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express

Editorial

In light of the catastrophic situation in the Middle East, we have decided to compile for our readers an electronic dossier containing crucial information for our ongoing efforts to oppose the war. In this dossier you will find statements by public figures who are determined to raise their voices in conscientious opposition to this madness. *Current Concerns* is a bimonthly independent newspaper produced by a group of concerned intellectuals in Switzerland. It is edited by the independent volunteer cooperative Zeit-Fragen.

The cooperative also publishes the weekly German-language *Zeit-Fragen* as well as the French-language monthly newspaper *Horizons et Débats*.

Please share this information as widely as possible – *Spread the word!*

We are looking forward to your response.

The Editorial Staff of Current Concerns

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“The Geneva Conventions Must be Respected in all Circumstances”

Statement by H.E. Mr. Peter Maurer, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations New York, July 2, 2006

Mr. President,

Let me begin by thanking you and the distinguished Members of the Security Council for the opportunity to present Switzerland's view on the current crisis which is affecting the Middle East.

Switzerland attaches the greatest importance to respect for international humanitarian law and human rights. It has repeatedly reminded the parties concerned of their obligations in this respect and will continue to do so. Respect for law is not a matter for negotiation. Nor is it subject to principles of reciprocity. The effects of the violations now being committed in the Middle East can be measured in terms of deaths, injuries, the indiscriminate destruction of accommodation and infrastructure as well as lasting damage to the cultural heritage and to the environment. These acts also impede humanitarian action.

Switzerland reminds the parties to the conflict that international humanitarian law prohibits attacks on civilians who are not directly participating in hostilities as well as attacks on civilian property. It reminds the parties of their obligation to distinguish between civilians and combatants and between civilian and military infrastructure, to take all the necessary precautions to preserve the lives of civilians and to avoid damaging civilian property, to respect the principle of propor-

tionality in all military operations and to refrain from any form of collective punishment against the population. The personnel, installations and vehicles bearing emblems recognised by the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols are protected by international humanitarian law and must be respected in all circumstances. The parties to the conflict are obliged to authorise and to facilitate the rapid passage of all humanitarian aid, and to take all practical and possible precautions to avoid attacking them.

Mr. President,

In view of the magnitude of the political and humanitarian crisis, the international community has a responsibility to act. The present escalation of violence in the Middle East is serious and dangerous. The regional ramifications of the current crisis exacerbate a situation that is already tense and heighten uncertainty about the course of the crisis and its outcome.

Switzerland hopes that the Security Council, the international community's main authority for the protection of peace and security, will be in a position to take action without delay. It regrets that, despite the gravity of the situation, it has not yet been possible to obtain a consensus in the Council on the measures to be taken.

Diplomacy must take the place of military confrontation. It is imperative to find a peaceful solution to the present conflict. Switzerland supports the efforts of the United Nations and the special good offices mission being conducted by Mr. Vijay K. Nambiar, at the specific request of the UN Secretary General. In this context, I would also like to commend the Secretary General for his judicious suggestions with regard to the establishment of a sustainable ceasefire. My country hopes that the Security Council will consider the proposals seriously and act swiftly upon them.

Switzerland condemns all acts of violence, provocation and terrorism. There is no doubt that Israel has the right to protect its territory and its population against such acts. Nevertheless, in the light of law and of the facts, Switzerland considers that the reaction of the Israeli armed forces in Lebanon is clearly disproportionate. Nothing can justify the magnitude of the present military operation consisting of an air, land and naval blockade. An entire country cannot be held to ransom for acts of military reprisal. The repeated air strikes of recent days against civilian targets are a serious violation of international humanitarian law. The indiscriminate firing of rockets by Hizbollah against population centres in Israel also violates the rules of international humanitarian law.

Mr. President,

The situation in Lebanon must not cause the international community to lose sight of the scale of the humanitarian, economic and social crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in Gaza.

Here, too, it is civilians who pay the heaviest price for the confrontations. Living conditions for the Palestinian population have become intolerable in recent months and weeks. Unemployment and poverty rates are constantly rising. Restrictions on freedom of movement for persons and goods not only contribute to this precarious situation but also seriously limit a whole range of basic rights.

Humanitarian organisations are informing us daily of the acute dangers of the food and medical crisis in Gaza. The destruction of the only electricity power plant in the Gaza has had a deep and lasting effect on hospitals and the provision of drinking water in particular. According to international humanitarian law, it is the responsibility of Israel, as the occupying power, to ensure that the basic needs of the Palestinian civilian population are provided for and to facilitate the rapid, secure and unimpeded passage of equipment and aid personnel.

Mr. President,

As a response to the crisis in Lebanon, Switzerland would like to stress three proposals: Establish an immediate cease-fire, organise humanitarian corridors and establish an international force.

As in all conflicts, it is not easy to put an end to the military logic of attacks and counter-attacks. But we simply cannot allow this devastating conflict to continue. Switzerland calls therefore on the parties to the conflict to conclude an immediate ceasefire. A ceasefire is absolutely necessary given the serious and steadily deteriorating humanitarian situation in Lebanon. The large-scale destruction of civil infrastructure such as bridges and roads has not only caused a large number of deaths, but is also preventing civilians from leaving the combat zones. Furthermore, it is also seriously hampering humanitarian activity. This destruction and efforts of large numbers of people to escape bombing have led to considerable displacements of population in Lebanon. The number of displaced persons is over 500,000, including 40,000 in Beirut alone. I repeat, the international community has the responsibility to act.

To respond to this humanitarian crisis, Switzerland also calls for the creation of humanitarian corridors making possible full and unrestricted access to victims. It is essential to guarantee access to basic needs

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(shelter, water, food) and services (sanitary and medical services). Supplies of water and electricity are also becoming precarious. Such humanitarian corridors, between Beirut and South Lebanon, between Beirut and Cyprus, between South Lebanon (Tyre) and Cyprus, but also between North Israel towards South Lebanon and the Bekaa would guarantee safe and unimpeded access to humanitarian personnel and goods. They would also enable the injured and sick to be taken to hospitals and civilians to be evacuated from combat zones.

Switzerland supports the proposal for an international security and monitoring force to be sent to South Lebanon. The Security Council should without delay seriously consider sending such a force in order to stop the escalation of violence. In order to respond effectively to the present crisis, such a mission would need to have a mandate to guarantee a ceasefire, to secure the

Israeli-Lebanese border and to facilitate by its presence a negotiated settlement of territorial disputes. This international security and monitoring force could also temporarily take control of the territory of the Chebaa farms while awaiting a settlement of this territorial disagreement and in order to reduce tensions resulting from this dispute. This force would also make it possible to contribute to the implementation of Security Council Resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), in particular the disarmament of all militias. As highlighted by the Secretary-General yesterday, the establishment of an international force should be supplemented by a set of other political and security measures, which would assure that the ceasefire is sustainable and the situation does not relapse into the status quo ante. Among the proposed measures, I would particularly stress the necessity for the Lebanese government to ensure the sovereignty

and the control of its entire territory and for a framework to secure funding for aid, reconstruction and development.

Switzerland welcomes the efforts of all actors who are trying to resolve the current crisis. However, it is imperative not just to manage the present crisis but to find a real solution for all the unresolved conflicts in the Middle East. The crisis in Lebanon, like that in the Palestinian Occupied Territory, cannot be viewed solely from the perspective of terrorism and counter-terrorism. A global approach to settle the totality of Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts is required. •

Thank you Mr. President

Source: Public meeting of the Security Council on the Situation in the Middle East, Statement by H. E. Mr. Peter Maurer July 21, 2006

The Right of Veto Must not be a Privilege that is Used to Defend Particular Interests

Statement by H.E. Mr. Peter Maurer, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations New York, July 20, 2006

Mr President,

The final document of the 2005 World Summit, which was approved last September by all member states, highlights the central role of Security Council reform. It also underlines the fact that this reform contains two elements that are of equal importance: enlargement of the membership of the Security Council and the improvement of its working methods.

As part of the follow-up to this Summit, Switzerland, together with a number of partners – Costa Rica, Jordan, Singapore and Liechtenstein – has prepared a draft resolution on the working methods of the Security Council. This text was tabled on 17 March 2006 under item 120 of the General Assembly agenda (Doc. A/60/L.49). The measures proposed in this draft resolution are the result of discussions that have gone on for ten years in the General Assembly. They concern in particular the following aspects:

- strengthening the transparency of the decision-making process, particularly with regard to the work of the Security Council's subsidiary organs;
- increasing possibilities of participating in the work of the Security Council for countries that are not Security Council members;
- intensifying consultations with troop contributor countries, interested neighbour states and regional organisations;
- making better use of experience acquired in the implementation of Security Council decisions;
- promoting the responsibility to protect by discouraging as much as possible the

use of the veto in cases of genocide or of crimes against humanity;

- establishing fair and clear procedures to enable persons affected by sanctions who believe that sanctions have been wrongly applied to present their point of view;
- facilitating the rapid integration of non-permanent members into the work of the Security Council.

The resolution that we have presented seeks to respond to the expectations of many member States who would like to be more involved in the work of the Security Council. These expectations are justified, for the following reasons:

- all UN members are concerned by the way in which the Security Council exercises its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security;
- all Member States contribute – according to their capacities – to the financing of peace operations, and many countries contribute troops;
- and all Member States have to implement the decisions of the Council in accordance with Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

I would also like to stress that the improvement of working methods is also very much in the interest of the Security Council itself. By involving all UN Member States more closely, the Security Council strengthens not only the effectiveness of its action but also its legitimacy and its authority to act in the name of all.

The five countries who drafted this resolution all favour the enlargement of the Security Council, even though their views on

the best model to adopt are not identical. All five of us are firmly convinced that the Security Council must become more representative of the modern world. However, we also consider that the enlargement of the Security Council and the improvement of its working methods are two distinct aspects, which should be treated in parallel processes, if possible, but separately. Unlike the enlargement of the Security Council, the improvement of working methods would not necessitate an amendment to the United Nations Charter. It is an area in which it is possible to achieve rapid progress, in the interest of all United Nations' Member States.

Mr President,

In the context of this important debate, Switzerland wishes to re-affirm and to explain its position with regard to the right of veto. As you know, it was the Swiss people who decided, four years ago, that the moment had arrived for my country to become a full member of the United Nations. There were strong arguments in favour of Switzerland joining the UN.

Nevertheless, a large number of Swiss people remained doubtful for a long time. They wondered whether the UN was in a position to achieve its goals and they deplored the fact that the right of veto had paralysed the Security Council in important situations. Today, while the government, Parliament and the Swiss people have a largely positive view of our activity in the United Nations, the blockages caused by the veto remain the main criticism directed at the UN.

We realise that any modification of the right to veto would have to follow the tortuous route of an amendment to the United Nations Charter. We also realise that – with or without a veto – the support of the great powers and their willingness to play an active part are essential to the success of the UN in maintaining international peace and security. Finally, we acknowledge that the use of the veto has declined considerably since the end of the Cold War. Even so, it is unfortunately still the case that the right to veto continues to be used excessively. It is not acceptable that the use of the veto – or the threat to use it – should paralyse the United Nations in cases of genocide, of crimes against humanity or in situations of serious crisis that require resolute action by the international community.

This explains the position that Switzerland advocates with regard to the veto in the ongoing debate on Security Council reform:

- Firstly, in the framework of improvements to the Security Council's working methods, Switzerland wishes to see rules put in place regarding the more selective use of the veto.

Our draft resolution proposes two rules. The first would be to ask permanent members who oppose a draft resolution to explain their motives when they make use of their right of veto. The second rule would invite the permanent members to refrain from using their veto in situations of genocide, crimes against humanity and serious and systematic violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law. To formulate this rule is simply to translate into concrete terms a central element of the „responsibility to protect“ which was adopted by the UN member States at the 2005 World Summit. It should be noted that the two rules that I have just mentioned do not affect the substance of the right of veto. Thus they would not necessitate a formal amendment to the Charter.

- Secondly, whatever model is adopted for the enlargement of the Security Council, Switzerland, like many other countries, opposes the allocation of new rights of veto, because this would complicate even further the process of decision-making within the Security Council and would pose an increased risk of paralysis.

We regret that in recent years the permanent members of the Security Council have refused to discuss or to act on the problematic aspects of the veto and have not taken seriously their responsibility to protect. This gives ammunition to all those who may think that the right of veto is not linked to a particular responsibility in the area of international peace and security but is simply a privilege that is used to defend particular interests. This contributes to a culture of inactivity in the face of certain crises, a fact which, together with others, we deplore.

