who remain missing. At least 1,125 Lebanese died before a United Nations-ordered ceasefire ended the fighting, says the HRW report.

ISRAELI FORCES CAUSED CIVILIAN DEATHS: STUDY; Hezbollah Conflict; 'Issuing Warnings Does Not Make Indiscriminate Attacks Lawful'; Why They Died: Civilian

HRW disputes Hezbollah systematically used civilians as human shields "as claimed by Israeli officials," but acknowledges the guerrilla group may have sought cover behind various UN bases installed to monitor an earlier ceasefire in southern Lebanon.

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This followed the UN's 2000 ruling that declared Israel had fully ended its former occupation of southern Lebanon.

Graphic

Color Photo: Eric Gaillard, Reuters; A Lebanese woman sits amid the rubble of a building damaged during last summer's conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. The Human Rights Watch group reported that "indiscriminate air strikes" by Israeli forces caused most of the estimated 900 civilian deaths in Lebanon. ;

ISRAELI FORCES CAUSED CIVILIAN DEATHS: STUDY; Hezbollah Conflict; 'Issuing Warnings Does Not Make Indiscriminate Attacks Lawful'; Why They Died: Civilian

Load-Date: September 6, 2007

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Hezbollah supporters flock to see 'miracle tree' in war-battered town; A dead tree dedicated to 43 Hezbollah fighters killed in last year's war with Israel sprouted leaves just in time for the anniversary, writes Borzou Daragahi in Bint Jbeil.

Ottawa Citizen

August 15, 2007 Wednesday

Early Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A11

Length: 655 words

Byline: Borzou Daragahi, The Los Angeles Times

Body

Some would say Fatmeh Shaheen should know better. The 45-year-old psychologist is trained to recognize how a desperate mind might override its own sensibilities in search of solace.

But here she is, piling into the chapel-like building in southern Lebanon with hundreds of other Lebanese Shiites to pay homage to a miracle tree.

A dead, shellacked poplar trunk somehow had sprouted leaves after it was adorned with the names of 43 fighters for the militant Islamic group **Hezbollah**. They were killed in the war with Israel last year, a conflict that left hundreds of Lebanese dead and destroyed huge swaths of the country's Shia Muslim heartland, perhaps setting the country's most economically disadvantaged sect back even further.

"Can you have any doubts now?" the well-educated, trilingual professional asks as she stares, eyes aglitter, at the bright green leaves wiggling out of the dark brown tree trunk.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah declared the war a "divine victory" for Lebanese guerrillas fighting against one of the most powerful armed forces in the Middle East. In the runup to yesterday's anniversary of the war's end, **Hezbollah** pulled out all the stops in reinforcing its version of history.

In mostly Shia southern Beirut, a ruined district of the capital subjected to Israeli airstrikes last summer, **Hezbollah** has opened a museum called the "House of the Spider" to celebrate the "divine" victory and demonize Israeli armed forces.

It includes the re-creation of a **Hezbollah** guerrilla base, with mannequins in camouflage uniforms looking at maps of northern Israel and punching Israeli grid co-ordinates into laptop computers. Visitors navigate past the wreckage of Israeli tanks, captured Israeli walkie-talkies, a downed helicopter and bloodied boots. A television screen loops a video game in which a **Hezbollah** fighter hunts down enemy armour. Footage of exploding Israeli tanks and crying Israeli soldiers plays inside a darkened theater.

Hezbollah supporters flock to see 'miracle tree' in war-battered town; A dead tree dedicated to 43 Hezbollah fighters killed in last year's war with Israel spro....

Large photographs of U.S. President George W. Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert accompany embarrassing quotes.

"Hassan Nasrallah won't forget the name of Amir Peretz," says the former Israeli defence minister, who was pushed out of his job largely for his handling of last summer's war.

And then there is the miracle tree.

A **Hezbollah** official, who gives his name only as "Abu Mohammed," stands on a stage inside the chapel and tells the story of the tree as visitors walk in.

Hezbollah officials, he explains, commissioned an artist to make a monument for the war dead of the border town of Bint Jbeil. The artist carved their names on wooden placards and nailed them to the tree trunk. He sprayed it with chemicals and a placed it on a block.

Suddenly, about two weeks before the one-year anniversary of the war, the monument began sprouting leaves, even though it wasn't getting any water or sunlight, the **Hezbollah** official says.

Exactly 43 leaves sprang to life, one for each of the town's combat casualties, he maintains.

Hezbollah's Al-Manar television began spreading word of the extraordinary phenomenon, and the visitors flocked to see a miracle.

"Let this be proof to all those who doubt the divine victory," Abu Mohammed says over the public address system. "The pure blood of the martyrs has watered the Earth."

A recording of brassy martial music fills the hall during a break.

"I saw it on television," says Aida Roz, a Beirut accountant who came with her two daughters. "I couldn't believe it. Now, I believe it."

Ms. Shaheen, the psychologist, drove herself and her two adolescent sons more than an hour from the coastal city of Tyre earlier in the morning. Then she came again by herself, just to marvel at the tree. She says she's not particularly religious. Unlike many of the **women** in the town, she doesn't even don the hijab signifying Muslim piety.

"You have to live in the south to understand," she says of the tree.

Graphic

Photo: Ayman Saidi, Reuters; More than 50,000 Lebanese, many of them **women** and children, filled the streets of southern Beirut yesterday to wave the **Hezbollah** flag and photos of the militant group's leader, Hassan Nasrallah. Mr. Nasrallah, who makes rare public appearances, showed up at the rally to warn Israel against another attack on the group's home base in Lebanon. ;

Load-Date: August 15, 2007

Two crazy ladies and Hezbollah give baby sea turtles a fighting chance

The Sunday Telegraph (LONDON)

August 19, 2007 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; International; Pg. 33

Length: 434 words

Byline: CHARLES LEVINSON in Al-Mansouri, Lebanon

Body

BEING A sea turtle is difficult; sharks, fishermen and a dwindling habitat have all taken their toll. Using the beaches of war-ravaged Lebanon as a nesting site has not made life any easier. So it must have felt like the final straw when the foxes turned up.

Driven from the coastal hills by the 34-day bombardment last summer, the red foxes took refuge on the last wild beach in the country. There they discovered a tasty treat in the form of the eggs of the rare green and loggerhead turtles, midway through their five-month nesting season.

This year, the turtles have returned, but so too have the foxes. "The foxes are destroying nests," said Mona Khalil, a conservationist who has become the reptiles' champion.

Lebanon's woes had already led to many ups and downs for the turtles. The Israeli gun boats that patrolled offshore during the

25-year occupation of southern Lebanon kept locals off the beach at night when the turtles come ashore to nest each summer between May and October.

But while Israeli warships were inadvertently protecting the sea turtles, United Nations peacekeepers were creating havoc. Soldiers from the Fijian contingent were paying fisherman \$10 a piece for the turtles, a delicacy in their native archipelago, until Miss Khalil convinced a sympathetic UN general to put a stop to the practice. The turtles are also being caught in the crossfire of competing Shi'ite political movements. The mile-long strip of beach on which they nest is split between two municipalities, one is controlled by Hezbollah, the other dominated by the rival Amal party.

Hezbollah has proven itself a friend of the sea turtle, declaring its half of the beach a protected area. Amal has steadfastly refused.

"It's not that I'm a fan of Hezbollah, but they have been good to the turtles," said Miss Khalil.

In the Mediterranean, the turtles face daunting obstacles. Fodder for predators and threatened by humans, only one in every 1,000 will survive and return to the same seashore to reproduce 25 years later.

Miss Khalil and her female friend, Habiba Syed, 49, walk the beach every daybreak, scouring the sand for new nests or those which are about to hatch. They try to protect eggs with chicken wire, but the foxes attack the nests

Two crazy ladies and Hezbollah give baby sea turtles a fighting chance

from the side. And now, with 20,000 Lebanese army troops stationed in south Lebanon, the turtles face a new set of challenges. The soldiers have set up camps along the beach and ripped up foliage to make a football pitch.

"Saving turtles means nothing to them," said Miss Syed, after supervising a nest of baby turtles into the sea. "They think we're two crazy ladies."

Load-Date: August 19, 2007

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Antiwar group backs working with Mideast radicals; Canadians come away from Cairo meeting urging solidarity with Hezbollah, Hamas

Ottawa Citizen

May 9, 2007 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A1

Length: 1058 words

Byline: Don Butler, The Ottawa Citizen

Body

Canadian activists who attended a controversial conference in Cairo are calling on antiwar campaigners to show increased solidarity with Mideast "resistance movements," including **Hezbollah** and Hamas.

According to an audio clip obtained yesterday by the Citizen, the activists issued the call at a public meeting April 27 in Toronto at which Canadian delegates reported on their experiences at the March 29 to April 1 Cairo Conference.

The focus of the conference was to forge an international alliance against "imperialism and Zionism." Twenty Canadians attended, mostly from Canadian antiwar groups.

The participants included representatives -- some quite senior -- of four Islamist groups listed as terrorist organizations by the Canadian government, including Hamas and **Hezbollah**.

In an interview, David Harris, a terrorism expert and former chief of strategic planning for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), said it was "absolutely extraordinary" that antiwar groups would align themselves with radical Islamic groups.

"At the very least, people associated with the organizations connected with this should feel mortified and horrified," he said.

The 90-minute meeting on April 27 at the Steelworkers' Hall on Cecil Street in downtown Toronto was chaired by James Clark of the Toronto Coalition to Stop the War, who was one of the delegates at the Cairo meeting. Seven other delegates also presented reports.

According to the audio recording, several talked about how "resistance movements" in the Middle East are keen to improve relations with antiwar and leftist groups in the West.

"What we saw in Cairo were the first signs that a world movement is beginning to come together," Suzanne Rice, one of the Canadian delegates, told the gathering.

A number of speakers urged audience members to sign up for next year's Cairo conference so an even larger Canadian delegation could attend.

Antiwar group backs working with Mideast radicals; Canadians come away from Cairo meeting urging solidarity with Hezbollah, Hamas

"We have to forge a more solid and more united anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist movement here to be able to have something to show our brothers and sisters when we get back," said one speaker.

Ali Mallah, who represented the Canadian Arab Federation, the Canadian Union of Public Employees and two antiwar groups, said Canadian delegates "made a very important contribution" in Cairo.

"We didn't agree with everything and we didn't disagree with many things," he said.

There were debates about resistance at the conference, Mr. Mallah said, adding: "When we hear about Islamist resistance, let's try to put ourselves where they are and try to see if from their point of view."

He said the question of Israel was "very difficult," because Middle Eastern groups reject its right to exist. "But there is no rejection of Judaism or Christianity, which we don't hear much about here."

Mr. Mallah said officials from Hezbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood told delegates they do not view religion, nationality or ideology as a barrier to co-operation with other activist groups, "as long as they agree on opposing the war, striving for peace and most importantly, standing up against imperialism and occupation."

But Mr. Harris, who directs the International and Terrorist Intelligence Program at INSIGNIS Strategic Research Inc. in Ottawa, said such statements are part of a disinformation campaign designed to dupe western activists.

"To the extent that their audience and any of us are gullible enough to actually believe that, then perhaps we deserve the consequences," Mr. Harris said.

In fact, he said, radical Islam constitutes "one of the most imperialistic supremacist movements known to history. These groups want to eliminate our way of life."

Mr. Harris said there was "something surprising about self-styled progressive peace and human rights operatives justifying cuddling with women-stoning, gay-killing, limb-amputating medieval throwbacks."

He said activists who deal with groups like Hamas and Hezbollah shouldn't be surprised if they come under scrutiny from Canadian security services.

"If you're going to start playing in those big leagues of international terror, you've got to expect that the defensive of Canada and other Western countries will begin to take an adverse interest in you," Mr. Harris said.

But John Riddell, a longtime activist who was part of the Canadian delegation in Cairo, told the Toronto audience that casting militant Islamists as the enemy is just Canadian government spin.

"It's the Harper government that says that Hezbollah and Hamas are officially terrorists," he said. "They want to intimidate us so we do not link up with the enemy."

"That's not how we see it. The goal of us who work for peace has always been to cut across the battle lines in a world alliance."

That isn't easy, he acknowledged, because of "the political barriers that exist in our country and the psychological barriers that go along with them."

Still, Mr. Riddell quoted a Hezbollah leader who declared that thanks to the Cairo Conference, "the world is more beautiful, more promising for us. And tomorrow is for us, not for imperialism."

Sid Lacombe, co-ordinator of the Canadian Peace Alliance, said the connection at the conference between groups in the Middle East and Western activists was "incredibly important."

"The nature of imperialism over the last number of decades has meant that these divisions between Western activists and activists in the Middle East have been quite huge," he said.

Antiwar group backs working with Mideast radicals; Canadians come away from Cairo meeting urging solidarity with Hezbollah, Hamas

"It's been very, very difficult for us to get past it. But it's the importance of the Cairo Conference that we're able to do this."

Mr. Lacombe was one of several Canadian delegates who travelled to Beirut following the conference to view the devastation Israeli bombing caused during last year's war with Hezbollah.

He said the Israeli attacks have only strengthen Hezbollah and broadened its base of popular support.

"The resistance movements are absolutely phenomenal at doing development work," he said. "They're doing any number of educational campaigns, and they're doing this work to try to support themselves and to try to free themselves from the kind of violence that's being unleashed on them constantly."

"To be able to see what the movements there are going through and to be able to meet with them is quite phenomenal," he said, adding that he hopes a "much, much larger delegation" of Canadian activists will attend the 2008 Cairo Conference.

Load-Date: May 10, 2007

Nation unites for heroes' homecomings

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

July 18, 2008 Friday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 1462 words

Byline: Hussein Abdallah

Body

Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) leader Walid Jumblatt said on Thursday that only Lebanese national unity can protect the resistance, in reference to Hizbullah. "Arms cannot protect arms ... only national unity can protect the resistance," he said, indirectly responding to Hizbullah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah.

Jumblatt, Fneish stress national unity at welcome ceremony for Samir Kontar

BEIRUT: Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) leader Walid Jumblatt said on Thursday that only Lebanese national unity can protect the resistance, in reference to Hizbullah. "Arms cannot protect arms ... only national unity can protect the resistance," he said, indirectly responding to Hizbullah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, who justified Hizbullah's use of arms against other Lebanese factions in early May as "using arms to defend the arms of the resistance."

Speaking at a ceremony in liberated prisoner Samir Kontar's hometown of Aabey, southeast of Beirut, Jumblatt said that there was no contradiction between the resistance and the Taif Agreement, which ended Lebanon's 15-year Civil War (1975-1990) and introduced major amendments to the Lebanese Constitution of 1926.

"There is no contradiction between the resistance and the Taif Agreement ... there is no contradiction between the resistance and the international tribunal," he said, referring to the UN-sponsored court to try suspects in the murder of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

"There is no contradiction between Lebanon and the resistance after gradually agreeing on a defense strategy," he said, adding that protecting the resistance did not conflict with having sound relations and mutual respect between Lebanon and Syria.

Meanwhile, Hizbullah official and Labor Minister Mohammad Fneish, who participated in the ceremony, said that Hizbullah had never forgotten its historical relations with Jumblatt, adding that Hizbullah was ready to extend its hand to Jumblatt in the future.

Fneish said Lebanon would not have been able to free all Lebanese prisoners in Israeli jails had it not of the resistance.

Nation unites for heroes' homecomings

"We should continue with the resistance to liberate the Shebaa Farms and the Kafar Shuba Hills," he added, referring to a border territory that Israel still occupied despite its withdrawal from most of Lebanon in May 2000.

Fneish said the agenda of the Lebanese state did not conflict with that of the resistance.

"We have wasted enough time ... we should cooperate to overcome the past, especially after the formation of the national unity Cabinet," he said.

"We will stretch our hand to our national partners with open hearts and minds regardless of unpleasant past experiences," he added.

Meanwhile, Youth and Sports Minister Talal Arslan also spoke at the ceremony and said that the new Cabinet's ministerial statement should not avoid "recognizing the legitimacy of the resistance."

Arslan paid tribute to Nasrallah and stressed "the mountains will always back the resistance."

Kontar, who was released on Wednesday after spending almost 30 years in Israeli jails, called on all Lebanese "to rally around the resistance."

"Let us all remember Kamal Jumblatt ... Had he been with us, he would have called on his comrades to cut any hand that dares to touch the arms of the resistance," Kontar said.

The late Kamal Jumblatt is the founder of the PSP and the father of Walid Jumblatt.

Kontar said the resistance shall continue even after the liberation of the Shebaa Farms.

"Whoever believes that liberating Shebaa Farms would put an end to the resistance is wrong ... even if we left the Israelis alone, they will not leave us," he said.

"Look at the way they treated the people who signed treaties with them ... Look at what they did to former Palestinian President Yasser Arafat," he added, indirectly blaming Israel for the Palestinian leader's death in November 2004.

As he arrived at his family house earlier on Thursday, Kontar said he had no regrets over what he did three decades ago.

Kontar was arrested in the northern Israeli town of Nahariya in 1978 and was convicted of killing three Israelis.

"I haven't for even one day regretted what I did," he said. "On the contrary, I remain committed to my political convictions."

Kontar received a hero's welcome at his hometown as many people from the village and neighboring areas attended the rally to meet him.

"We are very happy on this beautiful day, this is a victory for Lebanon and the national resistance," said Yusra Khaddaj, 39, as she stood with her three young daughters on the road leading to Aabey.

"Samir Kontar is the son of all the Lebanese," she added.

One banner along the road leading to Aabey read: "From Palestine to Iraq to Lebanon, the resistance is victorious."

Earlier on Thursday, Kontar visited Hizbullah's senior security official Imad Mughniyeh's tomb in Hizbullah's stronghold in the southern suburbs of Beirut before heading to his village in a triumphant convoy.

Mughniyeh was killed in a bombing in Syria last February. His death was blamed on Israel, which denied any responsibility.

Meanwhile, Israeli security officials warned on Thursday that Kontar should now fear for his own life.

Nation unites for heroes' homecomings

"Every terrorist who committed an act of terror against Israel, especially someone like Kontar, who killed a little child and two other people, is a target," one of the officials told AFP.

"If there is a chance for Israel to close the file on Kontar, Israel won't hesitate," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Israel's intelligence agencies Mossad and Shin Beth opposed Kontar's release but were over-ruled by political considerations, in order to end the mystery over the fate of two Israeli soldiers captured by Hizbullah two years ago in a cross-border raid. Israel responded to that raid by launching a devastating 34-day war on Lebanon.

The bodies of the two soldiers, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, were returned to Israel on Wednesday as part of the swap. - with AFP

Lebanese, Palestinians celebrate as bodies of slain Arab fighters are carried to Beirut

Mohammed Zaatari and Dalila Mahdawi

Daily Star staff

SIDON: A convoy of eight trucks carrying the coffins of 200 yet to be identified Arab fighters killed in decades of fighting with Israel made their way to Beirut from Southern Lebanon Thursday. In a rare spectacle of national unity, Lebanese and Palestinians from all political and religious affiliations lined the roads to greet the procession, forcing the trucks to make repeated stops as onlookers spilled out onto the road to throw rose petals and rice.

Coffins draped in Lebanese and Hizbullah flags were transported on Mercedes trucks that better resembled celebration floats, decorated with ornate flower wreaths, pictures of slain Hizbullah commander Imad Mughniyeh and victory banners. One such banner read "The martyrs of victory from the 2006 summer war."

Spectators carried flags or photographs of martyred relatives returning as part of the German-mediated deal between Israel and Hizbullah.

"It's like he's coming back to me alive," said Hajj Hassan Wazwazz, whose son Ali had been killed in 2006 after 13 days of fighting.

Mosque and church bells blared, chiming in chaotically with the chorus of patriotic and Hizbullah songs. Representatives from Hizbullah were out en masse. One official told a female reporter: "We are laughing so you cannot say Hizbullah are 'constipated' and serious. We have feelings; I read and write poetry."

Ahmad Khalaf, a Palestinian who was expecting a relative's body to be returned, told The Daily Star: "I wish the Palestinian revolution would regain its lost fire," clearly impressed with Hizbullah's success.

Five Lebanese prisoners released by Israel Wednesday prayed at the Mughniyeh's gravesite in southern Beirut on Thursday, vowing to continue the fight against Israel.

Later, Lebanon's longest-held prisoner in Israel Samir Kontar arrived in his hometown of Aabey, south of Beirut. "This time yesterday I was in the hands of the enemy. But at this moment, I am yearning more than before to confront them," he said.

In a speech in the Southern town of Yater, the hometown of freed prisoner Hassan Kourani, Hizbullah MP Hassan Fadlallah called the swap a "historic victory" for the resistance. "Israel knows that the opposition is stronger than it once was."

Kourani meanwhile expressed his gratitude toward the Shiite group and pledged his loyalty to continue the struggle of the Islamic resistance.

Nation unites for heroes' homecomings

While the Lebanese celebrated the day with a national holiday, the mood in Israel was somber. Former aide to Israeli Premier Ehud Olmert Miri Eisin told Al-Jazeera news channel Israel considered the swap deal, and in particular the release of Kontar, "incredibly difficult."

"Today in Israel we are mainly reflecting on the price we pay in our country to defend our borders," she added.

Load-Date: October 23, 2008

End of Document

Pelletier stuck in Lebanon; Quebec tennis player caught in middle of Hezbollah actions

The Gazette (Montreal)

May 10, 2008 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: SPORTS; Pg. D8

Length: 289 words

Byline: STEPHANIE MYLES, The Gazette

Body

There are times when the insular world of sports and the harsh realities of life intersect.

Tennis player Marie-Ève Pelletier, from Repentigny, has been trying, and failing, to get out of Lebanon ever since she lost in the second round of a tennis tournament held in Juniyah, a port town only 15 kilometres north of Beirut.

Yesterday, **Hezbollah** militias took control of the western part of that city; two pro-government television stations were shut down, one set on fire. At least 11 people are dead and 30 injured.

According to media reports out of Spain, players in the event have hunkered down in their hotel under secure watch, coming out only to play their matches.

The tournament, a \$50,000 International Tennis Federation **women**'s event, has continued. The semifinals take place today.

Tennis Canada media-relations representative Louis-Antoine Paquin, who has been in touch with Pelletier's parents (who have been in touch with their daughter), said Pelletier has been trying to get out of the country for three days.

While most of the roads were open yesterday, the key one that leads to the airport was not.

"They can take a risk, or stay and wait until everything calms down," Paquin said. "But the girls are a little worried it may start up again."

A report from player Neuza Silva, on the Portuguese tennis federation's website, said the area where the players are is calm.

"There are no confrontations here, nothing like the confusion in the middle of Beirut. We're pretty much quiet. Our concern is to get out of here safe and sound," Silva said.

There are limited options. The players could have someone drive them to Syria, and fly out from there. The other option is to take a ferry to Cyprus, only a few hundred kilometres east.

Pelletier stuck in Lebanon ; Quebec tennis player caught in middle of Hezbollah actions

Load-Date: May 10, 2008

End of Document

Hezbollah chief boasts of recovered Israeli soldiers' body parts; Hassan Nasrallah marks Shiite holy day with condemnation of Bush, threats of new confrontation with Israel over Lebanon

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)

January 20, 2008 Sunday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A4

Length: 516 words

Byline: Rita Daou, Agence France-Presse

Dateline: BEIRUT

Body

BEIRUT - Lebanon's **Hezbollah** chief Hassan Nasrallah said his militant group had the body parts of Israeli soldiers abandoned on the battlefield as he appeared in public on Saturday for the first time in more than a year.

"We have the heads, the hands, the feet and even a nearly intact cadaver from the head down to the pelvis," he said in a live video broadcast that followed his surprise appearance in his stronghold in the southern suburbs of Beirut to commemorate Ashura, Shiite Islam's holiest day.

"What did the Israeli army say to the family of this soldier and what remains did they give them?" he asked.

Speaking about his group's war with the Jewish state in 2006, he claimed **Hezbollah** had forced Israel to beat a quick retreat and warned that his group stood ready for a new conflict.

"If Israel launches a new war against Lebanon, we promise them a war that will change the face of the entire region," he said.

Hezbollah's capture of two Israeli soldiers in July 2006 led to the 34-day war that killed more than 1,200 civilians in Lebanon, a third of them children, as well as 160 Israelis, mostly soldiers.

The Jewish state failed in both its stated aims for launching the war: to stop rocket fire on northern Israel and to recover the two soldiers.

In October, Israel handed over the bodies of two **Hezbollah** militants and a prisoner in exchange for the remains of a drowned Israeli civilian, who was washed up on the Lebanese coast, and information on a missing airman.

Nasrallah, in his speech to tens of thousands of supporters, slammed U.S. President George W. Bush's Middle East tour that ended on Wednesday and his bid to convince Arab leaders that Iran posed a threat with its nuclear program.

Hezbollah chief boasts of recovered Israeli soldiers' body parts; Hassan Nasrallah marks Shiite holy day with condemnation of Bush, threats of new confrontation....

"Bush wants to convince our rulers and people that Iran is the enemy, that Iran poses a danger and a threat, and that Israel is a brother," the black-turbaned Nasrallah told the crowd.

He urged Arab states to address Bush's "Satanic visions" in the Middle East and to remain committed to the armed resistance.

Surrounded by dozens of bodyguards, Nasrallah earlier walked through the Shiite suburbs before being whisked away to deliver his speech.

The crowd of men, women and children carrying yellow Hezbollah flags cheered him on as he walked by and chanted "God, protect Nasrallah," and "Death to America, Death to Israel."

They beat their chests and backs in a ritual commemorating the killing of Imam Hussein by armies of the Sunni caliph Yazid in AD 680.

Hezbollah's Al-Manar television station said one million people had turned out for the event.

Nasrallah has been Israel's public enemy number 1 since his Iranian- and

Syrian-backed Shiite militant group fought a deadly month-long war against the Jewish state in the summer of 2006.

His last public appearance was at a massive "victory" rally in the southern suburbs in September 2006 in the wake of the war against Israel, during which he went into hiding.

Saturday's procession marked the climax of 10 days of ceremonies for Ashura. Despite cold temperatures, young men walked barefoot in a sign of humility and tribute for their revered imam.

Load-Date: January 21, 2008

International: Special report: Lebanon one year on: Fear and fragile peace: a long-suffering people prepare for a new war: Last July the country was plunged into a 34-day conflict that left it in ruins. Amid the reconstruction, fighters are digging in again

The Guardian - Final Edition

July 12, 2007 Thursday

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Section: GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES; Pg. 22

Length: 1344 words

Byline: Suzanne Goldenberg, Bint Jbeil, Lebanon

Body

In the video diary that Ali Dagher intended as his last testament of the 34-day war between Israel and ***Hizbullah***, there is a scene where he produces two cupped handfuls of metal bomb fragments that landed in his kitchen. "I collected these here in the house," he tells the camera. "I am not telling anyone about them because I don't want them to be afraid."

The time-date stamp at the bottom of the screen reads July 28 2006, a day of intense battle in this former fortress of ***Hizbullah***. The man staring into the camera is hollow-cheeked and exhausted. But a year later, the chance to look back is intoxicating. Mr Dagher has watched this video diary 10 times since the war - each time a celebration of the fact that he is still alive.

"When I was filming this tape, I had no hope of surviving. All I was thinking in my head was that I was going to die," he says. "But now that the war has ended, and I am still alive, I feel good. I feel that I did something important."

Mr Dagher's wife, Jumana, cannot bear to remain in the house when the video is on, and walks out. "It hurts me too much to remember," she says.

The sense of siege has not yet lifted in Lebanon - despite a durable ceasefire, the deployment of 13,500 United Nations troops to keep the peace in the south, and millions of dollars pledged for reconstruction from Arab states.

Instead, say many Lebanese, there is a deepening dread of a new war to come. There is no shortage of likely pretexts for a confrontation: a string of high-profile assassinations and bombings, and deepening political divisions in Beirut. In the north, there have been fierce clashes with al-Qaida affiliates at the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr al-Bared, outside Tripoli. In the south, there are suggestions of a plot to drive out the UN peacekeepers and provoke a new war with Israel.

There are also undeniable signs that ***Hizbullah*** is digging in for a new encounter with Israel, this time in the isolated and sun-scorched mountains just north of the Litani river.

"Don't think that everything got better immediately after the war was over," Mr Dagher says. "It will take 20 years."

International: Special report: Lebanon one year on: Fear and fragile peace: a long-suffering people prepare for a new war: Last July the country was plunged in....

A day before we met, his century-old house, whose thick stone walls had sheltered up to 50 members of Mr Dagher's family during the war, was condemned by the town authorities: it had been hit too many times to rebuild.

In its three rooms, used by the family in ordinary times as a store for sacks of sugar and flour for their sweet shop in town, the Daghers tried to turn a siege into a sit-com. "The fact that we were 48 people and we were trying to entertain ourselves was funny. We tried to turn tragedy into comedy," says Mr Dagher's cousin, also called Ali. Early in the war, on July 17, small children are sitting in a circle having a picnic on the floor, and Mr Dagher's son, Hussein, now six, is blowing kisses at the camera. By July 19, the laughing children have been supplanted by images of worried adults, praying amid the rumble of artillery.

The scenes show Mr Dagher trying to amuse the children by getting them to offer a tour of their makeshift sleeping quarters: a windowless closet. Off camera, the women grumble about the washing up and running out of food. The television is constantly tuned to the Hizbullah station; even the smallest children know the slogans by heart.

By July 27, the fighting has got so close that six-month-old Alaa is being blown off her mattress on the floor. Three days later, during a brief ceasefire, the Daghers flee, trundling the children in wheelbarrows over the hills to safety. When they return, with Mr Dagher still filming through the shattered windscreen of his car, he thinks his neighbourhood, along the town's southern slopes, looks like Hiroshima.

The town is now emerging, slowly, from that devastation, with workmen camped out in the rubble, and bull dozers and other heavy equipment choking the roads. But even this effort is touched by Lebanon's divisions.

Immediately after the war, Hizbullah doled out up to \$6,000 (£3,000) for each family for new furniture - an act of largesse that many people presume was underwritten by Iran. The machinery of the Lebanese government was not as well oiled, and its pockets less deep.

Months later, some in Bint Jbeil complain that compensation comes first to those who are politically connected. "I was so frustrated I was going to burn tyres in front of the house," says Hussein Kosseir, who has yet to receive money to repair the shattered glass and scarred walls of his home.

Rebuilding

Still, Bint Jbeil is further along than most other places in southern Lebanon, largely because of a plan to enlist Qatar to oversee the rebuilding. Some \$100m has been set aside for reconstruction in historic neighbourhoods such as Mr Dagher's. This means a town that continues to demonstrate its fealty to Hizbullah in the yellow banners that flutter over its destruction will owe its recovery to the generosity of a government - Qatar - that enjoys economic relations with Israel, and that also hosts a giant US military base.

It's a fragile peace. Last month, two Katyusha rockets were fired over the border into Israel - the first since the war. Barely a week later, on June 24, six Spanish and Colombian soldiers from the UN force in southern Lebanon were killed by a suicide car bomber. The UN had been braced for such an attack, aimed at driving its forces out of Lebanon. "We all knew there were groups against this," says the Unifil spokesman, Milos Strugar. "There are people, groups, who would like to undermine this agreement for the cessation of hostilities."

Last summer's war erupted just six years after Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon, ending more than two decades of occupation. During that time, Hizbullah built sophisticated bunkers with elaborate electrical and ventilation systems, all carved out of the hills, despite regular Israeli drone surveillance flights. That defensive line - exposed during the war - is now being replicated just north of the Litani river, beyond the reach of the UN patrols. On a hilltop overlooking one such possible site - a slope gouged by sandstone quarrying - a lone teenage foot soldier, still too young to grow a full moustache - stands sentry. Moments after our approach, two Hizbullah officials carrying attache cases emerge to demand to see our documents.

International: Special report: Lebanon one year on: Fear and fragile peace: a long-suffering people prepare for a new war: Last July the country was plunged in....

This part of Lebanon had been dominated by Christian and Druze communities, and villagers say that a Shia businessman has been methodically buying up land since the war, becoming the area's biggest landowner. Shia families are also moving into the area.

Observers of Lebanon are not surprised by the preparations; Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, Hizbullah's leader, is known for his meticulous planning.

Timur Goksel, a former senior adviser to Unifil, said: "It shows their awareness that the next war is going to be different - and that there will be a next war.

Invasion

"Hizbullah figures that the next time Israel comes they are not going to look for missiles from the air. There is going to be a massive land invasion."

By the time a ceasefire was reached, the war that began with the capture of two Israeli soldiers in a Hizbullah cross-border raid on Israel had killed more than 1,000 Lebanese and 158 Israelis. Most of the Israelis were soldiers, although the figure also includes 43 people killed inside Israel by Hizbullah rocket attacks. The Dahia, the Hizbullah stronghold of Beirut's southern suburbs, and much of the Shia heartland of southern Lebanon, including the old town of Bint Jbeil, were in ruins. Modern tower blocks in Beirut vanished; houses that had served villagers for generations were destroyed.

Israeli bombing raids had deliberately targeted bridges and roads, and in a departing act, dropped 4m cluster bombs on orange orchards and farms in the final hours of the war. Some 120,000 have since been recovered, according to the mine-clearing taskforce operated by the UN and Lebanese authorities.

The most recent war continues to write its legacy on southern Lebanon - even as preparations are being made for the next one.

Load-Date: July 12, 2007

Lebanese leaders agree deal for unity government

The Irish Times

May 22, 2008 Thursday

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 15

Length: 429 words

Byline: LUCY FIELDER in Beirut

Body

LEBANON:FEUDING LEBANESE leaders signed a deal in Doha yesterday to end an 18-month political stand-off that dragged their long-suffering country to the brink of civil war.

Army commander Gen Michel Suleiman is to be elected president on Sunday, ending a six-month vacuum in the top seat, reserved for Christians under Lebanon's power-sharing system.

"Today, we are opening a new page in Lebanon's history," said Saad al-Hariri, whose Future Movement gunmen were defeated by Hizbullah-led opposition forces who seized west Beirut and parts of Mount Lebanon in clashes that killed at least 67 people. "I know the wounds are deep, but we have no one except each other."

Mr Hariri is a front runner for prime minister.

Also agreed is a national unity government that grants the opposition a third-plus-one of cabinet seats and therefore veto power over strategic government measures. Analysts said Hizbullah had converted its military win to political gain.

Two decisions by the western-backed government of prime minister Fouad al-Seniora, which took aim at Hizbullah's telephone network and an allied airport security chief, prompted the military escalation two weeks ago.

Haggling over seats in Beirut's three electoral districts threatened to scupper the Qatari-brokered deal, as the two sides tried to swing a 2009 parliamentary poll to their advantage a year before it takes place. In the end, they agreed on a 1960 law demanded by the opposition, tweaked for the ruling team.

"In parts of Beirut, you may as well not vote next year," said Karim Makdisi, political science professor at the American University of Beirut. "Now the leaders can get back to dividing the spoils."

Arab League secretary-general Amr Moussa said there had been "no victor, no vanquished" - a popular catchphrase at the end of Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war.

But Iranian and Syrian-backed Hizbullah won a greater share in power and effective protection for its "resistance weapons", demands at the heart of its political campaign.

Hours after the signing, the opposition began dismantling a protest camp that has sprawled across two downtown Beirut squares since December 2006, a symbol of deadlock and stagnation.

Lebanese leaders agree deal for unity government

"We won in July 2006, thank God, and we've won again this May," said Afifa Bahsoun, a middle-aged woman wearing a headscarf, referring to the war between Israel and **Hizbullah**. "This is a victory for all Lebanon."

Beirutis milled around downtown taking photos. In one café, a group of young **women** kissed each other three times - Beirut style - and exchanged cries of "mabrouk!" or "congratulations!"

Load-Date: May 22, 2008

End of Document

A death fit for a terror chief; Imad Mughniyeh (1962-2008) Hezbollah security chief honed suicide bombings

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)

February 17, 2008 Sunday

Final Edition

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Section: SUNDAY READER – PASSAGES; Pg. E9

Length: 722 words

Byline: Con Coughlin, Daily Telegraph

Dateline: LONDON

Body

LONDON - As a young reporter working in Beirut 25 years ago, when my daily routine consisted of dodging car bombs and Shia kidnappers, one name that could be guaranteed to spread terror throughout the beleaguered community of foreign nationals was that of Imad Mughniyeh.

The 1980s were the heyday of the celebrity terrorist. There was Carlos the Jackal, the Venezuelan-born Marxist who led the team that took 42 OPEC ministers hostage during a conference in Vienna in 1975; he was then living under the protection of Syria in Damascus. And there was Abu Nidal, the radical Palestinian terrorist, who thought nothing of machine-gunning innocent women and children as they waited to board their flights, as happened at Rome and Vienna in 1985. But they were both amateurs when compared with the murderous effectiveness of the terror campaign that Mughniyeh, the Hezbollah security chief killed in Damascus last week, orchestrated in Beirut from the early 1980s.

Mughniyeh might not have been either as famous or as glamorous as the other terrorist masterminds of his generation, but in terms of achieving his ultimate objective of spreading terror throughout the civilian population, he was without peer.

One of the more chilling aspects of Mughniyeh's legacy of violence was the introduction of the suicide bomber as an effective terrorist tool. With suicide bombings these days almost a daily occurrence throughout the Middle East, whether in Baghdad or Israel, it is easy to forget that the suicide bomber is a relatively recent addition to the region's battle-scarred landscape.

The first time the concept of the suicide bomber really impinged on the West's consciousness was on April 18, 1983, when Mughniyeh arranged for a Hezbollah volunteer to drive a truck laden with explosives into the American embassy in Beirut. Among the 60 people killed when the building was reduced to rubble were an estimated 20 CIA officers at a special regional conference. Not only had Mughniyeh shown his ability to conduct major terror operations, but the timing of the attack meant that the CIA suffered the single most devastating loss of personnel in its history.

Developed kidnapping tactic

A death fit for a terror chief; Imad Mughniyeh (1962-2008) Hezbollah security chief honed suicide bombings

Mughniyeh went on to develop kidnapping as an effective terrorist tactic. The abduction of scores of Westerners -- including the British hostages Terry Waite and John McCarthy -- together with the incessant suicide car bombings, which culminated in the destruction of the American and French military bases in Beirut with the loss of more than 300 lives in October 1983, resulted in the Americans undertaking a humiliating withdrawal of their forces from Beirut.

As head of security for Hezbollah, Mughniyeh's terrorist expertise was in great demand, and his trademark suicide truck bomb was employed to devastating effect in the bombings in Buenos Aires of the Israeli embassy and a Jewish community centre (1994), the attack on the U.S. military compound in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia (1996) and the suicide bomb attacks on the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Tanzania (1998).

Not surprisingly, Mughniyeh featured as prominently on the FBI's most wanted list as Osama bin Laden, and a \$25-million reward was placed on his head -- dead or alive. That he managed to evade detection for so long was primarily due to his Iranian paymasters, who provided him with a sanctuary in Tehran. But the growing crisis over Iran's nuclear program meant the Iranians had to reactivate their most valuable terrorist asset, and in recent months Mughniyeh is believed to have been busy arranging the assassinations of a number of anti-Syrian Lebanese politicians as part of Tehran's regional campaign of destabilization, which would explain his presence in the Syrian capital at the time of his death.

After years in the shadows, Mughniyeh was forced to break cover and become fully involved in Iran's attempts to destabilize the region in a cynical ploy to deflect attention away from its nuclear program. But his attempts to resurrect his career of violence proved to be a step too far. Ronald Reagan, who presided over the Lebanon debacle in the 1980s, once warned Mughniyeh and his ilk, "You can run, but can't hide," and so it has proved, although the manner of his death suggests Israel's Mossad was more likely to be responsible for the assassination, rather than Washington.