Mr President,

Switzerland welcomes the fact that the Security Council reactivated the internal working group on documentation and on working methods last February. I would like to seize this opportunity to thank Japan for its exemplary commitment in its capacity as president of the working group. We note with satisfaction that specific measures have been decided. Several of these measures are a direct response to the demands set out in the S-5 draft resolution. This is a first tangible and important step in the right direction.

We expect the Security Council to continue its work and in the coming months to address a number of other unresolved issues. I would like to mention three aspects which are particularly urgent:

- The first is the use of the veto, where it is important and ultimately quite easy to establish the two rules mentioned above.
- The second is the improvement of the working of the Security Council's subsidiary organs, in particular the sanctions committees. The requirement of greater transparency and of increased participation applies not only with regard to Security Council decisionmaking but also with regard to the work of the subsidiary organs. Too often the sanctions committees require a long time – sometimes several years – to take decisions and then do not communicate them, or do not communicate them correctly, to the interested States. It is in the working of the subsidiary organs that the most serious problems regarding transparency occur, both with regard to the rules and procedures and to the decisions taken.
- The third area in which improvements need to be made rapidly is that of the procedures for establishing lists of persons and entities targeted by sanctions. It is not only necessary to improve these procedures but also to establish a satisfactory review mechanism which would enable those who claim that their name has been wrongly entered on this list to present their point of view. We hope that the reflections that are now going on in the Security Council will rapidly lead to tangible improvements.

Mr President,

We continue to believe that the best course of action would be to adopt and to implement the resolution that we have proposed. This resolution:

- is legitimate, because it expresses the expectations of a large majority of member States;
- it is pragmatic, because it asks the Security Council to consider a series of specific proposals in areas which have proved to be particularly problematic in recent years;
- it is flexible, because it establishes a framework of reform that can be en-

larged or adapted in the course of implementation, and it encourages a dialogue between the Assembly and the Council on a subject of mutual interest;

- it conforms fully to the Charter, because it respects the distribution of responsibilities between the Assembly and the Council and is based on precedents;
- it is useful, even if there is no absolute unanimity about the measures proposed, because it sends a strong political signal in favour of an improvement of the working methods of the Security Council;
- finally, it represents a first tangible step towards a more global reform of the Council. It facilitates discussion on enlargement and as such it should be supported by all countries who wish for a global reform of the Security Council.

Mr President,

To conclude, I welcome once again the fact that the Security Council, following the submission of our resolution, has decided to take specific measures to improve its working methods. Switzerland will watch closely if the Security Council is committed to implementing those measures and if other open issues, such as the use of the veto, the subsidiary bodies and fair de-listing procedures, will be addressed.

We are convinced that our draft resolution would facilitate the reform of working methods. We will continue to follow this question closely together with our partners and we keep open the option of asking the General Assembly to take action on our draft resolution.

Thank you, Mr President.

Source: 60th session of the General Assembly, Reform of the Security Council (agenda items 117 & 120), Statement by H. E. Mr. Peter Maurer, July 20, 2006, www.eda.admin.ch/newyork_miss/e/home.html

The new UN Human Rights Council was let down by the European Union

by Professor Dr. iur. et phil. Alfred de Zayas, Geneva*

The high representatives of 47 elected States committed themselves to make the new Human Rights Council more effective and, above all, to help the victims while refraining from politization and double standards.

The Human Rights Council replaces the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) that met from 1946 to spring 2006 and did much good. In the last few years, the United States and the European Union had called the commission "discredited", because some so-called "rogue states" were members of the commission. However, in these terms is not the General Assembly as well as the Security Council "discredited", particularly since rogue states participate?

And who is entitled to determine, who the rogue states are? Are Libya, Saudi Arabia, North Korea, Iran the only rogue states? Or perhaps other states, too, which trample on international law, like Russia with its massacres and bombardments in Chechnya, the United States with its wars of aggression and crimes against humanity in Guantánamo, or Israel, which has been repeatedly condemned for a consistent pattern of grave violations of human rights by the UN Human Rights Committee and the UN Committee against Torture?

If the CHR allegedly lost credibility in the last years, had the European Union states not contributed to it? I myself participated in the Commission's 2004 and 2005 sessions, when Guantánamo was on the agenda. The "good states" of the European Union then mightily politicised and brazenly applied double-standards. I remember the breathtaking cynicism of some European Union states and the shameful fact that all European Union states actually voted against the Guantánamo resolution, in order not to irritate their NATO ally and friend, the USA.

As someone, who over a period of 22 years worked with the CHR and other UN administrative bodies, I do not regard the HRC as a discredited mechanism. On the contrary. After all, it did adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, two human rights covenants and many other conventions and protocols. It brought important mechanisms into being, like the working groups against arbitrary detention, working

groups on disappeared persons, on the rights of indigenous persons, and on internally displaced persons and special Rapporteurs, on torture, on extra-judicial killings, on religious intolerance etc.

The CHR did considerable good, for which we must be grateful in the name of the victims of violations of human rights. The Human Rights Council can also bring about much good. Even if it acts politically, or perhaps just because of that.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, opened the new Human Rights Council on 19 June. What are the results that the new Human Rights Council can announce so far? When the first session came to an end on 30 June, the Human Rights Council had adopted several forward-looking resolutions and decisions, had extended the tasks of the special Rapporteurs, and discussed new rules of practice. The Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples that the CHR had been working on for eleven years was approved with amendments and passed on to the General Assembly. Also a new Convention on disappeared persons was adopted.

The Human Rights Council could not be silent in view of the situation in the Middle East. It adopted a mildly worded resolution. This resolution 2006/106, "Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories" requested from the UN special Rapporteurs to report in the following session of the Council and to keep the question on the agenda. Regarding the large number of resolutions of the General Assembly and the CHR, which have been violated by Israel over the decades, this resolution of the new Human Rights Council appeared strangely tame. To the dismay of many observers – particularly the members of NGOs – the European Union states as well as Canada, Australia and even Switzerland argued in an insincere political way and finally voted against the resolution, which was adopted with 29 votes in favour, 12 against and 5 abstentions.

Considering the decades of brutal violations of human rights against the Palestinian civilian population and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) of 9 July 2004, which until today has been totally ignored by Israel, a stronger resolution of the Human Rights Council would have been appropriate. Although the European Union states had again and again invoked the principle of consensus, they understood consensus only as a means to weaken the resolution even further in order to shield Israel. When their proposals did not convince the majority of the members of the council, because they were intellec-

tually dishonest, they abandoned any pretense of striving for consensus and voted against the resolution, just as they had done in the CHR, when they voted against the Guantánamo resolution.

The EU's inconsistency and the embarrassing insincerity of Finland's statements amongst others, were a low point of this first session and certainly did not promote of the new Human Rights Council's credibility and authority. By contrast the words of the representatives of many of the 29 states who voted in favour of the resolution, especially Argentina and Uruguay are worth noting. Why Switzerland voted against the resolution remains incomprehensible as in recent years Micheline Calmy-Rey had endorsed many valuable initiatives for the Middle East.

The following week the Human Rights Council sat for their first special session in order to debate the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. On 6 July the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution expressing, "(...) deep concern at the breaches by Israel of international humanitarian law and human rights law", and decided to dispatch a fact-finding mission to the territories occupied by Israel. The UN Special Rapporteur John Dugard, Professor at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands, should travel to Israel and Palestine. As of today, however, he has not been granted entry. This is not surprising, when we remember that Israel thwarted the UN fact-finding mission to Jenin in 2003, notwithstanding a resolution by the Security Council. In fact, Israel has been preventing UN missions for decades, and does it with impunity because any resolution condemning Israel or threatening sanctions against Israel is systematically blocked by the United States. Indeed, the United States have used their right of veto 82 times, in most cases to protect Israel from sanctions, most recently on 31 July when a great majority of the Security Council wanted to condemn Israel because of their actions in Gaza and Lebanon.

If the EU took human rights seriously, they would have supported this resolution of the new Human Rights Council. As with former resolutions they all voted "no". At least this time Switzerland did not vote against the resolution but merely abstained. The resolution was adopted with 29 votes in favour, 11 against and 5 abstentions.

Why do the EU and Switzerland have this attitude? This is difficult to explain. Outwardly they described the resolution as biased because it only condemns Israel. In my opinion, and taking all the facts and the pre-history into account, the resolution is not at all biased. It ascertains that gross violations

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of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law have been committed by Israel, including the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure, power plants, water networks and bridges; the arrest of Palestinian ministers, members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, the military attack against Palestinian ministries and any collective punishment on civilians.

One has to bear in mind that with Resolution 242 in 1967 the Security Council demanded that Israel leave all occupied territories. 39 years later Israel is still sitting on Palestinian territory, destroying houses and stealing its water resources. We should also not forget that on 9 July 2004 the highest judicial authority in the world, the International Court of Justice, ascertained a great

number of breaches of international law by Israel. Israel has arrogantly ignored the advisory opinion of the ICJ as well as the subsequently adopted resolutions of the UN General Assembly.

Would it not be time that the European states demanded that also Israel has to respect international law? And when Israel does not even respect the International Court of Justice, should the EU behave as if nothing of consequence had happened? Should Switzerland continue doing commerce with Israel, buying Israeli products, citrus fruit, dates, micro chips? Should gross violations of human rights law by Israel have no consequence? Should the EU not start considering the imposition of economic sanctions?

Switzerland is rightly proud of its direct democracy. Should the people of Switzerland not express more clearly that they abhor war and military occupation, that they demand that international law be respected, and that they refuse to become accomplices in crime by their silence? Is it morally tenable for the EU, and for Switzerland to continue doing business with rogue states?

The EU states must decide whether they are in favour of or indifferent to human rights. One can conclude that the new Human Rights Council has done a relatively good job. But it is the European Union that has abandoned its principles. Not the credibility of the Human Rights Council is at stake, but rather the credibility of the European Union and of Switzerland. •

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Statement concerning the Qana Massacre in Southern Lebanon

Thank you, Mr. President.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We meet at a moment of extreme gravity – first and foremost for the people of the Middle East, but also for the authority of this Organization, especially this Council.

As you know, during the night the Israeli airforce bombed the village of Qana, in southern Lebanon. This village is no longer in UNIFIL's area of operations. Therefore we had no UN personnel nearby at the time of the attack – though Chinese engineers and two medical teams have now managed to reach the area. They are helping to clear the rubble and giving treatment to survivors.

I am therefore relying on the Lebanese authorities for my information. Preliminary reports say that at least 54 people have been killed, among them at least 37 children.

Excellencies, we must condemn this action in the strongest possible terms, and I appeal to you to do likewise. I am deeply dismayed that my earlier calls for immediate cessation of hostilities were not heeded, with the result that innocent life continues to be taken and innocent civilians continue to suffer. I repeat that call once again from this Council chamber, and I appeal to the Council to do likewise. And I send my deepest condolences to the families of all the victims of violence – in Lebanon, in Israel, and in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Gaza.

Excellencies, this tragedy has, rightly, provoked moral outrage throughout the world.

Regrettably, some Lebanese people have turned their anger against this Organization. Earlier today a large number of protesters broke into our headquarters in Beirut and briefly set fire to it. I am glad to say the fire was quickly put out. As of now, three staff

members have been reported injured – and I am glad to say, none critically.

The demonstrators have now left the building after intervention by the Lebanese armed forces. I am deeply grateful to the government of Lebanon for this prompt action, and also to the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, Mr. Nabih Berri, and other Lebanese leaders, whose statesmanlike appeals for calm were decisive. The UN House is the hub of our humanitarian activities in Lebanon. These will continue throughout the country.

But naturally we fear similar reactions elsewhere in the region or in the wider Islamic world. I appeal to the authorities and people in all countries to respect and ensure the safety of UN personnel. I appeal to everyone to understand that we are doing our best to help – through diplomacy, through humanitarian action and by the efforts of UNIFIL, which as you know itself suffered tragic losses only a few days ago.

My dear friends,

The tragic events in Qana remind us that, ten years ago over 100 people who had taken refuge in this same village suffered a similar fate. We must deliver the region from this seemingly endless cycle of violence.

In the last 18 days, several hundred Lebanese citizens have been killed – the vast majority of them civilians, and at least a third of them children. During the same period, hundreds of thousands of Lebanese have had to flee their homes, many of them under heavy shelling.