Load-Date: February 21, 2008

End of Document

Local demonstrations flay Israel over Gaza onslaught

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

March 3, 2008 Monday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 566 words

Byline: Daily Star Staff

Body

Hundreds of **Hizbullah** supporters gathered Sunday at a border fence separating Lebanon and Israel to protest ongoing Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip that have killed nearly 70 Palestinians in two days and more than 100 in less than a week. Up to 1,000 supporters carrying Lebanese and Palestinian flags took part in the demonstration.

Hundreds of **Hizbullah** supporters gathered Sunday at a border fence separating Lebanon and Israel to protest ongoing Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip that have killed nearly 70 Palestinians in two days and more than 100 in less than a week. Up to 1,000 supporters carrying Lebanese and Palestinian flags took part in the demonstration at the Fatima Gate border point in the Southern village of Kfar Kila across from Israeli outposts on the other side.

"Death to Israel," some of them shouted. Others carried banners that read in Arabic: "The blood of our sons in Palestinian will not be in vain."

Nearly 70 Palestinian, roughly half of them civilians, were killed in two days of Israeli attacks against Gaza. At least 54 Palestinians were killed in fighting Saturday, the highest single-day death toll in more than seven years of violence. Two Israeli soldiers also were killed.

The attacks, which Israel says are in response to Palestinian rocket attacks, have caused fury in the Arab street, with demonstrations Saturday in Palestinian refugee camps in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.

The attacks have been denounced by many Arab governments, including Lebanon, the Gulf countries, Egypt and Jordan, while Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has described them as a "holocaust" against the Palestinian people.

In a statement, **Hizbullah** denounced Israel's "brutal aggression" on Gaza and the Occupied West Bank. "Before the eyes of the whole world, the Israeli war machine kills the Palestinian people and slaughters its innocent children, without causing leaders - who claim to protect human rights - to bat an eye," the statement said.

Hizbullah also described the Israeli attacks as a holocaust against the Palestinians, "protected by the United States and financed by Western countries."

Local demonstrations flay Israel over Gaza onslaught

"If Arab governments will remain silent, the Arab people are invited to support Palestinians and lift the unjust siege protected by the US with Arab complicity," the resistance said. "The Palestinians have made enormous sacrifices ... History has taught us that such heroic struggles end in victory and the defeat of occupiers and evil, which in our day and time are represented by [Israel], backed by the corrupt US government."

Also Sunday, hundreds of students held protests near the headquarters of the Arab League in Beirut, calling on Arab leaders to stop Israeli aggression and support the Palestinians. Some of the protesters burned Israeli and American flags and chanted slogans against the two nations.

Thousands of Palestinian refugees in South Lebanon also protested against Israel's assault on Gaza. **Women** and children took part in the protest at the Ain al-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp in Sidon on Saturday.

"Death to Israel," shouted the angry protesters, carrying black flags and pictures of Palestinian children killed in the latest Israeli attack.

The protesters also burned Israeli and American flags.

They called on **Hizbullah**'s leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, to avenge the killing of Palestinian children. - **AP, with additional reporting by Mohammed Zaatari**

Load-Date: October 22, 2008

Local demonstrations flay Israel over Gaza onslaught

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

March 3, 2008 Monday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 566 words

Byline: Daily Star Staff

Body

Hundreds of **Hizbullah** supporters gathered Sunday at a border fence separating Lebanon and Israel to protest ongoing Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip that have killed nearly 70 Palestinians in two days and more than 100 in less than a week. Up to 1,000 supporters carrying Lebanese and Palestinian flags took part in the demonstration.

Hundreds of **Hizbullah** supporters gathered Sunday at a border fence separating Lebanon and Israel to protest ongoing Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip that have killed nearly 70 Palestinians in two days and more than 100 in less than a week. Up to 1,000 supporters carrying Lebanese and Palestinian flags took part in the demonstration at the Fatima Gate border point in the Southern village of Kfar Kila across from Israeli outposts on the other side.

"Death to Israel," some of them shouted. Others carried banners that read in Arabic: "The blood of our sons in Palestinian will not be in vain."

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Load-Date: June 30, 2008

Beirut divided in mourning for fallen leaders

Guardian.com

February 14, 2008

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theguardian

Length: 901 words

Highlight: Two protests over the deaths of a *Hizbullah* chief this week and a former prime minister three years ago expose Lebanese divisions

Body

It was Beirut's tale of two cities: two protests over two slain leaders today cruelly exposed the divisions of a small and fractured state on the faultlines of the Middle East.

It was a perfect opportunity for split-screen coverage: a sea of national Cedar flags on one side; acres of *Hizbullah*'s yellow banner, with its logo of a defiantly raised Kalashnikov rifle, on the other.

In Martyrs Square, in the heart of the Lebanese capital, hundreds of thousands paid tribute to Rafik Hariri, the former prime minister whose murder three years ago was widely blamed on Syria and triggered the Cedar Revolution that drove out the Syrians and changed the political map of the region.

Held under heavy security and in driving rain, the show of force by the western-backed government was followed in the Shia southern suburbs by a mass funeral service for Imad Mughniyeh, the *Hizbullah* military chief killed by a car bomb in Damascus on Tuesday night.

The Hariri crowd, estimated at more than 1 million by the organisers, braved the downpour to hear speeches about Lebanon's independence, freedom and justice by speakers protected by bullet-proof glass and flanked by giant photographs of two dozen murdered anti-Syrian figures.

At Ruweis, in south Beirut, there were deafening volleys of machinegun fire and calls for revenge on America and Israel - blamed by *Hizbullah* for this week's bombing - as prayers were held and Mughniyeh's coffin was borne aloft by bearded, black-uniformed fighters watched by women in flowing chadors.

The appalling weather was about all the two gatherings had in common.

"No one in this city who went to the Hariri memorial rally would ever go to support *Hizbullah*," said Samir Jowhar, a pro-government Druze whose two brothers died in the 15-year civil war. "The opposition are tools of Iran and Syria - traitors to their country."

Hizbullah showed the strength and discipline that allowed it to claim the laurels of resistance and victory in the July 2006 war with Israel. Hundreds of stewards patrolled streets that are no-go areas for the Lebanese state, all wearing plastic badges showing the "martyr" Mughniyeh's features.

Beirut divided in mourning for fallen leaders

The organisation's leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, issued a stark warning of the consequences of the killing. "With this murder, its timing, location and method - Zionists, if you want this kind of open war, let the whole world listen: let this war be open."

Israel has publicly denied any involvement in the killing, though both it and the US welcomed the death of a man they saw as a ruthless and uniquely experienced terrorist.

Nasrallah, in hiding for fear of assassination, spoke over a video link, the security risk deemed too great for him to appear in public.

"The July war is not over," he pledged. "The blood of Imad Mughniyeh will contribute to the disappearance of the Jewish state."

Underlining ***Hizbullah***'s key strategic alliance, the VIPs attending the ceremony included Manuchehr Mottaki, the Iranian foreign minister, who read a message of condolence from President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Mottaki left immediately afterwards for talks with the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, another key backer of the militant Lebanese Shia group.

In Martyrs Square, there was loud applause for Hariri's son Sa'ad, now part of the ruling Christian-Sunni-Druze coalition, when he thundered: "The truth is that Lebanon is being assassinated."

Thousands cheered the slogan "the tribunal is coming" - a reference to the UN body many hope will eventually incriminate Assad in the 2005 Beirut killing.

"We were born free and we will die free," said Naila Mouawad, a government minister. "We won't allow Lebanon's destiny to be linked to the Syrian regime."

Rising tensions in recent weeks, and especially the shooting by the army of seven Shia demonstrators, have encouraged gloomy talk of a new Lebanese civil war, though despite inflammatory speeches there seems little appetite for what would doubtless be a bloody sectarian struggle.

Government and opposition are so evenly balanced that neither can budge. The presidency has been vacant since last November and parliament no longer meets. Arab League mediation has failed to bridge the gap between the sides.

"Things are much more polarised now than a few months ago," said a western diplomat. "There's no middle ground, no will to compromise, and there are no deadlines or incentives."

Nadim Shehadi, a political analyst, said: "These two events taking place just a few miles from each other in Beirut symbolise the divisions that are paralysing this country. But at least it has been peaceful."

In Martyrs Square, Sa'ad Hariri called for agreement on the only candidate for the presidency, army commander General Michel Suleiman.

"Our hand is extended and will remain extended, no matter what the difficulties," he said.

Nasrallah responded cautiously: "When we see that the extended hand is sincere, it will only be met by an extended hand."

Such appeals to unity may be the only option left. "The hazard of history has made it such that a large number of Lebanese will be commemorating the loss of Prime Minister Hariri while a large number of Lebanese will be mourning one of the leaders of ***Hizbullah***," said the culture minister, Tareq Mitri, before the two gatherings got under way.

"Let us hope that this will not be a another divisive factor in Lebanon. We need to heal our divisions, we need to transcend what divides us."

Beirut divided in mourning for fallen leaders

Load-Date: February 14, 2008

End of Document

Schalit talks set to resume in Cairo this week - Israel. Hamas, Islamic Jihad threaten to end cease-fire

The Jerusalem Post

July 20, 2008 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 843 words

Byline: YAAKOV KATZ and KHALED ABU TOAMEH

Highlight: Lead Story

Body

After over a month of delays and only days after completing a prisoner swap with Hizbullah, defense officials said over the weekend that Israel is scheduled to renew Egyptian-mediated negotiations with Hamas this week for the release of St.-Sgt. Gilad Schalit.

The officials said that Israel had been waiting for a green light from Egypt regarding the renewal of the talks, which have been suspended since before the cease-fire between Israel and Hamas went into effect in June.

"The negotiations depend on the Egyptians," one official said, adding that there was a concern in Israel now that Hamas would raise its demands following the completion of the swap with Hizbullah.

Israeli officials said that Ofer Dekel, the former deputy head of the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) who was appointed chief negotiator on the prisoner exchange issue, would travel to Cairo this week to discuss renewing the talks.

On Friday, the Palestinian Ma'an News Agency reported that the issue holding up the negotiations was the identity of the prisoners Israel would release in exchange for Schalit, kidnapped in June 2006.

Hamas said over the weekend that it was convinced that "sooner or later, Israel would give in to our conditions" regarding the case of Schalit.

Abu Obaidah, spokesman for Hamas's armed wing, Izaddin Kassam, the group that is holding the IDF soldier, claimed that Israel's "intransigence" was behind the delay in achieving an agreement over a prisoner release.

Referring to the recent deal between Israel and Hizbullah, Abu Obaidah expressed hope that it would serve as an incentive for a new agreement between Israel and Hamas.

"Hamas considers the deal with Hizbullah an honorable achievement for the Lebanese resistance," he said. "This deal also proves that Israel's criterion for releasing [security] prisoners has been shattered. In the past, Israel refused to free prisoners serving lengthy sentences."

He expressed confidence that Israel would eventually succumb on the case of Schalit. "Sooner or later Israel will have to accept our conditions," he added. "Unless Israel accepts all our demands, there will be no agreement."

Schalit talks set to resume in Cairo this week - Israel . Hamas, Islamic Jihad threaten to end cease-fire

The Hamas spokesman said the case of Schalit was much more complicated than the Israel-Hizbullah deal because of the "siege" on the Gaza Strip and the large number of prisoners that Hamas was demanding.

"We are demanding the release of hundreds of prisoners serving lengthy sentences or life terms," he said. "We are also asking for all the sick prisoners, as well as the women and minors."

He said that the problem until now was Israel's "reluctance" to accept Hamas's demands. "Israel is continuing with its stubbornness," he charged. "But following the deal with Hizbullah, there are growing calls inside Israel for striking a deal with Hamas at any price."

Abu Obaidah confirmed that Hamas was under pressure to replace Egyptian mediators with German intermediaries who played a key role in bringing about the Israel-Hizbullah agreement.

"Egypt's role is very weak," he said. "In the absence of Arab and Islamic backing, Egypt alone can't put pressure on Israel to reopen the border crossings. Egypt's weakness is one of the reasons behind the delay in achieving an agreement over Schalit."

Abu Obaidah warned that failure to comply with Hamas's demands would prompt the movement to kidnap more IDF soldiers in the future to release Palestinian prisoners.

Accusing Israel of failing to abide by the cease-fire agreement by refusing to reopen the border crossings into the Gaza Strip, Abu Obaidah said he did not rule out the possibility that Hamas and the rest of the Palestinian factions would end the truce.

"We will end the truce and resume our operations against Israel to force it to reopen the border crossings," he said.

He also warned Israel against invading the Gaza Strip, saying the Palestinians were prepared more than ever to thwart such an offensive.

Hamas Interior Minister Said Siam also accused Israel over the weekend of "violating" the cease-fire by retaining the blockade on the Gaza Strip. He said that his government was in touch with the Egyptians to acquaint them with the alleged Israeli violations.

Siam also hinted that Hamas might seek the help of the Germans if the Egyptians fail to exert enough pressure on Israel to lift the blockade and reopen all the border crossings.

"There are some voices inside Hamas that are demanding that we replace the Egyptians with Germans or other international parties," he said. "But until now we remain committed to the role the Egyptian mediators are playing."

The Islamic Jihad organization also threatened to end the truce. Nafez Azzam, a senior Jihad official in the Gaza Strip, accused Israel of failing to live up to its commitments under the terms of the cease-fire accord.

"Although the Palestinians have abided by the truce, Israel is continuing to drag its feet," he said. "Israel is still preventing enough goods from entering the Gaza Strip. One can say that the situation on the ground hasn't changed much for the Palestinians one month after the truce."

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Why Israel's incursion into Gaza will not change much

The Irish Times

January 17, 2009 Saturday

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Section: OPINION; Opinion; Pg. 15

Length: 925 words

Byline: RAMEZ MALUF

Body

WORLD VIEW:THE SOUND blasts from the loudspeakers in the mosque near my office in Beirut are causing the windowpane to shudder. It is noon on Friday, and the local muezzin is leading the faithful in prayer. The mosque is full, the crowd of believers spilling over to the sidewalk in front. Today, the muezzin is more upset than usual, and he has been very upset of late.

He is admonishing Arab leaders for failing to stop the violence in Gaza, for failing to confront Israel and the United States, for failing to come to the assistance of Hamas and the Palestinians. Arab leaders are traitors to the ummah [Arab world], he tells the crowd. He quotes from the Koran to make it clear that they will burn in hell.

You ask why they are not coming to the help of our people? Because they are corrupt; they are cowards, puppets of the imperialists. That is the reason.

It is taking him a long time to make his point, but that is the gist of this Friday's sermon.

In my opinion, there is at least another reason, and that is that Arab leaders, as well as large segments of their populations, are suffering from war fatigue. They want to see an end to the conflict, one way or another. If Israel is able to crack down decisively on Hamas, they reason, the road may be open for a peace agreement. Admittedly, to many others, this is nothing short of defeatism, surrender to the enemies of man and God.

But defeatism or not, there is no denying that an increasing number of Arabs want an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Those leaders being admonished by the muezzin probably believe that only a minority of diehards, particularly Hamas and Hizbullah supporters, remain as obstacles to peace.

That may be the case. But even if so, the Israeli incursion into Gaza is unlikely to change matters much. Hamas and Hizbullah are likely to remain thorns in Israel's side for a long time, and this for at least three reasons.

The first is that come what may, Hamas will portray this last round of fighting as a victory. From his exile in Damascus, the Islamic group's leader, Khaled Meshal, has been touting the success of his fighters' resistance every day. Despite the human tragedy, he remains unwilling to compromise. His tone is defiant and unyielding. Almost incomprehensibly, many of his and Hizbullah's supporters are convinced that the tide has changed. When he speaks about fighting for Palestine, he means all of Palestine, and not just land lost in 1948.

Recently on a morning political show on Hizbullah's Al Manar TV, a respected Shia scholar told his hosts that it was about time Arabs start discussing what the Middle East will look like without Israel. I am not saying that this is

Why Israel 's incursion into Gaza will not change much

going to happen tomorrow or after tomorrow, he said. But there is reason to think that we will not have a Jewish state in the region in the not too distant future.

Was it not time for scholars and politicians to study that possibility? Obviously, seemed to think his female co-hosts, who nodded repeatedly in agreement.

Particularly after the failure of the Israelis to end the July 2006 attack on Lebanon on their own terms, morale among Hizbullah and Hamas militants has soared. The myth of Israeli invincibility has been conclusively put to rest, Hizbullah leader Hassan Nasrallah tells TV audiences at every one of his appearances.

The second reason is the ability of Hamas and Hizbullah to secure weaponry.

Unless the Israeli incursion results in the destruction of all artisan tunnels between Egypt and Gaza, Hamas will continue to have access to armament and material needed to manufacture their rockets.

The Dubai-based Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis reported on January 14th that Palestinians in Gaza have recently started to manufacture a 122mm-calibre Grad version of the Katyusha that is about 30 per cent lighter than the most advanced Qassam rockets they previously used, with an improved range of 18-30km. According to the report, the Palestinians may be on the verge of improving their range capability and placing the larger Katyusha rocket as the mainstay of their inventory in place of the Qassam, which carries a lighter explosive load and has a range of no more than 9km .

While Israel is currently in the midst of restructuring its anti-rocket defence systems, even the more favourable assessments recognise that its options are limited and will ensure only partial results. Matters may improve after 2010 when the Jewish state begins to take delivery of its high-speed anti-rocket Iron Dome defence system, and more so after 2013 when it will start putting in place its long-range Magic Wand systems. Nevertheless, Israel s vulnerability to rocket attacks will be diminished but not considerably removed.

The third reason is that the appeal of Islamic organisations among Palestinians, as well as other Arab militants, is likely to grow rather than diminish in the years to come. It is naïve to expect that the impoverished Palestinian and Arab populations surrounding Israel will choose to confront Israel as secular liberal democrats, when the West in all of its wisdom, wants to support, arm, and, in the case of the United States, finance a Jewish state in the Middle East, albeit dressed in the garb of modernity.

Those who want to support a religious state must be ready to fight a religious war. The muezzin in the mosque nearby has learned that lesson, and his crowd grows larger every week.

Ramez Maluf is a professor of communication at the Lebanese American University in Beirut.

Paul Gillespie is on leave

Load-Date: January 20, 2009

Eyewitness 14.02.08: Beirut: One city, two protests: Beirut's deadly divide

The Guardian - Final Edition

February 15, 2008 Friday

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Section: GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES; Pg. 23

Length: 654 words

Byline: Ian Black, Beirut

Body

It was Beirut's tale of two cities: two huge protests over two slain leaders yesterday exposed the divisions of a small, fractured country on the faultlines of the Middle East - fuelling fears that they may prove impossible to overcome.

It was a perfect opportunity for split-screen coverage: a sea of national cedar flags on one side; acres of **Hizbullah**'s yellow banner with its defiantly raised Kalashnikov rifle logo in the other.

In Martyrs Square, in the heart of the Lebanese capital, hundreds of thousands paid tribute to Rafiq al-Hariri, the former prime minister whose murder three years ago was widely blamed on Syria - and triggered the "Cedar revolution" that drove out the Syrians and changed the political map of the region.

Held under heavy security and in driving rain, the show of force by the western-backed government was followed in the Shia southern suburbs by a mass funeral service for Imad Mughniyeh, the **Hizbullah** military chief killed by a car bomb in Damascus on Tuesday.

The Hariri crowd, said by organisers to be more than a million, heard speeches on Lebanon's independence, freedom and justice by speakers protected by bulletproof glass and flanked by giant photographs of two dozen murdered anti-Syrian figures.

Later, at Ruweis in south Beirut, there were volleys of machine gun fire and calls for revenge on Israel and America as prayers were held and Mughniyeh's coffin was borne aloft by black-uniformed fighters watched by **women** in flowing chadors.

The appalling weather was about all the two gatherings had in common.

"No one in this city who went to the Hariri rally would ever go to support **Hizbullah**," said Samir Jowhar, a pro-government Druze whose two brothers died in the 15-year civil war. "The opposition are tools of Iran and Syria - traitors to their country."

Hizbullah showed the strength and discipline that allowed it to claim the laurels of resistance and victory in the July 2006 war with Israel. Hundreds of stewards patrolled streets that are no-go areas for the Lebanese state - all wearing badges showing the "martyr" Mughniyeh's features.

The organisation's leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, issued a stark warning of the consequences of the killing. "Zionists, if you want this kind of open war, let the whole world listen: let this war be open," he said. Israel has

Eyewitness 14.02.08: Beirut: One city, two protests: Beirut's deadly divide

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Nasrallah spoke over a video link - the security risk deemed too great for him to appear in public. "The July war is not over," he pledged. "The blood of Imad Mughniyeh will contribute to the disappearance of the Jewish state."

Underlining Hizbullah's strategic alliance, the VIPs in attendance included Manuchehr Mottaki, Iran's foreign minister, who read a message of condolence from President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Earlier, in Martyrs Square, there was loud applause for Sa'ad al-Hariri, the murdered man's son and now part of the ruling Christian-Sunni-Druze coalition, when he thundered: "The truth is that Lebanon is being assassinated."

Thousands cheered the slogan "the tribunal is coming", a reference to the UN body many hope will eventually incriminate Bashar al-Assad, Syria's president, in the killing. "We were born free and we will die free," said minister Naila Mouawad.

Rising tensions - especially the shooting by the army of seven Shia demonstrators - in recent weeks have encouraged fears of a new civil war, but despite inflammatory speeches there seems little appetite for what would be a bloody sectarian struggle.

Government and opposition are so evenly balanced that neither can budge without triggering an explosion. The presidency has been vacant since last November and parliament no longer meets. "Things are much more polarised now than a few months ago," said a western diplomat. "There's no middle ground, no will to compromise."

Load-Date: February 15, 2008

End of Document

One city, two protests - Beirut's deadly divide

The Guardian - Final Edition

February 15, 2008 Friday

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Section: GUARDIAN HOME PAGES; Pg. 1

Length: 840 words

Byline: Ian Black, Beirut

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One city, two protests - Beirut's deadly divide

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Government and opposition are so evenly balanced that neither can budge without triggering an explosion. The presidency has been vacant since last November and parliament no longer meets. Arab League mediation has failed to bridge the gap between the sides.

"Things are much more polarised now than a few months ago," said a western diplomat. "There's no middle ground, no will to compromise."

Nadim Shehadi, a political analyst commented: "These two events taking place just a few miles from each other in Beirut symbolise the divisions that are paralysing this country."

In Martyrs Square al-Hariri called for agreement on the only candidate for the presidency, army commander General Michel Suleiman. "Our hand is extended and will remain extended, no matter what the difficulties," he said. Nasrallah responded cautiously: "When we see that the extended hand is sincere, it will only be met by an extended hand."

Such appeals to unity may be the only option. "The hazard of history has made it such that a large number of Lebanese will be commemorating the loss of Hariri while a large number of Lebanese will be mourning one of the leaders of Hizbullah," observed the culture minister, Tareq Mitri, before the two gatherings got under way. "Let us hope this will not be a another divisive factor in Lebanon. We need to heal our divisions, we need to transcend what divides us."

Eyewitness, page 22-23 >=

Load-Date: February 15, 2008

Gaza protests come in several colors, shapes and sizes

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

January 12, 2009 Monday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 561 words

Byline: Mariam Saab

Body

From Akkar to Nabatiyeh, heated demonstrations against Israel's offensive in the Gaza Strip rippled throughout Lebanon over the weekend. But despite protesters' like-minded chants, sectarian and political rifts threatened to undermine the unity of some rallies.

BEIRUT: From Akkar to Nabatiyeh, heated demonstrations against Israel's offensive in the Gaza Strip rippled throughout Lebanon over the weekend. But despite protesters' like-minded chants, sectarian and political rifts threatened to undermine the unity of some rallies.

At least five people were hurt during a pro-Gaza rally in the northern province of Akkar on Saturday. Tensions flared after members of the Syrian Social National Party waved the party's flag, provoking residents from Haysheh and others from Wadi Khaled to hurl sticks and stones. A Syrian TV crew also came under attack.

Lebanese Army troops intervened and dispersed the antagonists before the clashes got out of control.

Local party allegiances were also loudly proclaimed in Nabatiyeh on Saturday.

Hizbullah and Palestinian flags waved alongside each other as nearly 20,000 people converged on the **Hizbullah**-organized protest against the Gaza offensive. **Women** wearing the traditional Palestinian keffiyeh scarf over black chadors carried a sign that read "July (2006) was a walk in the park," referencing recent remarks by **Hizbullah**'s leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah.

Nasrallah said during a rally last week that "the Zionists will discover the next time they decide to attack Lebanon that what they faced in July 2006 was only a walk in the park compared to what will happen."

Others protesters held what they described as prophetic banners that read "Whatever happens in Gaza, the Katyushas [rockets] are waiting."

Amid such lines of **Hizbullah**-oriented rhetoric in the Shiite majority district, other slogans emerged suggesting a united national response, with banners reading: "Gaza is the nation's battle."

Gaza protests come in several colors, shapes and sizes

Also on Saturday, the Leftist Assembly for Change, in conjunction with the Lebanese Organization for Alternative Globalization, held a demonstration in Sassine Square, Achrafieh. As an area renowned for its ties to the right-wing Christian Lebanese Forces (LF) group, the rally garnered far fewer attendees.

The line of protest was: "no to war on Gaza, no to racism, no to the international and Arab silence".

A representative of the Leftist Assembly for Change, Bassem Cheet, said he did not anticipate any backlash from LF members.

"I don't think they have the guts to stand up and say, 'we are with what's happening in Gaza,' he told The Daily Star. "If they did they would be losing their political position."

Cheet argued that sectarian divisions have diverted the focus of any given protest by giving way to another dimension of drama.

"Our aim is to widen the anti-war movement and break through the borders that are enforced by the ruling opposition forces and the loyalists," said. "For us, we don't consider any regional or sectarian split a concern. An effective demonstration cannot grow in locked rooms or from behind imaginary lines. The country belongs to us all. It is time to show refusal in every region in Lebanon."

The protests have been prompted by the mounting death toll in Gaza; to date at least 3,350 Palestinians have been wounded and 850 killed, including 235 children, 93 women, and 12 paramedics. - With AFP

Load-Date: January 20, 2009

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Can the Lebanese agree on a defense strategy?

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

November 26, 2008 Wednesday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 1488 words

Byline: Marc J. Sirois

Body

In two recent articles about Lebanon's efforts to define a suitable strategy for national defense, I have attempted to explain the importance of first laying down stable foundations. I have argued that this must include Lebanese leaders' agreeing on what diplomatic space this country should seek to hold

First person by Marc J. Sirois

In two recent articles about Lebanon's efforts to define a suitable strategy for national defense, I have attempted to explain the importance of first laying down stable foundations. I have argued that this must include Lebanese leaders' agreeing on what diplomatic space this country should seek to hold, and on how public support for that position can be built and maintained. Obviously, these two elements are inextricably linked, and the details of getting them in synch will be where the proverbial devil takes up residence.

The greatest single challenge is how to manage some truly massive differences about the concept of "resistance" and Lebanon's obligations, if any, thereto. A small sampling of the facts that must be considered in this effort offers some idea of the complexity of this process:

The United Nations Charter of 1945 does not just enshrine resistance against occupation - including the use of armed force - as a legal right; it also imposes a duty on neighboring states to facilitate that resistance until such time as the UN Security Council gets the occupier to leave. Unfortunately, however, there is nothing like the rule of law when it comes to the interactions between states and peoples, and one result is that the Security Council has consistently been prevented - primarily by the United States - from taking useful action against Israel's continuing occupation and colonization of Arab land.

In addition to preventing UN intervention, the United States has also acted in various ways to ensure that Israel retains decisive advantages - including nuclear weapons - over its neighbors in any military confrontation. One by one, therefore, most of the Arab countries have walked away from the struggle because the price in blood and treasure was simply too high. Some have made peace with the Jewish state, but most have simply retreated to the safer ground of sullen refusal to have any truck with it, and the occasional rhetorical outburst.

With all of the heavyweights out of the game, it has paradoxically fallen to Lebanon, one of the smallest and weakest Arab states, to bear most of the load when it comes to resistance. The great majority of Lebanon's own

Can the Lebanese agree on a defense strategy?

occupied land has been recovered, thanks almost exclusively to Hizbullah, but some pockets remain under the boot, and here the disagreements are multiple and at least outwardly irreconcilable. This is not to mention the fact that Palestine remains occupied, including the all-important city of Jerusalem.

Lebanon is an Arab country with most of the sympathies generally to be found among the populations of such countries, many of which have to do with undoing the historical wrong done to the Palestinians by the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Large numbers of Lebanese Muslims, especially Shiites, feel a strong sense of responsibility to contribute to the liberation of Palestine - and, understandably, to ensure that all Lebanese territory is also free of foreign occupation.

However, many Lebanese are not Muslims, and even outside the small Armenian community, there are some who do not consider themselves to be Arabs, either. There is a school of thought among some Lebanese Christians, for instance, that feels no connection at all - let alone any sense of duty - to the Palestinian cause, and in fact many of the same people regard much of the heavily Shiite South as an artificial appendage to a "real Lebanon."

These and related dichotomies, reinforced by a sectarian political model, have written much of Lebanon's painful history since independence in 1943, and they threaten to do so again.

The foregoing facts are relatively unambiguous, but how to manage them is anything but. Hizbullah and its allies argue that further armed action will be necessary to retrieve the Shebaa Farms, the Kfar Shuba Hills and the northern part of the border village of Ghajar. In addition, the party has alluded to additional struggle for what are known as the "Seven Villages" - and even to soldiering on until Occupied Jerusalem is freed.

This is all noble stuff, to be sure, but as the summer war of 2006 demonstrated with murderous clarity, the price of entering into combat with the Israeli military can be exorbitant, and the Israelis have threatened to be even more merciless if and when there is a next time.

For Hizbullah's opponents in the March 14 Forces, anything that risks another clash is (Iranian- and Syrian-orchestrated) madness. Some of these have backed away from their earlier denials that the Shebaa Farms are Lebanese, but none thinks the area worth fighting for, certainly not against an enemy who can slaughter civilians at will, as the Israelis did in 2006, and still escape any form of meaningful censure. On the contrary, the United States made sure Israel was richly rewarded for its crimes that year.

In a nutshell, then, however righteous its position (a few Security Council resolutions flouting the UN Charter notwithstanding), Hizbullah is asking all Lebanese to be willing to make heavy sacrifices - including, possibly, their lives and those of their loved ones - for the sake of a project that many of them disdain. If there is to be any progress on formulating a workable strategy of national defense, therefore, some headway must be made on bridging this enormous gap.

Lebanon has faced a similar riddle before, during the 1990s, and solved it with surprising ease. But that was a very different era in more ways than one. For one thing, the South remained under full-fledged foreign occupation, amplifying the resonance of Hizbullah's insistence on the necessity of action. For another, Lebanese politicians were operating under Syrian "tutelage," and Damascus saw the slow bleeding of the Israeli Army in South Lebanon as something that might be an effective inducement for the Jewish state to quit the Golan Heights - or, failing that, a suitable punishment for its ongoing refusal. It so happened that those most resolutely opposed to resistance were also those most resentful of the Syrian presence, so by dint of their own boycotts and Damascus' gerrymandering of the Lebanese electoral system, they had little say in policy.

The result was that successive Lebanese governments - most of them led by the late Prime Minister Rafik Hariri - supported Hizbullah's resistance activities but kept the organization and its work entirely separate from the state as a means of keeping the latter and the country's civilians from being made targets. There were too many Israeli attacks on bridges and power stations - not to mention too many wanton killings of women and children - to declare this approach anything like a blanket success, but in the end, it worked. In May 2000, the Israelis decided that they had had enough and decamped from most of the South, blasting away at civilians and journalists as they bugged out to vent their frustration at not being able to stop Hizbullah fighters from harrying them all the way to the border.

Can the Lebanese agree on a defense strategy?

Both games in question have changed in dramatic fashion.

The Syrians don't make the rules in Lebanese politics anymore, so the consensus that prevailed in the 1990s is gone - and has not been rebuilt. Since his assassination in 2005, Hariri's political heirs have gone over to those who oppose resistance, while Christian loyalists of MP Michel Aoun, long a vociferous foe of Syria, have formed an unlikely but apparently unshakable alliance with **Hizbullah**. All told, these two camps are just about evenly matched, so neither has the ability to impose its will on the other.

In addition, 2006 saw the Israelis abandon any pretense of respecting the rules that previously governed their exchanges with **Hizbullah**, usually keeping the fighting within levels known as "low-intensity" conflict. This - and subsequent threats to be even more profligate with their firepower in the future - have helped to reinforce the lack of agreement in Lebanon. Israel's deadly messages haven't been pretty (extortion via collective punishment and promises of more to come never are), but they have been brutally effective in blackmailing a good portion of the Lebanese and their political leaders into submission.

These are not small obstacles that can be easily avoided and then quickly forgotten. They must be dealt with before any defense strategy can be agreed to, much less implemented. Even the comparatively cut-and-dry circumstances of the 1990s required that several issues be finessed, and doing that can only be more difficult this time.

Marc J. Sirois is managing editor of The Daily Star. His email address is marc.sirois@dailystar.com.lb

Load-Date: November 26, 2008

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The way to exit from Lebanon's morass

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

March 11, 2008 Tuesday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 980 words

Byline: Paul Salem

Body

Clouds of war hover over Lebanon. The country is adrift without a president and with a contested government as well as a Parliament whose doors have been closed since late 2006. Tensions between rival groups spill over regularly into street clashes amid news that they are arming and training.

Clouds of war hover over Lebanon. The country is adrift without a president and with a contested government as well as a Parliament whose doors have been closed since late 2006. Tensions between rival groups spill over regularly into street clashes amid news that they are arming and training. The tense calm between Hizbullah and Israel may be broken as Hizbullah vows to retaliate for the assassination of Imad Mughniyeh, its head of operations. Israeli actions in Gaza are adding fuel to the fire. Syria is increasingly nervous as the establishment of the Hariri tribunal nears; and the United States and Saudi Arabia are raising the pressure on Damascus through political, financial and, recently, naval means.

Is there a safe passage through this morass? Domestically, the steps that we Lebanese should take are clear. Open-ended bargaining should end in favor of a constitutionally sound approach. This begins by electing a president - and luckily there is a consensus candidate - enabling the president to fulfill his function as empowered patron of the political negotiation process. This process should lead to the formation of a government - especially one of national unity that includes all major groups and that can rebuild, under the president's aegis, Lebanon's shattered internal unity. This would help shield the country from the gathering regional storms.

Among this government's first goals would be to attend to Lebanon's defense and security framework. First it must strengthen the army. It is scandalous that after four years in which the Lebanese Army has kept the peace under very difficult conditions and won a critical battle against the Fatah al-Islam terrorist group, and at a time when the army is tasked with bolstering the sovereignty and independence of the state, it has received very little in terms of regional and international support. While Hizbullah has fully rearmed and while international fleets sail up and down the Lebanese coast, the Lebanese Army has received little more than partial logistical support and used Humvees to accomplish its gargantuan tasks.

Furthermore, with Hizbullah inside the new government, the government must develop a "national defense strategy" that incorporates Hizbullah's proven force and fighting capacity into the strengthened national army. This can come in the form of a border defense force or other such arrangements that exist in other countries. Ultimate

The way to exit from Lebanon 's morass

war and peace decision-making, however, must be in the hands of the state, and ultimate command over military means must be in the hands of the army. The state and reconstructed army, however, must provide very credible answers to the recurring threat of Israeli attacks against the South and must include a realistic mechanism to finally control the Lebanese-Syrian border.

On the political front, the new government's most urgent task is to adopt an electoral law. The current Parliament's term ends in June 2009 and the way things are going today we are likely to arrive at that date without having been able to hold elections, thus entering into a period of even more complete institutional bankruptcy than today. To hold the elections we must draft an electoral law by the fall of 2008 at the latest. The government should at long last open and read the proposed draft law prepared by the government-appointed National Election Commission in June 2006, which I participated in drafting. That should be the starting point for debating electoral reform, not backroom deals by political bosses.

That law proposes lowering the voting age, creating an independent electoral management body, enabling expatriate voting, strictly controlling the abuse of money in campaigns, strictly controlling the abuse of private television stations, preventing vote-rigging, introducing measures to protect voting secrecy and to combat vote buying, and boosting women's representation. These measures would have a revolutionary effect on politics in Lebanon - measures that most political bosses from both camps today would probably not favor.

The law also introduces proportional representation, which would allow diverse groups and parties to enter Parliament so that each community is not represented merely by its communal bosses. Elections are the basis of any republic; and a truly reformed electoral law is the most important step to help rebuild our ruined political culture.

At the regional level, there is continuing need for international attention. Israel must be pressured to avert an onslaught on Gaza, which risks once again drawing Lebanon and other players into conflict. Iran, Syria and Hizbullah must be dissuaded from overreacting to Mughniyeh's assassination. Pressure must continue on Syria to reverse its policies in Lebanon - both with the aim of ending the threat of assassination against anti-Syrian politicians and pushing Damascus to compel its Lebanese allies to rejoin the constitutional process. Syria must be convinced of a two-state solution: Syria and Lebanon, sovereign states, living side by side.

As for the Hariri tribunal, its creation should be advanced quickly. The institution has hung over Lebanon and Syria for three years, and it is time that the truth comes out, that justice be done, and that Syria and Lebanon deal with the serious political repercussions that might follow from its conclusions. Only after facing those truths and overcoming them can the two countries look forward to a post-tribunal relationship.

Paul Salem is director of the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut. He wrote this commentary for **THE DAILY STAR**.

Load-Date: October 22, 2008

Sarkozy's Shebaa Farms gambit has much to recommend it

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

June 10, 2008 Tuesday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 637 words

Byline: The Daily Star

Body

New comments from French President Nicolas Sarkozy offer hope for a resolution of one of the most complicated issues facing Lebanon today, that of Israel's continuing occupation of the Shebaa Farms. The implications of a solution are nothing less than startling. First and foremost, the matter of Hizbullah's arms would take on a whole new light.

Editorial

New comments from French President Nicolas Sarkozy offer hope for a resolution of one of the most complicated issues facing Lebanon today, that of Israel's continuing occupation of the Shebaa Farms. The implications of a solution are nothing less than startling. First and foremost, the matter of Hizbullah's arms would take on a whole new light, presumably making it easier to integrate them and the men who have wielded them into the arsenal of the state - which would then become far more formidable. In addition, such a development would also make it possible at last to demarcate the entirety of Lebanon's border with Syria, a key sticking point in efforts to establish diplomatic relations between Beirut and Damascus.

Perhaps the best part of Sarkozy's approach is that it has resurrected one of slain Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's tenets, namely that Shebaa should not be decoupled from other regional issues. He had his critics for holding that view, of course. Some Lebanese were (and are) too enamored of defeatism and/or of denigrating Hizbullah to acknowledge it, but the farms are Lebanese - a fact confirmed most clearly several years ago by an Israeli academic named Asher Kaufman. There was (and is) no talking to them. Others have taken a more subtle view, arguing that Hariri's approach risked tethering Shebaa to the adjacent Golan Heights, also occupied by Israel, and therefore preventing Lebanon from ever achieving a separate peace.

There are many problems with the latter argument, but two stand out. First, there is every reason to expect that a small country like Lebanon would get the wrong end of the stick if it were ever to negotiate a bilateral peace with Israel; that is how things work in conflict resolution, especially when the Israelis are involved. Second, Israel has had plenty of time to carry out a withdrawal from Shebaa or seek negotiations, and it has done neither. In fact, it was just a few years ago that US President George W. Bush promised to raise the issue with the Israelis and the response that came back was, basically, "what's in it for us?"

Sarkozy's Shebaa Farms gambit has much to recommend it

Actually, they might have avoided a war with Lebanon in which Hizbullah exposed their much-ballyhooed military as having little stomach for a fight with people who are neither women nor children. A similar option is still available for Israel, one that both would help it save face and grease the wheels of its own indirect negotiations with Syria. As a first step, progress on Shebaa would almost have to include Damascus' officially communicating to the United Nations what it has already effectively conceded, namely that the farms are Lebanese and not Syrian. The formula most commonly bandied about would then see Shebaa fall under UN supervision until the Golan was evacuated. Instead of several interlocking issues preventing movement on any of them, then, a phased and internationalized transfer of Shebaa might allow leverage to start working the other way.

What's in it for Lebanon? Sarkozy's having picked up this particular ball means this country has an opportunity to simultaneously regain occupied land and defuse internal tensions. These advantages mean a great deal to average Lebanese who live in fear of how the next crisis - foreign or domestic - will affect their livelihoods, endanger their children and interrupt their education. Any Lebanese government, of any composition, that fails to see - and avidly pursue - the value in this will hear about it.

Load-Date: October 23, 2008

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The way to exit from Lebanon's morass

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

March 11, 2008 Tuesday

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THE DAILY STAR

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Is there a safe passage through this morass? Domestically, the steps that we Lebanese should take are clear. Open-ended bargaining should end in favor of a constitutionally sound approach. This begins by electing a president - and luckily there is a consensus candidate - enabling the president to fulfill his function as empowered patron of the political negotiation process. This process should lead to the formation of a government - especially one of national unity that includes all major groups and that can rebuild, under the president's aegis, Lebanon's shattered internal unity. This would help shield the country from the gathering regional storms.

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The way to exit from Lebanon 's morass

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Paul Salem is director of the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut. He wrote this commentary for **THE DAILY STAR**.

Load-Date: June 30, 2008

Comment & Debate: Truce or bloodbath: Ignoring its own people's wishes in attacking Gaza, Israel leaves Hamas no choice but to fight back

The Guardian - Final Edition

March 3, 2008 Monday

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the**guardian**

Section: GUARDIAN COMMENT AND DEBATE PAGES ; Pg. 30

Length: 618 words

Byline: Azzam Tamimi

Body

A recent poll published in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz suggested that 64% of Israelis favoured a negotiated truce with Hamas. But in the past few days, a military onslaught that has so far claimed more than a hundred Palestinian lives, mostly women and children, has made it clear that the Israeli leadership is not interested in any peaceful exit from the current predicament.

The Ha'aretz poll may point to a lack of confidence in the government's ability to settle its problem with Gaza through the use of force, and vindicate those within the military and intelligence community who have been advising the Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert to talk to Hamas. A truce as once proposed by Giora Eiland, who served as national security adviser to the former prime minister Ariel Sharon, would entail a reasonable exchange of prisoners and a lifting of sanctions in exchange for a cessation of all hostilities between the two sides. Hamas would, in principle, have agreed to negotiate a truce along these terms. But it seems that Olmert's cabinet has not given up on the idea of bringing Hamas to its knees or finishing it off altogether.

The attack on Gaza comes at a time when all previous means of inciting the Strip's population against Hamas have failed. The sanctions imposed globally on Hamas and the siege that almost suffocates Gaza's 1.5 million inhabitants have neither forced Hamas to accept the three conditions set out by the Quartet (the US, the UN, Russia and the EU) nor convinced the Palestinian population to rise against it.

The enormous resources dedicated to empowering an influential group within Fatah to effect a coup against the legitimate government backfired and finally uprooted that group from the Palestinian political scene. Starving Gaza while the Ramallah-based West Bank authority receives financial and political backing from Israel and its allies in the west has failed to shift Palestinian opinion in favour of President Mahmud Abbas and his prime minister, Salam Fayyad. So, rather than heed the advice of the experts and fulfil the wish of his own public, Olmert has decided to go to war with the Gaza Strip.

Once again Olmert is taking a gamble. He might have been encouraged by the fact that, unlike Hizbullah in Lebanon, Hamas has no immediate regional backers and is less capable of confronting his troops. The rockets fired from Gaza are nothing compared with the missiles Hizbullah used in July 2006.

Comment & Debate: Truce or bloodbath: Ignoring its own people's wishes in attacking Gaza, Israel leaves
 Hamas no choice but to fight back

This is perhaps what encourages senior Israelis officials to threaten the Palestinians with a "shoah" if they continue to defy Israel. It is not clear whether the Israeli defence minister meant to use the Hebrew word for Holocaust when he warned the Palestinians of Gaza. What really matters is that the message has been delivered; this Israeli administration, which has failed to force capitulation on the Palestinians, is willing to use its war machine to burn them alive.

The Israeli establishment is incapable of learning a single lesson from past experience. Hamas, like **Hizbullah**, and the Palestinians, like the Lebanese, have no choice but to fight back until the Israelis are forced to retreat. Few people thought that **Hizbullah** could defeat Israel in 2006. Fewer people may think today that Hamas is capable of something similar. They might be surprised. The number of casualties among the Palestinians will, undoubtedly be much higher, but Israelis will die and suffer too. The only way to avoid a bloodbath is for the Israeli army to withdraw immediately from Gaza and negotiate a truce before it is too late.

Dr Azzam Tamimi, the director of the London-based Institute of Islamic Political Thought, is the author of Hamas: Unwritten Chapters info@ii-pt.com

Load-Date: March 3, 2008

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Lebanon's grand ayatollah a moderate with millions of followers

The Irish Times

October 17, 2008 Friday

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Section: WORLD; Other World Stories; Pg. 14

Length: 897 words

Body

Lebanon's senior Shia cleric, although seen as mentor to *Hizbullah*, is a man of moderate views who preaches dialogue, writes **Michael Jansen** in Beirut

SAYED MUHAMMAD Hussein Fadlullah, Lebanon's sole grand ayatollah, reached the top of the Shia hierarchy, the marja'iyat or emulated clerics, through piety, scholarship and good works.

His office is deep in the Dahiya, the southern suburbs of Beirut ruled by *Hizbullah*. Although of Lebanese origin, Sayed Fadlullah (73), was born and educated in Shia seminaries in Iraq.

In 1952, he moved to Beirut where he became a scholar, wrote books and founded an association which established a public library, a hospital, schools, orphanages and Islamic centres. Regarded by some as the spiritual mentor of *Hizbullah*, although Iran's late Ayatollah Khomeini holds that place, the sayed was targeted by assassins on several occasions. A car bomb near his home in 1985 killed 80 people.

He wears the high black turban of the sayeds, men who can trace their lineage to the family of the Prophet Muhammad, and dons a tan caftan covered with a white, fine linen abbaya, or cloak.

His visage is pale and acetic, his eyes are gentle. Sayed Fadlullah, a moderate, is a reformer who has millions of followers in the Shia world.

He blames the centuries-old divergence between Shias and Sunnis on figures who sought to exploit differences for political gain. This, he says, "resulted in tribal feuds" leading "some Sunnis and some Shias to regard each other as infidels". The groups should, instead, "develop a common understanding and bring closer their interpretations of Islamic law and philosophy . . . we strive to bring together Sunnis and Shias to arrive at the great goal of Islamic unity".

Speaking in general terms, he argues: "In any religious dispute, differences are accentuated by feudalism and extremism and transformed into political problems." He compares disagreements between Muslims to divisions between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland.

"We believe in dialogue between religions. I wrote a book 20 years ago on Islamic-Christian dialogue. We believe dialogue brings minds together and allows people to understand one another. Many religious problems are due to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Dialogue solves problems if minds are open . . . Violence never solves problems, rather it complicates problems".

Lebanon 's grand ayatollah a moderate with millions of followers

He rejects the domination of small countries by great powers and says the US "tries to control the Islamic world . . . by deepening differences and feuds." He gives as examples Shias and Sunnis in Iraq and Lebanon and argues that the powerful seek to "outlaw" Iran.

On Muslim attacks in the West, he says: "We find many Muslims living in the West who could not find a dignified, healthy existence in their own countries. But western extremists try to complicate their lives, leading some Muslims to react against the extremism of the West."

Sayed Fadlullah says the system of governance installed by Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, *walayet-e-faqih*, or rule by the imam, should involve election of the imam by experts, along with monitoring and removal, if he is found to be a "dictator", "ruling in a personal manner" or straying from Muslim law.

Walayet-e-faqih is subject to "different interpretations, even in Iran itself, where some scholars do not accept it . . . I myself don't believe in the absolute authority of the imam unless the interests of the nation are endangered".

On this point, he differs with ***Hizbullah***, which accepts the absolute authority of Iran's spiritual guide, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the successor of Ayatollah Khomeini.

On treatment of children and the place of ***women***, the sayed adopts a progressive line.

"Children have rights in the family and society. Fathers are responsible for taking care of their children's welfare, education and intellectual development."

Parents and teachers must not beat or abuse children physically or psychologically. He mentions a ruling (fatwa) he issued stating parents and teachers should pay children compensation if harmed.

"A woman is a human being exactly like a man . . . There is no difference in their mental or other capacities. ***Women*** have the right to be respected . . . educated to the maximum, [to] take part in political life, elect and be elected at all levels and assume responsibility for administration in the state . . . She is also legally and financially independent and is free to dispose of her financial resources without interference from her father, brother or husband . . . I issued a fatwa saying that a woman has the right to defend herself . . . if a man strikes her.

"The marriage relationship is defined in a contract, like any other contract," in which the two sides must honour their commitments. Partners must also undertake to provide for each other's sexual needs, without oppression, so spouses do not look outside marriage for satisfaction.

On the communal power struggle in Lebanon, he observes: "I believe reconciliation is happening at the upper level and that this will have a positive affect on ordinary people . . . [However] various countries are benefiting from the sectarian regime in Lebanon by trying to promote conflicts".

He warns that "America will be upset if the [current pro-western] majority [in government] becomes a minority and the [***Hizbullah***-led] minority becomes a majority" in next spring's parliamentary election.

Load-Date: October 17, 2008

Multiple views may prove barrier to final electoral law

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

June 27, 2008 Friday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 784 words

Byline: Anthony Elghossain

Body

The political debate surrounding electoral-law reform in Lebanon was partially resolved at the Doha talks when competing Lebanese parties agreed to adopt a modified 1960 electoral districting system utilizing majoritarian voting, but the determination of a broader electoral order has yet to be completed.

BEIRUT: The political debate surrounding electoral-law reform in Lebanon was partially resolved at the Doha talks when competing Lebanese parties agreed to adopt a modified 1960 electoral districting system utilizing majoritarian voting, but the determination of a broader electoral order has yet to be completed.

With the reform package set up by the National Commission on Electoral Law having been separated from districting and split into individual reform issues and the Justice Committee in Parliament having begun initial deliberations centered on legal and administrative reform measures set up by the commission's draft, an examination of the various positions taken by some political parties within each of the two main alignments may help draw the landscape of the upcoming debate.

The Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform (CCER), a coalition of 58 civil-society groups that aims to overhaul the Lebanese electoral system, maintains a matrix of the "political stances on electoral reform principles" adopted by an assortment of parties, movements and prominent figures in Lebanon. Stances are broken down into preferences regarding districting and administrative reforms, with the latest update taking place on June 18, 2008.

For the purposes of this article, the positions of the Future Movement, the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), the Lebanese Forces (LF) and the Phalange Party will be listed from the March 14 coalition selection, while the stances of the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), the Amal Movement, *Hizbullah* and the Tashnak Party will be taken from the opposition segment, although a wider range of parties is covered by the CCER project.

Within the March 14 coalition, both the Future Movement and the PSP oppose the particular qada-based districting of the 1960 electoral framework while supporting, in principle, majoritarian voting based on contemporary qada divisions.

Targeting administrative reform, members of the Future Movement have backed "same-day elections and [the formation of an] independent electoral commission [IEC]." Meanwhile, the PSP supports the "key reforms outlined in the Butros draft law."

Multiple views may prove barrier to final electoral law

On the other hand, the LF favors implementing majoritarian voting in sub-qada districts (two to four MPs per constituency), proportional voting in "medium-sized districts," or the Butros draft law, which is the commission proposal combining majoritarian qada-based voting and proportional muhafaza-based processes.

With respect to broader reforms, the Lebanese Forces endorses the "establishment of an IEC, campaign finance regulation, media regulation and [expatriate] voting," while "expressing reservations regarding other reform measures."

Finally, the Phalange Party similarly supports small-district majoritarian voting, but has also put forth majoritarian voting according to the Butros draft law districting divisions. The party favors the "establishment of an IEC, campaign finance regulation, media regulation, [using] pre-printed ballots and [eliminating] electoral cards."

Opposition party stances vary less than those adopted by March 14 factions when dealing with the districting issue, as the FPM, Amal, Hizbullah and the Tashnak all look favorably on majoritarian voting systems within a qada-based 1960 districting structure.

However, Amal has also expressed support for a "proportional system at the muhafaza level or with Lebanon as a [single constituency]," and the FPM endorsed "either a majoritarian system at the qada level or proportional representation in large districts," according to the CCER list.

Members of both Amal and the FPM have expressed their support for the Butros draft reform package, while differing on the specific relative importance of each category of reform, and the Tashnag also approves of reforms put forth in the Butros-advocated overhaul.

In contrast, members of Hizbullah "expressed support for all administrative reforms," but noted their reservation concerning "[expatriate] voting and the women's [candidacy] quota." One Hizbullah party official said reservations exist toward the "role and responsibility of the IEC as outlined in the Butros draft law."

Most parties have publicly backed many of the reform measures proposed in the Butros draft, but it remains to be seen if and how the plurality of views across and within the political boundaries in Lebanon will affect the move to realize what exists on paper.

Load-Date: October 23, 2008

Tiny protesters lament Gaza bloodshed

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

March 4, 2008 Tuesday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 490 words

Byline: Tamara Qiblawi

Body

Several hundred schoolchildren took part in a Hizbullah-organized demonstration outside UN headquarters in the Lebanese capital on Monday to protest against Israel's deadly offensive in Gaza. Twenty schools participated in the rally, organizers said. The children presented a letter to a UN representative calling on the world body to take action.

BEIRUT: Several hundred schoolchildren took part in a Hizbullah-organized demonstration outside UN headquarters in the Lebanese capital on Monday to protest against Israel's deadly offensive in Gaza. Twenty schools participated in the rally, organizers said. The children presented a letter to a UN representative calling on the world body to take action.

The pupils held aloft pictures of Hizbullah's leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and of some of the children killed in Gaza during Israeli land and air strikes over the weekend.

"Where are children's rights?" asked one banner carried by the demonstrators, some of whom wore Palestinian-style checkered headscarves.

"USA and Israel, the same face of terror," read another.

The demonstration came after more than 100 people, including dozens of women and children, died in Israeli military raids since last Wednesday.

"I came here to encourage the kids in Gaza," said 8-year-old Rawan.

Dozens of demonstrations also took place in Palestinian refugee camps throughout southern Lebanon on Monday.

Hundreds of Palestinian students took part in Hamas-organized demonstrations in the Rashidiyeh, Bourj al-Shemali and Al-Bass camps, near the southern port city of Tyre.

Demonstrators in the Bass camp set ablaze portraits of US President George W. Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, while others burned US and Israeli flags.

Tiny protesters lament Gaza bloodshed

"Ban Ki-moon, do you feel with Gaza's children?" one banner asked, referring to the UN chief.

Meanwhile, members of the American University of Beirut (AUB) community staged a "die-in" Monday afternoon to protest attacks on Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip.

More than 30 students, members of faculty and staff lay in the Main Gate area of the college campus draped in Palestinian flags and checkered traditional keffiyeh headdresses, emulating the Gazans killed in the Israeli onslaught.

"We are here not here under the name of a nationality or a [political] club or any kind of political identity," event organizer Bahaa al-Kayyali told the crowd. "We are here as students, staff and faculty members standing in solidarity with the people of Gaza who are dying everyday."

Event coordinators included senior members of nine student clubs at AUB.

"We are in AUB [but] we are still in an Arab country," said the president of AUB's Syrian Cultural Club, Sara Ajlyakin, "It's very important that we speak out against the atrocities done against our people in Gaza."

"This is a very disturbing period in our history," said Sharif Abdunnur, who teaches performing arts. "It's now or never. You either speak or you cease to exist."

Load-Date: June 30, 2008

Tiny protesters lament Gaza bloodshed

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

March 4, 2008 Tuesday

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THE DAILY STAR

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Load-Date: October 22, 2008

Resilient, go-ahead Lebanon at peace with itself for the moment

The Irish Times

October 22, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: WORLD; Other World Stories; Pg. 13

Length: 761 words

Body

LETTER FROM BEIRUT:The global financial tsunami is not expected to lay waste to Lebanon, writes **Michael Jansen**

THE BREEZE blowing in from the Mediterranean is cool. Sunday traffic is light in the normally congested streets leading to the corniche along the seafront. The wide pavement is filled with walkers and joggers, men in shorts, T-shirts and headbands; women in trousers and jackets. Boys on rented cycles whip round and round like puppies chasing their tails.

Optimistic fisher-folk, buckets at their heels, stand at the rail, long poles in hand, lines in the foaming water rolling against the rocks. Vendors dispense juice and sandwiches.

Opposite the blasted and battered St George's Hotel, a bronze sculpture resembling a bouquet of furled flags marks the site where a bomb slew former premier Rafic Hariri in 2005. A statue of a young, slender Hariri gazing out to sea stands on a platform further along.

Below the hotel, once Beirut's best, yachts tethered to docks ride the pitching sea. Several are huge floating palaces like those at Cannes or Monte Carlo. The sole slim sailboat is a masted swan among stout motorised ducks.

Beyond the marina is a fenced stretch of sand and scrub, a sign proclaims "Jardin Président Rafic Hariri". Lebanon has had many martyrs since independence in 1943.

A billionaire businessman and politician, he made his mission the resurrection of the commercial heart of the city devastated during Lebanon's 1975-90 civil war. Tall yellow cranes hang over the buzzing and thumping construction cityscape where skeleton blocks are shrouded in green fabric.

Completed buildings boast shops stocked with the latest fashions from Paris and London and cheerful cafes. Trees in elegant clay pots adorn balconies at Park Avenue Luxury Apartments. Beautifully reconstructed traditional houses are arrayed in paint in the colours of the rainbow. But hiding in narrow, crooked alleyways are bullet-pocked, crumbling buildings where the poor dwell in flats with geraniums flowering in rusted tins on verandas.

Hariri-land unites Christian east Beirut and Muslim-Christian west Beirut. The solid middle-class lives elsewhere and commutes to jobs in offices, shops and the banks guarded by uniformed men from private security firms.

Resilient, go-ahead Lebanon at peace with itself for the moment

Across town near the airport, the Shia Dahiya is an even more impressive construction site. Here Hizbullah is rebuilding blocks of apartments, shops, and offices destroyed during Israel's devastating 33-day bombardment in 2006. The rubble of flattened buildings is long gone; shell and bullet holes have been erased.

Great square holes for foundations and parking garages are bound in yellow tape bearing the words, "Divine Victory", referring to Hizbullah's defeat of Israel. Hizbullah's own contractors are rebuilding with funds provided largely by Iran. Chaotic traffic is directed by Hizbullah wizards in mufti wielding wands.

Lebanon is at peace with itself, for the time being. In May, army chief Michel Suleiman was elected to the presidency seven months after his predecessor stepped down. Weeks later, warring factions formed a unity government to prepare for next spring's parliamentary elections.

Lebanon is also at ease with its neighbour Syria, which last week formally recognised Lebanon as a separate, sovereign state and promised to dispatch an ambassador to Beirut by the end of the year. Twelve thousand UN soldiers keep the peace on the border with Israel.

And the global financial tsunami is not expected to lay waste to Lebanon.

The central bank has sandbagged with tight regulations the country's commercial banks and financial institutions. Banks are solid, sound. Lebanese hold that banking is too important to be left to cowboy speculators like those who have broken the banks in the west. So far, \$73 billion in deposits has flowed into Lebanon this year. The figure is expected to rise to \$80 billion by the end of 2008. Properties valued at \$4 billion have been sold in Beirut and the mountains.

However, the Lebanese will not emerge from the global crisis unscathed. The middle-class has lost millions of dollars in US and European shares and insurance policies. The Beirut stock market is volatile. Remittances from expatriates could be cut because they simply cannot afford to send money to their relatives here.

Gulf and Saudi investments may also fall due of the collapse of the price of oil.

Lebanese working in the Gulf may lose their jobs and come home. Tourists may stay away. But Lebanon, the quintessential country of entrepreneurs, will survive because it is resilient and adaptable.

Load-Date: October 22, 2008

Tensions rise as rockets hit Israel from South Lebanon

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

January 9, 2009 Friday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 1479 words

Byline: Andrew Wander

Body

At least three rockets were fired from southern Lebanon into Israel on Thursday, prompting the Israeli military to respond with an artillery attack near the village of Tair Harfa. During an emergency meeting Thursday night, the Lebanese Cabinet said it refuses to give Israel "pretexts" to launch a wide-ranging offensive on Lebanon.

TAIR HARFA/BEIRUT: At least three rockets were fired from southern Lebanon into Israel on Thursday, prompting the Israeli military to respond with an artillery attack near the village of Tair Harfa. During an emergency meeting Thursday night, the Lebanese Cabinet said it refuses to give Israel "pretexts" to launch a wide-ranging offensive on Lebanon.

Speaking following the Cabinet meeting at Baabda Palace, Information Minister Tarek Mitri said the government rejects turning South Lebanon into a platform for launching missiles and said the Lebanese Army has started a "serious investigation" into Thursday's incident.

Mitri added that President Michel Sleiman and the Cabinet stressed Lebanon's commitment to UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which brought a cessation of hostilities to the devastating summer 2006 war with Israel.

Three Katyusha rockets were fired from southern Lebanon and two landed in the Nahariya area of Israel, with one ripping through a crowded nursing home wounding one person. Israel hit back by firing five mortar shells across the border. No one was injured by the shells. The attacks come at a time of heightened tension on the border, where there have been fears that militant groups could open a "second front" against Israel while it is embroiled in attacking the Gaza Strip.

The Lebanese Army and the UN peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon, UNIFIL, stepped up their patrols on the border in an effort to bring the situation under control. The commander of UN peacekeepers in Lebanon called for "maximum restraint" in Lebanon and Israel, a spokesman for the peacekeeping force said.

Israel has also intensified patrols along the border. From southern Lebanon on Thursday dozens of Israeli armored vehicles and soldiers were visible on the frontier.

Schools on both sides of the border closed, as worried parents kept their children home from school.

Tensions rise as rockets hit Israel from South Lebanon

Ali Akil, who lives close to the impact site of the Israeli shells, told The Daily Star he thought a new war had begun when they landed.

"We woke to the sounds of explosion and we thought the war had started again," he said. "We rushed to the TV to see what was going on, but Hizbullah officials said it was not a big deal and an unknown faction had fired on Israel."

Akil added that he would stay in the area even if another conflict began.

"Even if Israel launched another offensive we will not leave our homes," he vowed.

Dozens of Tair Harfa residents, however, evacuated their homes and fled the town for fear that the events of the devastating summer 2006 war with Israel might recur.

Hizbullah was not thought to be behind the attack, and assured other members of the government that it is still committed to Security Council Resolution 1701.

Officials representing the two predominant Palestinian factions in Lebanon, Hamas and Fatah, have also both denied involvement in the attack.

Lebanese security sources contacted by The Daily Star said they believed another Palestinian militant group, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), was responsible.

The security source also noted the area from which the rockets had been fired at Israel was "extremely volatile."

"The Lebanese Army has not been able to achieve any kind of control or stability within this particular area," he told The Daily Star.

Israeli military sources also blamed Palestinian militants in Lebanon, rather than Hizbullah, for the attack and said they would respond to further rocket attacks in a similar way.

PFLP-GC head Ahmed Gibreel said that he hoped that "all fronts" against Israel would be opened.

"Since the start of the assault on Gaza we have called for all fronts to engage in a war against Israel including the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon," he said.

When asked about the attacks he said: "We heard this morning about the rockets in South Lebanon. We are currently putting the issue under close scrutiny in order to formulate our opinion concerning what happened."

Prime Minister Fouad Siniora condemned the attack.

"The firing of rockets is rejected and is the work of parties who stand to lose from the continued stability in Lebanon and want to drag it to a situation it does not want and which serves the Israeli plan and does not serve Lebanon's interests nor the Palestinian or Arab interests," he said.

Observers agree that a conflict between Israel and Hizbullah would have devastating consequences for Lebanon, which is enjoying a period of relative stability. Israeli political and military leaders have pledged to expand their campaign of 2006 in any future war, when their offensive went far beyond Hizbullah.

Some 1,200 Lebanese were killed during that conflict, the great majority of them civilians, along with 160 Israelis, most of them soldiers

The security official said that he did not expect Hizbullah to respond militarily to Israel's artillery attack, but warned that further Israeli action in Lebanon could push the party to mobilize its militia against the Zionist state.

"I believe this is likely if Israel extend their retaliatory attacks beyond the areas from which the rockets have been launched," the source said. - With additional reporting by Mariam Saab, agencies

Tensions rise as rockets hit Israel from South Lebanon

Memories of 2006 as villagers flee

TAIR HARFA: The South Lebanese village from where rockets were fired at Israel resembled a ghost town on Thursday after panicked residents fled or hid in fear of massive retaliation.

Lebanese soldiers and Italian troops serving with the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) patrolled the streets seeking information on who fired the rockets early in the day from just outside the village of some 4,500 people.

Several missiles slammed into the northern Israel town of Nahariya, wounding two women as the Zionist state entered the 13th day of its massive offensive on the Gaza Strip.

"No one is left here," said Hasna Ataya, 55, one of the few residents who stayed in the border village along with her daughter Khadija, 20. "Many took their personal belongings and some rented vehicles to flee with their loved ones. I stayed behind with my daughter because we don't have a car."

Amina Rahal, 48, said she packed food for her three children before fleeing from Tair Harfa, 7 kilometres from the Israeli border.

"The last war was terrifying," Rahal said of the 34-day summer conflict in 2006 with Israel that devastated South Lebanon and killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians.

"My children can't take another war," she added. "When we saw everyone heading toward Tyre, we decided to follow their example."

Rahal said that since the early morning rocket attack and Israeli retaliation with artillery rounds, no one had dared venture into her shop on the outskirts of the village.

"My children are terrified," she said. "They heard the rocket fire this morning and were trembling. We saw black smoke rising from the fields after Israel retaliated."

Mohammad Akeel, 59, said he had rented a cab to flee to Tyre along with his wife and five children. "We'll spend the night in Tyre until things calm down," he said.

On the road out of the village, some 60 Syrian builders who work in the area could be seen trying to arrange transport to Tyre.

Yasser Khalil, 35, said he worked on building sites in the village that was largely destroyed in the 2006 war and that he heard the explosions early on Thursday.

"I'm heading to Beirut because it is not safe here any more," he said. Meanwhile at a small cafe inside Tair Harfa, several young men gathered to follow the latest developments on television. "In 2006 we were part of the resistance in this village," said Mohammad, 18, who would give only his first name. "Many people are just waiting for Israel to launch a new offensive."

No one has yet claimed responsibility for the rocket attack, but Hizbullah has indicated that it was not behind the salvo.

Officials in both Israel and Lebanon have said that the attack may have been the work of a Palestinian faction.

Ahmed Jibril, the Damascus-based leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, threatened on January 3 to open up new military fronts against Israel if its war in the Gaza Strip escalates.

A spokesman for the party would neither confirm nor deny involvement in the rocket attack on Thursday, but slammed Israel's Gaza offensive and condemned what he called inaction by Arab states.

"This war is open to all possibilities in the absence of a political will from the international community to dissuade Israel from pursuing its holocaust in Gaza," Anwar Raja told AFP in Damascus. - AFP

Tensions rise as rockets hit Israel from South Lebanon

Load-Date: January 20, 2009

End of Document

Nassib Lahoud outlines March 14's goals in dialogue

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

November 6, 2008 Thursday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 2403 words

Byline: Michael Bluhm

Body

After 18 months of verbal and armed conflict, it is not easy for members of the March 14 and March 8 political camps to sit together in the national unity government, Minister of State and former March 14 presidential candidate Nassib Lahoud told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

InterviewBEIRUT: After 18 months of verbal and armed conflict, it is not easy for members of the March 14 and March 8 political camps to sit together in the national unity government, Minister of State and former March 14 presidential candidate Nassib Lahoud told The Daily Star on Wednesday. As leaders from the deeply divided March 14 and March 8 coalitions met on Wednesday for the second session this year of the conference on national dialogue, Lahoud discussed March 14's goals for the dialogue and its positions on the country's most sensitive issues.Q: What is March 14 trying to accomplish in the dialogue?A: We have two objectives that we would like to achieve through dialogue. One, we would like to implement the decisions that were unanimously made by this dialogue committee more than a year ago. There are some decisions that were made that are in the course of being implemented.

Diplomatic relations with Syria are well on the way. The international tribunal - also a decision made by the dialogue committee - is well on the way. Decisions have been made and not implemented [regarding] Palestinian weaponry outside the camps ... the regulation of the Palestinian weaponry within the camps (and) the delineation of the border with Syria.The second objective is to resume the dialogue where it has stalled - the dialogue had stalled when it was discussing the future of Hizbullah's arms and the relations of Hizbullah, as an armed organization, with the state of Lebanon. This was interrupted by the summer 2006 war with Israel, and it has been resumed in the last session of the dialogue committee. I would hope that the dialogue committee would find a common vision on the relation of Hizbullah's weapons and the Lebanese state.Q: What is March 14's plan for Hizbullah's relations with the state?A:In the March 14 camp, we have a vision for that. Our vision is that gradually the military capabilities of Hizbullah - whether human or hardware - should be integrated within the Lebanese Armed Forces. We think that Lebanon should benefit from these capabilities, but the decision-making process on how to run the defense policy of Lebanon should be solely in the hands of the Lebanese state. Decisions affecting war and peace, in our opinion, should be the sole responsibility of the Lebanese state. This is our vision, and we would like to discuss the best means of first getting the other side to agree on this vision and on the ways to implement it.Q: How has Hizbullah responded to this proposal?A: Up to now no official response has been heard. Of course, Hizbullah believes that as long as the Lebanese Army is not capable of defending the country, they would like things to remain as they are.

Nassib Lahoud outlines March 14's goals in dialogue

We in March 14 believe otherwise. We believe in a gradual process to integrate the Hizbullah capabilities within the Lebanese Armed Forces.Q: How would this integration take place? A: We are flexible on this. The way we see it is that these are capabilities that have been efficient in defending Lebanon, in resisting occupation, and they should be invested in defending Lebanon. But the best way to defend Lebanon is for these capabilities to be integrated within the Lebanese state. We are flexible on the process and on the mechanisms.Q: How soon do you envision this integration taking place?A: We believe that the sooner, the better. We think we would like to benefit from these capabilities on the one hand, but we would like also all the Lebanese to be party to decision-making affecting war and peace. So the sooner the better, but this of course can only be achieved through dialogue, and we know that these are difficult issues that will take time to be implemented completely. Q: Iran has provided much support to Hizbullah and remains in a standoff against Israel and the United States. How do you think Iran will respond to this proposal for integration?A: We were not speaking of taking only the hardware. We're speaking of the human capabilities and the hardware and the military experience, all together. It is not, in our opinion, the business of Iran to decide who Lebanon's friends are or Lebanon's enemies. Lebanon would like to keep having close relations with the United States of America. America's friendship to Lebanon is important for defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. The US has been highly influential in assuring the successes of the conferences held in Paris which have provided financial support for Lebanon. They are in the process of providing training and hardware for the Lebanese Army. We have no intentions to allow Lebanon to slip in to a position of confrontation with the US, nor do we want a position of confrontation with Iran. Iran is a major regional power in this area, and we will treat it as such. We would hope for Iran not to drag Lebanon into any regional confrontation for agendas that Iran may have in its confrontation with the West. We would like to see Iran having equidistant relations with all parties in Lebanon, with all the confessions in Lebanon. This is the way we would like to conduct our relations with the US and Iran.Q: Hizbullah has often tied its weapons to the liberation of the Lebanese part of Ghajar, the Shebaa Farms and Kfar Shuba Hills. How would March 14 like to proceed with these issues?A: First, we would like to discuss the procedure for integrating Hizbullah's capabilities within the Lebanese state. We would also like to give the liberation of Kfar Shuba, of the Lebanese part of Ghajar and the Shebaa Farms the full benefit of diplomatic efforts that have been instituted in [UN Security Council] Resolution 1701. I think the United Nations has pledged to play a useful role in resolving and ending the occupation of the Lebanese part of the Shebaa Farms. We would like the diplomatic solution to be given a full chance.Q: How has the civil strife that took place in May affected the dynamic of the dialogue?A: What happened on May 7 in Beirut had been the direct cause for the Qatari and Arab effort to convene the Doha conference, which has decided that no issue in Lebanon should be decided through military force. Yes, we believe there are differences in vision on certain subject, but I think that using weapons again - or ever - for resolving political differences in the country should be totally out of the question.Q: Why has March 14 been against expanding the number of participants in the dialogue, as proposed by March 8? A: We believe that the Doha agreement - which has set up the process of dialogue - has set it up on the basis of this committee of 14. We see no reason to change that, anyway not before the next elections. If the next legislative elections create new facts, then one could think of amending the participation. We do not see any reason now.Q: How do you view the progress that has been made in developing diplomatic ties with Syria, and what would you like to see going forward? A: Let us first say that we have no existential conflict with Syria. We would like relations between Lebanon and Syria to be normalized. That means that the dossiers which have been the subject of differences between Lebanon and Syria would be seriously addressed and resolved. The first such dossier was the establishment of diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level between Lebanon and Syria, something the Lebanese have expressed wishes for for decades now. This decision was announced as the fruit of the first summit that President Michel Sleiman held with President Bashar Assad, and we do hope that this successful step will be fully implemented in the weeks to come. Other issues have been addressed by President Sleiman in Damascus during his summit with President Assad in a spirit of cooperation. I think that President Sleiman is trying to solve the problem of the Lebanese prisoners in Syrian jails. He has tried also to find ways of cooperating on border control. He has also expressed a wish to see the Syrian-Lebanese border delineated. I hope that, during the months to come, progress will be made on these issues and one would hope that the more Syria would be responsive to these Lebanese wishes, the more Syria will show respect for Lebanon's independence and integrity, the more the Syrian-Lebanese relations would be normalized, and that is something we would welcome. Q: What is your reaction to the deployment in recent weeks of Syrian troops along the northern and eastern areas of the Lebanese-Syrian border?A: They have announced that they are deploying for the purpose of border control, of fighting contraband and implementing Security Council Resolution 1701. If these are the objectives, I see no problem with their

Nassib Lahoud outlines March 14's goals in dialogue

deployment on their side of the border. I will put just one proviso: these movements of troops should be coordinated with the Lebanese side, and the Lebanese public should be informed in advance of any troop movement. This would help in confidence-building in the relations between the countries.Q: Do you think they have other objectives?A: They should not. I think that the fears of Syrian incursion into Lebanon are unfounded. I think that Lebanon is secure within its borders, and we do not fear any incursions from the Syrians. I think no Lebanese would wish that. No Lebanese would tolerate that.Q: How is it working with members of the March 8 coalition in the unity Cabinet? A: Running a national unity government is not the easiest thing in the world. Governments normally are more homogeneous bodies, but I think the period requires the national unity government. It gives comfort to many people in Lebanon to see all the political factions working within the same executive body. I think some progress is being made. Decisions are sometimes tedious and difficult to make, but that's the way things are. These are people who are Lebanese, and although we do not see eye-to-eye on many subjects, there is enough common ground today that was established through the ministerial declaration. This should take us, hopefully, peacefully to the next general elections, where the Lebanese would have to decide whom to give a mandate to for the next period, whether it is the March 14 or March 8.Q: How do you view the recently adopted electoral law which will govern the 2009 general elections?A: I would have liked to see more reform in that electoral law, but some of the major reform components were killed before the bill arrived in Parliament, were killed in Doha the moment Doha agreed to go back to the 1960 electoral law and have elections on the basis of a qada and under a majority voting system. Automatically, by killing proportional representation, you also kill the possibility of apportioning a quota for women in this electoral law. Besides, I'm disappointed because Parliament did not agree to a uniform ballot paper that could have been a protection against citizens being influenced in their voting. But I think that there are important reforms that have been approved, such as the control of electoral expenditures by candidates and putting caps on that and the regulation of the media during the electoral period. These are important reforms, plus the fact that elections will be held on a single day. I would have hoped for more reform, but I think what has been achieved is an important step, and I think that more will be achieved by 2013, like the non-resident Lebanese being given the opportunity to vote. It's a process that will take time, but it's running in the proper direction.Q: Do you plan to run for Parliament in the 2009 elections?A: YesQ: Will your party, the Democratic Renewal Movement, put out its own slate, or will you form an alliance with other parties in the March 14 camp? A: The Democratic Renewal Movement will have candidates, but within the framework of the March 14 alliance, and we will fight the elections on the basis of the platform that will be agreed within the March 14 alliance. A program is being drafted now, and we are hoping that it will be announced just before the end of the year or just after. Q: Is the government's work on track so that polls can take place next May as expected?A: Yes, preparations are well under way ... The country's getting ready for elections. People are gradually making up their minds. The issues are getting clearer in the minds of people. The next elections will be fought on political grounds, on clear platforms and programs. This is healthy for Lebanon's democratic life.Q: Many observers view the Christian areas as those which will be most hotly contested between the March 14 and March 8 groups. How do you plan to target those voters?A: Christians should bless their luck that they have diversity within their community and they don't all vote in a herd. Unlike some of the other areas of Lebanon, where it may be possibly easier to predict the result, in the Christian area it's an open battle. The Christians have a real choice, and I hope they exercise it wisely.Q: How would you evaluate the performance of President Michel Sleiman? A: President Sleiman has conducted the affairs of state very wisely, and he has been true to his commitment to be an arbiter between the Lebanese, at equal distance from all parties. He's got his priorities straight. He's projecting an image of the presidency which reflects the true face of Lebanon - open-minded, and open to the Arab world and to the world at large.Q: How might the election of Barack Obama as president of the US affect Lebanon?A: I don't think it will change the fundamentals. Over the past few years the Lebanon policy in the United State has developed into a bipartisan issue, and the commitment of the US to the independence and the sovereignty of Lebanon is solid in the Democratic camp and in the Republican camp, and it has deep roots within Congress and the Senate. A change of president will not affect the fundamentals of the United States-Lebanon relationship. Now, of course, with a new president there will be a change of style, there will be a change of mechanism perhaps, but I think Lebanon will remain an issue that is important in American foreign policy.

Nassib Lahoud outlines March 14's goals in dialogue

End of Document

Northern mayor offers advice to the south

The Jerusalem Post

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 491 words

Byline: EHUD ZION WALDOKS

Body

Ma'alot-Tarshiha Mayor Shlomo Buhbut had a long drive ahead of him on Tuesday. He drove from his front-line community on the northern border to the war zone in the South to meet with his counterpart in Ashkelon, as well as others, and impart some of his hard-won knowledge. He toured the whole southern front last week as well.

Buhbut formed the Forum of Front-Line Communities which coordinates defenses for the moshavim spread out along the border with Lebanon, which bore the brunt of Hizbullah's attacks during the Second Lebanon War two years ago.