Meanwhile over 50 Israelis have died, including 19 civilians, and the population of northern Israel has been subjected to intense and continuous rocket fire, and thousands are now in shelters.

It is important to stress that both sides in this conflict bear a heavy responsibility,

and there is strong prima facie evidence that both have committed grave breaches of international humanitarian law.

The present fighting began on 12 July with an unprovoked Hezbollah attack on Israel and the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers. Since then, Hezbollah has continued firing rockets indiscriminately into northern Israel, from positions apparently located in the midst of the civilian population.

No one disputes Israel's right to defend itself. But by its manner of doing so it has caused, and is causing, death and suffering on a wholly unacceptable scale.

As you know, I have repeatedly condemned all actions that target civilians, and the High Commissioner for Human Rights has reminded all parties that they may be held accountable for any breaches of international humanitarian law.

But, my friends, the most urgent need is to bring the fighting to a halt without further delay. For that, this Council has a solemn responsibility.

Action is needed now, before many more children, women and men become casualties of a conflict over which they have no control.

Therefore, I reiterate my call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, to allow desperately needed humanitarian relief to reach the victims. While that is happening, we can work together on the political framework needed for a lasting ceasefire and a sustainable solution: the strengthening of Lebanon's government, the disarming of all militias, and the implementation of all Security Council resolutions, including 1559 and 1680. I will work with you in the development and deployment of a stabilisation force to support the Government of Lebanon in its decision and responsibility to extend its authority throughout the country.

I know there are differences among the Council's members about the precise sequence of actions needed. I beg you to set those differences aside, and come together on the most urgent point – the immediate cessation of hostilities.

I should also share with the council that this morning in my conversation with the Prime Minister Siniora of Lebanon, he told me his government has taken a decision that they will no longer engage in further diplomatic discussions, and efforts to find a solution, without a ceasefire. And I asked him if the government as a whole took that decision and he reaffirmed that's the decision of his government.

The other information that I would like to share with you, is that UNIFIL did receive a request from the Israeli defence forces that the population of two villages, Ramyah and Aytash-Shab, that they wanted the villages to be evacuated before sunset today. Of course UNIFIL has refused to evacuate the villages indicating that they don't have the capacity and these requests have come where the assistance is required from the government of Lebanon.

This is something I thought you should know to let you understand the dynamics in the region and in the south.

Let me conclude, Mr. President, by stating very clearly and briefly that the author-

ity and standing of this Council are at stake. People have noticed its failure to act firmly and quickly during this crisis. Today's events at ESCWA were in part an expression of that frustration. For the sake of the people of the region and of this Organization, I urge you to act, and to act now.

Thank you very much. •

Source: United Nations, New York, July 30, 2006

No Resolve by Troops but Only by Politics Arms Have to be Silenced at Once!

Interview with Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic

How to resolve the current crisis in the Middle East?

A meeting has been called in Rome on Lebanon, with two goals.

The first subject for discussion will be the humanitarian problems. The number of victims, the number of displaced persons, the mass destruction, particularly in Lebanon, of all the facilities required for everyday living, have created a humanitarian situation that is becoming dramatic, and which requires a reaction from the international community. The United States has mentioned a sum of 30 million dollars to be allocated to humanitarian aid in Lebanon. France, already strongly involved in humanitarian aid, has decided to make a significant gesture. I have requested that an additional 15 million euros be allocated to humanitarian aid in Lebanon. And, as I requested, humanitarian corridors are to be created.

The second point is political. It is essential for the international community to agree on the main principles of a political arrangement, to be implemented after a ceasefire. A ceasefire is crucial. This implies that the Israeli soldiers held by Hizbullah should be freed, as should the soldier taken hostage by Hamas. But first, a ceasefire is essential. It is the prerequisite.

There are two requirements for this ceasefire. First, Israel's security, which must be ensured, and second, the actual application, on the ground, of UN resolution 1559.

It is not possible to create a stable and democratic Lebanon, as is the country's clear vocation, if part of its territory escapes government authority and is under the control of militia. This was clearly specified in resolution 1559, and it must be achieved.

All the Lebanese, who are an ancient people, an ancient civilisation, which has overcome countless hurdles throughout history, including the tendency to quarrel among

themselves, must understand that the stable, democratic State they desire cannot exist if the government cannot exercise its authority across the country's entire territory.

This implies a withdrawal of Hizbullah from South Lebanon, an agreement on the Shebaa farms, and an agreement concerning exchange of prisoners, in particular the return of Lebanese prisoners currently held in Israel. All this and then, for support, a multinational force to ensure the implementation of all these measures.

Are you calling for an immediate ceasefire?

That is what I am hoping for. Because there is no military solution to this problem. And if an illustration was necessary, the disaster that UNIFIL just experienced shows that the situation on the ground is worsening. By striking UNIFIL, where French soldiers are also serving, the peacekeeping force of the international community has been attacked. We cannot but condemn this action, which more than ever demonstrates that the fighting must cease urgently.

In this conflict, responsibility is clearly shared. One thing is certain, and that is that the method used, strikes on Gaza on the one hand and then on Lebanon, is in my view, out of proportion. Also, I can comprehend a lot of things, but I do not believe in a military solution to this type of conflict.

A ceasefire requires the conditions to be in place. That is a priority. Whether these conditions are easy to implement, that is another question. I am perfectly aware of the complexity of the situation. But if there is no military solution, a ceasefire is required. We need to discuss how it is to be implemented.

Between which parties could the political agreement you mentioned be negotiated?

This political agreement, which supposes a ceasefire, must be negotiated between the Lebanese government and Hizbullah, and between the international community, Israel and Lebanon.

Do you still feel it is inopportune to describe Hizbullah as a terrorist organisation?

It is not at a time when we want to see Hizbullah, if possible, return to within the Lebanese community and become a political party that we should raise questions of that nature.

How do you see an international force in Lebanon, and what would France's role be?

Use of a multinational force implies a number of essential conditions. The first is the acceptance of a ceasefire by all players concerned. The second is the acceptance of the very principle of an international force by the various parties. And the third is that this force should be under UN Chapter VII.

The mandate of this force should be very carefully prepared. First, there is a political objective, which is for the legal Lebanese government to recover full sovereignty over its entire territory. This is a sine qua non. There is also a military objective, which is to enable the Lebanese forces, restructured and assisted, to deploy across Lebanon and ensure the country's security.

This intervention force must have the resources and the rules of engagement suited to its mission.

The deployment zone must be consistent in size with its mission. Its mission would be to control the ceasefire and to ensure borders are respected, both the Israeli-Lebanese border and the Syrian-Lebanese border, naturally. The task would be to ensure

that the zone from which Hizbullah should in principle have withdrawn – that is the aim – has been fully demilitarised. And, finally, the mission of this force would be to ensure that no rockets, of any nature, are fired on Israel.

We also need to handle the security of the Israeli-Palestinian border.

France does not believe it is NATO's role to set up such a force. For technical reasons but also for political reasons, NATO is not designed for this type of intervention. NATO is perceived, whether we like it or not, as the armed wing of the West in these regions, and consequently, in terms of its image, NATO is not the right organisation here.

If Hizbullah refuses to disarm and Israel accepts a conflict resolution scenario, who will disarm Hizbullah? The international force, the Lebanese army?

This is one of the real underlying questions. I do not believe that an international force, in the case where no political commitment could be obtained, would have the capacity or the mandate to disarm Hizbullah. It is up to the Lebanese authorities to do so. Which implies a political agreement. Hizbullah is currently in the Lebanese government. We can very well imagine, in any case hope, that Hizbullah will draw the conclusions from its presence within the government, and become a political force. This is why there has to be some contact between the Lebanese government and Hizbullah. Hizbullah, once disarmed, is set to be a political force in Lebanon.

Can you see an international force deployed between Israel and the Palestinians?

We have always believed in the need for some form of international presence to assist security at the Israeli-Palestinian border. The mandate and framework would naturally be different.

Should and could Syria have an influence on this situation in Lebanon?

I would be tempted first of all to talk about Iran, whose position is even more important than that of Syria. There is the nuclear issue, and then there is Iran in that region, and I do not believe we should mix up these two issues. Negotiations are underway with Iran. It is regrettable that Iran has not responded earlier. I believe that Iran must comply with international rules, and from this point of view, the country must understand that an agreement that complies with the rules of the international community, in other words non-proliferation, is in everyone's interest, and in Iran's interest. We must not forget that substantial proposals have been made to Iran. They include full co-operation concerning electronuclear issues, economic co-operation and dialogue concerning security issues in the region.

I would add that these proposals were not from the „Three“ to Iran. The United States, Russia and China were associated. The entire international community was therefore involved. We indicated that if no agreement was reached, we would have to go to the Security Council and envisage more restrictive options, including sanctions. But we are not at that stage.

We were a little disappointed at Iran's failure to respond promptly. There may be some domestic policy issues that have led to this delay, I do not know, I cannot pass judgement on that point. I sincerely hope that Iran will provide a positive response to the overtures that have been made, because that means in a way that, in one way or another, – and we are no longer talking about the nuclear issue but about the region, we recognise that Iran has a legitimate right to defend its position in the region. Iran is an ancient civilisation, a major country. Its desire to have weight in the region is legitimate. We cannot pretend it does not exist. We need to be able to re-establish normal relations with Iran.

Indeed, Iran has its share of responsibility in the current conflict. Our information shows that sophisticated weapons and funding are being sent by Iran, probably via Syria, to Hizbullah. This is a problem.

But we can discuss it with Iran. I would like to remind you that when the elections took place in Lebanon, there was a period when we wondered what Hizbullah's reaction to these elections would be. Would they contest the results? At that time, we had contacts with Iran. And I have to note that Iran was quite co-operative.

Do you think that the trigger for the crisis, on July 12th, bears Iran's signature?

I do not want to accuse anyone. I feel that neither Hamas nor Hizbullah took these irresponsible initiatives simply of their own accord. That is my impression.

Concerning Syria, I believe the problem is a little different. Syria has, it has to be said, a strongly minoritarian and very particular regime, which is both judge and judged, and which reacted quite badly, after thirty years of occupation, to the obligation to withdraw its troops – 15,000 men – from Lebanon. With the political, economic and social consequences that that implied. I do not have the same feeling about Syria as I do about Iran.

What Syria can do best to protect itself and its population, particularly in terms of living standards and development, is not to seek revenge on Lebanon. That could be very dangerous for Syria.

What would France's role be in a multinational force?

I believe I have understood that the United States, failing a more effective, faster or better solution, sees only advantages, or no other solution than the intervention

of NATO, i.e. of the NATO reaction force (NRF) which would be commanded by the chief of staff of the European corps consisting of Germany, France, Belgium and Spain.

I would add that, from what we understand, the United States wishes to send this force immediately, and it would, in a way, be responsible for the application of a ceasefire.

I have given you the reasons why I believe that we first need a ceasefire, then a political commitment, and after that, a multinational force on the ground, to carry out the tasks I mentioned earlier.

I repeat, I do not think that NATO as such is the right solution. If not NATO, then what solution? Another expression of the international community, i.e. nations that agree to set up an international force of that nature. I am certain we can find a certain number of countries. Finding the lead nation capable of commanding the force is a more difficult question. Because there are not many nations that would be ready to do so.

Would France be prepared to do so?

France has always assumed its responsibilities in Lebanon. The decision will be made according to a certain number of conditions. We want a ceasefire, a political commitment, and an international force responsible for, in clearly defined conditions, applying this policy. At that point, we will consider.

We have the impression that in this affair, despite the differences, there is still considerable harmony between the US and French positions...

We want peace; there is no discussion about that. We have, together, in reality both of us, imposed resolution 1559. This is not something that occurred by magic. It is the result of joint action by the United States and France. It is a determining factor for stability in the region. From this point of view, we have had a joint approach. Perhaps we did not have exactly the same ulterior motives. I do not know. But we carried out the same action. This does not mean that we have always had the same position.

Concerning disarmament of Hizbullah, there is agreement between France, the United States and Israel, then?

There is general agreement on the need to apply resolution 1559.

Ms. Rice said that the time has come for a „new Middle East“. Do you fear that the United States will pursue its project to transform the region?

I do not want to jump to conclusions, even less so put words into their mouths. One thing is certain; we cannot change a region by force. This crisis results from a long and highly complex history. The situation is totally different from that of 1982 or 1996. Things have evolved. We have had the Iraq war, whose consequences are far from over,

which has in way moved the goalposts in this region, and has not simplified matters, to put it mildly. I find this situation increasingly worrying from all points of view.