Despite a heightened level of alert for the IDF in the north and reports in the foreign press of potential Hizbullah involvement being imminent, Buhbut assured The Jerusalem Post that their defenses were much improved since the war.

"The whole [northern] front line is very well prepared. We have bomb shelters, secure rooms and an action plan if we need it," Buhbut told the Post by phone from his car in between meetings.

"All of the shelters in Ma'alot-Tarshiha can now be opened automatically at the touch of a button," he added. While not every community had an automated system, he said a mixture of government funds and NIS 40 million from The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews had enabled all of the communities to renovate and upgrade their shelters since the war.

So far, he said, there had been no orders from the Home Front Command concerning civilians in the north, despite the fact that the IDF went on high alert earlier this week.

Buhbut opined that it would be the "mistake of a lifetime" for Hizbullah and Lebanon to begin any sort of confrontation with Israel now.

"I have it from very senior military sources that the policy is, in the event a missile is fired, to raze to the ground the village from which it was fired. So if they want to reduce Lebanon to piles of rubble [then they should attack]," he said.

Buhbut also had some practical advice for the southern communities.

"I advised them to organize a southern mayors' forum. They should create a plan and give every manager a task in the event of an emergency.

Northern mayor offers advice to the south

"I also suggested that they split their city into quarters. That way, each quarter knows how many people there are in their area, how many elderly, how many children. They can distribute food or render assistance in their quarter," he relayed.

"I also recommended that they petition the army for female soldiers to man the shelters to be able to help out. The severely handicapped should be evacuated from the cities entirely because they can't keep climbing up and down from the shelters," he continued.

Finally, he suggested that the mayors demand a special budget for their expenditures during this period from the government.

Several families from the South have turned to Ma'alot-Tarshiha for hospitality and the city has mobilized to take care of them. They have organized educational activities for the children and accommodations for the families.

Graphic

Photo: Shlomo Buhbut (Credit: Courtesy)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

The Hajj assassination and Lebanon's reality deficit

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

December 14, 2007 Friday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 1730 words

Byline: Marc J Sirois

Body

Once upon a time, virtually everything that went wrong in Lebanon was blamed on the Israelis. Whether it was a former confederate of the Jewish state getting assassinated in Hazmieh, seasonal rains flooding streets in Beirut, or Civil War-era displaced being cheated out of their rights in Metn.

First person by Marc J. Sirois

Once upon a time, virtually everything that went wrong in Lebanon was blamed on the Israelis. Whether it was a former confederate of the Jewish state getting assassinated in Hazmieh, seasonal rains flooding streets in Beirut, or Civil War-era displaced being cheated out of their rights in Metn, the standard official explanation typically pointed a finger across Lebanon's southern border.

To be fair, not all of these assumptions were unfounded. The first one listed above, for instance, was supported by the fact that shortly before he was blown up in 2002 the victim, Elie Hobeika, had promised to tell all he knew about the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacres of Palestinian refugees.

Given his status as a presumed leader of those atrocities, the close ties his Lebanese Forces militia then had to Israel, and the latter's having facilitated the killings as an occupying power, Hobeika's revelations promised to be a bombshell. In addition, the Israeli most directly responsible for Sabra and Shatila, then-Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, had by 2002 completed a triumphant comeback that put him in the prime minister's office. The man known at home as "the Bulldozer" and in many places abroad as "the Butcher of Beirut" was expected to be the primary target of any revelations Hobeika might make. Then he was silenced, and even a child could see that Sharon had the motive, the means and the opportunity to commit the crime.

Rehashing this history is important, not least because it reflects some of the inequities, the double standards and even the self-deceptions that prevail in Lebanon. The Hobeika hit has never been independently investigated, but he was not nearly so important as, for example, former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, whose 2005 assassination has been the subject of an intense United Nations inquiry. But what of those who perished at Sabra and Shatila? Is not the loss of hundreds of innocent lives at least equal to that of a single politician? Apparently not: A few Western governments and some of their Lebanese proxies seem to have decided that even if Lebanon has to have another

The Hajj assassination and Lebanon 's reality deficit

civil war, someone will be punished for Hariri's death. No such determination has ever been applied to the women and children who were brutally slaughtered at Sabra and Shatila, and Sharon will die a free (if comatose) man.

More importantly, however, the Hobeika assassination demonstrates how a rush to judgment can be off-base or incomplete even if the facts, when logically analyzed, seem to support it. Sharon's Israel had to be a suspect because he and it fit the profile of the perpetrator. But there were a couple of flies in the proverbial ointment. For one thing, by 2002 Hobeika was not just a threat to Sharon: He had made enemies of many quarters in Beirut and Damascus as well. In addition, many observers noted that the shape of the neighborhood where he lived and died was such that the attack could not have been carried out without the knowledge of those who oversaw security there. That meant the Syrians. In no way did this obviate the possibility that the Israelis were involved; it only taught the lessons that sometimes even mortal enemies can have mutual interests, and that always judgment should be reserved until relevant facts are available in sufficient quantity.

The tendency to blame Israel began to undergo a profound shift after Hariri was slain. The most common initial reaction was an assumption that Syria was responsible, although there were also plenty of people who theorized that Israel had carried out a masterstroke by committing a crime for which its old foe would be blamed and forced to relinquish its dominant position in Lebanon.

Whoever the culprits were, it was the Syrians who quickly came under suspicion, resulting in enormous international pressure that forced them to pull their troops out of Lebanon just a couple of months later. Since then, the search for scapegoats has conformed to another time-honored Lebanese tradition, that of dueling narratives. In this process, each important event that takes place is filtered through a given camp's worldview, and what emerges is a theory that appears to support that party's arguments, claims and predictions - and, tacitly or implicitly, to blame the other side for whatever has happened.

It has not always been an equal contest. Most of the assassination plots that have followed the Hariri hit, for instance, have targeted members or supporters of the ruling March 14 Forces coalition built around his Future Movement. This has afforded the government side a steady stream of opportunities to blame Syria - and to tar Hizbullah and its opposition allies with guilt by association. This has not stopped the opposition from speculating that some of the killings in question have been the result of intra-March 14 rivalries and/or of conspiracies to attract international sympathy for the government. It has, however, given the ruling coalition a distinct advantage in the area of credibility on this particular score.

More troubling have been other incidents in which the knee-jerk reactions from pro-government circles have indicated a willingness to overlook essential considerations such as facts. After the deadly June bombing that targeted the Spanish contingent of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), for example, some supporters of March 14 instantly blamed Hizbullah. Their basic argument was that UNIFIL, having been expanded several times over since the end of the summer 2006 war with Israel, was inhibiting what they said was the resistance's desire to resume military operations against Israel. Some even went so far as to state that Hizbullah's involvement was "obvious."

In fact, of course, far from such a scenario being obvious, it was prima facie less likely than at least a couple of others. Radical Sunni organizations linked to Al-Qaeda, for example, had already made direct threats against UNIFIL - and accused Hizbullah of serving as Israel's "bodyguard" by having avoided confrontations since the war. In addition, any attack on UNIFIL seemed likely to increase calls for further internationalization of Lebanon's multiple and overlapping crises, an eventuality that could only undermine the interests of the opposition of which Hizbullah is the leading element. The UN force itself reiterated its good relations with Hizbullah, even going so far as to request its assistance in the investigation.

Now the assassination of General Francois Hajj, operations chief for the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), has engendered similarly reflexive accusations against Damascus. Any serious investigator (or journalist) has to be willing to consider any and all possible suspects, but to assume a Syrian role on the basis of what is currently known is to render judgment in spite of the facts rather than because of them. After all, Hajj was regarded as the opposition's preferred successor to General Michel Suleiman should the latter be moved from his present position

The Hajj assassination and Lebanon 's reality deficit

as LAF commander to the country's presidency. Syria supports that opposition, so its possible reasons for eliminating a senior Lebanese officer well-placed to defend Hizbullah's rights and well-disposed toward doing so have to be regarded as nebulous.

Luckily, few mainstream voices (not to be confused with responsible ones, which are in their habitual short supply) are playing the game this time. Perhaps this is due to Hajj's having led the LAF's campaign against Fatah al-Islam at Nahr al-Bared last summer. That group's motive to kill one of its most senior tormentors has to be a powerful one, and its leader and several other key figures escaped the camp before it was fully invested by the army, meaning that they remain at large.

The Fatah al-Islam angle is just one of several, and suspects could include rival officers and even some factions of the March 14 Forces with a political interest in having someone other than Hajj - specifically a general hostile to Hizbullah - replace Suleiman. But to impugn any party now would be the height of irresponsibility, especially when so little is known about the crime and when tensions are already so high.

In a more ordered society or during a more stable era, a forthright public debate might be possible. But this one is afflicted with a failure (and even a refusal) to communicate. The government and opposition camps spend plenty of time talking at, about and past one another - but almost none talking to each other. Some of their more voluble supporters, including some whose education entitles others to expect better of them, have taken the tendency a step further, staking out ever-more extreme positions that only pressure the principals to back away from compromise. Some of the more rabid proponents of both sides go so far as to equate consensus with treason or surrender, undermining the standing of more reasonable sorts who might otherwise enter into a dialogue.

Far from conducting a genuine debate about either the big picture or some of its individual elements, therefore, many Lebanese have been reduced to arguing that none should take place - or even, amazingly, to asserting that one is already under way. This is a long way from where national consciousness needs to be if Lebanon is ever to regain its footing, and some of those who claim to care most about this country are actually exposing it to mortal peril by refusing to have truck with their would-be interlocutors - and by refusing to be honest with either their allies or themselves.

While we're on the subject of honesty, it should be noted that while there is still no one who wants to talk about Hobeika, many of the same people who blamed Israel for clogged storm drains and missing money for the displaced are now blaming Syria for the very same problems. And guess what? Both of those countries really did contribute to the conditions that continue to impose such awful governance on Lebanon - and so did the Lebanese politicians who helped them do it.

Marc J. Sirois is the managing editor of **THE DAILY STAR**

Load-Date: October 22, 2008

Instability undermines human rights in Lebanon

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

February 2, 2008 Saturday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 1860 words

Byline: Daily Star Staff

Body

The Human Rights Watch's World Report 2008 said Lebanon endured another year of instability in 2007, with political and security crises weakening state institutions and undermining human rights. The three-month military confrontation between the Lebanese armed forces and the armed Islamist group Fatah al-Islam.

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The Human Rights Watch's World Report 2008 said Lebanon endured another year of instability in 2007, with political and security crises weakening state institutions and undermining human rights. The three-month military confrontation between the Lebanese armed forces and the armed Islamist group Fatah al-Islam destroyed most of the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp. More than 40 civilians died in the fighting.

As the security situation in the country deteriorated, torture and ill-treatment of security suspects increased. Palestinian refugees continue to face widespread discrimination, and their situation worsened following the Nahr al-Bared fighting. Iraqis fleeing their war-torn country to Lebanon find themselves facing a real risk of coerced return. Lebanese law continues to discriminate against women by, among other things, denying them the right to pass their nationality to their children or spouses. Migrant domestic workers face exploitation and abuse from their employers with little possibility for legal remedy.

In May 2007 the UN Security Council passed a resolution to establish an international tribunal to try those responsible for the murder of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005. Access to redress remains elusive for the approximately 900 civilians who died in last year's war between Israel and Lebanon and for the families of the estimated 17,000 who "disappeared" during and after Lebanon's deadly 1975-90 Civil War.

The Nahr al-Bared battle and Palestinian refugees

The battle between the Lebanese Army and the armed Islamist Fatah al-Islam from May to September 2007 in the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp was the worst internal fighting since the end of the Civil War in 1990. Over 30,000 camp residents fled the camp, which lay in ruins. According to military and government sources, the battle resulted in the deaths of 166 Lebanese Army soldiers, 220 Fatah al-Islam militants, and at least 40 civilians, most of whom were Palestinians. The Lebanese government appealed to international donors for almost \$400 million to rebuild the camp and its surrounding areas and to care for those forced out of their homes.

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The Lebanese Army and the Internal Security Forces arbitrarily detained and physically abused some Palestinian men fleeing the fighting. On June 29, 2007, the Lebanese Army killed two Palestinian civilians when it opened fire on demonstrators demanding to return to their homes in Nahr al-Bared. The government failed to investigate the cases of arbitrary detention and abuse or the shooting incident, reinforcing a climate of impunity.

The fighting exacerbated existing tensions between Lebanese and an estimated 300,000 Palestinians living in Lebanon. Harassment and abuse of Palestinian civilians at checkpoints on account of their identity discouraged some Palestinians from moving around the country. Palestinians remain subject to wide-ranging restrictions on housing and work despite some efforts by the authorities to relax some of these restrictions in 2005.

Torture and ill-treatment

As the security situation deteriorated in 2007, reports of torture and ill-treatment of security detainees increased. While the exact scope of torture remains unknown, credible reports indicate that the Military Intelligence unit of the Defense Ministry, the Information Branch of the Internal Security Forces, and the police - notably in their anti-drug trafficking operations - engage in torture of certain detainees.

Lebanese law prohibits torture, but accountability for ill-treatment and torture in detention remains elusive. In a rare exception, in March 2007, a Lebanese court sentenced a policeman for torturing an Egyptian man, but the 15-day sentence and the monetary fine were insignificant penalties.

Conditions in prison and detention facilities remain poor, with overcrowding a perennial problem. At least five people died in custody in 2007 without independent investigations to credibly determine their exact cause of death.

Legacy of war between Hiz-bullah and Israel

More than a year after the end of the [war with Israel], neither the Israeli nor the Lebanese governments have investigated the serious violations of the laws of war committed by the warring parties. The war resulted in approximately 900 civilian deaths in Lebanon and 39 civilian deaths in Israel.

The estimated 1 million cluster submunition "duds" left behind by Israel's bombing campaign continue to kill and injure civilians, resulting, at this writing, in at least 34 deaths and 216 injuries. Israel continues its refusal to turn over detailed information on the location of its cluster-munition attacks, hampering demining efforts, which the United Nations estimates will last until the end of 2008.

The reconstruction of the infrastructure and of the tens of thousands of homes damaged by Israeli attacks has stalled amid allegations of corruption and rising tensions between the government and Hizbullah.

In October 2007 Israel and Hizbullah agreed to exchange the remains of an Israeli civilian who had drowned and whose body had washed ashore in Lebanon for a captive Hizbullah member and the bodies of two of the group's fighters. The two Israeli soldiers abducted by Hizbullah at the beginning of the July 2006 war remained in captivity at this writing.

Political assassinations, Hariri court, and lack of accountability

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In June 2007 Security Council Resolution 1757 established a tribunal to try those responsible for the Hariri killing, and the UN began the process of setting up the court. Four former heads of Lebanese intelligence and security services - General Ali al-Hajj, General Raymond Azar, Brigadier General Jamil al-Sayyed, and head of the Presidential Guard Mustafa Hamdan - remain in detention without charge following their arrest in August 2005 on suspicion of involvement in Hariri's murder.

Instability undermines human rights in Lebanon

"Disappearances"

No progress was made in 2007 to uncover the fate of the Lebanese, Palestinians, and other nationals who "disappeared" during and after the 1975-90 Lebanese Civil War. The Lebanese government estimates that there were a total of 17,415 such cases, but no criminal investigations or prosecutions have ever been initiated. Relatives and friends of the "disappeared" have been holding a sit-in in front of the UN offices in Beirut since April 2005 to demand information on the fate of people still unaccounted for.

According to Lebanese human-rights groups, Syria has committed at least 640 enforced disappearances, detaining Lebanese incommunicado in Syrian prisons. An official joint Syrian-Lebanese committee established in May 2005 to investigate the cases had not published any findings at this writing.

Iraqi refugees

An estimated 50,000 Iraqis are now living in Lebanon. Since January 2007, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has recognized all Iraqis from central and southern Iraq seeking asylum in Lebanon as refugees on a prima facie basis. However, Lebanon has refused to give legal effect to UNHCR's recognition of Iraqi refugees, and it treats the vast majority of them as illegal immigrants, subjecting a number of them to arrest, fines, indefinite detention, and coerced return. Lebanon provides almost no services to the Iraqis and no effective process for regularizing their status.

Human rights defenders

Human rights groups operate freely in Lebanon, but the tense political and security situation creates a challenging environment for activists. In September 2007 judicial police formally questioned a Human Rights Watch researcher with respect to a legal complaint accusing him of "weakening national sentiment" and other such crimes in connection with the release of a report by Human Rights Watch documenting Hizbullah violations in their rocket attacks on Israel. The prosecutor did not proceed with the case for lack of evidence to prove the elements of the crime.

Samira Trad, whose organization Frontiers Center promotes the rights of refugees, continues to face ill-defined defamation charges dating from 2003, apparently related to her work on behalf of refugees. Her court session is scheduled for January 2008.

Discrimination against women

Despite women's active participation in all aspects of Lebanese society, discriminatory provisions continue to exist in personal status laws, nationality laws, and criminal laws relating to violence in the family. Current Lebanese law does not allow Lebanese women to confer nationality on either their spouses or children.

Women migrants employed as domestic workers, most of whom come from Sri Lanka, face exploitation and abuse by employers, including excessive hours of work, nonpayment of wages, and restrictions on their liberty. Many women migrants suffer physical and sexual abuse at the hands of employers, in a climate of complete impunity for employers. According to media reports, over 200 migrant domestic workers in Lebanon reportedly committed suicide over the last four years with no real investigation of their deaths.

Key international actors

Multiple international actors compete for influence in Lebanon, but none contribute effectively to improving Lebanon's human rights record.

Since the cease-fire between Israel and Hizbullah in 2006, 13,000 UN peacekeepers monitor Lebanon's southern border and its territorial waters. The UN Security Council passed Resolution 1757 in May 2007 to establish an international tribunal to try those responsible for the Hariri killing. Meanwhile, the Security Council continues to follow-up on the implementation of Resolution 1559, which calls among other things for the Lebanese government to extend its control over all Lebanese territory and the "disarmament of all Lebanese militias."

Instability undermines human rights in Lebanon

France and the United States retain a strong role in Lebanon. In 2007, the US sharply increased its military assistance to Lebanon to \$270 million, more than five times the amount it provided a year earlier.

Regionally, Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia maintain a strong influence on Lebanese politics through their local allies. Despite the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon in April 2005, Lebanese-Syrian relations remain tense, and members of the parliamentary majority accuse Syria of killing some of its members. As Hizbullah's main foreign ally, Iran is seen by many as key to any long-term solution to the conflict between Hizbullah and Israel.

Load-Date: October 22, 2008

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According to Lebanese human-rights groups, Syria has committed at least 640 enforced disappearances, detaining Lebanese incommunicado in Syrian prisons. An official joint Syrian-Lebanese committee established in May 2005 to investigate the cases had not published any findings at this writing.

Iraqi refugees

An estimated 50,000 Iraqis are now living in Lebanon. Since January 2007, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has recognized all Iraqis from central and southern Iraq seeking asylum in Lebanon as refugees on a prima facie basis. However, Lebanon has refused to give legal effect to UNHCR's recognition of Iraqi refugees, and it treats the vast majority of them as illegal immigrants, subjecting a number of them to arrest, fines, indefinite detention, and coerced return. Lebanon provides almost no services to the Iraqis and no effective process for regularizing their status.

Human rights defenders

Human rights groups operate freely in Lebanon, but the tense political and security situation creates a challenging environment for activists. In September 2007 judicial police formally questioned a Human Rights Watch researcher with respect to a legal complaint accusing him of "weakening national sentiment" and other such crimes in connection with the release of a report by Human Rights Watch documenting Hizbullah violations in their rocket attacks on Israel. The prosecutor did not proceed with the case for lack of evidence to prove the elements of the crime.

Samira Trad, whose organization Frontiers Center promotes the rights of refugees, continues to face ill-defined defamation charges dating from 2003, apparently related to her work on behalf of refugees. Her court session is scheduled for January 2008.

Discrimination against women

Despite women's active participation in all aspects of Lebanese society, discriminatory provisions continue to exist in personal status laws, nationality laws, and criminal laws relating to violence in the family. Current Lebanese law does not allow Lebanese women to confer nationality on either their spouses or children.

Women migrants employed as domestic workers, most of whom come from Sri Lanka, face exploitation and abuse by employers, including excessive hours of work, nonpayment of wages, and restrictions on their liberty. Many women migrants suffer physical and sexual abuse at the hands of employers, in a climate of complete impunity for employers. According to media reports, over 200 migrant domestic workers in Lebanon reportedly committed suicide over the last four years with no real investigation of their deaths.

Key international actors

Multiple international actors compete for influence in Lebanon, but none contribute effectively to improving Lebanon's human rights record.

Since the cease-fire between Israel and Hizbullah in 2006, 13,000 UN peacekeepers monitor Lebanon's southern border and its territorial waters. The UN Security Council passed Resolution 1757 in May 2007 to establish an international tribunal to try those responsible for the Hariri killing. Meanwhile, the Security Council continues to follow-up on the implementation of Resolution 1559, which calls among other things for the Lebanese government to extend its control over all Lebanese territory and the "disarmament of all Lebanese militias."

Instability undermines human rights in Lebanon

France and the United States retain a strong role in Lebanon. In 2007, the US sharply increased its military assistance to Lebanon to \$270 million, more than five times the amount it provided a year earlier.

Regionally, Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia maintain a strong influence on Lebanese politics through their local allies. Despite the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon in April 2005, Lebanese-Syrian relations remain tense, and members of the parliamentary majority accuse Syria of killing some of its members. As Hizbullah's main foreign ally, Iran is seen by many as key to any long-term solution to the conflict between Hizbullah and Israel.

Load-Date: June 30, 2008

End of Document

The Hajj assassination and Lebanon's reality deficit

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

December 14, 2007 Friday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 1730 words

Byline: Marc J Sirois

Body

Once upon a time, virtually everything that went wrong in Lebanon was blamed on the Israelis. Whether it was a former confederate of the Jewish state getting assassinated in Hazmieh, seasonal rains flooding streets in Beirut, or Civil War-era displaced being cheated out of their rights in Metn.

First person by Marc J. Sirois

Once upon a time, virtually everything that went wrong in Lebanon was blamed on the Israelis. Whether it was a former confederate of the Jewish state getting assassinated in Hazmieh, seasonal rains flooding streets in Beirut, or Civil War-era displaced being cheated out of their rights in Metn, the standard official explanation typically pointed a finger across Lebanon's southern border.

To be fair, not all of these assumptions were unfounded. The first one listed above, for instance, was supported by the fact that shortly before he was blown up in 2002 the victim, Elie Hobeika, had promised to tell all he knew about the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacres of Palestinian refugees.

Given his status as a presumed leader of those atrocities, the close ties his Lebanese Forces militia then had to Israel, and the latter's having facilitated the killings as an occupying power, Hobeika's revelations promised to be a bombshell. In addition, the Israeli most directly responsible for Sabra and Shatila, then-Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, had by 2002 completed a triumphant comeback that put him in the prime minister's office. The man known at home as "the Bulldozer" and in many places abroad as "the Butcher of Beirut" was expected to be the primary target of any revelations Hobeika might make. Then he was silenced, and even a child could see that Sharon had the motive, the means and the opportunity to commit the crime.

Rehashing this history is important, not least because it reflects some of the inequities, the double standards and even the self-deceptions that prevail in Lebanon. The Hobeika hit has never been independently investigated, but he was not nearly so important as, for example, former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, whose 2005 assassination has been the subject of an intense United Nations inquiry. But what of those who perished at Sabra and Shatila? Is not the loss of hundreds of innocent lives at least equal to that of a single politician? Apparently not: A few Western governments and some of their Lebanese proxies seem to have decided that even if Lebanon has to have another

The Hajj assassination and Lebanon 's reality deficit

civil war, someone will be punished for Hariri's death. No such determination has ever been applied to the women and children who were brutally slaughtered at Sabra and Shatila, and Sharon will die a free (if comatose) man.

More importantly, however, the Hobeika assassination demonstrates how a rush to judgment can be off-base or incomplete even if the facts, when logically analyzed, seem to support it. Sharon's Israel had to be a suspect because he and it fit the profile of the perpetrator. But there were a couple of flies in the proverbial ointment. For one thing, by 2002 Hobeika was not just a threat to Sharon: He had made enemies of many quarters in Beirut and Damascus as well. In addition, many observers noted that the shape of the neighborhood where he lived and died was such that the attack could not have been carried out without the knowledge of those who oversaw security there. That meant the Syrians. In no way did this obviate the possibility that the Israelis were involved; it only taught the lessons that sometimes even mortal enemies can have mutual interests, and that always judgment should be reserved until relevant facts are available in sufficient quantity.

The tendency to blame Israel began to undergo a profound shift after Hariri was slain. The most common initial reaction was an assumption that Syria was responsible, although there were also plenty of people who theorized that Israel had carried out a masterstroke by committing a crime for which its old foe would be blamed and forced to relinquish its dominant position in Lebanon.

Whoever the culprits were, it was the Syrians who quickly came under suspicion, resulting in enormous international pressure that forced them to pull their troops out of Lebanon just a couple of months later. Since then, the search for scapegoats has conformed to another time-honored Lebanese tradition, that of dueling narratives. In this process, each important event that takes place is filtered through a given camp's worldview, and what emerges is a theory that appears to support that party's arguments, claims and predictions - and, tacitly or implicitly, to blame the other side for whatever has happened.

It has not always been an equal contest. Most of the assassination plots that have followed the Hariri hit, for instance, have targeted members or supporters of the ruling March 14 Forces coalition built around his Future Movement. This has afforded the government side a steady stream of opportunities to blame Syria - and to tar Hizbullah and its opposition allies with guilt by association. This has not stopped the opposition from speculating that some of the killings in question have been the result of intra-March 14 rivalries and/or of conspiracies to attract international sympathy for the government. It has, however, given the ruling coalition a distinct advantage in the area of credibility on this particular score.

More troubling have been other incidents in which the knee-jerk reactions from pro-government circles have indicated a willingness to overlook essential considerations such as facts. After the deadly June bombing that targeted the Spanish contingent of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), for example, some supporters of March 14 instantly blamed Hizbullah. Their basic argument was that UNIFIL, having been expanded several times over since the end of the summer 2006 war with Israel, was inhibiting what they said was the resistance's desire to resume military operations against Israel. Some even went so far as to state that Hizbullah's involvement was "obvious."

In fact, of course, far from such a scenario being obvious, it was prima facie less likely than at least a couple of others. Radical Sunni organizations linked to Al-Qaeda, for example, had already made direct threats against UNIFIL - and accused Hizbullah of serving as Israel's "bodyguard" by having avoided confrontations since the war. In addition, any attack on UNIFIL seemed likely to increase calls for further internationalization of Lebanon's multiple and overlapping crises, an eventuality that could only undermine the interests of the opposition of which Hizbullah is the leading element. The UN force itself reiterated its good relations with Hizbullah, even going so far as to request its assistance in the investigation.

Now the assassination of General Francois Hajj, operations chief for the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), has engendered similarly reflexive accusations against Damascus. Any serious investigator (or journalist) has to be willing to consider any and all possible suspects, but to assume a Syrian role on the basis of what is currently known is to render judgment in spite of the facts rather than because of them. After all, Hajj was regarded as the opposition's preferred successor to General Michel Suleiman should the latter be moved from his present position

The Hajj assassination and Lebanon 's reality deficit

as LAF commander to the country's presidency. Syria supports that opposition, so its possible reasons for eliminating a senior Lebanese officer well-placed to defend Hizbullah's rights and well-disposed toward doing so have to be regarded as nebulous.

Luckily, few mainstream voices (not to be confused with responsible ones, which are in their habitual short supply) are playing the game this time. Perhaps this is due to Hajj's having led the LAF's campaign against Fatah al-Islam at Nahr al-Bared last summer. That group's motive to kill one of its most senior tormentors has to be a powerful one, and its leader and several other key figures escaped the camp before it was fully invested by the army, meaning that they remain at large.

The Fatah al-Islam angle is just one of several, and suspects could include rival officers and even some factions of the March 14 Forces with a political interest in having someone other than Hajj - specifically a general hostile to Hizbullah - replace Suleiman. But to impugn any party now would be the height of irresponsibility, especially when so little is known about the crime and when tensions are already so high.

In a more ordered society or during a more stable era, a forthright public debate might be possible. But this one is afflicted with a failure (and even a refusal) to communicate. The government and opposition camps spend plenty of time talking at, about and past one another - but almost none talking to each other. Some of their more voluble supporters, including some whose education entitles others to expect better of them, have taken the tendency a step further, staking out ever-more extreme positions that only pressure the principals to back away from compromise. Some of the more rabid proponents of both sides go so far as to equate consensus with treason or surrender, undermining the standing of more reasonable sorts who might otherwise enter into a dialogue.

Far from conducting a genuine debate about either the big picture or some of its individual elements, therefore, many Lebanese have been reduced to arguing that none should take place - or even, amazingly, to asserting that one is already under way. This is a long way from where national consciousness needs to be if Lebanon is ever to regain its footing, and some of those who claim to care most about this country are actually exposing it to mortal peril by refusing to have truck with their would-be interlocutors - and by refusing to be honest with either their allies or themselves.

While we're on the subject of honesty, it should be noted that while there is still no one who wants to talk about Hobeika, many of the same people who blamed Israel for clogged storm drains and missing money for the displaced are now blaming Syria for the very same problems. And guess what? Both of those countries really did contribute to the conditions that continue to impose such awful governance on Lebanon - and so did the Lebanese politicians who helped them do it.

Marc J. Sirois is the managing editor of **THE DAILY STAR**

Load-Date: June 30, 2008

'It was like falling back into the grave'. Slain soldier Keren Tendler's mother shocked by news of remains

The Jerusalem Post

June 2, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 448 words

Byline: TOVAH LAZAROFF

Body

Rivana Tendler was so busy teaching high school English that she missed the first phone calls alerting her that some of her daughter's remains might be in the box of IDF body parts that **Hizbullah** returned to Israel on Sunday.

Until that moment, she had believed that her daughter Keren, 26, who died along with four other soldiers when their helicopter was shot down over Lebanon on August 12, 2006, had been buried intact.

"I knew she was burned," Rivana told The Jerusalem Post, but she had never worried about whether parts of her daughter's body might be missing from the grave.

So she was caught completely by surprise when she answered her cellphone at about 1:30 p.m. as she left her classroom at ORT Singalovsky High School in Tel Aviv.

The army told her that **Hizbullah** had given Israel a box of IDF remains that "might be connected to the helicopter crash, but they were not sure," said Rivana.

That call has catapulted her back to those first days of mourning for her daughter, the first **female** soldier killed in combat since the Yom Kippur War.

"It was like falling back into the grave," Rivana said.

She last saw her daughter on August 12, around 3 p.m., when Keren left their home in Rehovot to head to Lebanon, said Rivana. The night of Keren's death, Rivana and her husband heard both on the Internet and television that a helicopter had been shot down. Their worst fears were confirmed at 1:45 a.m., when officers came to their home to tell them Keren was gone.

"I miss my daughter. I have a huge photograph of her in my living room. As I'm talking to you, I'm looking at her. I still don't believe that she is not with us any longer," Rivana said. "But to suddenly hear such dreadful news - it's difficult to accept."

Since mid-afternoon, Rivana has spoken to the IDF several times, but has learned nothing more. It could take 24 hours to run the pathology tests, she told the Post.

In the interim, she has consoled herself with the idea that what was found might be some of Keren's personal items that were never recovered, such as, perhaps, her glasses or her helmet.

'It was like falling back into the grave'. Slain soldier Keren Tendler's mother shocked by news of remains

Avraham Mashiah, whose son Ron, 33, was in the same helicopter, said that he knew only what he heard on the news.

This was not the first time that the question of his son's remains had been raised, even though he, like Rivana, had believed that all parts of his son had been buried.

In January, a Lebanese paper published a report that **Hizbullah** had his son's dog tag.

Miriam Gomez, whose son Daniel, 25, was also in that helicopter, said she had received a warning call from the army in the early afternoon to alert her that news might be forthcoming about her son's remains.

"We don't know anything more," she said.

Graphic

Photo: Sgt. -Maj. (Res.) Keren Tendler

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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Preparing for 'the day after'

The Jerusalem Post

January 16, 2009 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 15

Length: 1275 words

Byline: YAAKOV KATZ

Highlight: SECURITY AND DEFENSE. As residents of Gaza sift through what is left of their homes, the defense establishment is collecting evidence proving Hamas's responsibility for the havoc wreaked on the civilian population. It's also aiming to establish an international mechanism to prevent future weapons smuggling well before missiles make their way into tunnels

Body

The real work for the Foreign Ministry and IDF Spokesman Brig.-Gen. Avi Benayahu will start once Operation Cast Lead is officially over and the troops have returned to Israel from the Gaza Strip.

It is then, when the Palestinians go back to their homes - or what is left of them - in northern Gaza that we will bear witness to the devastation this war has caused. The foreign media, which until now have been barred from entering the Strip, are expected then to be allowed inside. It is then that the world will be flooded with photos of Palestinians sifting through the ruins.

The pictures will be difficult. Some are already making their way out via the media pools that the IDF has allowed inside for a brief glance at what it is doing there - and fighting against. The assessment in the IDF is that it will take Hamas several years to rebuild its infrastructure and recover from the Israeli offensive.

But the IDF does not accept blame for the level of destruction on civilian buildings, as these are homes from which Hamas has opened fire at troops. Thus, it says, they were legitimately bombed from the air, just as D-9 bulldozers legitimately plowed through streets, ripping up asphalt, to make it difficult for Hamas suicide bombers on motorbikes to reach Israeli forces.

"Hamas cynically uses civilian infrastructure to strike at Israel," a top officer commanding troops inside Gaza said this week. "They use mosques to fire at us, hide inside hospitals, plant booby-traps and dig tunnels at the entrance to homes and rig schools with explosives."

One officer with Armored Brigade 401 gave another reason for the damage: "In some cases, when we blew up a tunnel discovered in the middle of a field, the explosion also destroyed the home it was connected to - even though we didn't know they were connected."

A main reason for this is an IDF decision, made prior to the war, that when the life of a soldier is weighed against Israel's image abroad, the soldier's life comes first.

Preparing for 'the day after'

DEFENSE MINISTER Ehud Barak is already preparing for the "day after," when international lawsuits are expected to abound. As a result, he has ordered the establishment of an "Incriminating Team" of intelligence and legal experts to collect evidence against Hamas and its military infrastructure.

The group has received all footage filmed by IDF Combat Camera teams deployed inside the Strip, for it to review and decipher. The footage, much of which is being released to the media on a daily basis, shows clearly how Hamas booby traps schools and zoos, uses mosques to hide weapons and turns innocent civilians into human shields.

There is also the issue of casualty figures. The United Nations has officially adopted the Palestinian Health Ministry's claims that among the close to 1,000 dead, more than half are innocent civilians, including 311 children and 76 women.

The IDF and Israeli intelligence agencies have invested much time and effort in refuting these claims. They have managed to compile a list of 900 names of Palestinians killed in the fighting. Of those 900, the IDF says, 150 are women, children and elderly. According to IDF assessments, the highest number of civilian casualties is around 250; the other fatalities are terrorists.

One source of this discrepancy is the way a "child" is defined. In the UN reports, 17-year-olds - such as Mohammed Jamal Yassin, killed during clashes with Israeli soldiers in northern Gaza - are classified as children. But, according to the IDF, Yassin was a Hamas operative. (The same kind of discrepancy emerged following the Second Lebanon War, when Israel was accused - then, too - of killing 1,000 Lebanese civilians. Since Hizbullah refused to release the number of its dead, the IDF and intelligence agencies compiled a list which showed that at least 600 out of the 1,000 were Hizbullah guerrilla fighters.)

Take, as well, the case of the UNRWA school, which Israel shelled when Hamas terrorists used it as a base from which to fire mortars at troops. In its most recent report on humanitarian conditions in Gaza - released on Thursday - the UN repeated Palestinian claims that 43 civilians had been killed in the attack. In fact, the IDF discovered after examining the incident, that 21 Palestinians had been killed, among them several Hamas operatives, two of them known terrorists.

BUT MAKE no mistake: The real end-game is taking place not in Gaza or Israel, but rather in Cairo and Washington DC.

Egypt is working to broker a cease-fire between that will last longer than the six-month truce which began in June and collapsed in December. The United States is playing an equally important role, by helping to create a mechanism in Egypt and around the world that will stop the weapons smuggling under the Philadelphi Corridor and into Gaza.

Israel's demand for a stop to the smuggling is based on the lessons it learned from Security Council resolution 1701, which ended the Second Lebanon War, but which did not put an end to the smuggling of weapons into Lebanon from Syria. Since then, Hizbullah is believed to have tripled its missile stockpile - from 15,000 to more than 40,000 - with longer ranges and larger warheads.

The fear in Israel is that if the smuggling into Gaza is not stopped, Hamas will do as Hizbullah did.

As was reported earlier this week in The Jerusalem Post, the IDF supports a plan, formulated five years ago by former National Security Council head Giora Eiland, which calls for the erection of a two-part barrier encompassing the Egyptian side of Rafah, to be manned by Egyptian soldiers preventing weapons smugglers into the area.

The idea behind the plan is for the smuggling to be stopped before the weapons even reach Rafah - not after they are already inside the tunnels. Egypt is reluctant to adopt this plan, but says it is open to all sorts of proposals, including the building of a moat along the Philadelphi Corridor and assistance from the US and Germany, in the form of tunnel-detection technology.

Preparing for 'the day after'

The US comes into play with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that Israel is hoping to extract from the Bush administration before Tuesday, when Barack Obama is due to be sworn in as president. In addition to Egyptian action along the border, Israel wants the MOU to create an international mechanism to combat the smuggling well before any weaponry reaches the Sinai Peninsula.

An example of such weaponry is the dozens of Grad- model Katyusha rockets that are currently being fired into Israel. These rockets have a 40-kilometer range, and are very similar to the 122-mm Soviet-made Katyusha rockets that were used by **Hizbullah** during the Second Lebanon War.

Defense officials said that the rockets were smuggled across the Egyptian border in January 2008, after Hamas blew a hole in the border wall.

The question remains as to how they got from China, where they are manufactured, to the Sinai Desert.

Officials explained that, from China, the rockets make several stops before reaching Gaza. In many cases, they are purchased by Iran or **Hizbullah**, and then transferred to the Sinai. In other cases, the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) has learned, weaponry that comes from Yemen and Eritrea is transferred to Sudan, then smuggled into Egypt and finally brought down into a tunnel to Gaza.

Due to this intricate smuggling system, Israel is asking the US to enlist NATO, the European Union and other countries in Africa and the Middle East in the creation of a mechanism through which to share intelligence and stop the smuggling - not when it is being lowered into a tunnel along the Philadelphi Corridor, but when it is being loaded onto a ship or truck somewhere in Africa.

Graphic

Photo: RUMMAGING THROUGH the ruins in Gaza. When the operation is over, the world will be flooded with photos like these. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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Defeating the enemy

The Jerusalem Post
January 2, 2009 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 24

Length: 2248 words

Byline: DAVID HOROVITZ

Highlight: EDITOR'S NOTES

Body

A simple question: Can Israel defeat its enemies? One need not go back decades, to the clinical successes of the Six Day War and Entebbe, to answer emphatically in the affirmative.

Operation Defensive Shield, carried out in the spring of 2002, was a carefully planned and effectively executed attack on the Palestinians' suicide-bomb infrastructure in the West Bank that remade our reality in the years ever since - precisely the kind of goal enunciated for this week's Operation Cast Lead against Hamas in Gaza.