There have been developments in the relationship between Shi'ia and Sunni Muslims, and something that worries me enormously, the hardening of relations between Islam worldwide and the West. With all that this brings with it in terms of fostering the development of terrorism.

Do you believe Iraq is in a state of civil war?

If it is not civil war, we are not far off. There is permanent confrontation, and what we feared from the beginning, a fragmentation of Iraq, which is the worst possible solution for the region, is beginning, I will not say to occur, but it is becoming a threat. Having said that, since France is not involved, we are not in a position to give lessons.

Are you in favour of an American withdrawal from Iraq?

From Iraq, definitely. The problem is that it is extremely difficult, since the presence of US troops is both necessary and a source of concern there. But I do not believe we can look to rebuild civil peace in Iraq without giving Iraqis the feeling they are truly a sovereign country. I think we need, at a date that remains to be set, to determine, in particular with the new Iraqi authorities, which we support, that there is a prospect for the departure of the foreign forces.

What means are at France's disposal to win agreement on the scenario you described for Lebanon?

I would say common sense. That does not mean that common sense always triumphs. We have clearly expressed our thoughts. We have certain traditional, historical knowl-

edge of the region. We probably benefit from a certain trust on the part of the Lebanese in the broadest sense of the term, and also from their environment, in the Arab world. And Israel cannot doubt for a moment that for us, its security is an element on which no concessions are possible. We do have certain valuable experience to build on.

How to move forward without dialogue with Syria?

There was a time when I talked with Bashar al-Assad. I used to talk with his father. To be perfectly honest with you, we no longer talk. He was the one who broke it off. And then, I realised that it was achieving nothing. That the regime embodied by Bashar al-Assad seemed to me difficult to reconcile with security and peace.

Does that mean that you are committed to a policy of regime change also?

I would be extremely wary of adding additional complexity to a situation that does not require it.

Are the two problems, that of Lebanon and that of Palestine, linked?

They are two separate questions, even though there is an overall issue. We talked about the question of Lebanon, with a reminder that the key is resolution 1559. For Palestine, the key is to re-launch discussions, with Mahmoud Abbas first of all. When he came to Paris, then Ehoud Olmert came in turn, my feeling was that the dialogue was set to begin again. Both gave the impression that they were going to talk to one another and take the road of two independent States side by side, with guaranteed security and viability. I was rather optimistic.

I wonder how far Hamas, in its provocative behaviour, was inspired from outside. I

do not know. What is certain is that the reprisal was also out of proportion, and everything has been suspended. The sole solution is to restart negotiations, which would, little by little, lead Hamas to accept the three points required of it: renounce violence, recognise Israel and accept the commitments made by the PLO. That is the solution.

What is Teheran's responsibility?

The situation in Lebanon and the nuclear question are two separate dossiers and should be treated as such. The question of the Middle East is totally different. Iran has a number of concerns. Iran wants to assert itself as a power – hence its desire to master nuclear technologies, this being a related issue – to assert itself as a power that exists, that has weight in the region.

This leads to two consequences. Firstly, Iran wants to establish normal relations with the rest of the world, in particular with the United States. Secondly, it wants to be able to give its opinion on regional questions, since it is an important regional power.

It is logical to dialogue with Iran. We will then draw the necessary conclusions. We cannot make concessions on the nuclear issue. This is why I have said that it is a separate issue that will be dealt with if necessary by the Security Council. For the rest, everything depends on Iran's attitude. I reminded you of Iran's co-operative attitude during the Lebanese elections. At that time, we saw the influence that Iran can have over Hizbullah and its willingness to listen to advice on moderation. Perhaps those ideas are out of date now, but diplomacy is also founded on memory. •

Source: www.elysee.fr, July 26, 2006

What Does Israel Want?

by Ilan Pappé

Imagine a group of high ranking generals who simulated for years Third World War scenarios in which they can move huge armies around, employ the most sophisticated weapons in their disposal and enjoy the immunity of a computerized headquarters from which they can direct their war games. Now imagine that they are informed that in fact there is no Third World War and their expertise is needed to calm down some of the nearby slums or deal with soaring crime in deprived townships and impoverished neighborhoods. And then imagine – in the final episode in my chimerical crisis – what happens when they find out how irrelevant have their plans been and how useless are their weapons in the struggle against the street violence produced by social inequality, poverty and years of discrimination in their society. They can either admit failure or decide none the less to use the massive and destructive arsenal at their disposal. We are witnessing today the havoc wreaked by Israeli generals who opted for latter course of action.

I have been teaching in the Israeli universities for 25 years. Several of my students were high ranking officers in the army. I could see their growing frustration since the outbreak of the first Intifada in 1987. They detested this kind of confrontation, called euphemistically by the gurus of the American discipline of International Relations: 'low intensity conflict'. It was too low to their taste. They were faced with stones, molotov bottles and primitive arms which required a very limited use of the huge arsenal the army has amassed throughout the years and did not test at all their ability to perform in a battlefield or a war zone. Even when the army used tanks and F-16s, it was a far cry from the war games the officers played in the Israeli Matkal – headquarters – and for which they bought, with American tax payer money – the most sophisticated and updated weaponry existing in the market.

The first Intifada was crushed, but the Palestinians continued to seek ways of ending the occupation. They rose again in 2000, inspired this time by a more religious group of national leaders and activists. But it was still a 'low intensity conflict'; no more than that. But this is not what the army expected, it was yearning for a 'real' war. As Raviv Druker and Offer Shelah, two Israeli journalists with close ties to the IDF, show in a recent book, *Boomerang* (p. 50), major military exercises before the second Intifada were based on a scenario that envisaged a full-scale war. It was predicted that in the case of another Palestinian uprising, there would be three days of 'riots' in the occupied territories that would turn into a head-on confrontation with neighboring Arab

states, especially Syria. Such a confrontation, it was argued, was needed to maintain Israel's power of deterrence and reinforce the generals confidence in their army's ability to conduct a conventional war.

The frustration was unbearable as the three days in the exercise turned into six years. And yet, the Israeli army's main vision for the battlefield is today still that of 'shock and awe' rather than chasing snipers, suicide bombers and political activists. The 'low intensity' war questions the invincibility of the army and erodes its capability to engage in a 'real' war. More important than anything else, it does not allow Israel to impose unilaterally its vision over the land of Palestine – a de-Arabized land mostly in Jewish hands. Most of the Arab regimes have been complacent and weak enough to allow the Israelis to pursue their policies, apart from Syria and Hizballah in Lebanon. They have to be neutralized if Israeli unilateralism is to succeed.

After the outbreak of the second Intifada in October 2000, some of the frustration was allowed to evaporate with the use of 1,000 kilo bombs on a Gaza house or during operation Defense Shield in 2002 when the army bulldozed the refugee camp in Jenin. But this too was a far cry from what the strongest army in the Middle East could do. And despite the demonization of the mode of resistance chosen by the Palestinians in the second Intifada – the suicide bomb – you needed only two or three F-16 and a small number of tanks to punish collectively the Palestinians by totally destroying their human, economic and social infrastructure.

I know these generals as well as one could know them. In the last week, they have had a field day. No more random use of one-kilo bombs, battleships, choppers and heavy artillery. The weak and insignificant new minister of defense, Amir Perez, accepted without hesitation the army demand for crushing the Gaza strip and grinding Lebanon to dust. But it may not be enough. It can still deteriorate into a full scale war with the hapless army of Syria and my ex-students may even push by provocative actions towards such an eventuality. And, if you believe what you read in the local press here, it may even escalate into a long distance war with Iran, backed by a supreme American umbrella.

Even the most partial reports in the Israeli press of what was proposed by the army to Ehud Olmert's government as possible operations in the coming days, indicate clearly what enthuses the Israeli generals these days. Nothing less that a total destruction of Lebanon, Syria and Tehran.

The politicians at the top are more tamed, to a point. They have only partially satisfied the army's hunger for a 'high intensity con-

flict'. But their politics of the day are already donned by military propagandists and rational. This why Zipi Livni, Israeli foreign minister, an otherwise intelligent person, could say genuinely on Israeli TV tonight (13 July 2006) that the best way to retrieve the two captured soldiers 'is to destroy totally the international airport of Beirut'. Abductors or armies that have two POWs of course immediately go and buy commercial tickets on the next flight from an international airport for the captors and the two soldiers. 'But they can sneak them with a car', insisted the interviewers. 'Oh indeed' said the Israeli Foreign Minister, 'This is why we will also destroy all the roads in Lebanon leading outside the country'. This is good news for the army, to destroy airports, set fire to petrol tanks, blow up bridges, damage roads and inflict collateral damage on a civilian population. At least the airforce can show its 'real' might and compensate for the frustrating years of the 'low intensity conflict' that had sent Israel's best and fiercest to run after boys and girls in the alleys of Nablus or Hebron. In Gaza the airforce has already dropped five such bombs, where in the last six years it dropped only one.

This may be not enough, though, for the army generals. They already say clearly on TV that 'we here in Israel should not forget Damascus and Teheran'. Past experiences tell us what they mean by this appeal against our collective amnesia.

The captive soldiers in Gaza and Lebanon have already been deleted from the public agenda here. This is about destroying the Hizballah and Hamas once and for all, not about bringing home the soldiers. In a similar way in the summer of 1982, the Israeli public have totally forgotten the victim that provided the government of Menachem Begin with the excuse of invading Lebanon. He was Shlomo Aragov, Israel's ambassador to London on whose life an attempt was made by a splinter Palestinian group. The attack on him served Ariel Sharon with the pretext of invading Lebanon and staying there for 18 years.

Alternative routes for the conflict are not even raised in Israel, not even by the Zionist left. No one mentions commonsensical ideas such as an exchange of prisoners or a commencement of a dialogue with the Hamas and other Palestinian groups at least over a long ceasefire to prepare the ground for more meaningful political negotiations in the future. This alternative way forward is already backed by all the Arab countries, but alas only by them. In Washington, Donald Ramsfeld may have lost some of his deputies in the Defense Department, but he is still the Secretary. For him, the total destruction of the Hamas and Hizballah – whatever the price and if it is without loss

of American life – will ‘vindicate’ the *raison d’être* for the Third World Theory he propagated early on in 2001. The current crisis for him is a righteous battle against a small axis of evil – away from the quagmire of Iraq and a precursor for the so far unattained goals in the ‘war against terror’ – Syria and Iran. If indeed to a certain extent the Empire was serving the proxy in Iraq, the full fledged support President Bush gave to the recent Israeli aggression in Gaza and Lebanon, shows that may be pay off time has come: now the proxy should salvage the entangled Empire.

Hizbollah wants back the piece of southern Lebanon Israel still retains. It also wishes to play a major role in Lebanese politics and shows ideological solidarity with both Iran and the Palestinian struggle in general, and the Islamist one, in particular. The three goals do not always complement each other and resulted in a very limited war effort against Israel in the last six years. The total resurrection of tourism on the Israeli side of the border with Lebanon testifies that, unlike the Israeli generals, for its own reasons the Hizbollah is very happy with a very low intensity conflict. If and when a comprehensive solution for the Palestine question will be achieved even that impulse would die out. Crossing 100 yards into Israel proper is such an action. Retaliating to such a low key operation with a total war and destruction indicates clearly that what matters is the grand design not the pretext.

There is nothing new in this. In 1948, the Palestinians opted for a very low intensity conflict when the UN imposed on them a deal which wrested from their hand half of their homeland and gave it to a community of newcomers and settlers, most of whom arrived after 1945. The Zionist leaders waited for long time for that opportunity and launched an ethnic cleansing operation that expelled half of the land’s native population, destroyed half of its villages and dragged the Arab world into unnecessary conflict with the West, whose powers were already on the way out with the demise of colonialism. The two designs are interconnected: the wider Israel’s military might expands, the easier it is to complete the unfinished business of the 1948: the total de-Arabization of Palestine.

It is not too late to stop the Israeli designs from creating a new and terrible reality on the ground. But the window of opportunity is very narrow and the world needs to take action before it is too late. •

Source: The Electronic Intifada, July 14, 2006, www.electronicintifada.net

“We condemn all violence against civilians”

by *Jews for Justice for Palestinians JfJfP, Britain*

Jews for Justice for Palestinians (JfJfP)* is appalled by the current escalation of the Middle East conflict into a state of undeclared war and the huge toll that has already been taken in civilian life. We condemn all violence against civilians, no matter by whom it is carried out. We see Palestinian, Israeli and Lebanese lives as equally precious, and we offer our deepest condolences to the bereaved Palestinian, Israeli and Lebanese families who are mourning their loved ones.