Defensive Shield was launched after the heaviest losses to terrorism in a single month in Israeli history - some 130 fatalities in more than a dozen attacks, including the Seder night bombing of the Park Hotel in Netanya. Its stated aim, as set out by then-prime minister Ariel Sharon, was to capture the terrorists and their dispatchers, and destroy their weapons, their explosives and their arms factories - their capacity to kill us.

The operation was bitter and bloody. It was internationally controversial: Duplicious Palestinian claims that Israel was massacring civilians were given widespread credence. There was heavy loss of life and massive destruction on the Palestinian side. Twenty-nine Israeli soldiers were killed - most of them in the suicide-bomber "capital," Jenin refugee camp, where the terror gangs had booby-trapped buildings for the incoming IDF troops.

But it was decisive, marking the beginning of the drastic decline in suicide-bombings that enabled ordinary life to flourish here anew. The physical destruction of the bombers' infrastructure; the knowledge that the IDF might return at any time; the deaths of key terror chiefs; the effective intelligence gathering that greatly reduced potential bombers' motivation; the construction of the West Bank security barrier - all of these factors combined if not to terminate, then to profoundly set back what had been an unprecedented strategic suicide-bomb onslaught against the men, women and children of Israel.

The deterrent effect of what had been a reluctant resort to such force, however, was gravely undermined by the subsequent abject handling of the Second Lebanon War - fought, like the current operation, across a border to which Israel had unilaterally withdrawn in the false hope of being rewarded with quiet.

The Winograd Committee's scathing dissection of that conflict portrayed an IDF unprepared to battle Hizbullah, and a political leadership - headed by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and defense minister Amir Peretz - too arrogant and inexperienced to realize this.

Defeating the enemy

The consequence was a bumbling and hesitant confrontation, in which Hizbullah's tenacity was underestimated, as was the capacity for its thousands of Katyusha rockets to wreak havoc throughout the north of Israel. The initial air assault failed to achieve the decimation of Hizbullah that the Israeli leadership had unfoundedly predicted. And the ground forces were short of training and supplies, and poorly marshalled. (IDF soldiers fought highly effectively against Hizbullah's forces; the problem was not with their courage and skill, but with the incoherence of the command hierarchy.)

The stop-start battle with Hizbullah was code-named, with unintended accuracy, Operation Change of Direction. It became the Second Lebanon War only after it went unwon.

In the two and a half years since then, however, the IDF has benefited from the command of a no-nonsense ex-infantry man, Gabi Ashkenazi, who has quietly retrained and re-entrenched basic logistics and skills.

The unqualified Peretz has long since gone from the Defense Ministry, to be replaced by the rather politically unloved, but undeniably experienced Ehud Barak - a former chief of the General Staff and former head of the IDF's elite Sayeret Matkal commando unit.

Olmert remains in power - albeit only for a few more weeks - having insisted that he was uniquely placed to learn the lessons of 2006's failures, and thus to prevent a recurrence.

And yet, this week, six days into Operation Cast Lead, the question must be asked anew: Can Israel defeat its enemies?

ISRAEL EMBARKED on its confrontation with Hamas with a clear goal: To restore security to the South.

Some senior Israelis exaggerated the scope. The ambassador to the UN, Gabriela Shalev, for instance, said the aim of this conflict was to destroy Hamas. She was privately rapped for speaking out of line. Barak said in the Knesset on Monday that Israel was engaged in "a war to the bitter end" against Hamas, but those who used this assertion to claim that Operation Cast Lead was itself this "war to the bitter end" were removing the comment from the context in which he employed it in his speech. It was uttered as Barak sought to illustrate the fundamental clash between our sovereign state and an Islamist movement that avowedly seeks our elimination, not as part of the operation's goals.

Publicly and privately, however, Israeli officials from Olmert on down did elaborate on what would constitute "restored security." By this, they said, Israel meant the creation of a new reality in which Hamas would not fire rockets into Israel; would not seek to fire rockets into Israel; would not manufacture rockets; would not produce or smuggle in the materials for manufacturing rockets; and would not engage or prepare for other acts of terrorism. If Hamas's ability to rule Gaza was destroyed in the process, so be it.

This, they said, would enable southern Israel to breathe easily again, enjoying long-term confidence that murderous metal shrapnel was not about to burst upon it from the Kassam crews of the Gaza Strip.

Quite apart from the presence at the helm of a chastened prime minister, a more experienced defense minister and a quietly effective chief of General Staff, many other central factors combined to give the operation a realistic chance of success.

The IDF had spent months preparing for the conflict, gathering intelligence on Hamas targets, training for specific missions.

Gaza was relatively familiar territory for the IDF, which had been deployed there until the disengagement of 2005.

Quiet diplomatic efforts had been under way to explain the nature of the challenge Israel was facing - the untenability of having a widening swathe of a tiny country held hostage to Hamas's improving rocketeers.

Public diplomacy had been geared up, too, with a unified hierarchy organized by Yarden Vatikai in the Prime Minister's Office, and practiced diplomats trained for action on the foreign language media battlefields.

Defeating the enemy

Southern Israel had proven demonstrably resilient, having endured eight years of Kassam attacks, and was thus relieved, though understandably anxious, as the IDF set about seeking a long-term respite. The coordination of the Home Front Command was far more efficient than in 2006, with local authorities well briefed for the challenges.

The enemy, though viciously motivated and supremely indifferent to loss of life - it ruthlessly killed its own people when wresting power in Gaza in June 2007 - was far less equipped for the fight than that other Iranian proxy army to the north, Hizbullah. Its rocket capacity was limited, and its ability to melt away much constrained, especially given Egypt's refusal to let its border with Gaza serve as Hamas's supply import route and terrorist escape route.

In fact, Egypt's unprecedented criticism of Hamas, for bringing disaster to bear on Gaza by maintaining rocket attacks on Israel and cancelling the misnamed "truce," was another major asset for Israel, in turn helping to mollify some of the inevitable international criticism of the resort to force.

NEVERTHELESS, AS early as Tuesday evening, sources in the defense establishment were indicating that Barak was ready to agree to a 48-hour "humanitarian" time-out in the operation - as requested by French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner - which might turn into a permanent cease-fire if Hamas halted the rocket attacks.

Adherents of the notion claimed the air force had exhausted its "bank" of Hamas targets in Gaza and that there was little more that could be done from the air for now, while bad weather meant a ground assault was not practicable for the next couple of days anyway. They said Israel would gain greater international support for displaying a willingness to sanction a suspension of the operation, and that if Hamas nevertheless continued to fire rockets, Israel could renew the assault with greater legitimacy. And they noted that Israel had spurned the chance of a cease-fire early in the Second Lebanon War, and come to rue the missed opportunity.

None of these arguments withstands serious scrutiny. The "bank" of targets continually refreshes so long as Hamas attempts to govern Gaza. Bad weather might necessitate delayed actions, but not a formal commitment to inaction. Yes, Israel might score points if Hamas continued firing through a time-out, but what if it didn't? The operation would be over without its goal attained. And while the unready IDF might indeed have benefited from an early cease-fire in 2006, to take the time to properly prepare for the confrontation with Hizbullah, this time Ashkenazi had made clear that it was ready to execute its battle plan.

After discussion by Barak, Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni that night, the time-out was rejected. On Wednesday, officials attempted to suggest it had never been seriously contemplated. But Ashkenazi, for one, plainly believed that it was a plausible possibility; he went so far as to approve the release of a statement on Tuesday afternoon dissociating the IDF from any role in hatching or advancing the idea.

On Wednesday, Olmert declared that "we didn't initiate the Gaza operation in order to end it while Israeli towns are still under fire." So why was Barak weighing the time-out, and thus seemingly signalling a desired Israeli countdown toward a cease-fire?

Hamas has been firing rockets more deeply than ever into Israel - as far as Beersheba since Tuesday, bringing an estimated 800,000 Israelis into range. Though it has sustained considerable losses, it is anything but broken, as the head of the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency), Yuval Diskin, told the cabinet on Wednesday. Almost all of its leadership has gone safely to ground. Its armed forces are essentially intact. It may be temporarily unable to effectively govern Gaza at present, but it retains its capacity to regain its hold if the operation ceases.

Barak's readiness to contemplate the time-out at so early a juncture suggested that the defense minister was himself uncertain that Israel could indeed effectively quash the Hamas threat. By extension, it conveyed a similar sense of uncertainty to the IDF and to those international players who have explicitly or tacitly backed Israel in this endeavor. And what a boost it must have been to Hamas and its Islamist supporters.

THIS IS not to say that the stewards of this operation should be sending great convoys of tanks plunging through the mud into Gaza - to be gleefully confronted by a Hamas force that has been preparing - booby-trapping roads and buildings, setting ambushes - for precisely such an eventuality.

Defeating the enemy

The IAF assaults have smashed the symbols of Hamas power, bombed many of the tunnels that are its lifeline, blown up many of its rocket silos, hit some of its weapons stores and laboratories, and killed several of its key commanders.

If much of what can be achieved from the air was indeed achieved early in this operation, other targets will nevertheless appear as Hamas leaders seek to emerge from the bunkers - as was the case on Thursday afternoon when Nizar Rayyan was killed. And if they do not show their faces, Hamas will gradually lose more credibility, and ultimately lose the capacity to govern.

Meanwhile, astute use of forces on the ground where and when necessitated - whether to tackle concentrations of terrorist power as in Operation Defensive Shield, or to target weapons stores and rocket silos callously placed by Hamas in dense residential areas unreachable from the air - would gradually reduce Hamas's capacity to threaten Israel.

As the original goal made plain, this confrontation must be concluded with Israel in a position of strength, able to dictate conditions that will prevent a resurgence of the Hamas threat in the long-term. Israel must retain ongoing freedom for military action, enabling the IDF to prevent the homefront - the schools, the kindergartens - from again becoming the front line.

A cease-fire, by contrast, that leaves Hamas able - as it was during the months of the last lull - to move around freely and organize for battle, to import arms and to improve its weaponry, would mean Operation Cast Lead had achieved nothing.

It would suggest a further deterioration since 2006, when Israel's leadership was plainly inexperienced and underqualified. Here and now, Hamas, **Hizbullah**, Iran and Syria would proclaim, Israel - having once more chosen to seek a decisive outcome after its people came under unprovoked attack, facing a force less formidable than **Hizbullah**, and led by a veteran defense minister and a highly regarded IDF chief - was again ultimately deterred.

AFTER THE shock of the initial air strikes, Operation Cast Lead was predicated on the basis of weeks, not days - a strategic, systematic effort to change the reality in the South.

It worked for Operation Defensive Shield in the West Bank. If Israeli civilians are to live free from the terror threat, it needs to work in Gaza.

Graphic

Photo: IDF FORCES prepare at the Gaza border. A cease-fire that leaves Hamas able - as it was during the months of the last lull - to move around freely and organize for battle, to import arms and to improve its weaponry, would mean Operation Cast Lead had achieved nothing. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolinski/The Jerusalem Post)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

**Israeli attacks blamed for bulk of Lebanon war fatalities; Findings released
by Human Rights Watch**

Edmonton Journal (Alberta)

September 6, 2007 Thursday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. E8

Length: 735 words

Byline: Steven Edwards, CanWest News Service

Dateline: UNITED NATIONS

Body

UNITED NATIONS - Israel has been thrown on the defensive after a new Human Rights Watch report charged that "indiscriminate air strikes" by Israeli forces caused most of the estimated 900 civilian deaths in Lebanon during last year's conflict with Hezbollah.

Drawing on findings of a five-month-long study, the New York- and Washington-based monitoring group said a "simple movement of vehicles or persons -- such as attempting to buy bread or moving about private homes -- could be enough to cause a deadly Israeli air strike."

The group's 249-page report, entitled Why They Died: Civilian Casualties in Lebanon during the 2006 War, adds that 300 of the 510 civilians whose deaths were investigated were women and children.

"Israel wrongfully acted as if all civilians had heeded its warnings to evacuate southern Lebanon when it knew they had not," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of HRW.

"Issuing warnings does not make indiscriminate attacks lawful."

Last month, in a report on Hezbollah's role in the July 12 to Aug. 14, 2006, conflict, HRW said the group fired "thousands of rockets indiscriminately -- and at times deliberately -- at civilian areas in northern Israel."

The report released today includes a response by Israel. It highlights HRW's assertions of Hezbollah's deliberate targeting of civilians and adds that Hezbollah used civilians as human shields.

"Hezbollah ... deliberately targeted Israeli civilians, while attempting to use the cover of civilians and civilian structures in order to stockpile its weapons, hide its fighters and fire missiles in Israel," Israeli officials said.

"Israel, on the other hand, held itself bound to apply the principles of humanitarian law, even while facing an opponent who deliberately flouted them."

HRW disputes that Hezbollah systematically used civilians as human shields "as claimed by Israeli officials," but acknowledges the group, listed by Canada as a terrorist organization, may have sought cover behind UN bases which had been installed to monitor an earlier ceasefire in southern Lebanon.

Israeli attacks blamed for bulk of Lebanon war fatalities; Findings released by Human Rights Watch

Israel launched operations against Hezbollah after the group seized two Israeli soldiers, who are still missing. At least 1,125 Lebanese died before a UN-ordered ceasefire brought an end to fighting, says the HRW report.

Canada's Maj. Paeta Hess-von Kruegener was one of four UN observers killed when an Israeli precision-guided missile hit their base at Khiyam on July 25, 2006. While the UN said at the time there had been no Hezbollah presence near the base just before the strike, an e-mail written by the major days earlier said Hezbollah had been active there, and Israeli air strikes close to it had "not been deliberate targeting."

HRW says its investigations show Israel defence forces deliberately targeted more than just the militant wing of Hezbollah, charging strikes on the group's non-military institutions in southern Lebanon would violate international humanitarian law.

"HRW research indicates that a large number of private homes of civilian Hezbollah members were targeted during the war, as well as a variety of civilian Hezbollah institutions, such as schools, welfare agencies, banks, shops, and political offices, in addition to Hezbollah militants and the homes of Hezbollah combatants," says the report.

The report notes the civilian death toll from such attacks was low because Hezbollah officials and many of their neighbours had evacuated the areas in anticipation of strikes. But Roth said such a policy would set a "dangerous precedent."

"To accept the argument that any part of Hezbollah can be targeted because it aids the military effort would be to accept that all Israeli institutions that aid the Israel Defence Forces can be targeted," he said.

Although the report focuses on Israeli and Hezbollah military operations during the war, some commentators say the wider context of the conflict needs to be continually emphasized.

"The war was not between two internationally legitimate entities," said Hillel Neuer, executive director of the Geneva-based UN Watch.

"Hezbollah should by that time have disarmed, according to international law, and its actions in seizing the Israeli soldiers were also illegal."

The UN Security Council ruled in 2004 that the Lebanese government should establish sovereignty over the southern part the country, thereby displacing Hezbollah and ending the group's ability to strike Israel from the region.

Load-Date: September 6, 2007

The folly of calling brothers enemies

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

March 7, 2008 Friday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 1635 words

Byline: Samir Khalaf

Body

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Because the media covered the events simultaneously, viewers could witness their unfolding on the same screen. At no moment in Lebanon's history had rival political factions ever seemed so dissonant.

The March 14 commemoration was an exultant spectacle. Throngs of people braved foul weather to converge on Martyrs' Square in numbers far exceeding expectations. They filled open spaces and blocked all major arteries leading to the once-vibrant city center. The gathering was a spontaneous blend of broad constituencies drawn from all of Lebanon's communities, representing a wide cross-section of socioeconomic sectors. Women in headscarves and turbaned religious figures mixed amiably with more stylish compatriots. The rippling flags, banners, placards, umbrellas and protective caps transformed the rally into an animated work of art, one akin to a Jackson Pollock canvas.

Just a few kilometers away, in Beirut's southern suburbs, the funeral ceremony for Mughniyeh was the antithesis of the March 14 gathering. It had all the appearance of being based on a prearranged set of totalitarian precepts. The women, in black chadors, huddled together, looking like a motionless polka-dotted tapestry. The bearded men, wearing party head-gear, occupied an adjoining space. Hizbullah secretary general Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah's vituperative speech was met by an orchestrated, rhythmic response, as the men present punched the air with their fists. Nasrallah highlighted his eulogy by saying that Hizbullah had declared "open war" against Israel, a state destined to be wiped off the map.

Underlying those differences was an ideological rift validating the political legitimacy of each group. To March 14, the paramount aim is retributive justice for Hariri's killing and countless others since. Only when justice is fulfilled, the majority believes, will Lebanon regain its independence. The opposition, in turn, boasts of its occupation of

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central Beirut. Rather than remembering the number of days since Hariri's assassination, they list the number of days since opposition parties began the wasteful sit-in in the Downtown area. Bizarre as these two dissonant approaches are, their interplay has come to mold the destiny of Lebanon's traumatized society.

Despite the striking differences between March 8 and March 14, they share an aberrant feature which largely accounts for Lebanon's political deadlock. For over three years, the two sides have been trapped in an escalating war of mutual rhetorical vilification, depicting the "other" as a repository of all the pathologies that more often characterize enemies. Since this sense of enmity is directed internally, it involves effectively dehumanizing a brother to better justify the rancor against him.

The current political impasse has a puzzling edge to it. As the two recalcitrant groups disavow any resort to violence, they adamantly maintain their belligerent rhetoric. One group is seething with anger and bitterness; the other with fear and resilience. All efforts at reconciliation have been in vain. The 16 calls to convene Parliament to confirm the election of General Michel Suleiman as president have gone nowhere.

Just as fractious political leaders have been violating all the basic ingredients of participatory democracy, they have also been making a mockery of the civic virtues of public protest. In democracies, controversy, disputes, and tolerable conflict are healthy signs. The public interest is well served by spirited public debate. But when disagreements are distorted by extremist rhetoric, the public debate degenerates into futile meta-politics, or worse mere exchanges of invective; democratic discourse becomes a spectator sport, a destructive pastime.

The primary victim of all this is the democratic citizen. He or she is denigrated, deceived, demeaned. Witness the waste of resources as the media, day and night, insult our intelligence and debase our aesthetic sensibilities by hosting talk shows that remind us of cockfights in a tribal culture. The level of demonization has never been as vulgar or abusive.

While one might point the finger at the unwavering strategies of March 14, it is the escalating demands of March 8 and the Aounists that have crippled all possible venues for consensus. The opposition has failed thus far in realizing any of its objectives: the resignation of the Siniora government, electing a president with Syrian approval, compelling the army's leadership to abandon the government, persuading the Arab League and foreign powers to make a deal with Syria and, perhaps most important, derailing formation of the Hariri tribunal.

Yet despite its failure, perhaps because of it, the opposition has escalated its rhetoric, its single-minded, dogmatic inclinations, and its righteous insistence on the supremacy of its views while denigrating all others. In their public appearances, opposition groups have embodied two of Nietzsche's concepts: *schadenfreude*, taking pleasure in the suffering of others, and "ressentiment," or blaming others for one's own frustrations.

To the opposition, obstruction has become a cherished agenda. ***Hizbullah*** unilaterally provoked the summer 2006 war which had ruinous consequences for Lebanon's economy and infrastructure, not to mention the far more painful toll in lives and personal property. The destruction was even more acute because the war erupted at a time when the country was displaying signs of recovery and solidarity. Oddly, ***Hizbullah*** continues to celebrate that war as a "divine victory."

By far the most spiteful expression of *schadenfreude* has been the occupation of Beirut's old city center. Just as the Downtown area was emerging as an open, cosmopolitan public sphere, perhaps because of its notoriety in hosting the Cedar Revolution of 2005, it became a target of desecration. Its ruin was accomplished with indifference, as though the epicenter of the capital was enemy territory. This malice could well have been a reflection of unresolved sectarian tensions. Otherwise, it would not have been characterized by vengeful disregard for the wellbeing of others. Indeed, the opposition has dismissed the damage it has done to the area as virtually affecting a parking lot belonging to the Hariri family.

Finally, and with this same sinister mindset, Shiite ministers and a minister close to former President Emile Lahoud resigned from the Cabinet in November 2006 as a ploy to declare the government illegitimate and unconstitutional. Their "resignation" however, was relative. When it serves their interests, they attend to their duties. This is where Nietzsche's "ressentiment" becomes relevant. The opposition has been powerless to impose its desired outcomes,

The folly of calling brothers enemies

and this has been transformed into a sense of impotent hostility. Schadenfreude and "ressentiment" feed off each other. It is the diffuse feeling of hatred, envy, and antagonism that compounds the horrors endemic to both.

We are at a fateful crossroad in Lebanon's political history. When conflict sparked by communal and sectarian rivalries is transformed from a dispute over divisible problems (electing a consensus president, power-sharing, the prerogative of the Cabinet, a new electoral law, and the like) to one over indivisible issues (such as the future, defining character, and existence of Lebanon as a plural, open and independent state), then the character of the conflict is bound to become more belligerent.

It should be remembered that social strata become embittered by loss of status, material advantage, and privilege. Lebanon's communal formations feel threatened by the loss of freedom, identity, heritage, even their own national existence. This is what is currently at stake in the country. And this is why March 8 and March 14 seem so inflexible.

Comparative evidence on the relationship between civil violence and conflict resolution is instructive. Unfortunately, it tends to reinforce Lebanon's bleak prospects. A recent analysis of how six instances of civil unrest ended - in Colombia, Zimbabwe, Greece, Yemen, Sudan, Nigeria, and the American Civil War - suggests that when conflict is primarily of an ethnic, communal character, in contrast to economic and political issues, the likelihood of a negotiated nonbelligerent resolution becomes very slim. Indeed, in all communal wars there must be a victor and a vanquished before combatants can begin to consider negotiation.

But then all earlier episodes of collective strife in Lebanon never ended, or were never permitted to end, through victory. The only other option under such circumstances is partition or some confederal arrangement. This, too, is extremely unlikely in Lebanon. If the Lebanese have had problems living peacefully together, living apart is even more problematic.

Once again, the political future of the country is shrouded in uncertainty. The usual interplay between internal divisions and external rivalries are exasperating the crisis. In the absence of an unforeseen cataclysmic event, the country is doomed to remain in this misbegotten state of limbo.

Samir Khalaf is a professor of sociology at the American University of Beirut. He wrote this commentary for **THE DAILY STAR**.

Load-Date: October 22, 2008

Beirutis wonder how 10 MiG-29s - and upkeep - can benefit Lebanon

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

December 23, 2008 Tuesday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 622 words

Byline: Fidelius Schmid

Body

Defense Minister Elias Murr was in the mood for superlatives after he extracted a promise of 10 MiG-29 fighter jets from Russia's government during a trip to Moscow last week. It was, Murr said, the "most important thing" that happened since he took office. Now, virtually everyone who had heard of Murr's catch.

BEIRUT: Defense Minister Elias Murr was in the mood for superlatives after he extracted a promise of 10 MiG-29 fighter jets from Russia's government during a trip to Moscow last week. It was, Murr said, the "most important thing" that happened since he took office. Now, virtually everyone who had heard of Murr's catch (and there were quite a few who hadn't) greeted it as "a good thing," when The Daily Star went out on a random poll about the subject on Monday.

But many Beirutis asked the glaring question: What exactly are they good for? Will they be of more use than just showflying them over Beirut - which to the more cynical observers is essentially all the air force's Hawker Hunter planes built in the 1950s and 1960s are good for.

"Generally, I think it is a fantastic idea, if they really live up to their promise," said Nicolas Tabet, 17. "Of course these planes could not repel an Israeli assault - even if they gave us a hundred planes. But it has symbolic value, it is a good start."

"This is purely symbolic. We cannot fight Israel with that," said Khaled, 45, who works in agriculture in South. "But it is still a good thing."

Roland, 25, a management student, believed Russia's donation was "a great help for the Lebanese Army," but also questioned the need for the jets. "I mean it also seems like we're afraid of something here. We have seen so many wars - let's just be peaceful" he added. "I don't think we would be able to fend off Israel with these jets."

Abdel-Rahman Bandakji, who owns a restaurant in Downtown Beirut, sounded even more skeptical. "Thank you Russia, thank you Qatar," he said. "But let's be serious: What do we need those MiGs for? To fight who? Israel? Syria? ... In case of an Israeli attack, these planes would never even leave the ground."

Beirutis wonder how 10 MiG-29s - and upkeep - can benefit Lebanon

"If you want to fight, you need everything. Giving us helicopters instead of these planes would have been more useful. There is no need for 10 jets," he added. "The pilots need training for two years and we need to maintain them and the economy is going down," he added.

Prompted on why they thought Hizbullah had not reacted to the Russian promise of jets yet, a considerable number of people declined to answer. But most said they thought the party would not want to see a strong Lebanese Army.

"I cannot think Hizbullah likes to see this" Khaled said. "I cannot see that they would want to see the Lebanese Army to be strong," he added. Roland, the management student, said strengthening the army with defense procurements such as the Russian warplanes "would not be to Hizbullah's benefit."

"A powerful army would mean taking away the reason for their existence," he added.

A couple of people, however, were very optimistic about the government's defense procurement activities. "The jets will help defend Lebanon better," Serge Trad said.

Babih Srour said he believed the jets would be useful. "You will see, if Israel tries, they will fight," he said. "The Lebanese are fighters, we were kind of born to war and for some, there is nothing to lose."

But while most men were quite vocal about their views, Beirut's women were less enthusiastic at all. "Haven't heard about it," some said, while others named "Christmas shopping" as their top priority.

A Lebanese woman visiting from France summed it up by saying: "We have heard so much about war, buying arms, selling weapons and we have heard so many promises that we're just fed up with it."

Load-Date: December 22, 2008

The folly of calling brothers enemies

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

March 7, 2008 Friday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 1635 words

Byline: Samir Khalaf

Body

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Samir Khalaf is a professor of sociology at the American University of Beirut. He wrote this commentary for **THE DAILY STAR**.

Load-Date: June 30, 2008

Put them to death

The Jerusalem Post

July 25, 2008 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 6

Length: 1199 words

Byline: SARAH HONIG

Highlight: Another Tack

Body

Preempting an opponent's objection with an objection - thereby turning an argument on its head - is the bread-and-butter of polemics. The tactic is common everywhere - from ordinary conversation to the halls of academe and courtroom litigation. When used cunningly, counterarguments can become the demagogue's most invaluable of tools, used to sway the intellectually indolent and apply populist pressure.

Much as it's politically incorrect by our society's kitschified codes to cast Miki Goldwasser - mother of Ehud, who was ambushed, slain and nabbed by Hizbullah two years ago - as a skilled manipulator, her cleverness cannot but be acknowledged.

Her meticulously crafted June 18 letter to the prime minister testifies to that. Striving to rebut the contention that "if [Samir] Kuntar is swapped, more people would be kidnapped," she faults the very fact that Kuntar was held behind bars: "Had Kuntar been exchanged in the Tannenbaum deal, you wouldn't be reading my letter today. Contrariwise, were Kuntar not to be exchanged today, there would be more abductions and this time perhaps also of Israeli citizens pleasurably touring abroad. Nasrallah is determined to get Kuntar back no matter what. His next attempt could be lots worse. It could end up in kidnapping a family, juveniles, expectant mothers or anyone else."

It may have been her prerogative to shout to all and sundry that she doesn't give a hoot about why Kuntar was convicted in the first place, nor does she care about the consequences of his release. It's legitimate for a distraught mother to focus only on her personal pain. But it's illegitimate to cynically contrive to mess with the minds of the rest of the nation, from whose ranks emboldened Hizbullah's next victims will surely come.

Her pro-forma premise was that Kuntar's liberation was Nasrallah's ultimate objective. But was it? Kuntar perpetrated his horrific crime before Hizbullah's inception. He's not a Shi'ite nor a member of Nasrallah's militia.

IN 1979 Kuntar led the invasion of the Haran family's Nahariya apartment. He caused the mother, Smadar, to hide in the ceiling crawl space and inadvertently smother her toddler daughter Yael to death, lest her cries betray them. He took the father Danny and four-year-old Einat at gunpoint to the beach, where he executed Danny and where Einat was swung hard by her ankles to callously bash her head against the rocks. Kuntar then repeatedly slammed his rifle butt into Einat's skull. Remnants of her brain tissue adhered to his weapon. There are conflicting versions about who witnessed whose horrifying death. Did Danny see Einat's brains spill out or was her father's bloodied body the last thing Einat saw?

Put them to death

Such barbarity is the stuff of which heroes are made in the Arab world, and his savagery is precisely why Kuntar is adulated. Setting him loose constitutes a matchless prestige booster for Nasrallah. That's his sole stake in Kuntar, and it won't cause Hizbullah to close all accounts with Israel. Far from it. Having coerced Israel to capitulate, Nasrallah will home in on the next lucrative prestige booster. Pretexts aren't scarce and can, moreover, be quickly manufactured.

Just as offensive is Goldwasser's resort to scare tactics, like her warning that if Kuntar weren't let out, the next hostages may be families and youngsters. Do such scenarios hinge only on Kuntar's fate? Does his release obviate the danger? Does the bloodlust genuinely depend on the Kuntar excuse? Haven't we already seen the indiscriminate slaughter of whole families, women and children before Kuntar was seized? What on earth does Miki Goldwasser think Kuntar's initial nighttime attack on the pajama-clad Harans was?

But worst of all is her insinuation that Nasrallah's will must be done because he is "determined." Woe to us collectively if the Jewish state calculates its moves according to the determination gauge of its worst genocidal enemies. Logically, this path inevitably leads to Israel's eradication, just as Nasrallah, Ahmadinejad and assorted Hamas lynchpins openly preach. If we accept their determination to achieve a given goal as a foregone conclusion that mustn't be resisted, then we're goners.

TO SURVIVE in our hostile environment we must consistently frustrate everything about which Nasrallah is determined - not acquiesce to his insistence and subserviently abet his purposes. We must do the opposite of what he demands, not give in to his diktats. Whatever aggrandizes him, endangers us.

Moreover, Nasrallah's determination is inextricably linked to Ahmadinejad's determination. By giving in to Teheran's Lebanese hand puppet, we encourage the puppet master to persevere in his genocidal aims.

Kuntar was nothing but Nasrallah's pretext for extortion. The best we can do is remove as many such facile pretexts from our prisons as possible. It's remarkably easy to fabricate new rationales for bloodshed, but convicted murderers sentenced to life behind bars mustn't be allowed out alive. The enemy must have nobody to free. This may mean conditional death penalties - to become mandatory in case attempts are made to spring convicts via hostage- taking.

The flaw here is that Israel's exceedingly milksop system, whose life sentences are in any case worthless, will lack the gumption to execute villains when it comes to the crunch. It's way too much to expect resolve under pressure from a leadership which brainwashes its people to take pride in weakness, portraying it as the hallmark of humanitarianism.

The best alternative is not to wait till hostages are taken, but put to death every Kuntar-type right after sentencing. This may not directly save lives, but it would ensure that unspeakable homicide won't go unpunished, that those who gleefully spill the blood of Jewish children won't live to be feted for their bestiality and won't be accorded heroes' welcomes.

That too is some consolation, even if minor. It's important - six decades after the Holocaust - to trust that the Jewish state won't countenance the callous massacre of Jews merely because they are Jews.

It's at least slight solace to know that the most heinous of butchers won't get the last laugh on us and won't in the interim enjoy our hospitality, be well fed by Israeli taxpayers, will further their education, pursue hobbies, receive conjugal visits, procreate and even commission and coordinate more terror onslaughts.

The only way to quit being suckers is to quit being suckers.

Many in our midst will of course regurgitate the questionable claim that by imposing capital punishment, we might imperil captured Israelis, whom vengeful unbridled enemies will readily kill. But the greater likelihood is that by contracting the sort of deal whereby living Kuntars are swapped for corpses, we eliminate the last enemy incentive to keep abductees alive.

Put them to death

Hizbullah, it would pay us to remember, had never returned any living Israeli - except for over-the-hill drug-dealer Tannenbaum, another wry Nasrallah joke at our expense. That's something to remain mindful of before expediently trying to turn common sense on its head. By having won her argument, Miki Goldwasser pushed us another step closer to losing our existential war.

Graphic

Photo: The funeral last week of Ehud Goldwasser. Mother Miki and wife Karnit escort him to his final resting place. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Beirutis put little faith in protest as means of ending Israeli war on Gaza

The Daily Star (Lebanon)
January 14, 2009 Wednesday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 952 words

Byline: Florence Thireau

Body

Protests continued in Lebanon and around the world this week, calling for an end to Israeli hostilities and global action to stop what the UN Human Rights Council on Monday called "grave" abuses committed over the past 18 days of violence in the Gaza Strip. As Israeli tanks moved closer toward the center of Gaza City Monday.

BEIRUT: Protests continued in Lebanon and around the world this week, calling for an end to Israeli hostilities and global action to stop what the UN Human Rights Council on Monday called "grave" abuses committed over the past 18 days of violence in the Gaza Strip.

As Israeli tanks moved closer toward the center of Gaza City Monday, and the death toll rose beyond 900 lives, many of them women and children, The Daily Star went to the Beirut neighborhoods of Achrafieh and Mazraa for a local perspective on whether protesting against the Israeli war in Gaza would be effective in ending hostilities.

Respondents generally expressed pessimism, believing that protesting against the current war, both locally and abroad, would have little effect on international action to halt the violence that has cost so many Palestinian lives over the past few weeks.

Many said that their political apathy, and their lack of faith in the political parties that are often demonstrating, namely Hizbullah, kept them from participating in protests. This attitude was manifested on the streets of both Achrafieh and Mazraa.

In Achrafieh, Mariet said: "I don't think that protesting will accomplish anything. I'm not political, so no I would not protest."

Nearby, George echoed her sentiments: "No, it's not going to change anything. I'm not political, so I won't protest myself, but even if I was, protesting is not going to change the situation in Gaza."

Colette, 40, said: "I reject Israel's policy and I blame the Lebanese government for its lack of action regarding Gaza. I regret that only Hizbullah and Palestinians are protesting in Lebanon. I don't support Hizbullah so I cannot protest with them."

Beirutis put little faith in protest as means of ending Israeli war on Gaza

Two younger women nearby, Samia and Nour, echoed her sentiments, that they wished to protest, but did not wish to protest or stand with Hizbullah. But they said they were, "shocked by the deaths of children and women."

Down the street, Amir, an Armenian living in Beirut, expressed a similar lack of faith in any progressive action stemming from protesting, but went further in his analysis: "Look, it's a genocide, and I'm Armenian. I know all about that. But it doesn't matter what [protesters] say ... How many times have there been protests? Protests of 1.5 million people even! Is there any change? There has been 25 years of war, at least. The problem is political and when we're talking about politicians, what will protests accomplish?"

Still, Amir believed that "if someone has a view to resist, and he's defending his home, let him resist, and let him protest." Regarding global protests, he said: "Maybe it will have an effect. I don't know."

Claude, 55, said: "I regret that Christian parties are not organizing protests in Achrafieh. For some it might seem like Gaza's situation is a Muslim problem, but all Lebanese people should be concerned. I recognize Israel's right to defend itself as well as the Palestinians.' I think Lebanon's government is the best among Arab governments ... It gave \$1 million to the Gazans and I am expecting good results from it. Giving money is [better] than protesting in the streets."

Nadine took a more radical tone. "I'm very shocked by this systematic targeting of innocents such as children and women in Gaza, but I can't help thinking that it is not Lebanon's problem. Lebanon should try to focus on its own problems. Our best solution is isolation. We welcomed Palestinians in our country 60 years ago and it created a lot of problems. Media are always defending the weakest, but I don't think that the weakest are always innocent. All these protests are useless. We should focus on the next legislative elections. Besides, in a democracy, the only legitimate way of protesting is to vote."

In Mazraa, Osama told The Daily Star that "protesting isn't going to change anything, and ultimately it won't bring anything good for the Palestinians."

However, further down the street, Mohammad was more vocal: "Israel is doing something terrible. They're using phosphorous bombs, committing war crimes, and they should stop it. There is no reason for this war, and if there is a reason, they should give us one. There are poor people in Gaza, women and children. How can they say this war is with Hamas? However, I don't believe that the Palestinians who are here and in [the Occupied West Bank] are doing enough." Asked about protesting specifically, he replied, "I don't know. It gives an opinion, and that's important. I will protest if I feel I have to."

At a jewelry shop in Mazraa, Samer said: "Locally, I don't think protests will accomplish anything. But globally, I do think so. Perhaps it will change the stance of people in Europe or America to see protesters standing with the Palestinians. But in the Arab world, no. It will not change anything. So no, I would not protest myself here in Lebanon. It is meaningless here."

Ahmad, a 21-year-old journalist in Mazraa, was more positive. He told The Daily Star that "Lebanon is the only Middle Eastern country where you can protest without fearing to be arrested, unlike Egypt or Syria. We all know that protesting in Beirut can create a 'domino effect' in the Arab world."

But unfortunately, Amhad's sentiments were not shared by most Beirutis, who felt that no amount of vocal protests would change or solve the Gazans' current predicament as they face violent siege at the hands of the Israeli military.

Load-Date: January 21, 2009

Freedom beckons for kidnapped Israeli soldiers

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

May 28, 2008 Wednesday

Third Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; International News; Pg. 7

Length: 519 words

Byline: Jason Koutsoukis In Jerusalem - with The New York Times

Body

HOPES were raised yesterday that the two Israeli soldiers kidnapped by the radical Lebanese Islamic movement **Hezbollah** in 2006, sparking a six-week war with Israel, could soon be released.

In his first public comments since a peace deal between warring Lebanese factions was signed last week, **Hezbollah**'s secretary-general, Hassan Nasrallah, hinted he would accept a prisoner exchange deal offered by Israel. The offer was made two weeks ago by Israel's chief negotiator with **Hezbollah**, Ofer Dekel, through a German mediator. It would include the return of five Lebanese prisoners in exchange for the two Israeli soldiers, Udi Goldwasser and Eldad Regev.

Speaking from his hiding place in Lebanon, Nasrallah said in a recorded speech released early yesterday that one of the Lebanese prisoners, Samir Kuntar, would "soon be among us and will be reunited with their families". The words were interpreted in Israel as a strong indication that Nasrallah would accept the Israeli offer.

The speech was screened before a crowd of thousands waving **Hezbollah** and Lebanese flags in the Dahiya neighbourhood in southern Beirut.

A few hours before the speech, Kuntar's brother, Bassam, told German media: "Yesterday my family received a message about a positive development that would lead to the release of my brother and other Lebanese prisoners." Bassam Kuntar said the deal would probably be carried out within 30 days.

The Israeli offer also includes the return of the remains of 10 **Hezbollah** gunmen and the expulsion from Israel of a convicted **Hezbollah** spy, Nasim Nasser.

But the offer would not include the return of any of the Palestinian prisoners that had initially been demanded by Nasrallah.

"The ball is now in **Hezbollah**'s court," a high-level political source was quoted as saying in the Israeli daily Yedioth Ahronoth.

"Significant progress has indeed been achieved, but no deal has been closed. The negotiations are at a crossroads, but no breakthrough is expected in the next few days. The breakthrough now depends on them."

Freedom beckons for kidnapped Israeli soldiers

Another senior Israeli source said Nasrallah's speech indicated that "for Nasrallah the penny has dropped and that he understands that he cannot squeeze any more juice out of this lemon".

In his speech, Hezbollah's leader also sought to reassure the Lebanese about the Shiite militant group's intentions, saying its expanded political clout would not translate into greater control over the state, and that its top priority remains the fight against Israel.

The speech came a day after Lebanon's parliament elected a new president, Michel Suleiman, formally ending 18 months of political conflict between the country's governing coalition and Hezbollah and its opposition allies.