We call on all the participants to cease ratcheting up the conflict and to begin the process of bridge-building by negotiating the release of each other’s prisoners. It is hugely important that the three Israeli soldiers seized by Hamas and Hizbollah and the hundreds of Palestinian civilians, including dozens of recently elected members of the Palestinian Parliament who have been incarcerated in retaliation by Israel, are freed.

We regard Hizbollah’s recent actions against Israeli military personnel and civilians as provocative and politically destructive, and we reject tactics designed to inflame the situation. Yet nothing can justify the massive Israeli bombing of Gaza and the Lebanon, bringing great loss of life, devas-

tation of essential infrastructure and the impoverishment of tens of thousands of ordinary people. This collective punishment is neither the way to fight a war, nor the means to build a peace. It is hard to see how it can do anything other than create further bitterness, violence and instability.

We call for an immediate ceasefire by all parties, followed by negotiations to end the current crisis and lay the foundation for a lasting peace. •

Source: www.jfjfp.org

* *Jews for Justice for Palestinians (JfJfP)* is a network of Jews in Britain.

- We support the right of Israelis to live in freedom and security within Israel’s 1967 borders, but equally we oppose Israeli expansion into Palestinian land.
- We oppose Israeli policies that undermine the livelihoods, human, civil and political rights of the Palestinian people.

We work to build Jewish opposition to the Israeli occupation and extend support to Palestinians trapped in the spiral of violence and repression.

I Accuse

by *Tsilli Goldenberg*

I, Tsilli Goldenberg, Israeli citizen, accuse you – Ehud Olmert, Prime Minister of Israel, Amir Peretz, Minister of Defense, Dan Halutz Head of Staff Chief Commander of the Israeli Army, of committing this bestial barbaric slaughter in Lebanon.

I accuse you of committing Crimes against Humanity towards the Palestinian People. I accuse you of deserting our soldiers, when their lives could be saved by negotiations, and I accuse you of starting an unjustified war in my name.

Haniya, Prime-minister of the Palestinian people, was willing to negotiate with us not only the return of P.O.W Gilaad Shalit, but a long term cease fire, that would enable people of Israel and Palestine *security* and *Sanity*. You refused.

Nasrallah was willing to negotiate the return of the soldiers kidnapped in the north. You refused.

Instead you have endangered the lives of hundreds of thousands of Israelis, you have caused the death of 27 Israelis, [till now], civilians and soldiers,

You have caused the mass murder of more than 350 Lebanese, many of them children, you have caused 500,000 Lebanese to be refugees, and you continue to murder and starve Palestinian children, just because they are living on their land.

The Palestinians are not my enemies, nor are the Lebanese. You, have become my enemy. And I will fight you, and so will many other sane people around the world.

*Tsilli Goldenberg,
Masarik 11,
Jerusalem 93106 Israel*

July 23, 2006

Israel's "New Middle East"

Israel's plan is to annex southern Lebanon and establish a puppet regime in Beirut

by Professor Tanya Reinhart, Israel

Tanya Reinhart demonstrates that Israel's real aim in Lebanon is to establish the Litani River as its natural border. To realize this, it will first destroy Lebanon, then install a puppet regime and, finally, annex southern Lebanon.

Beirut is burning, hundreds of Lebanese die, hundreds of thousands lose all they ever owned and become refugees, and all the world is doing is rescuing the "foreign passport" residents of what was just two weeks ago "the Paris of the Middle East". Lebanon must die now, because "Israel has the right to defend itself", so goes the US mantra, used to block any international attempt to impose a cease fire.

Israel, backed by the US, portrays its war on Lebanon as a war of self defence. It is easy to sell this message to mainstream media, because the residents of the north of Israel are also in shelters, bombarded and endangered. Israel's claim that no country would let such an attack on its residents go unanswered finds many sympathetic ears. But let us reconstruct exactly how it all started.

On Wednesday, 12 July 2006, a Hezbollah unit attacked two armoured Jeeps of the Israeli army, patrolling along Israel's border with Lebanon. Three Israeli soldiers were killed in the attack and two were taken hostage. At a news conference held in Beirut a couple of hours later, Hezbollah's leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, explained that their aim was to reach a prisoner exchange where, in return for the two captured Israeli soldiers, Israel would return three Lebanese prisoners it had refused to release in a previous prisoner exchange. Nasrallah declared that "he did not want to drag the region into war", but added that "our current restraint is not due to weakness... if they [Israel] choose to confront us, they must be prepared for surprises." (1)

The Israeli government, however, did not give a single moment for diplomacy, negotiations or even cool reflection over the situation. In a cabinet meeting that same day, it authorized a massive offensive on Lebanon. As Ha'aretz reported, "In a sharp departure from Israel's response to previous Hezbollah attacks, the cabinet session unanimously agreed that the Lebanese government should be held responsible for yesterday's events." Olmert declared: "This morning's events are not a terror attack, but the act of a sovereign state that attacked Israel for no reason and without provocation." He added that "the Lebanese government, of which Hezbollah is a part, is trying to undermine regional stability. Leb-

anon is responsible, and Lebanon will bear the consequences of its actions." (2)

At the cabinet meeting, "the IDF [Israeli armed forces] recommended various operations aimed at the Lebanese government and strategic targets in Lebanon", as well as a comprehensive attack on southern Lebanon (where Hezbollah's batteries of rockets are concentrated). The government immediately approved both recommendations. The spirit of the cabinet's decision was succinctly summarized by Defence Minister Amir Peretz who said: "We're skipping the stage of threats and going straight to action." (3)

At 2150 that same day, Ha'aretz internet edition reported that, by that time, Israel had already bombarded bridges in central Lebanon and attacked "Hezbollah's posts" in southern Lebanon. (4) An Amnesty International press release of the next day (13 July) stated that, in these attacks, "some 40 Lebanese civilians have reportedly been killed... Among the Lebanese victims were a family of 10, including eight children, who were killed in Dweir village, near Nabatiyeh, and a family of seven, including a seven-month-old baby, who were killed in Bafay village near Tyre. More than 60 other civilians were injured in these or other attacks."

It was at that point, early on Wednesday night, following the first Israeli attack, that Hezbollah started its rocket attack on the north of Israel. Later the same night (before the dawn of Thursday), Israel launched its first attack on Beirut, when Israeli warplanes bombed Beirut's international airport and killed at least 27 Lebanese civilians in a series of raids. In response, Hezbollah's rocket attacks intensified on Thursday, when "more than 100 Katyusha rockets were fired into Israel from Lebanon in the largest attack of its sort since the start of the Lebanon war in 1982". Two Israeli civilians were killed in this attack, and 132 were taken to the hospital. (5) When Israel started destroying the Shi'i quarters of Beirut the following day, including a failed attempt on Nasrallah's life, Hezbollah extended its rockets attacks to Haifa.

The way it started, there was nothing in Hezbollah's military act, whatever one may think of it, to justify Israel's massive disproportionate response. Lebanon has had a long-standing border dispute with Israel: in 2000, when Israel, under Prime Minister Ehud Barak, withdrew from southern Lebanon, Israel kept a small piece of land known as the Shaba farms (near Mount Dov), which it claims belonged historically to Syria and not to Lebanon, though both Syria and Lebanon deny that. The Lebanese government has frequently appealed to the US and others for Israel's withdrawal also

from this land, which has remained the centre of friction in southern Lebanon, in order to ease the tension in the area and to help the Lebanese internal negotiations over implementing UN resolutions. The most recent such appeal was in mid-April 2006, in a Washington meeting between Lebanon's Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and George Bush. (6) In the six years since Israel withdrew, there have been frequent border incidents between Hezbollah and the Israeli army, and ceasefire violations of the type committed now by Hezbollah have occurred before, initiated by either side, and more frequently by Israel. None of the previous incidents resulted in Katyusha shelling of the north of Israel, which has enjoyed full calm since Israel's withdrawal. It was possible for Israel to handle this incident as all its predecessors, with at most a local retaliation, or a prisoner exchange or, even better, with an attempt to solve this border dispute once and for all. Instead, Israel opted for a global war. As Peretz put it: "The goal is for this incident to end with Hezbollah so badly beaten that not a man in it does not regret having launched this incident [sic]." (7)

The Israeli government knew right from the start that launching its offensive would expose the north of Israel to heavy Katyusha rockets attacks. This was openly discussed at this government's first meeting on Wednesday: "Hezbollah is likely to respond to the Israeli attacks with massive rocket launches at Israel, and in that case, the IDF might move ground forces into Lebanon". (8) One cannot avoid the conclusion that, for the Israeli army and government, endangering the lives of residents of northern Israel was a price worth paying in order to justify the planned ground offensive. They started preparing Israelis on that same Wednesday for what may be ahead: "We may be facing a completely different reality, in which hundreds of thousands of Israelis will, for a short time, find themselves in danger from Hezbollah's rockets," said a senior defence official. "These include residents of the centre of the country." (9) For the Israeli military leadership, not only the Lebanese and the Palestinians, but also the Israelis are just pawns in some big military vision.

The speed at which everything happened (along with many other pieces of information) indicates that Israel has been waiting for a long time for "the international conditions to ripen" for the massive war on Lebanon it has been planning. In fact, one does not need to speculate on this since, right from the start, Israeli and US official sources have been pretty open in this regard. As a senior Israeli official explained to the Wash-

ington Post on 16 July, "Hezbollah's cross-border raid has provided a 'unique moment' with a 'convergence of interests'." (10) The paper goes on to explain what this convergence of interests is:

For the United States, the broader goal is to strangle the axis of Hezbollah, Hamas, Syria and Iran, which the Bush administration believes is pooling resources to change the strategic playing field in the Middle East, US officials say. (11)

For the US, the Middle East is a "strategic playing field", where the game is establishing full US domination. The US already controls Iraq and Afghanistan, and considers Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and a few other states as friendly cooperating regimes. But even with this massive foothold, full US domination is still far from established. Iran has only been strengthened by the Iraq war and refuses to accept the decrees of the master. Throughout the Arab world, including in the "friendly regimes", there is boiling anger at the US, at the heart of which is not only the occupation of Iraq, but the brutal oppression of the Palestinians, and the US backing of Israel's policies. The new axis of the four enemies of the Bush administration (Hamas, Hezbollah, Syria and Iran) are bodies viewed by the Arab world as resisting US or Israel's rule, and standing for Arab liberation. From Bush's perspective, he only has two years to consolidate his vision of complete US control of the Middle East, and to do that, all seeds of resistance should be crushed in a devastating blow that will make it clear to every single Arab that obeying the master is the only way to stay alive. If Israel is willing to do the job and crush not only the Palestinians, but also Lebanon and Hezbollah, then the US, torn from the inside by growing resentment over Bush's wars, and perhaps unable to send new soldiers to be killed for this cause right now, will give Israel all the backing it can. As Rice announced in her visit in Jerusalem on 25 July, what is at stakes is "a new Middle East". "We will prevail," she promised Olmert.

But Israel is not sacrificing its soldiers and citizens only to please the Bush administration. The "new Middle East" has been a dream of the ruling Israeli military circles since at least 1982, when Sharon led the country to the first Lebanon war with precisely this declared goal. Hezbollah's leaders have argued for years that its real long-term role is to protect Lebanon, whose army is too weak to do this. They have said that Israel has never given up its aspirations for Lebanon and that the only reason it pulled out of southern Lebanon in 2000 is because Hezbollah's resistance has made maintaining the occupation too costly. Lebanon's people know what every Israeli old enough to remember knows: that, in the vision of Ben Gurion, Israel's founding leader, Israel's border should be "natural", that is, the Jordan River in the East, and the Litani River of Lebanon in the north. In 1967, Israel gained control over the Jordan River, in the occupied Palestinian land, but all its attempts to establish the Litani border have failed so far.

As I argued in *Israel/Palestine*, already when the Israeli army left southern Lebanon in 2000, the plans to return were ready. (12) But, in Israel's military vision, in the next round, the land should be first "cleaned" of its residents, as Israel did when it occupied the Syrian Golan Heights in 1967, and as it is doing now in southern Lebanon. To enable Israel's eventual realization of Ben Gurion's vision, it is necessary to establish a "friendly regime" in Lebanon, one that will collaborate in crushing any resistance. To do this, it is necessary first to destroy the country, as in the US model of Iraq. These were precisely Sharon's declared aims in the first Lebanon war. Israel and the US believe that now conditions have ripened enough that these aims can finally be realized.

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published in 2005 (*Seven Stories*), and her new book: *The Road Map to Nowhere*, will appear in September (Verso). •

1. Yoav Stern, "Nasrallah: Only deal will free kidnapped soldiers," *Ha'aretz* 13 July 2006.
2. Amos Harel, Aluf Benn and Gideon Alon, "Gov't okays massive strikes on Lebanon," *Ha'aretz*, 13 July 2006.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Amos Har'el, "Israel prepares for widespread military escalation," *Ha'aretz* internet edition, Last update – 21:50 12 July 2006.
5. Amos Harel, Jack Khoury and Nir Hasson, "Over 100 Katyushas hit north," *Ha'aretz* 14 July 2006.
6. "Lebanese PM to lobby President Bush on Israeli withdrawal from Shaba," by Reuters, *Ha'aretz*, 16 April 2006: "Lebanon's prime minister (is) asking US President George Bush to put pressure on Israel to pull out of a border strip and thus enable his government to extend its authority over all Lebanese land... 'Israel has to withdraw from the Shaba Farms and has to stop violating our airspace and water,' Siniora said. This was essential if the Lebanese government was to become the sole monopoly of holding weapons in the country...' he added. 'Very important as well is to seek the support of President Bush so that Lebanon will not become in any way a ball in the courtyard of others or... a courtyard for the confrontations of others in the region,' Siniora said. Lebanon's rival leaders are engaged in a 'national dialogue' aimed at resolving the country's political crisis, the worst since the end of the 1975-1990 civil war. One key issue is the disarming of Hezbollah... The Shi'i Muslim group says its weapons are still required to liberate Shaba Farms and to defend Lebanon against any Israeli threats."
7. Amos Harel, Aluf Benn and Gideon Alon, "Gov't okays massive strikes on Lebanon," *Ha'aretz*, 13 July 2006.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. Robin Wright, "Strikes are called part of broad strategy," *Washington Post*, Sunday 16 July 2006; A15.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Tanya Reinhart, *Israel-Palestine – how to end the war of 1948*, *Seven Stories* press 2002, 2005, p. 83-87. See "How Israel left Lebanon" (Media articles section, as of Thursday).

* Edited by Mark Marshall

Source: *Palestine Chronicle*, July 30, 2006

In the Gunsight: Syria

by Uri Avnery*

It is the old story about the losing gambler: he cannot stop. He continues to play, in order to win his losses back. He continues to lose and continues to gamble, until he has lost everything: his ranch, his wife, his shirt.

The same thing happens in the biggest gamble of all: war. The leaders that start a war and get stuck in the mud are compelled to fight their way ever deeper into the mud. That is a part of the very essence of war: it is impossible to stop after a failure. Public opinion demands the promised victory. Incompetent generals need to cover up their failure. Military commentators and other armchair strategists demand a massive offensive. Cynical politicians are riding the wave. The government is carried away by the flood that they themselves have let loose.

That is what happened this week, following the battle of Bint-Jbeil, which the Arabs have already started to call proudly Nasrallahgrad. All over Israel the cry goes up: Get into it! Quicker! Further! Deeper!

A day after the bloody battle, the cabinet decided on a massive mobilization of the reserves. What for? The ministers do not know. But it does not depend on them anymore, nor on the generals. The political and military leadership is tossed about on the waves of war like a boat without a rudder.

As has been said before: it is much easier to start a war than to finish one. The cabinet believes that it controls the war, but in reality it is the war that controls them. They have mounted a tiger, and can't be sure of getting off without being torn to pieces.

War has its own rules. Unexpected things happen and dictate the next moves. And the next moves tend to be in one direction: escalation.

Dan Halutz, the father of this war, thought that he could eliminate Hizbullah by means of the Air Force, the most sophisticated, most efficient and the generally most-most air force in the world. A few days of massive pounding, thousands of tons of bombs on neighborhoods, roads, electricity works and ports – and that's it.

Well, that wasn't it, as it turned out. The Hizbullah rockets continued to land in the north of Israel, hundreds a day. The public cried out. There was no way round a ground operation. First, small, elite units were put in. That did not help. Then brigades were deployed. And now whole divisions are demanded.

First they wanted to annihilate the Hizbullah positions along the border. When it was seen that that was not enough, it was decided to conquer the hills that dominate

the border. There, the Hizbullah fighters were waiting and caused heavy casualties. And the rockets continued to fly.

Now the generals are convinced that there is no alternative to occupying the whole area up to the Litani River, about 24 km from the border, in order to prevent the rockets from being launched from there. Then they will find out that they have to reach the Awali River, 40 km inside – the famous 40 km which Menachem Begin talked about in 1982.

And then? The Israeli army will be extended over a large area, and everywhere it will be exposed to guerilla attacks, of the sort Hizbullah excels in. And the missiles will continue to fly.

What next? One cannot stop. Public opinion will demand more decisive moves. Political demagogues will shout. Commentators will grumble. The people in the shelters will cry out. The generals will feel the heat. One cannot keep tens of thousands of reserve soldiers mobilized indefinitely. It is impossible to prolong a situation which paralyzes a third of the country.

Everybody will clamor to storm forwards. Where to? Towards Beirut in the North? Or towards Damascus, in the East?

The Cabinet ministers recite in unison: No! Never ever! We shall not attack Syria!

Perhaps some of them really don't intend to. They do not dream of a war with Syria. Definitely not. But the ministers only delude themselves when they believe that they control the war. The war controls them.

When it becomes clear that nothing is helping, that Hizbullah goes on fighting and the rockets continue to fly, the political and military leadership will face bankruptcy. They will need to pin the blame on somebody. On who? Well, on Assad, of course.

How is it possible that a small "terror organization", with a few thousand fighters altogether, goes on fighting? Where do they get the arms from? The finger will point towards Syria.

Even now, the army commanders assert that new rockets are flowing all the time from Syria to Hizbullah. True, the roads have been bombed, the bridges destroyed, but the arms somehow continue to arrive. The Israeli government demands that an international force be stationed not only along the Israeli-Lebanese border, but on the Lebanese-Syrian border, too. The queue of volunteers will not be long.

Then the generals will demand the bombing of roads and bridges inside Syria. For that, the Syrian Air Force will have to be neutralized. In short, a real war, with implications for the whole Middle East.

Ehud Olmert and Amir Peretz did not think about that when they decided 17 days ago in haste and light heartedly, without se-

rious debate, without examining other options, without calculating the risks, to attack Hizbullah. For politicians who do not know what war is, it was an irresistible temptation: there was a clear provocation by Hizbullah, international support was assured, what a wonderful opportunity! They would do what even Sharon did not dare.

Dan Halutz submitted an offer that could not be refused. A nice little war. Military plans were ready and well rehearsed. Certain victory. The more so, since on the other side there was no real enemy army, just a "terror organization".

How hotly the desire was burning in the hearts of Olmert and Peretz is attested by the fact that they did not even think about the lack of shelters in the Northern towns, not to mention the far-reaching economic and social implications. The main thing was to rush in and gather the laurels.

They had no time to think seriously about the war aim. Now they resemble archers who shoot their arrows at a blank sheet and then draw the rings around the arrow. The aims change daily: to destroy Hizbullah, to disarm them, to drive them out of South Lebanon, and perhaps just to "weaken" them. To kill Hassan Nasrallah. To bring the captured soldiers home. To extend the sovereignty of the Lebanese government over all of Lebanon. To establish a new-old Security Zone occupied by Israel. To deploy the Lebanese army and/or an international force along the border. To rehabilitate deterrence. To imprint into the consciousness of Hizbullah. (Our generals love imprinting into consciousnesses. That is a wonderfully safe aim, because it cannot be measured.)

The more the nice little war continues, the clearer it becomes that these changing aims are not realistic. The Lebanese ruling group does not represent anybody but a small, rich and corrupt elite. The Lebanese army cannot and will not fight Hizbullah. The new "security zone" will be exposed to guerilla attacks and the international force will not enter the area without the agreement of Hizbullah. And this guerilla force, Hizbullah, the Israeli army cannot vanquish.

That is nothing to be ashamed of. Our army is in good – or, rather, bad – company. The term "guerilla" ("small war") was coined in Spain, during the occupation of the country by Napoleon. Irregular bands of Spanish fighters attacked the occupiers and beat them. The same happened to the Russians in Afghanistan, to the French in Algeria, to the British in Palestine and a dozen other colonies, to the Americans in Vietnam, and is happening to them now in Iraq. Even assuming that Dan Halutz and Udi Adam are greater commanders than Napoleon and his marshals, they will not succeed where those failed.

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When Napoleon did not know what to do next, he invaded Russia. If we don't stop the operation, it will lead us to war with Syria.

Condoleezza Rice's stubborn struggle against any attempt to stop the war shows that this is indeed the aim of the United States. From the first day of George Bush's presidency, the neo-cons have been calling for the elimination of Syria. The deeper Bush sinks into the Iraqi quagmire, the more he needs to divert attention with another adventure.

By the way: One day before the outbreak of this war, our Minister of National Infrastructures, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, took part in the inauguration ceremony of the big pipeline that will conduct oil from the huge Caspian Sea reserves to the Turkish port of Ceyhan, just next to the Syrian border. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline avoids Russia and passes through Azerbaijan and Georgia, two countries closely aligned with Israel, like Turkey itself. There is a plan to bring a part of the oil from there along the Syrian and Lebanese coast to Ashkelon, where an existing pipeline will conduct it to Eilat, to be exported to the Far East. Israel and

Turkey are to secure the area for the United States.

Must the sliding into a war with Syria happen? Is there no alternative?

Of course there is. To stop now, at once.

When President Lyndon Johnson felt that he was sinking into the morass of Vietnam, he asked his friends for advice. One of them answered with five words: "Declare victory and get out!"

We can do that. To stop investing more and more in a losing business. To be satisfied with what we can get now. For example: an agreement that will move Hizbullah a few kilometers from the border, along which an international force and/or the Lebanese army will be deployed, and to exchange prisoners. Olmert will be able to present that as a great victory, to claim that we have got what we wanted, that we have taught the Arabs a lesson, that anyhow we had no intention of achieving more. Nasrallah will also claim a great victory, asserting that he has taught the Zionist Enemy a lesson it will not forget, that Hizbullah remains alive, strong and armed, that he has brought back the Lebanese prisoners.

True, it will not be much. But that is what can be done to cut losses, as they say in the business world.

That can happen. If Olmert is clever enough to extricate himself from the trap, before it closes entirely. (As folk wisdom says: a clever person is one that gets out of a trap that a wise one would not have got into in the first place.) And if Condoleezza gets orders from her boss to allow it.

On the 17th day of the war, we must recognize that soon we will be faced with a clear choice: to slide into a war with Syria, intentionally or unintentionally, or to get a general agreement in the North, that will necessarily involve also Hizbullah and Syria. At the center of such an agreement will be the Golan Heights.

Olmert and Peretz did not think about that in those intoxicating moments on July 12, when they jumped at the opportunity to start a nice little war. But then, were they thinking at all? •

Interview With Yonatan Shapira, an Israeli Refusenik

Interview of the american TV program Democracy Now! with Yonatan Shapira, a former captain of the Israel Defense Force and co-founder of the organization "Combatants for Peace". He refused to serve in the occupied territories.

Amy Goodman: When did you join the Israeli military?

Yonatan Shapira: Just like all the other Israeli boys, when they finish their high school. It was the year of 1991, and I finished my pilot course in the end of 1993. I served about ten years as a rescue pilot flying Bell 212 and Black Hawk helicopters.

Amy Goodman: And where did you serve?

Yonatan Shapira: Most of the mission I did were rescue and also transport of commando forces into Lebanon and into the Occupied Territories.

In the year of 2003, I initiated and found a group of Air Force pilots, including colonels and brigadier generals, all of them from all of the most respectable squadrons in the Israeli Air Force. Attack helicopter pilots, squadron commanders, F-16 pilots, F-15 pilots, all of them join me to this petition that I have here with me, and we published this letter, which called a "Pilots' Letter," in which we declared our refusal to take part in these attacks on civilians.