Israeli media reported that Government and defence sources were hopeful about the fate of Master Sergeant Goldwasser and First Sergeant Regev, about whom nothing had been heard since they were snatched by Hezbollah gunmen while on a border patrol in July 2006.

In December 2006 a previously classified Israeli report said the two soldiers had been critically wounded when a missile struck their Humvee armoured vehicle.

Graphic

PHOTO: Celebration ... women hold pictures of Hassan Nasrallah, who has hinted he will accept a prisoner exchange deal offered by Israel. Photo: AFP/Ramzi Haidar

Load-Date: May 27, 2008

Family of Dalal Mughraby awaits return of remains

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

July 16, 2008 Wednesday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 947 words

Byline: Dalila Mahdawi

Body

The last time Amina Hassan Ismail saw her daughter, Dalal Mughraby, she noticed something unusual about her behavior. "Dalal came and told me she was going to visit her friend at the Ghazi hospital in Sabra. She gave me a framed photograph of herself, which was odd. I said to her, 'Why are you giving me a picture of yourself.

Interview

BEIRUT: The last time Amina Hassan Ismail saw her daughter, Dalal Mughraby, she noticed something unusual about her behavior. "Dalal came and told me she was going to visit her friend at the Ghazi hospital in Sabra. She gave me a framed photograph of herself, which was odd. I said to her, 'Why are you giving me a picture of yourself when I have the real thing?' ... I felt something was strange about the situation," Ismail recalled, with tears welling in her eyes.

"A few days later, many people came knocking at our door. Journalists came, wanting to know what the mother of Dalal was like, what kind of house she had lived in. I didn't know what had happened."

The Mughraby family turned on the television to see Ehud Barak, Israel's current defense minister, shooting bullets into Dalal's corpse and dragging her body across the ground.

More than 30 years later, Mughraby's body will be returned to Lebanon as part of the prisoner swap between Israel and **Hizbullah** expected Wednesday morning, in which the Jewish state is to hand over five Lebanese prisoners and the remains of about 200 Palestinian and Lebanese fighters killed over the last few decades.

In return, **Hizbullah** will give back Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, two soldiers the group captured in July 2006, and the remains of other Israeli soldiers killed in the 34-day war that followed the operation.

Three decades on, Mughraby is still reviled by Israelis as the notorious "Coastal Road killer." But many Palestinians and Arabs regard her as an icon of the resistance and as one of Palestine's first famous **female** fighters.

On March 11, 1978, Mughraby was just 19 years old when she led a unit of 11 other Lebanese and Palestinian Fedayeen fighters on an operation that killed 36 people. The unit set out for the mission by boat from South Lebanon, sailing to the coast of northern Israel, where they killed American photographer Gail Rubin and hijacked a

Family of Dalal Mughraby awaits return of remains

bus on the Haifa-Tel Aviv highway. The bus was eventually cornered at a police roadblock by an Israeli Army unit led by Barak, who would later become Israel's prime minister and then defense minister. Refusing to surrender, Mughraby declared an independent Palestinian state and after a long standoff with the Israeli Army, blew up the vehicle.

In the Mughraby family home in Tariq al-Jdideh, Mughraby's mother and brother Ahmad sit in a living room decorated with portraits of Dalal and two large Palestinian flags.

Ahmad told The Daily Star that the family feels conflicting emotions over the impending prisoner swap.

"***Hizbullah*** actually asked us in 2000 whether we wanted Dalal's body to be brought back to Lebanon but we said no. We wanted Dalal to stay in Palestine because she loved and died for her country. She went there to fight for the Palestinian people, for their rights and for Palestinian children. We are proud of what she did for her country."

It is not clear what has changed in the last eight years, but, according to Ismail: "We are so glad she is coming back now. Dalal was both Palestinian and Lebanese - she belonged to both countries. As a mother, I will be very happy to have Dalal so near me after all this time. I think it is what Dalal would have wanted too."

Ahmad chimed in with words of agreement. "We are happy because after 30 years, we have started to talk again about Dalal, about the Palestinians. We will have a big wedding for her when she returns. Although she was never married, Dalal had thousands of children," he said, in a reference to the children of Palestine and to fighters who have been martyred in the name of the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance.

Over the weekend the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) representative in Lebanon, Abbas Zakki, visited the Mughraby family to congratulate them on their daughter's anticipated return.

But like Mughraby's family, the Palestinian leadership has had a mixed response to the prisoner exchange and has previously expressed a desire to have Dalal's body remain in Palestine. An article in last Thursday's Palestinian Authority-financed daily Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda criticized ***Hizbullah*** for allowing Mughraby's body to be buried in Lebanon and called for her body to be buried in Ramallah alongside the late President and PLO leader Yasser Arafat.

Although her body will rest in Lebanon, Mughraby will likely remain a symbol of the national resistance in Palestine, where a girls' school in Hebron, summer camps, soccer teams and police training courses, among other things, bear her name.

But Mughraby's involvement in the national resistance remains a mystery to her family. "We don't understand how she got involved in the resistance, which is mainly a male domain," said Ahmad. "We live in a building among Lebanese people, not in the [Palestinian refugee] camps. We just don't understand how she, who was a smart, thoughtful and helpful girl, got involved. She taught many girls that they can fight for their countries," said Ahmad.

"Every time people come asking about Dalal, I remember something new from the past," said Ismail.

"Right now, I can remember Dalal sitting in the garden, smoking behind her father's back. She looked lost in thought. When I asked her what she was thinking about, she said 'nothing.' But I sensed she was thinking about something important," she said.

"I know now that she was thinking about Palestine."

Load-Date: October 23, 2008

Israel blamed for bulk of civilian deaths; Rights group calls attacks on Lebanon 'indiscriminate'

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

September 6, 2007 Thursday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A10

Length: 460 words

Byline: Steven Edwards, CanWest News Service

Dateline: UNITED NATIONS

Body

Israel has been thrown on the defensive after a new Human Rights Watch report charged that "indiscriminate air strikes" by Israeli forces caused most of the estimated 900 civilian deaths in Lebanon during last year's conflict with Hezbollah.

Drawing on findings of a five-month-long Human Rights Watch study, the New York- and Washington-based monitoring group said a "simple movement of vehicles or persons -- such as attempting to buy bread or moving about private homes -- could be enough to cause a deadly Israeli air strike."

The group's 249-page report, entitled Why They Died: Civilian Casualties in Lebanon during the 2006 War, adds that at least 300 of the 510 civilians whose deaths were investigated were women and children.

"Israel wrongfully acted as if all civilians had heeded its warnings to evacuate southern Lebanon when it knew they had not," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch. "Issuing warnings does not make indiscriminate attacks lawful."

Last month, in a report on Hezbollah's role in the July 12 to Aug. 14, 2006, conflict, Human Rights Watch said the group fired "thousands of rockets indiscriminately -- and at times deliberately -- at civilian areas in northern Israel."

This latest report, released today, includes a response by Israel.

It highlights Human Rights Watch's assertions of Hezbollah's deliberate targeting of civilians and adds that Hezbollah used civilians as human shields.

"Hezbollah . . . deliberately targeted Israeli civilians, while attempting to use the cover of civilians and civilian structures in order to stockpile its weapons, hide its fighters and fire missiles in Israel," Israeli officials said.

"Israel, on the other hand, held itself bound to apply the principles of humanitarian law, even while facing an opponent who deliberately flouted them."

Israel blamed for bulk of civilian deaths; Rights group calls attacks on Lebanon 'indiscriminate'

Human Rights Watch disputes that **Hezbollah** systematically used civilians as human shields, but acknowledges the group, listed by Canada as a terrorist organization, may have sought cover behind UN bases that had been installed to monitor an earlier ceasefire in southern Lebanon.

Canada's Maj. Paeta Hess-von Kruegener was one of four UN observers killed when an Israeli precision-guided missile hit their base at Khiyam on July 25, 2006.

Israel launched operations against **Hezbollah** after the group seized two Israeli soldiers, who remain missing. At least 1,125 Lebanese died before a United Nations-ordered ceasefire brought an end to fighting, says the Human Rights Watch report.

The rights group says its investigations show Israeli defence forces deliberately targeted more than just the militant wing of **Hezbollah**, charging strikes on the group's non-military institutions in southern Lebanon would violate international humanitarian law.

Load-Date: September 6, 2007

End of Document

Poll: Israel isn't top priority for US voters, including Jews. McCain backers are more likely to support Israel than their Democratic counterparts

The Jerusalem Post
April 1, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 7

Length: 775 words

Byline: GREER FAY CASHMAN

Body

Israel figures low on the totem pole for likely American voters, who are chiefly concerned with the economy and jobs followed by the situation in Iraq, affordable health care, terrorism and national security.

These are the findings of a poll conducted among 800 respondents representing America's broad demographic range in terms of age, affluence, gender, ethnic background and religion.

The telephone poll, conducted between March 18-20, was commissioned by The Israel Project, a nonpartisan Washington, DC, organization that works to strengthen Israel's image in the American media.

Project founder and president Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi told a news conference in Jerusalem on Monday that even in the Jewish community, the majority of likely voters do not give priority to Israel.

"Three quarters of the American Jewish community say that there are other issues more important than Israel," she said, saying only 23 percent of the Jewish population listed Israel as a top issue. The poll had a 3.5% margin of error.

While 51% of the respondents acknowledged that the economy and jobs were their major concern, only 7% cited the Middle East conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and the threat of Iran.

Despite the potential threat of Iran, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians was a slightly more popular issue.

While the majority of likely voters viewed Israel as a moderate among the Middle East players, there was a dramatic difference in their perceptions of Iran, Hamas, Hizbullah, and the Palestinian Authority.

Iran was generally regarded as the most extreme, with 84% of respondents categorizing it as extreme, and Hamas was seen as extreme by 72%. Hizbullah was seen as extreme by 64% while 68% thought the Palestinian Authority was an extremist organization.

On the other hand, 40% of respondents said that Israel is extreme, and, even when compared to the others listed above, only 54% said Israel was the most moderate, followed by the Palestinian Authority, 21%, Iran 12% and Hamas and Hizbullah 10% each.

Nonetheless, she noted, Americans are far more supportive of Israel than Europeans.

Poll: Israel isn't top priority for US voters, including Jews. McCain backers are more likely to support Israel than their Democratic counterparts

Questioned as to how much of a chance they thought that diplomacy and sanctions by the US government, or alternatively the United Nations or the European Union, could stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons, 54% replied that there was a good chance or at least some chance (46% for UN/EU), while 43% (52% for UN/EU) doubted that there was any chance.

Democrats were significantly more hopeful than Republicans or Independents, with 65% taking a positive approach to diplomacy and sanctions by the US compared to 47% of Republicans and 48% of independents.

Asked whether America would be less safe than it is now in the event that Iran succeeds in developing a nuclear bomb, 65% thought that they would be less safe while 34% assumed that there would be no change.

"Support for Israel has significantly increased" said Laszlo Mizrahi, noting a figure of 60% who declared themselves to be Israel supporters, 27% strong Israel supporters, 31% Palestinian supporters and only 8% neither or undecided.

The poll revealed that McCain voters are more likely to support Israel than their Democratic counterparts, but support for Israel is across the board, and 71% of Americans think that America should support Israel in the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Although Israelis often complain that the international media is biased against them, the poll indicates that 38% believe media reporting is favorable to Israel, while 15% thought it was favorable to the Palestinians.

The percentage point differences were even more overwhelmingly in Israel's favor in response to questions as to whether or not Israel is a vital ally to the US; whether or not Israel is a country that respects freedom of religion, speech and press, and whether or not Israel respects the rights of women and minorities.

In general, Americans also believe that Israel is committed to reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians, but are not convinced that the Palestinian Authority and Hamas are interested in reaching a peace accord with Israel.

Yet, despite these doubts, nearly two-thirds of likely voters believe that Israel should continue to negotiate with the Palestinian Authority, even in the face of terrorist attacks.

Support for a two-state solution to the conflict is extremely high - above 80%. The majority believes an independent Palestinian state will improve the economic future of the Palestinian people; 67% think it will make Israel more secure as a nation and 59% are convinced it will reduce Palestinian terrorism against Israel.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Freedom beckons for kidnapped Israeli soldiers

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

May 28, 2008 Wednesday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; International News; Pg. 7

Length: 442 words

Byline: Jason Koutsoukis IN JERUSALEM

Body

HOPES were raised yesterday that the two Israeli soldiers kidnapped by the radical Lebanese Islamic movement **Hezbollah** in 2006, sparking a six-week war with Israel, could soon be released.

In his first public comments since a peace deal between warring Lebanese factions was signed last week, **Hezbollah**'s secretary-general, Hassan Nasrallah, hinted that he would accept a prisoner exchange deal offered by Israel.

The offer was made two weeks ago by Israel's chief negotiator with **Hezbollah**, Ofer Dekel, through a German mediator. It would include the return of five Lebanese prisoners in exchange for the two Israeli soldiers, Udi Goldwasser and Eldad Regev.

Speaking from his hiding place in Lebanon, Nasrallah said in a recorded speech released early yesterday that one of the Lebanese prisoners, Samir Kuntar, would "soon be among us and will be reunited with their families".

The words were interpreted in Israel as a strong indication that Nasrallah would accept the Israeli offer.

The speech was screened before a crowd of thousands waving **Hezbollah** and Lebanese flags in the Dahiya neighbourhood in southern Beirut.

A few hours before the speech, Kuntar's brother, Bassam, told German media: "Yesterday my family received a message about a positive development that would lead to the release of my brother and other Lebanese prisoners."

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But the offer would not include the return of any of the Palestinian prisoners that had originally been demanded by Nasrallah.

"The ball is now in **Hezbollah**'s court," a high-level political source was quoted in the Israeli daily Yedioth Ahronoth.

"Significant progress has indeed been achieved, but no deal has been closed. The negotiations are at a crossroads, but no breakthrough is expected in the next few days. The breakthrough now depends on them."

Freedom beckons for kidnapped Israeli soldiers

Another senior Israeli source said Nasrallah's speech indicated that "for Nasrallah the penny has dropped and that he understands that he cannot squeeze any more juice out of this lemon".

Israeli media reported that Government and defence sources were hopeful about the fate of Master Sergeant Goldwasser and First Sergeant Regev, about whom nothing has been heard since they were snatched by Hezbollah gunmen while on a border patrol in July 2006.

In December 2006, a previously classified Israeli Government report stated that the two soldiers were critically wounded when their armoured Humvee vehicle was struck by an anti-tank missile.

Graphic

PHOTO: Celebration ... women hold pictures of Hassan Nasrallah who has hinted he would accept a prisoner exchange deal offered by Israel. Photo: AFP/Ramzi Haidar

Load-Date: May 27, 2008

Most Israelis ignore rare 'general' travel warnings

The Jerusalem Post

August 25, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 5

Length: 659 words

Byline: SHELLY PAZ

Body

Israelis are all too familiar with the travel alerts and warnings issued on a regular basis by the Counter- Terrorism Bureau in the Prime Minister Office.

Last week, the office put out a rare "general" travel warning for Israelis traveling anywhere overseas following Hizbullah's threat to expect "shocking" retaliation for February's assassination in Damascus of arch-terrorist Imad Mughniyeh, which the Islamist group blames on Israel.

The Jerusalem Post decided to look into how, if at all, these general warnings were affecting Israelis' travel plans.

On Sunday, the Post asked departing and arriving travelers at Ben-Gurion Airport how they had been informed about the alerts and whether they thought the government should use "creative" ways of contacting Israelis abroad, such as text messaging.

The answers were very Israeli.

"The government does so much to bring back Israelis thrown into dangerous situations abroad, like what happened in Georgia when two planes were sent to evacuate innocent Israeli tourists. Sending a text message is a good idea, and it wouldn't cost them a thing because the phone's owner pays the entire bill while abroad," said Oved Shuti from Or Yehuda.

Shuti was on his way to a five-day vacation in Varna, Bulgaria, with his wife and two children. He said his family would take care not to speak in Hebrew loudly, and remove their kippot and Magen David pendants.

Simona Abutbul from Rishon Lezion was much more concerned about the alerts.

"I don't want you to speak Hebrew to me there. Speak Arabic or French if you can," she instructed her husband, Mordechai. "Of course I'm going to be more alert - we're going to Turkey and it's not the safest place on earth."

"We heard about the alert on the news. It said to be careful of abductions and terrorist attacks," Tel Aviv resident Ortal Hatuka, 20, told the Post. She was about to take off to Burgas, Bulgaria, with two friends. "We don't intend to be alone and after dark in remote places and we plan to move from place to place by taxi," added Moriyah Halimov, 21, from Holon.

The three women agreed that receiving travel alerts via text messages could be useful, especially for someone who was away for a long time. "I just hope we'll be okay," Revital Kusayev, 21, from Tel Aviv, said in a worried tone.

Most Israelis ignore rare 'general' travel warnings

Mazal Iturak from Ashdod and her husband said the travel warning did not affect their plans to enjoy Turkey.

"We're originally from there, and we know where its safe and where we'd better not hang out. We wouldn't have changed our plans because of [the warning]." She added that she would not oppose a service offering travel warnings via text message.

At the arrivals hall the atmosphere was much more comfortable. After all, the passengers there had arrived home safely.

"No one told us about the alerts and we didn't take a cellular phone with us, but we read on the Internet about the alerts that Hizbullah would attempt to abduct Israelis," said Avishai Dabush, 28, from Holon, who had returned from Turkey with his friend Ortal Kazum, 21, from Tel Aviv.

Dabush and Kazum thought that informing travelers abroad about alerts was a bad idea.

"What good can come out of it? It would ruin the vacation. We live in constant fear, so why reach us abroad, too? If something serious happens, our parents will inform us," Dabush said.

Orly Biton from Beersheba left for Bulgaria with her husband and a couple of friends four days ago without hearing a thing about the travel warning.

"We already know we should be alert at all times, not to walk alone and not to gather in groups. This is all old news," she said, adding that prior to the trip she had been very nervous, "but when we arrived there I calmed down. The Bulgarian people are very much like the Israelis, and the atmosphere there was relaxing."

The Prime Minister's Office said travel alerts and warnings were disseminated via Israeli and foreign media outlets, the office's Web site and embassies and consulates abroad.

Graphic

Photo: A GOVERNMENT warning following threats by Hizbullah to harm Israelis abroad does not appear to have affected Israelis' travel plans. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski/The Jerusalem Post)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Israel's disconnect

Guardian.com

January 19, 2009

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theguardian

Length: 1217 words

Highlight: Julie Flint: Surgical strikes and careful warnings to civilians are what the IDF claims. As I learned in Lebanon, the reality is far different

Body

The call came at 8pm, in unaccented Arabic, to a foreign resident of the seafront neighbourhood of Ain Mreisse, on the other side of the city from the Hezbollah-controlled southern suburbs of Beirut. The voice was friendly, even though the words were not. "Beware of Hezbollah," it said. "Beware of Hamas. Think of yourselves. Don't give your support to these groups. You know what the results would be." And then it signed off, in case the listener had any doubt. "This is the State of Israel!"

We do indeed know what the results would be. In 2006, more than 1,000 people died in Lebanon, the vast majority of them civilians, when Israel launched air and artillery attacks against targets including Beirut airport, bridges and highways, and established an air, land and sea blockade following Hezbollah's capture of two Israeli soldiers from the Israeli side of the border. War crimes were committed and there has been no accountability, making the next war that much easier. In Gaza so far, more than 1,200 Palestinians have died (and 13 Israelis), the vast majority of whom were non-combatants. A quarter were children, straining even Israel's definition of "terrorist" as, according to its own experts, it expands the definition of "legitimate target" and, in so doing, narrows the definition of "collateral damage".

As jurist Amos Guiora, who served as a military lawyer in Israel for 19 years, has said: "Israel declared war on an organisation, and by extension on all those involved in that organization - active and passive alike. (The italics are mine.) This is how Operation Cast Lead is different from all previous Israeli operations."

Senior IDF officers have already warned that the "third Lebanon war" will be in the same vein: more "disproportionate" than the second was. A heavily rearmed Hezbollah will not be the main target. Maj Gen Giora Eiland, former head of the National Security Council, has gone as far as to say that Israel failed in 2006 because it fought the wrong enemy - Hezbollah rather than Lebanon itself. "The only good thing that happened in the last war was the relative damage caused to Lebanon's population," he said. "The destruction of thousands of homes of 'innocents' preserved some of Israel's deterrent power. The only way to prevent another war is to make it clear that should one break out, Lebanon may be razed to the ground."

In a "background paper" on "issues of proportionality" drawn up in December 2008, in the countdown to the Gaza offensive, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that "the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) makes strenuous efforts to give advance notice to the civilian population in the middle of military targets, including places used by terrorists for storing weapons and launching attacks, so that they have an opportunity to leave the area." How

Israel 's disconnect

hollow this rings as Gaza runs with blood, and how untrue. Operation Cast Lead was unleashed, without warning, at 11.30am, when urban areas of Gaza are at their most crowded and children compelled to attend school in shifts because of the scarcity of educational resources are on the move. Would anyone with even a scrap of humanity call hundreds of dead, not to mention thousands of wounded, maimed and traumatised, "effective" humanitarian planning?

The pain of those Israelis who oppose this horrific onslaught is as palpable as that of the Palestinians trapped in Gaza. "We are darkening the world of a million and a half human beings and destroying it," columnist Yossi Sarid wrote in Ha'aretz. "We are dropping featherweight notices and a ton of a bomb ... The begetter of all this will no longer boast of the-most-moral-army-in-the-world."

Lebanon grew used to featherweight notices and pre-recorded phone calls in 2006. The calls came at all hours of night and day, to all communities. Some said, "We mean you no harm." Others were threatening: "Keep away from areas where Hezbollah men live and work." "Terror by telephone," a friend called it.

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip were also telephoned in 2006, according to Ha'aretz, and told: "Welcome, you and your family are requested to leave home because the IDF intends to attack it. The house is used to hide warfare or terrorists." Welcome? How bizarre is that? But no one bothered to drop leaflets on the two pick-ups packed with people fleeing from the Lebanese village of Marwaheen near the Israeli border, on Israeli orders. Had they done so, 23 people might not have died in a single, heart-stopping moment - one of them a child who was found, lifeless, still clutching a half-eaten sandwich. No one bothered to telephone the ambulance driver whose vehicle was hit on a bridge outside Sidon, leaving a female passenger dead and three paramedics wounded, one of whom lost both feet.

The phone calls from south of the border tapered off after the war but did not stop completely. Lebanese were occasionally still woken in the night by unfamiliar voices requesting that they telephone a number in London if they "know where the fighters are". But in the last week, the pre-recorded message department of the Israeli military has been gearing up again, threatening people apparently selected at random after Katyusha rockets were fired across the Lebanon-Israel border on two consecutive days, killing no one.

Hezbollah has said it had nothing to do with either incident, and Tel Aviv initially blamed Palestinians. But within days Ha'aretz ran an article claiming that Hezbollah was trying "to alter the balance of power that has existed between the militant organization and Israel since the second Lebanon war". Even if the rockets weren't Hezbollah's, it said, "it is clear that little happens in southern Lebanon without being coordinated in advance with Hezbollah." When, it asked, "will Hezbollah have a better opportunity to change the regional rules of the game than it does now, during Israel's offensive against Hamas in Gaza, when cross-border fire receives greater legitimacy than during quiet times?"

Most Lebanese analysts disagree: the Lebanese are due to vote in general elections in June, and Hezbollah and its allies have a strong chance of forming a parliamentary majority. Bringing new destruction down on the country would not be conducive to that end.

In 2006, Israeli planes bombed a mosque in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Israeli intelligence sources claimed the mosque had seven basements and had been "built by Iranian engineers who specialised in the construction of protected subterranean building for their country's nuclear facilities". They said Hezbollah had sealed off the area and no one could approach it. Top Hezbollah leaders had died in the attack and the party wouldn't be able to deny it for ever. Wrong, on all counts.

I biked to the mosque within minutes of the bombardment without encountering one Hezbollah checkpoint and was able to examine it at leisure, without interruption. It had one basement - not seven - and that contained only copies of the Qur'an and prayer mats. Not a single member of Hezbollah had been killed there, far less any notable.

So, next time Ain Mreisse is targeted by telephone, I'd be very obliged if the call centre in Tel Aviv would listen to the message which gives that London number. There are no terrorists in my area, and I want it on record.

Israel 's disconnect

Load-Date: January 19, 2009

End of Document

Troops patrol tense Beirut but factions clash in north

The Toronto Star
May 13, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: WORLD AND COMMENT; Pg. AA01

Length: 749 words

Byline: Oakland Ross, Toronto Star

Dateline: BEIRUT

Body

The early stirrings of normal life returned to this battle-scarred Lebanese city yesterday - if life in Lebanon can ever be called normal.

"Lebanese people, the ones not fighting, they have an outlook on the future that's very optimistic," said a young **female** pharmacy clerk in the Ain el-Mreisse district. "As soon as it calms down, they go back out to shop and go to work. We like to live."

At least in Beirut things began to calm down yesterday following five days of sometimes terrifying internecine combat that left more than 80 people dead.

But there was renewed fighting during the day in the northern coastal city of Tripoli, where Sunni gunmen allied with the opposition group **Hezbollah** exchanged fire with Alawite Muslims loyal to the Lebanese government.

Gunfire and some shelling also broke out along Lebanon's eastern border with Syria.

The upheaval began when Iran-backed **Hezbollah** and its allies overran the strongholds of their Sunni political foes in Beirut last Wednesday.

In Beirut, a city of 1.25 million, Lebanese Army soldiers seemed to be everywhere - at checkpoints, roadblocks, or observation posts hastily set up at most of the city's main intersections and many smaller ones.

Lebanon's army said it will use force from today to stop fighting in the country between pro- and anti-government forces that has recalled the 1975-90 civil war.

At least 36 people were killed Sunday in fighting between **Hezbollah** and its pro-government Druze opponents east of Beirut, bringing the overall toll to 81 dead and about 250 wounded.

Parliament postponed a vote today on a new Lebanese president for the 19th time, delaying the session to June 10.

Hezbollah's success has dealt a blow to the ruling Sunni-led coalition and its main patron, the United States, which has cast the country as a fragile democracy endangered by the ambitions of **Hezbollah** and its Iranian and Syrian backers.

Troops patrol tense Beirut but factions clash in north

U.S. President George W. Bush said he will discuss Lebanon and Iran during a Middle East visit this week. Bush is due to meet Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora in Egypt on Sunday.

Britain and Germany have issued statements backing the Arab League mediation and endorsing Siniora's government.

So far such Western and Saudi support has done nothing to deter Hezbollah from exposing the military weakness of its foes, such as Sunni leader Saad Hariri and Druze chief Walid Jumblatt, whose mountain fiefdom was attacked on Sunday.

One source said 14 Hezbollah fighters were among the dead in those battles. Hezbollah-led forces overran several posts held by Jumblatt's gunmen in the Aley district east of Beirut before the Druze leader agreed to hand them over to the army.

While Hariri, Jumblatt and their Christian allies have retracted the moves that sparked Hezbollah's ferocious reaction - outlawing its communications network and sacking the airport security chief - they have yet to concede political ground.

For 18 months, the government has resisted opposition demands for veto rights in cabinet, although Hezbollah has now shown it has the military muscle to veto decisions it dislikes.

The political turmoil has paralyzed state institutions and left Lebanon without a president since November.

Lebanese officials said they expected a Qatari-led Arab mission, formed at an emergency meeting of Arab foreign ministers in Cairo on Sunday, to arrive in Beirut tomorrow.

The Arab mediators will try to quell the violence and tackle the political crisis by securing the election of army commander Gen. Michel Suleiman as president, the officials said.

In downtown Beirut yesterday, a few shops were open, but business was painfully slow.

"Nobody comes," said a 52-year-old man, the owner of a small convenience store on Rue 1, overlooking the Mediterranean. He declined to provide his name, citing security concerns. Others had similar fears.

"There's always revenge in this country," said a young man who works at a downtown bank that briefly opened its doors yesterday. "You don't know what they will do."

The man said there were few banking customers during the day and therefore little work, so the institution closed early.

He, however, made his way to a nearby pharmacy to visit his sister, who works there as a clerk.

She had just one message for all the many freelance fighting forces in Lebanon, armed outfits that plunged the country into the hell of civil war from 1975 to 1990 and could well do so again.

"Khalas!" she said, spreading out her arms.

In English, that means "Enough."

With files from Reuters

Graphic

Troops patrol tense Beirut but factions clash in north

HUSSEIN MALLA AP Yessra Halawi, a Druze, inspects her house yesterday. It was burned during Sunday's clashes between pro-Lebanese government supporters of Druze leader Walid Jumblatt and Shiite gunmen south of Beirut.

Load-Date: May 13, 2008

End of Document

Thousands of reservists on move as Israel watches its back - GAZA INVASION

The Australian

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 7

Length: 525 words

Byline: Abraham Rabinovich

Body

Jerusalem

ISRAEL began mobilising tens of thousands of reservists yesterday as it prepared for violent reactions to its Gaza incursion from other directions.

Some of the reservists were being deployed along the border with Lebanon as a precaution against attempts by the **Hezbollah** militia to begin rocketing Israel or stage cross-border raids to divert Israel from the Gaza campaign, officials said. Other reservists had been assigned to deal with the possibility of an uprising on the West Bank. Still others were to be sent to Gaza in case the campaign there was expanded.

The reservists were called up under emergency orders requiring them to report for an open-ended period. Most received their orders before going to work in the morning and were at their bases within a few hours.

Israelis are drafted at age 18. Men serve for three-year stints and **women** for two, but men continue to serve in the reserves until age 40 and are subject to up to a month's annual duty.

In the 2006 war in Lebanon, more than 60,000 reservists were called up, most of them serving a month. The precise number mobilised yesterday was not made known but military officials said that more reservists would be mobilised if required.

Reservists constitute two-thirds of Israel's military strength.

The most serious potential spin-off of the Gaza incursion for Israel is a renewal of war with **Hezbollah**, which fired thousands of rockets into Israel during a month-long clash in 2006.

The militia has since renewed its arsenal and is believed to have tens of thousands of rockets, many of them capable of striking deep inside Israel.

A senior Iranian official, who conferred with Syrian leaders on Saturday in Damascus a few hours before Israel launched its ground attack, said **Hezbollah** intended to renew its rocketing if Israel sent forces into Gaza, according to press reports.

Thousands of reservists on move as Israel watches its back - GAZA INVASION

Both Hezbollah and Hamas are proxies of Iran, which provides them with funding, weaponry, ideology and training.

A Hezbollah official in Lebanon subsequently declared that the militia had no intention of renewing the fighting with Israel.

In announcing the opening of the Gaza ground campaign on Saturday, Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak alluded to the threat from Hezbollah. ``We hope that the northern front will remain calm, but we are prepared for any possibility," he said.

Officials in Jerusalem yesterday warned of severe retaliation if Hezbollah joined the fray, noting that only a small part of Israel's air force was engaged in Gaza and that ground forces had been strengthened in the north.

The Hamas leadership has called on West Bank Palestinians to renew guerilla warfare against Israel, a strategy of the early stages of the Palestinian uprising, or intifada, that began in 2000.

The most immediate concern for Israel is a renewal of suicide bombings by West Bank Palestinians who have access to Israel. Such attacks took more than 1000 lives during the intifada.

Hamas leaders in Gaza issued a desperate plea for their renewal after the Israeli incursion began.

Thus far, none has occurred but Israelis have begun taking precautions, reducing their presence in marketplaces and coffee houses.

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

6 Are Killed in Sectarian Fighting in Northern Lebanon City

The New York Times

July 26, 2008 Saturday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 10

Length: 333 words

Byline: By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dateline: BEIRUT, Lebanon

Body

Sectarian clashes broke out Friday in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli, killing six people, including a 10-year-old boy and a police officer, and wounding at least 15, police officials said.

The clashes between Sunni Muslim gunmen and Alawites, an offshoot Shiite sect, started at dawn after a grenade was thrown toward a Sunni area, the state-run National News Agency reported.

Tension has been high along Lebanon's religious and political fault lines since the militant Shiite group **Hezbollah** overran parts of the capital, Beirut, in May in response to the government's attempts to limit its power. In the deal that ended that crisis, **Hezbollah** and other opposition politicians re-entered the government of the Western-backed prime minister, Fouad Siniora, with veto power over its decisions.

The clashes on Friday occurred as the government was struggling to draft a document outlining plans for its term in office amid disagreements with **Hezbollah**. The fighting escalated as automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades were used in fighting between the Sunni Bab al Tabbaneh district and the predominantly Alawite Jabal Mohsen neighborhood, the police officials said. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not allowed to speak to the news media.

A cease-fire began at 1 p.m. after mediation by the grand mufti of northern Lebanon, Sheik Malek al Shaar, who has acted as a mediator throughout the recent weeks of fighting.

But after a brief lull, fighting broke out again, said residents of the city, 50 miles north of Beirut. The police officials said three people died in the afternoon fighting, including two **women**.

On the political front, the new cabinet's efforts to forge a path forward have been complicated by disagreements with **Hezbollah** over its weapons.

Some groups say the job of defending Lebanon should fall to the national armed forces. **Hezbollah** and its allies say the militant group's weapons are needed to defend the country against Israel.

6 Are Killed in Sectarian Fighting in Northern Lebanon City

Load-Date: July 26, 2008

End of Document

Air strikes decried; Rights group rips Israel for civilian deaths

Windsor Star (Ontario)

September 6, 2007 Thursday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A4

Length: 367 words

Byline: Steven Edwards, CanWest News Service

Dateline: UNITED NATIONS

Body

UNITED NATIONS -- Israel has been thrown on the defensive after a new Human Rights Watch report charged that "indiscriminate air strikes" by Israeli forces caused most of the estimated 900 civilian deaths in Lebanon during last year's conflict with Hezbollah.

Drawing on findings of a five-month-long HRW study, the New York- and Washington-based monitoring group said a "simple movement of vehicles or persons -- such as attempting to buy bread or moving about private homes -- could be enough to cause a deadly Israeli air strike."

The group's 249-page report, entitled Why They Died: Civilian Casualties in Lebanon during the 2006 War, adds that at least 300 of the 510 civilians whose deaths were investigated were women and children.

"Israel wrongfully acted as if all civilians had heeded its warnings to evacuate southern Lebanon when it knew they had not," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of HRW.

"Issuing warnings does not make indiscriminate attacks lawful."

Last month, in a report on Hezbollah's role in the July 12 to Aug. 14, 2006, conflict, HRW said the group fired "thousands of rockets indiscriminately -- and at times deliberately -- at civilian areas in northern Israel."

This latest report, released Wednesday, includes a response by Israel. It highlights HRW's assertions of Hezbollah's deliberate targeting of civilians and adds that Hezbollah used civilians as human shields.

"Hezbollah ... deliberately targeted Israeli civilians, while attempting to use the cover of civilians and civilian structures in order to stockpile its weapons, hide its fighters and fire missiles in Israel," Israeli officials said.

"Israel ... held itself bound to apply the principles of humanitarian law, even while facing an opponent who deliberately flouted them."

HRW disputes that Hezbollah systematically used civilians as human shields, but acknowledges the group, listed by Canada as a terrorist organization, may have sought cover behind UN bases that had been installed to monitor an earlier ceasefire in southern Lebanon.

Air strikes decried; Rights group rips Israel for civilian deaths

One of the dead UN representatives, Maj. Paeta Hess-von Krudener, spent some of his basic training with the Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment in Windsor nearly 20 years ago.

Graphic

Photo: Hassan Ammar, AFP/Getty Images photo; BURIED: A UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) member watches as a truck searches for bodies in the ruins of a building following an Israeli strike in the southern Lebanese port city of Tyre July 26, 2006. Four UN observers, including Maj. Paeta Hess-von Krudener, were killed by an Israeli air strike on their base. ;

Photo: Paeta Hess-von Krudener ;

Load-Date: September 6, 2007

End of Document

Israeli air strikes caused civilian deaths: report; At least 300 of the 510 people investigated were women, children

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

September 6, 2007 Thursday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A9

Length: 229 words

Byline: CanWest News Service

Dateline: UNITED NATIONS

Body

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Load-Date: September 6, 2007

Honor and killings

The Jerusalem Post
January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 5

Length: 1120 words

Byline: Liat Collins

Highlight: Hamas seems to hold that violence and vilification are somehow honorable

Body

The term "honor killing" has lately taken on an even more twisted connotation, as if there were ever anything respectable about killing someone to protect a reputation.

A different aspect of the concept appeared in Jerusalem last March in them deadly shootings at Yeshivat Merkav Harav and in the tractor terror attacks last July. The motive in the three cases seems to have been an attempt by the perpetrators - all known to be petty criminals - to regain their "good" names. There have also been incidents of female suicide bombers, suspected by their families of adultery, who seem to have been offered the choice by Palestinian extremists: either kill yourself - and as many Jews as possible - or become the victim of an honor killing.

Now we are witnessing not just an honor killing but a whole war of honor. Hamas leader in Gaza Ismail Haniyeh, and those who help pull his strings in Syria and Iran, cannot admit that the Zionist entity might just be able to survive and thrive even when missiles are lobbed at places increasingly approaching the center of the country.

High, but not mighty, at the top of the shaky tree it has climbed, Hamas desperately needs a lull in the fighting but is unwilling to lose face - or in Hamas's case more than one face - by giving in without showing some sign of gain. Hence we see Hamas leaders vowing to fight Israel "until victory" while claiming all the time to be the victims of Israeli aggression.

Hamas has been trying to kill as many Israelis as possible to maintain its honor while Israel finds itself struggling to do the honorable thing and remove the Hamas threat without harming too many innocent Palestinians. The matter, of course, has been further complicated by the fact that Hamas has no compunction about using local children as human shields - and even seems to welcome the images of dead and wounded: an honor roll of tiny shahids whose deaths can be exploited to mobilize others to kill. (Although France 2, the TV station which broadcast the dubious Muhammad al-Dura footage which helped fuel terror attacks against Israelis, was forced to admit a snatch of its Gaza footage shown this week was actually filmed a few years ago.)

It's a time-honored tradition used also by Hizbullah in the War in the North (a.k.a. Lebanon II). The Arabic-speaking world awarded Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah a victory for defending his honor by promising to fight Israel "beyond beyond Haifa," just as Hamas is now hitting "beyond beyond Sderot."

Deputy head of Hamas's political bureau, Moussa Abou Marzouk, indeed, vowed the group would not talk about a permanent cease-fire so long as Israel continued its "occupation," and would continue the "resistance." There is

Honor and killings

some consolation in the fact that the echo sounded slightly hollow as Hamas leaders now speak from bunkers where they have gone into hiding, leaving the ordinary folk exposed.

Hamas and Hizbullah both seem convinced that honor can be gained through fighting and martyrdom rather than establishing peace and creating a real and viable state. Hence any cease-fire seems doomed to be just a temporary halt in open hostilities rather than an attempt at reaching even a cold peace. Hamas, unlike Hizbullah, is not willing to lose face by admitting that it misjudged Israel's response to the scores of Kassams it hurled on the Negev and "beyond." There is no honor among the thieves who have stolen the lives of so many - Palestinians and Israelis.

THE MIDEAST is not, of course, alone in being motivated by honor. Why else would so many countries be (politely) fighting each other for the honor of getting involved in the peace process? The harsh words by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan that Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip would lead to punishment from Allah and Israel's "self-destruction" was probably fueled not only by images from Al-Jazeera but also from an attempt to repair his own image. After all, only recently was it revealed that Turkey was trying to help mediate an agreement with Syria. (Although ask my Armenian friends about human rights and Turkey and the word "honorable" will not be used to describe their intentions.)