And since then, we were all dismissed from the Air Force, and many of us became peace activists, anti-occupation activists, and some of us formed with other soldiers, other refusers from the Israeli Army, the

group named Combatants for Peace, which is a group of Israeli former militants and Palestinian former militants who came together to the conclusion that there is no military solution to the violence and the conflict in the Middle East.

And my message here today is that if you will let the Israeli government to solve this conflict, it means the destruction of my country and the destruction of the neighbors' countries.

Juan Gonzalez: What was it that brought you to that conclusion during your time of service? What were the particular incidents or situations that you can confronted that led you to conclude that?

Yonatan Shapira: You know, it's a long process. And I give lectures here in the United States and in Europe and in Israel, sharing my process of transformation and realizing that in order to contribute to the security of my country and to the security of all the people who live in this region, I must refuse. I can talk to you about that for hours and hours. But if I have to put some particular events, it was the assassination policy that was led by Prime Minister Sharon and the same general who is now the commander of the Army, General Dan Halutz, who was the commander of the Air Force. And they started to use my friends and my fellow pilots in the F-16 pilot squadrons and Apache squadrons, in order to assassinate suspects in Gaza and in the Judean-Samaritan Occupied Territories.

And that process brought us to the situation where we finally understood that we are

just part of this circle of mutual violence, circle of revenge. And once you understand that you are part of this circle, you understand that there is no much difference between the terror that you are suffering from and the terror that you are involved in. And it's a very, very hard thing for one to understand and to go through. It involved personal crisis sometimes, and it involved with a lot of things that now connecting to each other, not just in the issues in the Middle East, but all over the world.

But now the idea is we believe that people like us who were part of the Israeli Army, who were part of the core of the Zionist enterprise and still care about their country and their people and love Israel, and I'm talking out of love to my country and my family. I'm going to be back there in a few days. I have friends that are now sitting in shelters and all this kind of stuff. I know the suffering also of my people. But we believe that it's our obligation now to shout this and to call the world: if you care about my country, if you care about the Israeli people, as well the Palestinian and the Lebanese who are now suffering, you must put massive pressure on the Israeli government, and putting pressure on the Israeli government means putting pressure on your government. [...]

Who said that by force we are going to save our country? Maybe it's some conception that you were raised upon and all those values and all those principles that we got during our education, in processing Israel. I don't believe and I think the rest of the

world, the enlightened world, do not believe that there is a solution that will come out by using force and using the Israeli military. And just think about what the Israeli government is saying now. They refuse for ceasefire. They refuse to stop the war. And missiles are falling on our families in Haifa, and at the same time, our leaders refuse to stop the war. [...]

This morning I talked to one of the leaders of Meretz, Zehava Galon, and she agreed with me that international pressure must be applied on the state of Israel, on the government of Israel, to force them to stop this crazy operation that eventually can cause to a nuclear war. We know that the situation in the Middle East is very fragile, and the Bush

administration do not need much things to happen in order to get us all involved in a regional war and maybe a world war. These are things who are much more dangerous for us from missiles in Haifa. The situation can get much worse.

And tell me, please, why do you think that killing innocent Lebanese, by now 330, most of them civilians, children and women, why do you think that killing these innocent people will bring you some kind of security? It's the same kind of logic to think that if you kill Lebanese civilians, you will force them to bring Israel security or to press the Hezbollah is the same kind of logic that maybe Nastrallah is trying to shoot Israeli cities and forcing, by that, the Israeli people

to convince the Israeli government to stop this war. It's the same kind of insanity.

And although – just last important thing – although it's not the same situation in Gaza and in the Occupied Territories and in Lebanon, the same insanity and the same cruelty and the same stupidity of our leaders is now being on the spot. This is the danger, because the leaders of this country now and in the Lieutenant General, General Halutz, who is now leading this crazy war, will not hesitate to get Syria and to get Iran involved, and this is my greatest fear. •

Source: www.democracynow.org, July 21st, 2006

Israel has Crossed a Moral Boundary

by Rabbi Michael Lerner*

In 2003 I was prevented from speaking at a large demonstration protesting the impending war in Iraq because I was deemed too pro-Zionist by one of the sponsoring organizations. My sin then, as now, is that I believe that both sides have acted with insensitivity and have been oblivious to the needs of the other, and both sides need to repent.

I still believe that now, and as late as last week was calling on the tens of thousands of readers of www.tikkun.org to insist to the Palestinians that they would be far more effective if they were to adopt the non-violent strategies of Gandhi, King, and Mandela rather than to imagine themselves capable of militarily defeating Israel. And just as I've critiqued the state terrorism against civilians that the IDF brings to the West Bank occupation, so I've always critiqued the terrorism of some sectors of the Palestinian population.

But this week it's impossible as a Jew and as an American to not notice that a new human rights violation by Israel has taken place which manages to surpass many of its previous violations in cruelty and in the outrage it has generated.

Anyone has ever faced the crippling heat of the desert-like conditions of southern Israel or the Gaza strip knows the desperation for water that comes each summer. So when Israel bombed and destroyed the electricity

system for 1.2 million Gazans and thereby made all electric pumps inoperable, they inflicted a collective punishment on the entire Gazan population.

The alleged justification was a desire to punish Palestinians for electing a Hamas government, and more immediately to retrieve a soldier who had been "kidnapped" (the quotes because this was not a civilian but a soldier in uniform, so if Israel sees itself as at war with Hamas, then the only possible description is that their soldier was captured by the other side). The Hamas government, however, has publicly urged the "kidnappers" whom it does not control to free the captured soldier.

Moreover, the outrage in Israel about this "kidnap" reflects a huge level of systematic denial going on in the consciousness of Israelis and many who support its policies—because virtually every human rights group including the various Israeli human rights organizations has chronicled tens of thousands of acts of „kidnap“ of this sort by the IDF against Palestinian civilians, who are then kept in detention for as long as six months without a trial, often facing brutal torture, and then released without ever having been charged with any crime. Of course, and I thank God for this because I care for the well being of the people of Israel, and as a Jew I am deeply tied to the success and safety of this particular Jewish society, the Palestinians have never been able to punish hundreds of thousands or millions of Israelis collectively for these systematic violations of human rights. To the extent that they do so through acts of terror, I condemn those acts.

This is a defining moment in our relationship with Israel for all Americans of whatever faith. Just as we need to make clear to our own government that its human rights violations in Guantanamo and Iraq

are unacceptable, so we need to communicate to the Israeli people that the mass punishment of a million people for the acts of a few is as unacceptable when it comes from a democratic society as when it comes from the willful oppression of entrenched authoritarian dictators. Even if, God forbid, the captured soldier is murdered by the lunatics who captured him, it is only they and their conscious sponsors who should be punished, not random Palestinians, unless you think it equally appropriate to some day punish the entire American public for the three million Vietnamese killed by American action in Vietnam or for the horrendous acts which continue in Guantanamo and Iraq even today.

Unfortunately, we can't count on our U.S. government to convey this sentiment without qualifying its concerns in ways that essentially communicate that Israel can do whatever it wants and we won't interfere.

So the onus is upon us as ordinary citizens to act and act decisively. We need to communicate our concerns to legislators and media. We need to organize demonstrations in front of the offices of our elected officials, and also outside Israeli consulates and those Jewish institutions which continue to use their influence to support Israeli policy even at this moment (there are a few which have spoken out in critique, but very very few). And we need to write to those in power in Israel, starting with Prime Minister Olmert, telling them that even those of us who love Israel and will never let it be destroyed find this particular action unconscionable, demand that Israel immediately rebuild the electricity system, and that Israel stop trying to impose its will with military might but instead sit down with the Palestinians and negotiate a lasting peace. •

Source: www.tikkun.org

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A black flag

by Gideon Levy*

A black flag hangs over the “rolling” operation in Gaza. The more the operation “rolls,” the darker the flag becomes. The “summer rains” we are showering on Gaza are not only pointless, but are first and foremost blatantly illegitimate. It is not legitimate to cut off 750,000 people from electricity. It is not legitimate to call on 20,000 people to run from their homes and turn their towns into ghost towns. It is not legitimate to penetrate Syria’s airspace. It is not legitimate to kidnap half a government and a quarter of a parliament.

A state that takes such steps is no longer distinguishable from a terror organization. The harsher the steps, the more monstrous and stupid they become, the more the moral underpinnings for them are removed and the stronger the impression that the Israeli government has lost its nerve. Now one must hope that the weekend lull, whether initiated by Egypt or the prime minister, and in any case to the dismay of Channel 2’s Roni Daniel and the IDF, will lead to a radical change.

Everything must be done to win Gilad Shalit’s release. What we are doing now in Gaza has nothing to do with freeing him. It is a widescale act of vengeance, the kind that the IDF and Shin Bet have wanted to conduct for some time, mostly motivated by the deep frustration that the army commanders feel about their impotence against the Qassams and the daring Palestinian guerrilla raid. There’s a huge gap between the army unleashing its frustration and a clever and legitimate operation to free the kidnapped soldier.

To prevent the army from running as amok as it would like, a strong and judicious political echelon is required. But facing off against the frustrated army is Ehud Olmert and Amir Peretz’s tyro regime, weak and hapless. Until the weekend lull, it appeared that each step proposed by the army and Shin Bet had been immediately approved for backing. That does not bode

well, not only for the chances of freeing Shalit, but also for the future management of the government, which is being revealed to be as weak as the Hamas government.

The only wise and restrained voice heard so far was that of the soldier’s father, Noam Shalit, of all people. That noble man called at what is clearly his most difficult hour, not for stridency and not for further damage done to the lives of soldiers and innocent Palestinians. Against the background of the IDF’s unrestrained actions and the arrogant bragging of the latest macho spokesmen, Maj. Gen. Yoav Gallant of the Southern Command and Maj. Gen. (res.) Amos Gilad, Shalit’s father’s voice stood out like a voice crying in the wilderness.

Sending tens of thousands of miserable inhabitants running from their homes, dozens of kilometers from where his son is supposedly hidden, and cutting off the electricity to hundreds of thousands of others, is certainly not what he meant in his understated emotional pleas. It’s a shame nobody is listening to him, of all people.

The legitimate basis for the IDF’s operation was stripped away the moment it began. It’s no accident that nobody mentions the day before the attack on the Kerem Shalom fort, when the IDF kidnapped two civilians, a doctor and his brother, from their home in Gaza. The difference between us and them? We kidnapped civilians and they captured a soldier, we are a state and they are a terror organization. How ridiculously pathetic Amos Gilad sounds when he says that the capture of Shalit was “illegitimate and illegal,” unlike when the IDF grabs civilians from their homes. How can a senior official in the defense ministry claim that “the head of the snake” is in Damascus, when the IDF uses the exact same methods?

True, when the IDF and Shin Bet grab civilians from their homes – and they do so often – it is not to murder them later. But sometimes they are killed on the doorsteps of their homes, although it is not necessary,

and sometimes they are grabbed to serve as “bargaining chips,” like in Lebanon and now, with the Palestinian legislators. What an uproar there would be if the Palestinians had grabbed half the members of the Israeli government. How would we label them?

Collective punishment is illegitimate and it does not have a smidgeon of intelligence. Where will the inhabitants of Beit Hanun run? With typical hardheartedness the military reporters say they were not “expelled” but that it was “recommended” they leave, for the benefit, of course, of those running for their lives. And what will this inhumane step lead to? Support for the Israeli government? Their enlistment as informants and collaborators for the Shin Bet? Can the miserable farmers of Beit Hanun and Beit Lahia do anything about the Qassam rocket-launching cells? Will bombing an already destroyed airport do anything to free the soldier or was it just to decorate the headlines?

Did anyone think about what would have happened if Syrian planes had managed to down one of the Israeli planes that brazenly buzzed their president’s palace? Would we have declared war on Syria? Another “legitimate war”? Will the blackout of Gaza bring down the Hamas government or cause the population to rally around it? And even if the Hamas government falls, as Washington wants, what will happen on the day after? These are questions for which nobody has any real answers. As usual here: Quiet, we’re shooting. But this time we are not only shooting. We are bombing and shelling, darkening and destroying, imposing a siege and kidnapping like the worst of terrorists and nobody breaks the silence to ask, what the hell for, and according to what right?

Source: www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/733427.html

* Gideon Levy writes for the Israeli daily newspaper Ha’aretz.

Lebanon as a new target – The Neocons Policy of “Constructive Chaos”

by Thierry Meyssan, Journalist and writer, president of the *Voltaire Network*

Some in Washington and Tel Aviv, are rejoicing about the military operations taking place in the Middle East.