I have seen Russians, Japanese and Norwegians all argue over their role in the Mideast peace process, each vying for a bit of the closest you can get to international standing in the post-colonial era.

President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo has obvious reasons for his efforts at brokering a truce between Israel and Hamas: The Palestinians threaten to remind Egypt that they can break through from Gaza into Rafah and the Sinai - the closed Gazan border that the world largely ignores. Furthermore, successfully mediating a cease-fire would bolster Mubarak's status as a leader in the Arab world.

How much of the rhetoric of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, for that matter, can be attributed to his attempts to establish his country's role as the leading pan-Islamic state?

Israel, too, is not immune to honor seeking. At least Prime Minister Ehud Olmert seems to have learned the hard way that pride comes before a downfall and has been maintaining a relatively low profile rather than wildly boasting about the country's military successes, as he did regarding Hizbullah in 2006.

WHO REALLY deserves an honorable mention in all this? Perhaps the average Palestinians in Gaza, caught up in this battle with nowhere to hide - and I'd welcome the chance to get to know them sometime.

But those who get pride of place are the Israeli residents who have not lost their healthy self-respect even under the enormous strain of missile fire. Ordinary people elsewhere in the country have done the decent thing and opened their hearts and homes to those needing a respite. And one can't but help respect, too, the children trying to make sense of it all - like the first grader who this week saw the photo of a fallen soldier and asked her mother: "Why is he smiling if he is dead?" Or the pupils at my son's Jerusalem elementary school who have been preparing care packages to send to soldiers and writing prayers to place in the Western Wall. All this, once again, emphasizes how close to home the fighting is and how close to our hearts those fighting to protect it. These are not soldiers sent thousands of miles overseas to serve their country; many of these fighters are as worried about their families on the home front as their families are concerned about them on the military front lines.

I feel unabashedly honored to be on the Israeli side - however bashed we might be by the likes of Erdogan.

Ismail Haniyeh could save a lot of lives if he did the honorable thing and just dropped dead. Or failing that, at least drop out of the picture and let all of us live in peace.

Graphic

Honor and killings

2 photos: An Israeli girl with her pet dog stands outside a bomb shelter in Beersheba. You can't help but respect the children struggling to cope with the missiles. An IDF mobile artillery piece fires towards targets in the southern Gaza Strip, trying to prevent the launching of more Kassams and Grads on Israel. (Credit: Tara Todras-Whitehill/AP. Anja Niedringhaus/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Iran behind Iraq attack in January, U.S. says

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

July 3, 2007 Tuesday

Copyright 2007 The Deseret News Publishing Co.

Length: 1382 words

Byline: Lee Keath Associated Press and Stephen Speckman Deseret Morning News

Body

BAGHDAD -- The U.S. military accused Iran on Monday of a direct role in a sophisticated militant attack that killed five American soldiers in Iraq, portraying Tehran as waging a proxy war through Shiite extremists.

The claims over the January attack marked a sharp escalation in U.S. accusations that Iran has been arming and financing Iraqi militants, and for the first time linked the Iranian effort to its ally, Lebanon's Shiite Hezbollah militia. The allegations could endanger Iraqi efforts to hold a new round of talks between the United States and Iran.

U.S. military spokesman Brig. Gen. Kevin J. Bergner said the Quds Force, part of Iran's elite Republican Guards, was seeking to build an Iraqi version of Hezbollah to fight U.S. and Iraqi forces -- and had brought in Hezbollah operatives to help train and organize militants.

"Our intelligence reveals that the senior leadership in Iran is aware of this activity," Bergner said in a Baghdad news conference. He said it would be "hard to imagine" that Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei did not know about the activity.

But a Utah mother of one of the soldiers killed in the January attack said Monday that the news of Iran's involvement doesn't change her opinion about the war in Iraq or her position on what to do about Iran's alleged involvement in Iraq.

"My reaction basically is, we need to come home," Kathleen Snyder said in a phone interview.

Snyder's son, Army reservist Capt. Brian S. Freeman, 31, of Temecula, Calif., was killed in the attack. Freeman was also a bobsled and skeleton athlete who trained in Utah.

"No, we shouldn't invade Iran -- no, we shouldn't invade Hezbollah," Snyder added. "I think we need to come home.

"I have always been against this war," she said. "I feel there was no justification for it. Iraq did not invade the United States. ... There was no reason to invade them."

Snyder said her son did not support the war either, adding that, "He went -- as many do -- because he made a commitment early in his life, and he was fulfilling it."

Snyder said that prior to the news Monday, her husband and Freeman's stepfather, Albert Snyder, wrote a letter to Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, expressing fear over a possible U.S. invasion of Iran.

Iran behind Iraq attack in January, U.S. says

Iran has denied past claims that it was backing Iraqi militants -- including accusations that it was providing them with a particularly deadly type of roadside bomb, the explosively formed penetrator. Its ally **Hezbollah** has denied having any role in Iraq, saying it operates only in Lebanon.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini rejected the allegations Monday, saying, "American leaders have gotten into the habit of issuing ridiculous and false statements without providing evidence, with political and psychological aims."

But Bergner said an extensive Quds Force program was revealed through interrogations of an alleged Lebanese **Hezbollah** operative, Ali Mussa Dakdouk, and an Iraqi militant, Qais al-Khazaali, along with documents seized with them. Both men were captured in March in the southern city of Basra.

The Quds Force is providing up to \$3 million a month to Iraqi militants and bringing them to three training camps outside Tehran to learn how to carry out bombings, raids and kidnappings, Bergner said. Most of those who trained in Iran were extremists who broke away from Iraqi Shiite militias, including the Mahdi Army loyal to anti-U.S. cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, he said.

Dakdouk, a 24-year veteran of **Hezbollah**, was sent to Iraq "as a surrogate for the Iranian Quds Force" to finance and arm militant cells known as "special groups," the general said.

The goal was to organize militants "in ways that mirrored how **Hezbollah** was organized in Lebanon." **Hezbollah** is one of the region's most disciplined and powerful militant groups, able to fight Israel's military to a near standstill in a war last summer.

Dakdouk told his interrogators that the militants behind the Jan. 20 surprise attack in the southern city of Karbala "could not have conducted this complex operation without the support and direction of the Quds Force," Bergner said.

The Karbala attack was one of the most sophisticated against U.S. forces in the 4-year-old Iraqi war.

Carrying false IDs, up to a dozen fighters disguised themselves as an American security team. They got past checkpoints to reach a provincial government building, where they opened fire with machine guns and explosives. One U.S. soldier was killed in the initial attack, and four others were abducted and found shot to death soon after.

Al-Khazaali was in charge of special groups around Iraq and confessed to ordering the Karbala attack, Bergner said. A 22-page document seized with him detailed the operation, showing that the Quds Force had developed detailed information on U.S. soldiers' "shift changes and defenses" at the government building, "and this information was shared with the attackers," Bergner said.

A total of 18 "higher-level operatives" from the Iranian-backed special groups have been arrested and three others killed since February, Bergner said.

The Shiite-led Iraqi government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is backed by the United States but is also closely tied to Iran, and it has hoped that talks between the two rivals could ease the tensions between them and reduce Iraq's violence.

An initial Baghdad session in February between ambassadors from the two countries, however, made little progress, overshadowed by accusations by each side that the other was fueling Iraq's turmoil. Iraq is trying to organize a second meeting, but no date has been set.

Sami al-Askari, al-Maliki adviser, said, "We don't rule out that there is Iranian interference by financing armed groups, whether Shiite or Sunni, or even that there might be some **Hezbollah** elements training the groups."

But he insisted the U.S. accusations "will not affect the Iranian-American meeting."

Iran behind Iraq attack in January, U.S. says

In Washington, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack echoed Bergner's charges, saying they were "another data point in what is a troubling picture of Iranian negative involvement in Iraq."

"We have found that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard has essentially subcontracted out to some elements of Hezbollah, using them as a pass through for material, technology and other material assistance," McCormack said. "It is of deep concern to us."

Ray Takeyh, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, said the allegations about Hezbollah were not surprising.

"Iran has always worked through Hezbollah, and it makes sense because Hezbollah is well-versed in this kind of terrain...in this kind of ambiguous situation where there is sectarian violence and an outside occupation," said Takeyh.

An American soldier was killed Monday by an explosion in Salahuddin province, a center for Sunni insurgents northwest of Baghdad. The U.S. military also reported the deaths of five U.S. service members killed in fighting a day earlier, in attacks in Baghdad and western Anbar province.

But violence appeared sharply down in Baghdad and other parts of the country, amid an intensified U.S. security sweep aimed at uprooting Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias in the capital and areas to the northeast and south.

Iraqi police reported four civilians killed in separate attacks in Baghdad. And car bomb hit the Baghdad district of Binouk in the evening, killing seven people and wounding 33, hospital officials said.

U.S. warplanes struck buildings in the mostly Shiite city of Diwaniyah with 500-pound bombs early Monday, targeting sites suspected as the source of mortar fire, the U.S. Air Force said. Iraqi police in the city said the raid killed 10 civilians, including women and children, wounded 25 others and damaged six homes. The police spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release the information.

AP Television News footage from the area showed houses with large holes, as residents dug through rubble, pulling out at least one person on a stretcher. Following the raid, residents protested in the streets, and Iraqi police fired in the air to disperse them, killing one person. Some protesters fired back, wounding two policemen, a police officer said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the press. E-mail: sspeckman@desnews.com

Load-Date: July 3, 2007

Israel kills terror chief with headrest bomb

The Sunday Times (London)

February 17, 2008

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Section: OVERSEAS NEWS; News; Pg. 25

Length: 1373 words

Byline: Uzi Mahnaimi Tel Aviv, Hala Jaber Beirut and Jon Swain

Body

NOTHING seemed very remarkable about the short, bearded man who mingled with other guests on Tuesday evening at a reception in Damascus, the Syrian capital, to mark the 29th anniversary of Ayatollah Khomeini's Iranian revolution.

Yet before the night was over he was dead in the twisted wreckage of his car and the inevitable assumption was that Mossad, the Israeli foreign intelligence service, had killed him with an ingeniously planted bomb.

The news spread rapidly that the dead man was Imad Mughniyeh, an elusive figure known as "the Fox" who had been one of the world's most feared terrorist masterminds.

Robert Baer, a former CIA agent who spent years on his trail, said Mughniyeh was "probably the most intelligent, most capable operative we've ever run across".

As the Israelis rejoiced, Iran and **Hezbollah**, the militant Shi'ite group, which together had harnessed Mughniyeh's expertise, mourned his death at a huge funeral in Beirut, where he established his terrorist network.

Mughniyeh's mother, Um Imad, sat amid a sea of black chadors, a lonely, sombre figure as mourners held their hero's picture aloft.

"If only I had more boys to carry on in his footsteps," she sighed, confessing that she did not have any pictures of him, even from his childhood, as he had taken them away. He was the third of her sons to die in a car bombing.

With a price of \$25m (£ 12.7m) on his head, he was always vigilant. Some say he had had plastic surgery to alter his face in an effort to elude the Americans and Israelis who blamed him for plane hijackings and other bloody attacks which killed hundreds of their citizens in the Middle East and as far away as South America.

He had grown accustomed to living dangerously and there was no reason he should have feared for his safety last Tuesday as he sipped fruit juice at the party at the Iranian cultural centre. Mughniyeh was on fairly good terms with everybody present -almost all the leaders of the Damascus-based militant groups were represented.

At 10.35pm he decided to go home. Having exchanged customary kisses with his host, Hojatoleslam Ahmad Musavi, the newly appointed Iranian ambassador, Mughniyeh stepped into the night.

Minutes later he was seated in his silver Mitsubishi Pajero in a nearby street when a deafening blast ripped the car apart and killed him instantly.

Israel kills terror chief with headrest bomb

According to Israeli intelligence sources, someone had replaced the headrest of the driver's seat with another containing a small high-explosive charge. Israel welcomed his death but the prime minister's office denied responsibility.

Hezbollah accused the "Zionist Israelis" of killing its "brother commander" but believed the explosive had been detonated in another car by satellite.

One witness said: "I held his head in my hands, kissed him farewell. His face was burnt but intact and he had received serious injuries to his abdomen."

Whatever the truth about the bomb, Mughniyeh, 45, died as he had lived - violently. He was a product of the Lebanese civil war that transfixed western governments 25 years ago.

Born in a south Lebanon village, the son of a vegetable seller, Mughniyeh joined Force 17, Yasser Arafat's personal bodyguard, when scarcely out of his teens.

After the Palestine Liberation Organisation was forced to leave Lebanon in 1982, he stayed behind and joined **Hezbollah**, the Lebanese Shi'ite Islamic group that emerged in 1985 as a militant force resisting Israeli occupation.

He came to the attention of Sheikh Mohammed Fadlallah, **Hezbollah**'s spiritual leader, and rose quickly up the ranks. He was shaped into a remarkably effective terrorist as, under the auspices of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, the organisation grew into one of the deadliest forces fighting Israel and America.

Western terrorism experts say he was the dynamo behind some of **Hezbollah**'s most lethal operations. These included the bombing of the American embassy in Beirut that killed 63 people and the attacks on the US marine and French paratrooper barracks that left more than 200 dead. It was Mughniyeh's decision to kidnap Terry Waite, the Church of England envoy, as he tried to broker the release of other captives.

Another notorious act attributed to him was the hijacking of a TWA flight when an American passenger, a US navy diver, was shot and his body thrown onto the runway.

In the 1990s Israel made him a priority target for his involvement in two attacks in Buenos Aires -the 1992 Israeli embassy bombing, which killed 29, and a 1994 suicide bomb attack on a Jewish community centre, in which 85 died. Then he went to ground. The FBI placed him on its most-wanted list but had to use a 20 year-old photograph for its reward posters.

Despite these difficulties, the CIA came close to capturing him. The Israelis were also hot on his trail. "We tried to knock him down several times in the late 1980s," revealed David Barkay, a former major in unit 504 of Israeli military intelligence who was in charge of Mughniyeh's file.

"We accumulated intelligence on him, but the closer we got, the less information we gleaned -no weak points, no **women**, money, drugs -nothing."

Mughniyeh lost two brothers, Jihad and Fuad, in car bomb explosions in Beirut. In 2000 he was targeted by an Israeli sniper in southern Lebanon. But in Meir Dagan, who became head of Mossad in 2002, he faced a committed opponent under whose leadership the organisation built a strong record in assassinating Israel's enemies.

Israel fought a bitter 34-day war against **Hezbollah** in 2006 to eradicate it in southern Lebanon. It believes that Mughniyeh was instrumental in rebuilding the group after the war, re-arming it with Iranian-made Fateh 110 rockets which are capable of hitting Tel Aviv and which it fears could be equipped with chemical weapons.

Informed Israeli sources said that at the time of his death Mughniyeh was working for the Syrians on a terrorist attack against Israeli targets. This was to avenge Israel's airstrike on what was believed to be a secret nuclear site in Syria last year.

Israel kills terror chief with headrest bomb

Since Mughniyeh's death, Israeli embassies and Jewish institutions around the world have been on high alert. "I've no doubt the Syrians and Iranians will retaliate," said Barkay.

Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's general secretary, warned in a fiery oration at Mughniyeh's funeral that Israel had committed a "major stupid mistake". It was now "open war", he said.

In Lebanon, a close friend of Mughniyeh was certain that he would be avenged by Hezbollah in an attack that, ironically, he had prepared himself before his death.

"Most likely the retaliation when it comes will be one that had been planned and masterminded by Imad himself," said Anis Al-Nackash, a Lebanese expert on Hezbollah.

He said Mughniyeh had prepared a variety of "spectacular" attacks to be executed by Hezbollah if one of its top leaders was assassinated. These were now being dusted off and updated.

On the day Mughniyeh was buried, Ehud Olmert, the Israeli prime minister, summoned Dagan from his cottage in Galilee to Jerusalem.

"It was a one-on-one meeting," said a source. But it is believed that Dagan was complimented by his boss and told that he would stay as head of Mossad until the end of 2009.

Time will tell whether, as Israel fervently hopes, Mughniyeh's death has gravely weakened his organisation or if the effect has merely been to harden Hezbollah's resolve.

Taken out

The Israeli security service, Mossad, is thought to have killed six other militants abroad since Meir Dagan became director in August 2002:

December 2002 Ramzi Nahara, Israeli agent who defected to Hezbollah and planned attacks against Israel. Dagan knew him personally. Killed in Lebanon by car bomb

March 2003 Abu Mohammed Al-Masri, Al-Qaeda member building cell to target Israeli border with Lebanon. Killed by car bomb in Lebanon

August 2003 Ali Hussein Saleh, Hezbollah explosives expert. Killed by car bomb in Beirut

July 2004 Ghaleb Awali, Hezbollah official with links to activists in Gaza Strip. Killed by car bomb in Beirut

September 2004 Izz el-Deen al-Sheikh Khalil, Hamas official liaising between headquarters in Syria and members in Gaza and West Bank. Killed by car bomb in Damascus

May 2006 Mahmoud Majzoub, Islamic Jihad official liaising with Hezbollah. Killed by car bomb blast in Lebanon

Load-Date: February 17, 2008

As Israeli Forces Withdraw From Northern Gaza, Hamas Celebrates Its Rocketry

The New York Times

March 4, 2008 Tuesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 12

Length: 1267 words

Byline: By TAGHREED EL-KHODARY and ISABEL KERSHNER; Taghreed El-Khodary reported from Gaza City and Isabel Kershner from Jerusalem. Steven Erlanger contributed reporting from Jerusalem.

Dateline: GAZA

Body

As Israel withdrew its forces from the northern Gaza Strip on Monday after a two-day assault on Hamas militants, and as Palestinians emerged from their houses to inspect the damage, Hamas leaders seemed to be following the playbook of their Lebanese ally, Hezbollah, in its 2006 war with Israel.

Fawzi Barhoum, a spokesman for Hamas in Gaza, said that like Hezbollah, Hamas had "gone from the stone to the rocket."

"What we learned from Hezbollah," he said, "is that resistance is a choice that can work."

The clearest example of echoing Hezbollah came Monday when thousands attended a so-called victory rally, and Mahmoud Zahar, an influential Hamas leader, briefly came out of hiding to tell the rallygoers that his organization would rebuild any house that had been damaged by the Israeli strikes.

Holding up his group as the source of reconstruction as well as resistance is precisely the message that brought local and regional acclaim to Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah leader, when his organization faced down Israeli attacks in the summer of 2006 through rocket barrages on Israel.

The latest surge in hostilities between Israel and militants in the Gaza Strip left 116 Palestinians dead, according to Dr. Moawiya Hassanain of the Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza, making it the deadliest fighting in Gaza in a year. Two Israeli soldiers were killed in the fighting in northern Gaza on Saturday, and one Israeli civilian was killed last Wednesday by rocket fire in the border town of Sderot.

But more than 200 rockets have been fired at Israel since Wednesday, according to Israeli military officials, including at least 21 longer-range Katyusha-style rockets, which are manufactured outside Gaza and brought into the strip. Palestinians and Israelis see the use of those rockets as another illustration of the growing similarity between Hezbollah and Hamas, the militant Islamic organization that controls Gaza.

As Israeli Forces Withdraw From Northern Gaza, Hamas Celebrates Its Rocketry

"We are very concerned that the role model for Hamas in Gaza is the Lebanese Hezbollah," said Mark Regev, a spokesman for Israel's prime minister, Ehud Olmert, when asked about parallels between this conflict and the one with Hezbollah.

"I have no doubt that the people who built Hezbollah's military machine are now building the military machine of Hamas," Mr. Regev added. He cited Iran, where Israeli security officials say the longer-range rockets used by both Hezbollah and Hamas were made.

Israeli officials say Hezbollah also provides Hamas with training and logistical support. They add that Hamas has also adopted other Hezbollah tactics, operating in civilian areas and in some cases storing weapons in homes, creating similar quandaries for the army that it faced in its war in Lebanon in 2006.

Soon after the forces left northern Gaza on Monday, two more of the imported rockets struck Ashkelon, an Israeli coastal city of 120,000 people about 10 miles north of the strip. One rocket hit an apartment block, causing damage but no serious injuries.

Hamas has claimed responsibility for most of the rocket fire. Hamas took over Gaza last June after routing forces loyal to President Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah.

Mr. Abbas, who is based in the West Bank, suspended peace talks with Israel as the death toll rose in Gaza, and on Monday he called on all sides to agree to a cease-fire and to allow him to act as a mediator, a day before Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was expected to arrive in the region for talks.

There was a second day of unrest in the West Bank on Monday, with Palestinians protesting the Israeli actions in Gaza and throwing stones at soldiers and Israeli cars in various locations. An Israeli settler shot and killed a 17-year-old Palestinian on a road west of Ramallah. According to Israel Radio, the settler said he had gone out for a walk and was confronted by a group of Palestinians, some masked, who threw stones.

In what was apparently a bid to remain relevant in Gaza, and in an echo of the actions of the Lebanese government in southern Beirut after the war in 2006, Mr. Abbas also instructed his government to allocate \$5 million to compensate Gaza residents whose properties were damaged in the Israeli campaign.

Israel says its ground and air forces have been aiming only at rocket squads and weapons storage and production facilities in Gaza. Israel's army chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, and its chief of military intelligence, Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin, described 90 percent of those killed in Gaza in the last few days as terrorists.

But that figure is challenged by medical officials in Gaza, who say about half of those killed were civilians, including several young children. The Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem also issued a statement on Monday saying that by its count, at least 54 of the dead had not taken part in the hostilities.

Mr. Olmert was quoted as telling Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee of Parliament that the recent military campaign, which started with concerted airstrikes on Wednesday and continued with the ground incursion early Saturday, was "not a one-time event."

"We are in the midst of a combat action," he said, adding that "the objective is reducing the rocket fire and weakening Hamas."

On Monday evening, the Israeli Air Force struck another rocket-launching squad and the wagon in which they were transporting rockets in northern Gaza, an army spokeswoman said. Palestinian officials said one militant was killed.

Israel is mulling a much broader and longer ground operation in Gaza, the defense minister, Ehud Barak, has said in recent days. But Israeli government and military officials say they are wary of such a campaign because of the inevitably high cost in lives on the two sides and uncertainty about what might be achieved.

As Israeli Forces Withdraw From Northern Gaza, Hamas Celebrates Its Rocketry

In terms of strength, Hamas is still far from **Hezbollah**. But if Israel does not act, said Mr. Regev, the spokesman for Mr. Olmert, it will wake up one day to a much more dangerous situation in the south with a large part of the Israeli population within range of Hamas rocket fire.

In the Gaza town of Jabaliya, the focus of the Israeli ground operation, residents emerged from their houses to inspect the destruction left by the Israeli tanks and to bury more of the dead.

Ahmad Darabeh, 37, a teacher and father of six, described how soldiers blew open the door of his house without warning before dawn on Saturday and took up sniper positions inside. The family was confined to one room, allowed out only to the bathroom once every 10 hours, Mr. Darabeh said.

He said one of his **female** relatives, Nihad Daher, 22, who lived nearby, was killed Saturday by shrapnel when an Israeli Apache helicopter fired a missile at an armed group outside the house.

Mr. Darabeh said he was impressed by the organization of the members of the Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas. "It was striking to see their performance this time," he said, adding that if the Israeli ground forces had not been backed up from the air, "Hamas could have beaten them."

The Qassam Brigades say that 37 of its members have been killed since Wednesday, and other militant groups say they lost 15.

Many Palestinians in Gaza also expressed reservations about the Hamas celebrations, given the number of people who had died.

Sitting outside her partly destroyed house in Jabaliya, Aisha Abd Rabbo, 85, said she did not care about the offer of compensation from Mr. Zahar, the Hamas leader who addressed the rally on Monday.

"All I want is the return of those who were killed," she said.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: THE ISRAELIS: Israeli soldiers approached Palestinian youths on Monday in Bethlehem, in the West Bank, after Palestinians protested Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip. (PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN FRAYER/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

THE PALESTINIANS: Palestinian youths ran after fighting broke out against the Israeli soldiers in Bethlehem. More than 100 Palestinians have died in hostilities since Wednesday. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MUSA AL-SHAER/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE -- GETTY IMAGES) MAP: Rockets reached Ashkelon, about 10 miles from the strip. Map of Ashkelon near the Gaza Strip.

Load-Date: March 5, 2008

Israeli PM's handling of conflict a 'severe failure'; Public reception of panel report likely to decide Olmert's fate

Ottawa Citizen
May 1, 2007 Tuesday
Early Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A7

Length: 1010 words

Byline: Steven Gutkin, The Associated Press; with files from Agence France-Presse

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

JERUSALEM - In extraordinarily strong language, a high-level investigative panel sharply criticized Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert yesterday for "severe failure" in his handling of the war in Lebanon -- a potentially fatal blow to his political survival.

Whether Mr. Olmert can hang on to his job will depend on how the Israeli people respond to the panel's report, which blamed him for "hastily" rushing into a war the army was not prepared to wage -- and that many Israelis think emboldened the Jewish state's enemies.

An expressionless Mr. Olmert stared straight ahead and slumped against the back of his chair as the panel's chairman read the report, which cited "a severe failure in the lack of judgment, responsibility and caution."

However, Mr. Olmert vowed to remain in office despite calls for his resignation from coalition partners as well as opponents. He also promised that failures "will be remedied."

"It would not be correct to resign," he said in a brief televised statement from his office, "and I have no intention of resigning." Instead, he said he would convene a special session of his cabinet tomorrow to begin implementing the report.

Mr. Olmert's best hope for remaining in office appeared to rest in his coalition partners' fear of new elections, which polls predict would bring opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu of the hardline Likud Party to power. Mr. Olmert's centrist Kadima party might seek to replace him, which would put the popular foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, in a good position to become Israel's second **female** prime minister.

The report capped a six-month investigation into the war, which erupted July 12 when **Hezbollah** guerrillas killed three soldiers and captured two others in a cross-border raid. In 34 days of fighting, Israel failed to secure the return of the captured soldiers or to prevent **Hezbollah** from firing thousands of rockets into Israel.

Soldiers returning from the battle front complained of poor preparations, conflicting orders and shortages of food and supplies.

Israeli PM's handling of conflict a 'severe failure'; Public reception of panel report likely to decide Olmert's fate

Between 1,035 and 1,191 Lebanese civilians and combatants were killed in the fighting, as were 119 Israeli soldiers and 39 civilians, according to official figures from the two sides.

Mr. Olmert has repeatedly called the war a success, citing the closing truce arrangement that forced Hezbollah away from the Israeli border and brought in thousands of international peacekeepers to monitor the area. But few Israelis share that view and a poll commissioned by Israel Radio shortly after the report was issued showed 69 per cent of those questioned thought Mr. Olmert should quit.

"There's no question" Mr. Olmert must go, said Zeev Crombie, a 50-year-old resident of the ancient city of Safed, the target of many Hezbollah rockets during the war. "In the eyes of the Arabs, we were defeated. And that gives them a lot of courage to continue to try to wipe us out."

A key test of Mr. Olmert's ability to weather the crisis will come Thursday, when his opponents from the left and right are planning a mass protest in Tel Aviv.

The report analysed the first six days of the war, as well as the six years preceding the war, beginning with Israel's 2000 pullout from southern Lebanon and Hezbollah's subsequent buildup along the border. The committee noted that part of the blame for the shortcomings during this war also fell on previous Israeli leaders. A full report on the entire war is scheduled for release this summer.

In a scathing conclusion, the commission laid ultimate responsibility on Mr. Olmert's shoulders. "The prime minister bears supreme and comprehensive responsibility for the decisions of his government and the operations of the army," the report said.

"The prime minister made up his mind hastily, despite the fact that no detailed military plan was submitted to him and without asking for one. Also, his decision was made without close study of the complex features of the Lebanon front and of the military, political and diplomatic options available to Israel," it said.

It also criticized Defence Minister Amir Peretz for his inexperience and said wartime military chief Lt.-Gen. Dan Halutz "acted impulsively," misrepresented the army's readiness and suppressed dissenting opinions. Lt.-Gen. Halutz resigned from the post of military chief of staff in January after internal army inquiries found widespread problems in the military's performance.

"If any one of them had acted better ... the outcome of the campaign would have been different and better," said Eliyahu Winograd, the retired judge who led the investigation.

The report did not call for the resignation of any of Israel's wartime leaders, but left none unscathed.

The committee also came down hard on the cabinet for relying too heavily on the army's recommendations and not pressing for an alternative course of action. "The ministers voted for a vague decision, without understanding and knowing its nature and implications," Mr. Winograd said.

After receiving the report yesterday, Mr. Olmert pledged to "act immediately to learn everything necessary in order to learn the lessons, to correct failures and ensure that in every possible future threat facing the state of Israel the failures and the defects that you point to will be remedied."

Mr. Olmert scheduled a meeting with his Kadima party last night to discuss the report. A senior Hezbollah official yesterday hailed the damning Israeli government report on the Lebanon war as confirmation of the Jewish state's "historic defeat" in last summer's conflict.

"The Winograd report is an admission of Israel's historic defeat in the face of the fighters of Hezbollah," Nabil Qaouk, the group's chief for south Lebanon, told reporters.

"This report heralds a new phase in which the enemy will continue its downward slide while the resistance will continue to grow stronger," said the Hezbollah official.

Israeli PM's handling of conflict a 'severe failure'; Public reception of panel report likely to decide Olmert's fate

Sheik Hassan Ezzeddine, **Hezbollah**'s most senior political officer in southern Lebanon, said the report "confirmed the inability of the Israeli political and military leadership to ... confront **Hezbollah**."

Graphic

Colour Photo: The Associated Press; The Winograd commission reserved its most severe language for Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, centre, for his conduct during last summer's war against **Hezbollah**. Also criticized were then-chief of staff Lt.-Gen. Dan Halutz, left, and Defence Minister Amir Peretz. ;

Load-Date: May 1, 2007

End of Document

Lebanon in need of strong leadership to overcome conflict

University Wire

November 5, 2007 Monday

Copyright 2007 Daily Bruin via U-Wire

Section: COLUMN

Length: 487 words

Byline: By Peter George Haber, Daily Bruin; **SOURCE:** UCLA

Dateline: LOS ANGELES

Body

Within the next few weeks, the Lebanese parliament will convene to decide on a new president, which may not mean much to most Americans, but could change the face of history.

Tensions are running high in this moderate state with extremist troubles. The pro-western government is fighting for its legitimacy against the opposition led mainly by Hezbollah.

Hezbollah is recognized by the United States as a terrorist group, and is quite possibly the best organized, most financially capable and largest threat to global security. The past few years in Lebanon have been marked with brutal assassinations, war, riots and strikes. Come election time, the world will turn their eyes toward the tiny nation to witness which way the tides will change in middle-eastern politics.

Which way should things go? As a Lebanese-American, an impartial response to these questions is difficult, but I will attempt an answer.

The issue with Lebanon is that it has not been a sovereign state since the start of the civil war and has been the battlegrounds for various nations and ideologies throughout the world. The civil war saw many faces, from religious struggles to class struggles. Most of the weapons and even some of the fighters were foreign. Unfortunately, now not much has changed.

On one end there is Hezbollah who claims to be Lebanese Nationalist, yet its ultimate goal is the annihilation of the state of Israel.

And what did Hezbollah resort to when Israel retaliated for the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers in 2006? They hid with women and children and launched rockets from civilian areas, resulting in the deaths of thousands of innocent people.

Hezbollah is known to be funded and directed by Syria and Iran and it is time for the Lebanese people to reject the exploitation of these nations. No longer should they deal with the bidding of foreign nations; the Lebanese have no place in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict.

On the other end are the pro-Western leaders in Lebanon. It makes me proud to know that America, the nation I consider home, supports a free-democratic Lebanon. But the Lebanese leaders must not use the west as a safety

Lebanon in need of strong leadership to overcome conflict

net. They cannot come running to America, France or the United Nations on a whim. The Western world proved powerless to defend the Lebanese people from Israeli air strikes in 2006.

Even if Lebanon has powerful allies in the west, it cannot rely on them to defend their soil. What Lebanon needs are leaders who, rather than hope for exceptions and pity from the west, will take a real stand against the hijacked sovereignty of their nation.

If the pro-Western leaders in Lebanon prevail, there will be war from the opposition.

If the opposition and **Hezbollah** prevail, we could witness the beginning of an entire regional war, perhaps even worse. Strong leadership is the only positive option to unite the country from within and secure peace for the entire region.

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Load-Date: November 5, 2007

Sectarian fighting kills 6 in Lebanon; Religious, political tensions have been running high since militant group overran parts of Beirut in May

The Times & Transcript (New Brunswick)

July 26, 2008 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. C13

Length: 378 words

Byline: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Body

Sectarian clashes broke out yesterday in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli, killing six people, including a 10 year-old-boy and a policeman, and wounding at least 15, police officials said.

The clashes between Sunni Muslim gunmen and Alawites, an offshoot Shiite sect, broke out at dawn after a hand grenade was thrown toward a Sunni area, the state-run National News Agency reported.

Tension has been high along Lebanon's religious and political fault lines since the militant Shiite group **Hezbollah** overran parts of Beirut in May in response to government attempts to limit its power.

The deal that ended that crisis saw **Hezbollah** and other opposition politicians re-enter the government of the western-backed prime minister, Fuad Saniora, with veto power over its decisions.

Yesterday's clashes occurred as the government was struggling to draft a document outlining plans for its term in office amid disagreements with **Hezbollah**.

The fighting escalated as automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades were used between the Sunni Bab el-Tabaneh district and the predominantly Alawite Jabal Mohsen neighbourhood, the police officials said. The two officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not allowed to speak to the media.

A ceasefire went into effect at 1 p.m. after mediation by the grand mufti of north Lebanon, Sheik Malek al-Shaar, who has acted as a mediator throughout the recent weeks of fighting.

But after a brief lull fighting broke out again, said residents of the city, located 80 kilometres north of Beirut. The police officials said three more people died in the afternoon fighting, including a policeman and two **women**. A 10-year-old boy struck by a stray bullet also died later Friday, bringing the total to six people killed.

The International Committee of the Red Cross urged those fighting to stop and allow the wounded to be evacuated and medical personnel to carry out their tasks.

On the political front, the new cabinet's efforts to forge a path forward have been complicated by disagreements with **Hezbollah** over its weapons.

Some groups say the job of defending Lebanon should fall to the national armed forces. **Hezbollah** and its allies counter that the militant group's weapons are needed to defend the country against Israel.

Sectarian fighting kills 6 in Lebanon ; Religious, political tensions have been running high since militant group overran parts of Beirut in May

Load-Date: July 27, 2008

End of Document

Fears of war build out of peace

Canberra Times (Australia)

July 14, 2007 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: A; Pg. B04

Length: 1340 words

Byline: The Canberra Times

Body

IN THE video diary that Ali Dagher intended as his last testament of the 34-day war between Israel and Hezbollah, there is a scene where he produces two cupped handfuls of metal bomb fragments that landed in his kitchen.

"I collected these here in the house," he tells the camera. "I am not telling anyone about them because I don't want them to be afraid."

The time-date stamp at the bottom of the screen reads July 28, 2006, a day of intense battle in this former fortress of Hezbollah. The man staring into the camera is hollow-cheeked and exhausted. But a year later, the chance to look back is intoxicating. Dagher has watched this video diary 10 times since the war each time a celebration of the fact that he is still alive.

"When I was filming this tape, I had no hope of surviving," he says.

"All I was thinking in my head was that I was going to die. But now that the war has ended, and I am still alive, I feel good. I feel that I did something important." Dagher's wife, Jumana, cannot bear to remain in the house when the video is on, and walks out. "It hurts me too much to remember," she says.

The sense of siege has not yet lifted in Lebanon despite a durable ceasefire, the deployment of 13,500 United Nations troops to keep the peace in the south, and millions of dollars pledged for reconstruction from Arab states.

Instead, say many Lebanese, there is a deepening dread of a new war to come. There is no shortage of likely pretexts for a confrontation: a string of high-profile assassinations and bombings, and deepening political divisions in Beirut. In the north, there have been fierce clashes with al-Qaeda affiliates at the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr al-Bared, outside Tripoli. In the south, there are suggestions of a plot to drive out the UN peacekeepers and provoke a new war with Israel.

There are also undeniable signs that Hezbollah is digging in for a new encounter with Israel, this time in the isolated and sun-scorched mountains north of the Litani river.

"Don't think that everything got better immediately after the war was over," Dagher says. "It will take 20 years." A day before we met, his century old house, whose thick stone walls had sheltered up to 50 members of Dagher's family during the war, was condemned by the town authorities: it had been hit too many times to rebuild.

Fears of war build out of peace

In its three rooms, used by the family in ordinary times as a store for sacks of sugar and flour for their sweet shop in town, the Daghers tried to turn a siege into a sit com.

"The fact that we were 48 people and we were trying to entertain ourselves was funny. We tried to turn tragedy into comedy," says Dagher's cousin, also called Ali.

Early in the war, on July 17, small children are sitting in a circle having a picnic on the floor, and Dagher's son, Hussein, now six, is blowing kisses at the camera.

By July 19, the laughing children have been supplanted by images of worried adults, praying amid the rumble of artillery.

The scenes show Dagher trying to amuse the children by getting them to offer a tour of their makeshift sleeping quarters: a windowless closet. Off camera, the women grumble about the washing up and running out of food. The television is constantly tuned to the Hezbollah station; even the smallest children know the slogans by heart.

By July 27, the fighting has got so close that six-month-old Alaa is being blown off her mattress on the floor. Three days later, during a brief ceasefire, the Daghers flee, trundling the children in wheelbarrows over the hills to safety. When they return, with Dagher still filming through the shattered windscreen of his car, he thinks his neighbourhood, along the town's southern slopes, looks like Hiroshima.

The town is now emerging, slowly, from that devastation, with workmen camped out in the rubble, and bulldozers and other heavy equipment choking the roads. But even this effort is touched by Lebanon's divisions.

Immediately after the war, Hezbollah doled out up to \$6000 for each family for new furniture an act of largesse that many people presume was underwritten by Iran. The machinery of the Lebanese Government was not as well oiled, and its pockets less deep. Months later, some in Bint Jbeil complain that compensation comes first to those who are politically connected.

"I was so frustrated I was going to burn tyres in front of the house," says Hussein Kosseir, who has yet to receive money to repair the shattered glass and scarred walls of his home.

Still, Bint Jbeil is further along than most other places in southern Lebanon, largely because of a plan to enlist Qatar to oversee the rebuilding.

About \$US100million (\$A115.4million) has been set aside for reconstruction in historic neighbourhoods such as Dagher's. This means a town that continues to demonstrate its fealty to Hezbollah in the yellow banners that flutter over its destruction will owe its recovery to the generosity of a government Qatar that enjoys economic relations with Israel and hosts a giant United States military base.

It's a fragile peace. Last month, two Katyusha rockets were fired over the border into Israel the first since the war. Barely a week later, on June 24, six Spanish and Colombian soldiers from the UN force in southern Lebanon were killed by a suicide car bomber. The UN had been braced for such an attack, aimed at driving its forces out of Lebanon. "We all knew there were groups against this," UNIFIL spokesman Milos Strugar says. "There are people, groups, who would like to undermine this agreement for the cessation of hostilities."

Last summer's war erupted just six years after Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon, ending more than two decades of occupation. During that time, Hezbollah built sophisticated bunkers with elaborate electrical and ventilation systems, all carved out of the hills, despite regular Israeli drone surveillance flights.

That defensive line exposed during the war is now being replicated just north of the Litani river, beyond the reach of the UN patrols.

On a hilltop overlooking one such possible site a slope gouged by sandstone quarrying a lone teenage foot soldier, still too young to grow a full moustache stands sentry.

Fears of war build out of peace

Moments after our approach, two Hezbollah officials emerge to demand to see our documents.

This part of Lebanon had been dominated by Christian and Druze communities, and villagers say that a Shi'ite businessman has been methodically buying up land since the war, becoming the area's biggest landowner. Shi'ite families are also moving into the area.

Observers of Lebanon are not surprised by the preparations; Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's leader, is known for his meticulous planning. Timur Goksel, a former senior adviser to UNIFIL, says, "It shows their awareness that the next war is going to be different and that there will be a next war. Hezbollah figures that the next time Israel comes they are not going to look for missiles from the air.

"There is going to be a massive land invasion."

By the time a ceasefire was reached, the war that began with the capture of two Israeli soldiers in a Hezbollah cross-border raid on Israel had killed more than 1000 Lebanese and 158 Israelis.

Most of the Israelis were soldiers, although the figure also includes 43 people killed inside Israel by Hezbollah rocket attacks.

The Dahia, the Hezbollah stronghold of Beirut's southern suburbs, and much of the Shi'ite heartland of southern Lebanon, including the old town of Bint Jbeil, were in ruins.

Modern tower blocks in Beirut vanished; houses that had served villagers for generations were destroyed.

Israeli bombing raids had deliberately targeted bridges and roads, and in a departing act, dropped four million cluster bombs on orange orchards and farms in the final hours of the war. Some 120,000 have since been recovered, according to the mine-clearing taskforce operated by the UN and Lebanese authorities.

The most recent war continues to write its legacy on southern Lebanon even as preparations are being made for the next one.

Suzanne Goldenberg is a correspondent of The Guardian.

Load-Date: July 13, 2007

Lebanon war rebuke 'nonsense,' Israelis say

The Toronto Star

September 7, 2007 Friday

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Section: WORLD AND COMMENT; Pg. AA01

Length: 854 words

Byline: Oakland Ross, Toronto Star

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Israeli officials reacted with anger and defiance yesterday, following accusations their country launched "indiscriminate" attacks resulting in hundreds of unnecessary civilian deaths during last summer's war in Lebanon.

"It's nonsense," stormed retired Maj.-Gen. Yaakov Amidror, former chief of the Israel Defense Forces' research and assessment division. "They are living in a bubble. They don't have to protect their citizens against terrorist attacks."

"They" are Human Rights Watch, a prominent and widely respected international monitoring agency that yesterday unveiled a 247-page report entitled "Why They Died," based on several months of research conducted mainly among villagers in southern Lebanon, near the border with Israel.

The region bore the brunt of last summer's 34-day conflict pitting Israel's armed forces against Hezbollah, a radical Islamist group.

The report says Israel consistently failed to exercise sufficient caution before unleashing aerial or artillery attacks on targets that had little or no military value, resulting in the loss of hundreds of innocent lives, many of them women and children.

But Amidror insists it isn't so. He says Israel did everything required of it, and more, to ensure its forces attacked only legitimate military targets. Unfortunately, he said, Hezbollah fighters often used civilians as a human shield, and that left Israel at times in a difficult position.

"What should we do? Wait for Hezbollah to leave populated areas and put up their flags and say, 'Hit us now?'"

The retired officer's outrage and denials were typical of statements made yesterday by Israeli government officials and the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) themselves, leaving the impression that this country's leaders and the New-York-based human rights agency were operating in two separate echo chambers, with neither side acknowledging the legitimacy of anything said by the other.

During a mid-morning press conference at an east Jerusalem hotel yesterday, two senior HRW representatives, including Kenneth Roth, the organization's executive director, detailed their agency's main findings, which tax Israel with unleashing "indiscriminate air strikes" against targets in Lebanon.

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"Human Rights Watch calls on the IDF to seriously investigate and to change the practices and procedures it uses in determining whether it is permissible to attack a target," said Roth.

"The level of proof last summer was far too low, and that is the reason hundreds of civilians died."

He dismissed Israeli claims that its armed forces first warned Lebanese civilians to flee targeted areas before launching its attacks.

While true, those claims are insufficient, he said. Many people were unable to flee, while others were killed in the act of fleeing.

Roth also refuted Israeli charges that Hezbollah routinely used civilians as a shield for its fighters. While Hezbollah did sometimes fire rockets from populated areas, he said, this did not automatically amount to "shielding." In any case, he said, the Lebanese militants did not use the tactic "systematically."

By contrast, Amidror insisted that two-thirds of the 4,000 or so rockets fired at Israel by Hezbollah during the conflict were launched from populated areas.

"We counted them," he said. "We have the exact number."

Amidror would not divulge the number, however, citing security concerns.

In a companion report released last month in Beirut, Human Rights Watch condemned Hezbollah for repeated rocket attacks in northern Israel that resulted in dozens of civilian deaths, but the carnage inflicted by Hezbollah upon Israelis was lower by an order of magnitude than the bloodshed suffered in Lebanon as a result of Israeli bombardment.

The document released here yesterday urges the United Nations secretary-general to consider whether war-crimes proceedings should be brought against parties on both sides of the conflict.

It also calls on the United States - Israel's leading weapons supplier - to suspend its arms shipments until the Jewish state brings its military practices into line with international humanitarian law.

A spokesperson for the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv said yesterday he was not yet aware of an official reaction by Washington to this demand.

In a statement issued to news outlets here yesterday the IDF said it would consider the Human Rights Watch report "seriously," along with its recommendations, but then seemed to belie that commitment by dismissing the document as error-plagued and based on unreliable and incomplete information.

"(Human Rights Watch) is not privy to classified intelligence information possessed by the IDF necessary to evaluate the legitimacy of each attack," said the IDF statement. The IDF also argued that evidence provided by Lebanese villagers was apt to have "limited reliability."

Roth had little patience for those claims yesterday.

"We are accustomed to hearing the usual platitudes from the IDF," he said. "They don't begin to address the very troubling issues raised by our report. HRW has evidence that the IDF does not have. Our evidence shows that their evidence is wrong, and it was wrong over and over."

Graphic

Civilians flee last summer's attacks.

Lebanon war rebuke 'nonsense,' Israelis say

Load-Date: September 7, 2007

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Winograd, latest act in a long play

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

February 2, 2008 Saturday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 1982 words

Byline: Marc J Sirois

Body

Judge Eliahu Winograd and his colleagues have had their say on Israel's war against Lebanon in 2006, and while the 600-plus pages they produced will be debated for years, it is already safe to declare that the establishment in the Jewish state has put together another tour de force of pseudo-independent sophistry.

FIRST PERSON by Marc J. Sirois

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As is clear to anyone with even a nodding familiarity with the decisions of the Israeli Supreme Court, for example, judicial independence is a fiction in the Jewish state. This situation is made necessary by the apartheid logic that informs Zionist ideology, the same unspoken but unmistakable reason that prevents Israel from having a constitution. Judges are there to improvise rationalizations for the bigotry that serves as the foundation of their state, and these have to mesh with changing social and political circumstances; if they also had to reference a constitution, they would get boxed in and the mental acrobatics required to keep excusing the inexcusable would get too complicated.

So it was that Winograd, a former chief justice, presided over an inquiry for which uncovering what went wrong with the Jewish state's latest misadventure in Lebanon was very much a secondary goal - especially since the impossibility of achieving Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's stated war aims by conventional military means was plain the moment he announced them in the early stages of the conflict. Going through the motions was a necessary performance to carry out the real tasks: shoring up faith in the Zionist project among the domestic audience and

Winograd , latest act in a long play

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All of this can be gleaned from the statement that accompanied the release of the commission's final report on Wednesday evening.

The first point of any relevance whatsoever (after announcing that the document had been presented and stressing the amount of work involved) was a pat on the back for Israeli politicians and military officers, respectively the high priests and janissaries of contemporary Zionism, for their willingness to accept "critical review." There follows a pre-emptive mitigation of any responsibility to be placed on these leaders by noting that the commission had access to a fuller picture of what was happening than did those who were participating in the events under examination.

Then the statement summarily judges the commission as having been balanced in deciding what sorts of information could be released and what should remain classified. It does this despite acknowledging that some of the material not included has already been published, presumably to defuse criticism of the members for their having refused to put their imprimatur on details that do not support their conclusions.

Next is a description of the alleged mission: to figure out what happened, identify flaws requiring repair, and make successful implementation more likely. This, in turn, supplies an excuse for not having subjected Olmert to the same level of criticism directed at his defense minister, the hapless Amir Peretz, and the airpower-happy military chief of staff, Lieutenant General Dan Halutz - both of whom were forced to step down after Winograd's interim report. "It should be stressed," the commissioners write, "that the fact that we refrained from imposing personal responsibility does not imply that no such responsibility exists." This would have been a cheeky cop-out by itself, but the chutzpah that follows makes it something else. "We also wish to repeat our statement from the interim report: We will not impose different standards of responsibility to the political and military echelons, or to persons of different ranks within them," the committee members state - and then proceed to do exactly what they say they will not. The next point echoes this fatuous declaration, followed by a procedural comment on the introductory statement itself and linking of the interim and final reports.

Then comes what appears to be the meatiest section, a description of the war as a "serious missed opportunity" with no mention of what possibilities might have been pursued. Limited negotiations aimed at freeing the soldiers whose capture was used as a pretext to launch the war? Broader talks on contentious issues like the Shebaa Farms and the United Nations-drawn "Blue Line" that serves as de facto border but was drawn in such a manner as to put Lebanese land under Israeli jurisdiction? The re-imposition of long-term occupation in South Lebanon? Another invasion all the way to Beirut? Ethnic cleansing? We are not told.

More direct comment follows: "Israel initiated a long war, which ended without its clear military victory." At least this part makes clear that the Western media has been lying shamelessly since July 12, 2006, the day when the soldiers were snatched, by claiming that this action constituted the beginning of the conflict. It also demonstrates that Hizbullah has not been unreasonable to claim that it prevailed. This relative forthrightness is "balanced," however, by the repetition of a blatantly false assertion that has circulated since the war, namely that Hizbullah unleashed a "barrage of rockets aimed at Israel's civilian population." The resistance did no such thing, which is why the vast majority of the casualties it inflicted were on military personnel; the same is not true of the Israeli armed forces, whose wrath was primarily expended in the extinction of innocents.

A brief listing of flaws (decision-making, military preparedness, planning, civil defense) is next, and then a pronouncement that the rapid decision to launch a full-scale war both limited the range of martial options and prevented full investment in any of them. A bombshell follows which has thus far received insufficient attention: "Israel did not gain a political achievement because of military successes; rather, it relied on a political agreement, which included positive elements for Israel, which permitted it to stop a war which it had failed to win." This refers to UN Security Council Resolution 1701, a cessation of hostilities that included new and larger obstacles to

Hizbullah's activities and to which the Lebanese government was blackmailed into agreeing by collective punishment: the slaughter of its citizens, the destruction of public infrastructure and the strangulation of its economy.

The next few points are a description of the mismatch between Israel's stated political objectives and the military means employed to achieve them, a nod to the enthusiasm with which individual soldiers participated in the debacle, an endorsement of the brutal effectiveness of the Israeli air campaign, and an acknowledgment of the fallaciousness of believing that airpower alone could defeat **Hizbullah**. There is also a contention that the Israeli Navy's performance was judged unfairly because of the heavy damage inflicted on its newest and most powerful surface asset, the Hannit, by a **Hizbullah** missile.

Then we are treated to the approval of 1701 as "an achievement," the praising of Olmert's staff for having recovered from a slow start in drawing up Israel's negotiating stance, and a lengthy complaint that diplomatic, political and military activities were not sufficiently coordinated (another mitigation attempt, this one aimed at justifying the sickening intensification of hostilities as they were about to end, including the last-minute sowing of South Lebanon with cluster munitions).

Some unabashed self-congratulations are next on the menu, then the advice that Israel's population must have faith in their country's armed might, and the quaint observations that "politically and morally" the Jewish state is obligated to "seek peace with its neighbors ... from a position of social, political and military strength." The conclusion? "If we succeed in facilitating rectification of the failings we have identified - this will be our best reward."

The founding assumptions that have driven Israel's creation and comportment are not, of course, questioned. That would be verboten for the Israeli establishment, and perhaps even more so for some of its devotees in America. There is also no treatment of the core assumption upon which Israeli military doctrine is based: that wars must be fought on someone else's land, a surefire way of ensuring that the Jewish state will continue to shoot first and ask questions later.

Until 2006, each war that Israel had fought against its Arab neighbors had been one that it could not lose but which simultaneously sustained a long-term contest that it cannot hope to win. There are simply not enough Israelis to support the permanent hegemony required to maintain the status quo, meaning that unless a political solution is found, the far more numerous Arabs will eventually get enough of their act together to alter the balance of power. Until 2006, that process looked like it might take 100 years, or a thousand.

No longer: **Hizbullah**'s performance has the capacity to restore the confidence of Arabs and Muslims (which is probably why the group has been so heavily pressured by the Western backers of its domestic opponents since the war). But Arab defeatism does not add to Israel's security: On the contrary, it only extends the aforementioned contest and solidifies the Jewish state's false sense of irreversible superiority. A more assertive Arab world, on the other hand, might convince Israelis of the necessity to make genuine compromises while they can still negotiate handsome terms.

Overall, the first impression of the Winograd Commission's approach to the inquiry has to be that it resolved from the outset to do no more than nibble around the edges. A closer examination of the final report itself may add nuance to that judgment, but it is highly unlikely that it will be proved substantively wrong.

Having said all of the above, I will add this: The Israelis have as usual gone in for a gaudy representation of responsible governance instead of the more effective - but messier - real stuff, but at least they fully recognize the importance of appearing to do the right thing.

The same can emphatically not be said of the Lebanese political class, which has been too busy with its domestic squabbles to reflect usefully on what happened in 2006. By its failure, the elite is finishing a job started by the Israelis but which they could not succeed on their own: that of pulling Lebanon apart at its seams.

Marc J. Sirois is managing editor of **THE DAILY STAR**

Winograd , latest act in a long play

Load-Date: October 22, 2008

End of Document

Winograd, latest act in a long play

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

February 2, 2008 Saturday

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No longer: **Hizbullah**'s performance has the capacity to restore the confidence of Arabs and Muslims (which is probably why the group has been so heavily pressured by the Western backers of its domestic opponents since the war). But Arab defeatism does not add to Israel's security: On the contrary, it only extends the aforementioned contest and solidifies the Jewish state's false sense of irreversible superiority. A more assertive Arab world, on the other hand, might convince Israelis of the necessity to make genuine compromises while they can still negotiate handsome terms.

Overall, the first impression of the Winograd Commission's approach to the inquiry has to be that it resolved from the outset to do no more than nibble around the edges. A closer examination of the final report itself may add nuance to that judgment, but it is highly unlikely that it will be proved substantively wrong.

Having said all of the above, I will add this: The Israelis have as usual gone in for a gaudy representation of responsible governance instead of the more effective - but messier - real stuff, but at least they fully recognize the importance of appearing to do the right thing.

The same can emphatically not be said of the Lebanese political class, which has been too busy with its domestic squabbles to reflect usefully on what happened in 2006. By its failure, the elite is finishing a job started by the Israelis but which they could not succeed on their own: that of pulling Lebanon apart at its seams.

Marc J. Sirois is managing editor of **THE DAILY STAR**

Winograd , latest act in a long play

Load-Date: June 30, 2008

End of Document

Israeli forces condemned for civilian deaths: report

Ottawa Citizen

September 6, 2007 Thursday

Early Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A12

Length: 205 words

Byline: Steven Edwards, The Ottawa Citizen

Dateline: UNITED NATIONS

Body

UNITED NATIONS - Israel has been thrown on the defensive after a new Human Rights Watch report claimed that "indiscriminate airstrikes" by Israeli forces caused most of the estimated 900 civilian deaths in Lebanon during last year's conflict with **Hezbollah**.

Drawing on findings of a five-month study, the monitoring group said a "simple movement of vehicles or persons -- such as attempting to buy bread or moving about private homes -- could be enough to cause a deadly Israeli airstrike."

The group's 249-page report, titled Why They Died: Civilian Casualties in Lebanon during the 2006 War, adds that at least 300 of the 510 civilians whose deaths were investigated were **women** and children.

The report, released today, includes a response by Israel. It highlights Human Rights Watch's assertions of **Hezbollah**'s deliberate targeting of civilians.

"**Hezbollah** ... deliberately targeted Israeli civilians, while attempting to use the cover of civilians and civilian structures in order to stockpile its weapons, hide its fighters and fire missiles in Israel," Israeli officials said.

"Israel, on the other hand, held itself bound to apply the principles of humanitarian law, even while facing an opponent who deliberately flouted them."

Load-Date: September 6, 2007

'The tendency towards multilateralism is greater than ever'

The Jerusalem Post

July 25, 2008 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 13

Length: 2992 words

Byline: MICHAL LANDO

Highlight: In an interview with 'The Jerusalem Post' to sum up his tenure as Israel's ambassador to the UN, Dan Gillerman waxes diplomatic in assessing the 'glass building' where he spent the last six years. INTERVIEW

Body

"I wear two hats here: one is representing Israel at the UN - which is difficult enough; the other, which is even tougher, is representing the UN in Israel," says Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Dan Gillerman. He is sitting in his office a few hundred meters from what he often refers to as the "glass building" - the UN headquarters in New York City. It is an office he will be vacating at the end of the month, to make way for law professor Gabriela Shalev, Israel's first female envoy to the UN.

Gillerman's nearly six-year tenure saw the Hamas takeover in Gaza, the Second Lebanon War and ongoing threats from Iran to wipe Israel off the map.

"If I had to judge by winds and feelings that accompanied me, the UN was a place where I would be abused, attacked and criticized, and the feeling was that there wasn't much to be done about it," says Gillerman. "The only option was to lie back and take it. But I didn't come here to lie back and take it. I came here to make a difference."

Making a difference included forging relationships with representatives from Arab countries that have no diplomatic ties to Israel. Indeed, a farewell event held last week at Gillerman's residence was attended by ambassadors from dozens of countries, including a large number of Arab envoys. Present were the ambassadors of Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar and Oman - and even Palestinian Observer Riyad Mansour, who regularly butted heads with Gillerman at Security Council meetings.

Among Gillerman's other accomplishments: a stint as vice president of the General Assembly (the first Israeli to be elected to this post in 55 years); the passage of a Holocaust remembrance resolution; and an agricultural technology resolution, the first resolution to be initiated and put forth by Israel.

Though this hasn't made Israelis "fall in love" with the UN, Gillerman hopes the advances he has made have managed to alter Israel's perception of the international body.

"One thing people have to understand is that when you talk about the UN being anti-Israel, basically you have to understand that the UN is only a building on First Avenue," says Gillerman. "It's as good as its member states, and its member states are only as good as the world we live in. And in the world we live in today there still is an automatic, immoral majority against Israel, so you are fighting an uphill battle. It's a slow, very difficult, sometimes Sisyphean battle, but if you persist, you can achieve things that seem unachievable."

'The tendency towards multilateralism is greater than ever'

It is this attitude that perhaps explains Gillerman's sheepish acknowledgement that he has enjoyed "every minute" of his service at the UN, despite its being widely considered the most difficult diplomatic post.

In an interview with The Jerusalem Post mere days before leaving this post, Gillerman quips: "When you work for the government, you are not supposed to enjoy yourself. Had I said that before, I probably would have been recalled long ago."

Has there really been any change at the UN with regard to Israel during your tenure as ambassador?

The most interesting part of my job was the relationships I forged with Arab and Muslim ambassadors, some of whom still remain nameless, because my relationship with them is discreet, and some of whom are public knowledge, like the Pakistani ambassador. My relationship with him started in clandestine bars and dark hotel lobbies, and evolved into an open relationship. We managed to bring dividends to both countries, which far outweigh the significance of the number of hands raised at any vote at the UN. I also forged relationships with the Omani, Qatari and Moroccan ambassadors. These relationships were not reflected in votes, but I don't think votes are the most important thing. You can bring dividends to your country in many areas not reflected in votes.

We [the Israeli mission] decided to stop being a one- issue mission. For too long, Israel has been accused of being concerned only with the conflict. We wanted to bring to the awareness of our colleagues and the world what a beautiful country of excellence and innovation and creativity Israel is, and to get into areas where Israel is contributing to the world and could contribute to the UN.

We also decided to reach out to as many countries as we could - not solely to rely on the US mission for information, but eventually to be in a position where we could provide the US with information, and we did do that.

The UN has long been perceived as ineffective. What is your view?

There was a time when the UN was perceived as irrelevant, unimportant and ineffective. And in many ways, in different places, it still is very ineffective. The inability of the UN to act and have a serious presence in Darfur, for example, is shameful, horrendous and scandalous. On the other hand, the UN passed Resolution 1559, which put an end to the Syrian presence in Lebanon, and Resolution 1701 brought an end to the Second Lebanon War. And the UN adopted three different resolutions on Iran, some quite tough. In addition, the UN is marking the Holocaust for the first time in history in a very moving, significant and important way.

One of the paradoxes today is that though we live in a one-superpower world, the tendency towards multilateralism is greater than ever before. Even the US is seeking consensus - is seeking this multilateral umbrella - maybe because of the Iraq experience. Even the Bush administration, which sometimes did not have the highest regard for the UN, is seeking this legitimacy of multilateral consensus on Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran more than ever before. In this respect, if anything, the UN has become more central and more relevant. I just wish it were also more effective.

You refer to UN resolutions relating to Iran and Lebanon. But have they really been effective?

Resolution 1701 was perceived as a major diplomatic achievement for Israel, because in previous wars, while we did have resounding and outright victories on the ground, they were never followed by political or diplomatic achievements. Here, while we may not have had a resounding victory on the ground, we did have a very significant diplomatic achievement, which not only put an end to the war, but also had elements of dramatically changing the situation on the ground... Until July 12, 2006, southern Lebanon was a Hizbullah land - a state within a state. Hizbullah could do whatever it wanted out in the open, and no Lebanese soldier would dare venture. Suddenly, there were 30,000 soldiers there.

But Hizbullah has rearmed in the meantime, hasn't it?

Resolution 1701 was supposed to limit the actions of Hizbullah and prevent it from rearming. It did not achieve that. Hizbullah today has rearmed to the point that it is possibly even better equipped than it was before the war. The resolution also imposed an embargo on arms shipments to militias in Lebanon - namely Hizbullah - which was a huge achievement, but that wasn't implemented either. 1701 also demanded the immediate release of Eldad Regev

'The tendency towards multilateralism is greater than ever'

and Ehud Goldwasser who, tragically, were returned two years later in coffins. So the implementation of 1701 is far from satisfactory. In fact, it's very disappointing. But the elements were there, and still are. One of the things I keep telling the Secretary General Ban ki-Moon and others is that it is up to them to implement it. It is the Security Council who passed it, and the Security Council cannot afford for it to be just another piece of paper, because in the end, when there is another flare-up in Lebanon, and there very well may be, the UN will be to blame...

What should the Security Council be doing?

They should be much more proactive - more aggressive in going after Hizbullah in detecting and identifying arms depots. They should be going in there, not just relying on Lebanese armed forces to do so, who often work in collusion with Hizbullah. The UNIFIL soldiers were not sent there to give out chocolates to children or write traffic tickets. They were sent there to carry out a mandate which was very clearly defined...

What about Iran?

There is no doubt that Iran is the greatest threat to world peace and security and the survival of civilization as we know it. It is very important to stress that Iran is not just an Israeli matter. In fact, if you ask the Saudis or some of the Gulf countries, they are probably more worried about Iran than we are. There is a huge difference between North Korea and Iran, because while North Korea attained nuclear weapons out of desperation, Iran is seeking them out of aspiration. They want to realize their 2500-year-old dream of a Persian Empire, taking over the Arab and Muslim countries, exporting Shia extremism. The UN passed three resolutions with quite tough sanctions. I believe the Iranians are rattled by those resolutions, not indifferent to them. I think they are mainly rattled by the unanimity of the stand of the international community. I don't think Iran wants to be a pariah state, isolated and boycotted. Still, this has not stopped them from enriching uranium and from seeking nuclear weapons. Therefore, the international community should be much tougher. Frankly, I don't know whether we have time for diplomacy to make Iran stop. I hope very much that we do. I still believe in diplomacy; that's why I am here. But if diplomacy fails, Iran must understand that the world, not just Israel, will not stand for a nuclear Iran, and that all options are on the table.

What do you make of recent claims that Israel is planning an attack?

We are sitting a few hundred yards from the Security Council, and I am still very much engaged in a diplomatic effort. I also believe Israel should not be perceived as being at the forefront of this conflict with Iran. There is nothing the Iranians would like better than to turn this into an Iranian-Israeli conflict, or even an Islamic-Jewish one. This is so far a conflict between Iran and the rest of the world. We should make sure it stays that way.

How is it that, despite having a Holocaust resolution, the UN continues to host Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has repeatedly denied the Holocaust and calls for Israel's destruction?

I must say I was very disappointed when he came here the first time. I was more disappointed when he came a second time. And I am shocked that, after everything he is saying, he is allowed to come here again. I know that the UN has to allow everybody in, and that they have allowed butchers and killers and assassins in before, but I think that in the case of a person who publicly vows to wipe another member state off the map, and who denies the Holocaust while preparing the next one, the UN should not allow him in.

On a different topic, why does UNRWA persist in perpetuating, rather than solving, the refugee problem?

The refugee problem is a horrible one, and the fact that the Arab countries and the Palestinian leadership have kept these refugees as hostages for so many years, some of them wearing the keys of their homes they will never return to on their necks, made to believe that one day they may return - which is a total impossibility - and the very dire conditions in which they live, is a horrible testament to the cynicism and brutality of the Arab world which not only doesn't care about the refugees, but uses them. That's why we have third- and fourth-generation refugees living in such squalid conditions.

'The tendency towards multilateralism is greater than ever'

I don't think there is any other people in the world who have remained refugees for so many years. Take Israel, which started with 600,000 people and today numbers over 7 million Jews. It absorbed refugees from all over the world, including from Arab countries. Even the Arab Israelis live in far better conditions and have many more rights and better education than any of their brethren in the Arab countries.

But I think we should ask ourselves what would happen if there were no UNRWA. At the moment, the only organization that takes care of the refugees' basic health, food and education needs is UNRWA. So, though we may not like some of UNRWA's statements and activities, it is carrying out a very important duty that nobody else is doing.

Is there no room for a change in its mandate?

When people talk about a two-state solution, they mean that Israel is the solution for the Jewish refugees, and Palestine is the solution for the Palestinian refugees. The international community could easily solve the refugee problem, and I don't think it would take very much money or resources to do so. The real question is, where are the Arab countries? Some of the Arab and Muslim countries are the richest countries in the world. Some of the world's economies are undergoing very difficult times, while these countries are getting richer by the minute. They have unlimited resources. They spend billions of dollars on real estate and financial institutions all over the world, including in the US. If they care so much about those poor refugees, why don't they do something about the problem? The reason is because they don't really care, and because it suits them to hold this open wound as an alibi for their anti-Israelism.

The same goes for the peace process. I believe we are at a point in time where we do have a chance to finally settle the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Never before have so many different parties converged with this common interest.

When I returned from the Annapolis summit, I was cautiously optimistic, because, to me, the most important thing that emerged there was the fact that so many Arab and Muslim countries seemed to form a coalition of moderates against Iran, and indicated support for the process. This was very encouraging, because for a very long time the most frightening thing to me was the eerie silence of the Arab world. What we are witnessing today is no longer what Samuel Huntington called a "clash of civilizations." What we are witnessing today is a clash of "civilization" in the singular, because when you look at world we live in, most of the bloodshed and violence occurs within Islam. Not only are most terrorists Muslims, but the vast majority of their victims are Muslims, as well. The frightening thing is that you don't see a single Muslim leader - secular, political, religious, academic - get up and say, "Enough is enough. What are we doing killing each other?"

It's almost as though when Jews kill Muslims it's a massacre; when Christians kill Muslims it's a crusade; and when Muslims kill Muslims it's the weather channel - nobody cares.

In Annapolis, I thought they finally started caring, not because they fell in love with Israel. They came out of fear - fear of Iran, of Shia extremism - and out of the realization that they had a chance, maybe for the first time, to be much more pragmatic and realistic about settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, so that they could align against the real danger, Iran.

Do you speak about this in your private conversations with other ambassadors?

It comes up all the time, but there is this perpetration of the ritual of victimhood, which somehow they don't want to give away. I even told this to my Palestinian colleague, Riyad Mansour, with whom I have a very good relationship. We can go at each other's throats in the Security Council, but after that, we can also talk to each other as two human beings, which I think is one of the luxuries of the UN.

Could the UN have done anything differently regarding Regev and Goldwasser?

Secretary General Ban ki-Moon has a lot of sympathy and admiration for Israel and the Jewish people, and has done as much as he could. He had his own negotiator working on the case, together with the Germans. He has

'The tendency towards multilateralism is greater than ever'

briefed the families many times, spoken to the prime minister and foreign minister several times, and was very deeply involved and committed. He had a picture of the soldiers on his table to remind him, and showed a lot of compassion for them. During one meeting, he had tears in his eyes when Karnit [Goldwasser] spoke.

Is he more sympathetic to Israel than his predecessor?

I had a lot of respect for Kofi Annan. He was a very able diplomat, and a very charismatic secretary general. Some Israelis had their misgivings about him. He made some mistakes and some unfortunate statements, but at times he was very helpful - and always very gracious and helpful to me. He was very instrumental in bringing about the Holocaust remembrance resolution, and on the whole I think he was very decent and fair. I think Ban ki-Moon has greater compassion and friendship for Israel, even from the days when he was the Korean foreign minister.

There seems to be a lot of concern about your successor. Does it make a difference that she is a woman?

I very much respect Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's choice, and have a lot of confidence in her judgment. I also respect her desire for the post to be filled by a woman. This may send out a different message, maybe even soften Israel's image a bit. I assure you Gaby Shalev will be a very successful ambassador, regardless of her gender. She is a person of extremely high intellect, very capable, very highly regarded within the legal community, and aside from all that, she is also very nice. She is of such high caliber and intelligence that she would never undertake this if she didn't think she could succeed. I believe she can do it, though she may do it differently. I will be happy to help her in any way I can, and am in close contact with her.

What are the main challenges she faces?

She is entering the post during a very difficult and interesting period. But then, for Israel, it's always difficult and interesting. She is coming when Iran is still very much on the agenda; when there is a change of administrations in Washington; when there are indirect peace talks with Syria; when threats and dangers of Hizbullah in the North and Hamas in the South are very real and sometimes existential - when the world is probably at its most dangerous since the Cold War or even World War II.

Graphic

2 photos: DAN GILLERMAN. 'If anything, the UN has become more central and more relevant. I just wish it were also more effective.' GILLERMAN'S WARNING. 'There is nothing the Iranians would like better than to turn this into an Iranian-Israeli conflict, or even an Islamic-Jewish one.' (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Gaming: Tactical Advantage

New York Sun (Archive)

November 14, 2007 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 9

Length: 789 words

Byline: AARON MANNES and VENKATRAMANAN SUBRAHMANIAN

Body

When **Hezbollah** released the second version of its video game "Special Force" in August, it demonstrated, yet again, how quickly terrorist groups have taken advantage of technology in order to propagate their worldview. While America dominates the fastgrowing multi-billion dollar video game industry, there has not yet been an effort to develop video games that counter Islamist extremism.

"Special Force 2" updates the 2002 video game with scenarios based on last summer's war between Israel and **Hezbollah**: players kidnap Israeli soldiers, fire missiles at an Israeli gunboat, and launch Katyusha rockets into Israel. When the game was released a **Hezbollah** press official, Sheikh Ali Dahir, described it as a recruiting tool stating, "The Lebanese child has the right to know what happened in the south so as to imitate the jihadist action and the act of liberating the land."

Mr. Dahir also showed **Hezbollah**'s sophisticated understanding of communications when he described "Special Force" as "an alternative to the Western patterns that are presented to us in names, language, and tones that are sometimes devoid of content and at other times for not so innocent aims."

Hezbollah is not the only organization using video games as a strategic communications tool. There is a growing movement to develop video games to educate the public on various issues. The U.S. military has long used electronic simulations for training. In 2005, the Army released an online game, "America's Army," as a recruiting tool. But this understanding of the power of video games has not penetrated American efforts to reach out to moderate Muslims.

True, **Hezbollah**'s game designers have the easier task. **Hezbollah**'s anti-Israel message resonates throughout the greater Middle East and last summer's war provides a ready-made narrative. Games that are blatantly pro-American will only come off as ham-handed propaganda.

The point of waging a war of ideas is not to make America more popular. It is to foster attitudes and ideas that marginalize extremists. Increasingly sophisticated and supporting complex narratives, video games could be an ideal platform for the subtle transmission of values and an essential component in the war of ideas.

The best propaganda doesn't look like propaganda, and for video games to be successful they must be fun. Fun is a worthwhile value in and of itself, particularly for people caught in the midst of terrible circumstances, but it can also be a tactical asset.

Gaming: Tactical Advantage

Nations have come to virtual standstills for crucial episodes of beloved television shows. Violence in Baghdad dipped during Saddam Hussein's trial, as Iraqis were glued to their televisions to watch their former tormentor face justice. In particular, video games could be a crucial tool for reaching young men, the same demographic targeted for recruitment by terrorists.

The possibilities for video games targeted at Muslims throughout the world that marginalize extremist ideologies are limitless. Shoot-em-up games that give players the chance to rescue their countrymen from bloodthirsty terrorists could reinforce the message that Muslims themselves are the primary victims of Islamic extremists.

Other values can be fostered in more complex games modeled on popular strategy games like "Civilization." These games can help introduce players to the workings of open political systems and modern economies, and even make the subtle case for the education of women. Different games could be developed for different regions. A soccer game based on the venerated Iraqi national soccer team could help foster national consciousness among Iraqis, whereas a different game could be designed for cricket-mad Pakistan. Battery powered handheld games could be developed for areas where computers are scarce or electricity is inconsistent.

Video games can be funny as well. Popular sitcoms like "The Simpsons" have inspired video game spin-offs. Humor is an essential communications tool for building bridges and for ridiculing shared enemies.

Since September 11, policy-makers have been calling for a war of ideas. Terrorists have consistently and quickly adapted their message to the most popular and accessible media. To win the war of ideas, America must adapt to the new forms of spreading their message as well. Video games are one of the great communications tools of this century; it is time to take them seriously. The extremists already do.

Mr. Mannes, a researcher at the University of Maryland's Laboratory of Computational Cultural Dynamics, is a doctoral student at the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy. Mr. Subrahmanian, a professor of computer science, is the director of the University of Maryland Institute for Advanced Computer Studies.

Load-Date: November 14, 2007

Growing rift between the U.S. and Iran; LEBANON: Hate the U.S., And Head For It

IPS (Latin America)

May 2, 2008 Friday

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Length: 931 words

Byline: Mona Alami

Body

The growing rift between the U.S. and Iran has spread also to Lebanese soil, with Shia youngsters frequently seen burning U.S. flags. But ironically, for many of Hezbollah's Shia constituency, the U.S. is home.

Lebanese have been flocking to the U.S. since the first emigrant left for Ellis Island in 1849. Looking for better work opportunities and an escape from war, it has been a journey thousands and thousands of Lebanese have made over the past 150 years.

Ahmad, a dual Lebanese-U.S. citizen and a Shia from the southern region of Nabatieh, on vacation in Lebanon, has been living in the U.S. for the past ten years. A security specialist, he was sponsored by his elder brother, an engineer who studied in Texas. 'My three brothers and I currently live in the USA. We are happy to live in a country ruled by law and order,' he says.

His aunt Hiba, a hairdresser, dreams of following in the footsteps of her other family members and moving to the U.S. 'My sister lives comfortably in America, where everyone enjoys equal rights. Lebanon is a country where only the rich can buy their way out of problems and live happily,' she says.

During the July 2006 war between pro-Iranian Hezbollah and Israel, Lebanese-Americans visiting their hometowns were caught in the line of fire. The website of the Arab American Institute still features postings of those stranded in Lebanon at the time.

Numerous testimonials told emotionally charged stories, including that of Samira Elzayat, 32, who was trapped in the southern village Sultane with her three children Nadine, 7, Hassan, 5 and Maya, 3. Mr. and Mrs. Ayoub were stranded in Beit Yahoun, with little food or water. Mr. Ayoub suffered from high-blood pressure, his wife from osteoporosis and arthritis.

As South Lebanon and Beirut Shia suburbs were hit by metal and fire, the U.S. government evacuated some 15,000 nationals with the help of 5,700 U.S. military personnel. Many of the U.S. citizens were picked up from the southern city of Tyre. Images of Shias from the south -- men, women and children -- being carried by U.S. soldiers in one of the largest evacuations in U.S. history circulated around the world.

But underneath the sorrow and pain of the evacuees, the images underlined an enormous contradiction: people torn between their allegiance to their community, represented by Hezbollah, and to the U.S., their adoptive country.

Growing rift between the U.S. and Iran LEBANON : Hate the U.S. , And Head For It

Abbas, a young realtor in his thirties originally from Bint Jbeil, is visiting from California. Sipping on a bottle of Bacardi Breezer while lounging poolside at the posh Mövenpick Hotel, he expresses in broken Arabic (reverting to English when he can) his admiration for Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah.

'Sayed Nasrallah, a charismatic and intelligent figure, definitely had good reasons to stage the kidnapping of the two Israeli soldiers (in reference to what sparked the 2006 war). America should never have blindly supported Israel's aggression,' he says.

Since the birth of Israel in 1948, the U.S. has been associated in the Lebanese collective unconscious with its southern neighbour. Years of occupation, repeated aggression, and wars have made the Lebanese wary of the solid alliance between the two countries.

Shia southerners bore the brunt of Israel's wrath, especially in the village of Qana, where two forceful Israeli strikes in 1996 -- during the 'Grapes of Wrath' conflict with Hezbollah -- and the 2006 war led to the cumulative death of some 130 people, mostly children. The 2006 war also led to the death of about 1,200 people, and the displacement of at least a million people from the south.

Rana, a young Shia mother of two who lives in Washington, explains that the stance of most southern Lebanese against the U.S. results from the strategic mistakes the country has made in the region. 'When youngsters burn the American flag, they express their hatred of America's support of Israel, not of the country itself,' she says.

According to Nasser Beydoun, chairman of the Arab-American Chamber of Commerce quoted in the Arab American news report of Aug. 1 2006, some 10,000 Detroit residents have direct ties with the southern town of Bint Jbeil, which was the scene of violent combat in 2006 between Israelis and Hezbollah.

Besides hosting a large Lebanese southern community concentrated around Michigan and spread all over the U.S., the country has in recent years spent 230 million dollars in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance for conflict-affected persons in Lebanon. The financial assistance has benefited more than two million Lebanese in more than 500 villages across 24 of Lebanon's 26 districts, with some 35 projects directly aiding the south alone, according to USAID.

By working in the U.S., many U.S. citizens originally from south Lebanon have been able to provide for their families still residing in their home country. With his brothers, Ahmad supports his extended family. 'Although America has certainly made foreign policy mistakes in Lebanon, I still believe that many local factions on both sides of the divide are serving foreign interests and destroying the country in the process,' he says, referring to the ongoing political conflict between the Hezbollah-led opposition and the Western-backed majority groups in government.

In spite of Hezbollah's condemnation of the U.S., and although southerners are quick to voice criticism of U.S. policies in the Middle East, many Lebanese Shias are still likely to jump at the chance to get a visa or green card to the U.S., and live out the American dream. © 2008 NoticiasFinancieras - IPS - All rights reserved

Load-Date: May 2, 2008