Following the expression of Condoleezza Rice, the pains of Lebanon would be “the birth pangs of a new Middle East”. For the theoreticians of a “constructive chaos”, blood must be shed in order to bring about a new order in that region rich in hydrocarbons. Planned since a long time, the

Tsahal offensive against Lebanon is supervised out of the United States Defense Department.

During her press briefing at the State Department, on July 21st 2006, Condoleezza Rice was questioned on the initiatives she intended to take to bring peace back to Lebanon. “I have no interest in diplomacy for the sake of returning Lebanon and Israel to the status quo ante”, she responded. “I think

it would be a mistake. What we’re seeing here, in a sense, is the growing — the birth pangs of a new Middle East and whatever we do we have to be certain that we’re pushing forward to the new Middle East not going back to the old one.” [1]

Seen from Washington, what is happening today in Lebanon has no relation whatsoever with the recovering of soldiers captured by the Hezbollah. What is at stake is

the carrying out of the long nurtured theory of “constructive chaos”. According to the adepts of philosopher Leo Strauss, whose media branch is better known under the name of “neo-conservatives”, real power cannot be exerted from if one remains in the status quo, but only, quite the contrary, in the act of destroying all forms of resistance. It is by plunging the masses into chaos that the elites can aspire to ensure the stability of their position.

Leo Strauss

Also, according to the adepts of Leo Strauss, it is only in this violence that the imperial interests of the United States [can] merge with those of the Jewish State.

The Israeli will to dismantle Lebanon, to create in its place a mini-Christian state and annex part of its territory, is not new. It was enunciated in 1957 by David Ben Gourion in a famous letter published as an annex to his posthumous memoirs. [2] Particularly, it was inserted into a vast colonization project of the Middle East written in 1996 under the title: A clean break: a new strategy to secure the Kingdom (of Israel) [3] That document, written up in a neo conservative think tank, the IASPS, was prepared by a group of experts assembled by Richard Perle [and] given to Benjamin Netanyahu. It is representative of the thinking of the revisionist Zionism of Vladimir Jabotinsky [4]. It called for:

- the canceling of the Oslo peace agreements
 - the elimination of Yasser Arafat
 - the annexation of the Palestinian territories,
 - the overthrow of Saddam Hussein to destabilize, Syria and Lebanon in a chain of events
 - the dismantling of Iraq and the creation of a Palestinian state in its territory
 - the utilization of Israel as a complementary base for the US Star Wars program
- That document inspired the speech given the next day by Benjamin Netanyahu to the US Congress. [5] All ingredients of the present situation are included there: threats against Iran, Syria and the Hezbollah, with the included demand for annexation of East Jerusalem.

That viewpoint concurs with that of the United States administration. The control of areas rich in hydrocarbons defined by Zginiew Brzezinski and Bernard Lewis as the “arc of crisis”, ie. the arc reaching from the Gulf of Guinea to the Caspian sea going through the Persian Gulf, demands a redefinition of borders, States and political regimes: a “remodeling of the Greater Middle East,” to use the _expression of George W. Bush.

That is the new Middle East which Miss Rice claims to be the mid-wife of, and whose painful birth she is watching.

The idea is simple: substitute to the States inherited by the collapse of the Ottoman empire, smaller entities of mono-ethnic

character, and neutralize those mini-states by setting up them permanently against each other. In other terms, the idea is to reconsider the secret agreements concluded in 1916 by the French and British empires, the Sykes-Picot agreements [6] and to establish rather a total domination of the Anglo-Saxons over the region. But in order to define new states, the existing ones must first be destroyed. That is what the Bush Administration and its allies have been doing since 5 years with the enthusiasm of a sorcerers apprentices. Judge the results:

- Occupied Palestine’s territory has been reduced by 7%; the Gaza strip and the West Bank have been separated by a wall; the Palestinian authority has been ruined, its ministers and parliamentarians kidnapped and imprisoned.
- The UN has ordered Lebanon to disarm, expel the Syrian forces and dissolve the Hezbollah; former Prime minister Rafic Hariri was murdered and French influence disappeared with him; the economic infrastructures of the country have been razed and more than 500 000 added refugees roam in the region.
- The Saddam Hussein dictatorship was replaced in Iraq by a still more cruel regime responsible for more than 3000 dead per month; in total anarchy, the country is on the verge of fragmenting into three distinct entities.
- The Taliban pseudo-emirate has given way to a pseudo-democracy ruled under the most obscurantist interpretation of the Charia, with an added feature, the poppy culture. De facto, Afghanistan is already divided among the different war lords and combat is generalizing. The central government has renounced to being obeyed even in the capital city.

In Washington, the disciples of Leo Strauss, more and more impatient, dream of extending their chaos to Sudan, to Syria and Iran. In this transition period, one no longer speaks of “market democracy”, but only of blood and tears.

Jacques Chirac who wished to intervene in Lebanon to defend French interests and sent there his Prime minister, Dominique de Villepin, had to renounce: during the G8 summit in St. Petersburg, George W. Bush forbade him from doing so stating that this was not an Israeli operation approved by the United States, but a United States operation being executed by Israel. Thus, M. de Villepin had nothing to declare to his interlocutors in Beyrut, only his words and his impotence.

More precisely, the project for destroying Lebanon was presented by Tsahal to the Bush administration a little more than a year ago, as the San Francisco Chronicle reported it. [7] It was at the center of political discussions at the yearly World Forum organized by the American Enterprise Institute, on June 2006 17th ad 18th at Beaver Creek. Benjamin Netanyahu and Dick Cheney met

at length along with Richard Perle and Nathaniel Sharansky. The green light by the White House was given a few days after.

Tsahal’s military operations are supervised by the United States Department of Defense who determines the essentials of the strategy and the choice of targets. The main role is played by general Bantz Craddock as commander in chief of the Southern Command. As he showed during the Desert Storm operation and, particularly, when he lead NATO land forces in Kosovo, Craddock is a specialist of armored vehicles. He is a trusted man of Donald Rumsfeld of whom he was the personal chief of staff, and for whom he developed the Guantanamo camp. Next November, he should be named commander of the European Command and of NATO. In that position, he could be called to command, beyond those forces already operating in Afghanistan and Soudan, the interposition force which NATO could deploy in Southern Lebanon.

The Israeli and United States generals have learned to know each other, since some thirty years, thanks to the exchanges organized by the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA) an association which obliges its cadre to follow the seminars on the doctrines of Leo Strauss. ●

¹ Source: Special Briefing on Travel to the Middle East and Europe, State Department, July 21st 2006.

² “Lettre de David Ben Gourion à Moshe Sharett sur la constitution d’un État maronite au Liban”, document is available in french in the electronic library of the Réseau Voltaire.

³ A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm, IASPS, July 8th 1996. An abridged version is available on the website of IASPS. The complete content of the document is known through the reports made by the Guardian at that time.

⁴ The father of Benjamin Netanyahu, Ben-Zion Netanyahu was the personal secretary of Vladimir Jabotinsky, the founder of revisionist Zionism. Ehud Olmert belongs to that same current..

⁵ “Speech to the Congress of the United States” by Benjamin Netanyahu, July 9th, 1996.

⁶ That secret treaty was signed on May 16th 1916 by Sir Mark Sykes and François Georges-Picot, for the United Kingdom and France, then approved by Russia and Italy.

⁷ “Israel set war plan more than a year ago. Strategy was put in motion as Hezbollah began gaining military strength in Lebanon” par Matthew Kallman, San Francisco Chronicle, July 21st 2006.

The War on Lebanon and the Battle for Oil

by Michel Chossudovsky*

Is there a relationship between the bombing of Lebanon and the inauguration of the World's largest strategic pipeline, which will channel more than a million barrels of oil a day to Western markets?

Virtually unnoticed, the inauguration of the Ceyhan-Tblisi-Baku (BTC) oil pipeline, which links the Caspian sea to the Eastern Mediterranean, took place on the 13th of July, at the very outset of the Israeli sponsored bombings of Lebanon.

One day before the Israeli air strikes, the main partners and shareholders of the BTC pipeline project, including several heads of State and oil company executives were in attendance at the port of Ceyhan. They were then rushed off for an inauguration reception in Istanbul, hosted by Turkey's President Ahmet Necdet Sezer in the plush surroundings of the Çýrađan Palace.

Also in attendance was British Petroleum's (BP) CEO, Lord Browne together with senior government officials from Britain, the US and Israel. BP leads the BTC pipeline consortium. Other major Western shareholders include Chevron, Conoco-Phillips, France's Total and Italy's ENI.

Israel's Minister of Energy and Infrastructure Binyamin Ben-Eliezer was present at the venue together with a delegation of top Israeli oil officials.

The BTC pipeline totally bypasses the territory of the Russian Federation. It transits through the former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan and Georgia, both of which have become US "protectorates", firmly integrated into a military alliance with the US and NATO. Moreover, both Azerbaijan and Georgia have longstanding military cooperation agreements with Israel.

Israel has a stake in the Azeri oil fields, from which it imports some twenty percent of its oil. The opening of the pipeline will substantially enhance Israeli oil imports from the Caspian sea basin.

But there is another dimension which directly relates to the war on Lebanon. Whereas Russia has been weakened, Israel is slated to play a major strategic role in "protecting" the Eastern Mediterranean transport and pipeline corridors out of Ceyhan.

Militarization of the Eastern Mediterranean

The bombing of Lebanon is part of a carefully planned and coordinated military road map. The extension of the war into Syria and Iran has already been contemplated by US and Israeli military planners. This broader military agenda is intimately related to strategic oil and oil pipelines. It is supported by the Western oil giants which control the pipeline corridors. In the context of the war on Lebanon, it seeks Israeli territorial control over the East Mediterranean coastline.

In this context, the BTC pipeline dominated by British Petroleum, has dramatically changed the geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean, which is now linked, through an energy corridor, to the Caspian sea basin:

"[The BTC pipeline] considerably changes the status of the region's countries and cements a new pro-West alliance. Having taken the pipeline to the Mediterranean, Washington has practically set up a new bloc with Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and Israel," (*Komerzant*, Moscow, 14 July 2006)

Israel is now part of the Anglo-American military axis, which serves the interests of the Western oil giants in the Middle East and Central Asia.

While the official reports state that the BTC pipeline will "channel oil to Western markets", what is rarely acknowledged is that part of the oil from the Caspian sea would be directly channeled towards Israel. In this regard, an underwater Israeli-Turkish pipeline project has been envisaged which would link Ceyhan to the Israeli port of Ashkelon and from there through Israel's main pipeline system, to the Red Sea.

The objective of Israel is not only to acquire Caspian sea oil for its own consumption needs but also to play a key role in re-exporting Caspian sea oil back to the Asian markets through the Red Sea port of Eilat. The strategic implications of this re-routing of Caspian sea oil are farreaching.

What is envisaged is to link the BTC pipeline to the Trans-Israel Eilat-Ashkelon pipeline, also known as Israel's Tipline, from Ceyhan to the Israeli port of Ashkelon. In April 2006, Israel and Turkey announced plans for four underwater pipelines, which would bypass Syrian and Lebanese territory.

"Turkey and Israel are negotiating the construction of a multi-million-dollar energy and water project that will transport water, electricity, natural gas and oil by pipelines to Israel, with the oil to be sent onward from Israel to the Far East,

The new Turkish-Israeli proposal under discussion would see the transfer of water, electricity, natural gas and oil to Israel via four underwater pipelines." (<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1145961328841&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>)

"Baku oil can be transported to Ashkelon via this new pipeline and to India and the Far East. [via the Red sea]"

"Ceyhan and the Mediterranean port of Ashkelon are situated only 400 km apart. Oil can be transported to the city in tankers or via specially constructed under-water pipeline. From Ashkelon the oil can be pumped through already existing pipeline to the port of Eilat at the Red Sea; and from

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there it can be transported to India and other Asian countries in tankers." (regnum)

Water for Israel

Also involved in this project is a pipeline to bring water to Israel, pumping water from upstream resources of the Tigris and Euphrates river system in Anatolia. This has been a long-run strategic objective of Israel to the detriment of Syria and Iraq. Israel's agenda with regard to water is supported by the military cooperation agreement between Tel Aviv and Ankara.

The Strategic Re-routing of Central Asian Oil

Diverting Central Asian oil and gas to the Eastern Mediterranean (under Israeli military protection), for re-export back to Asia, serves to undermine the inter-Asian energy market, which is based on the development of direct pipeline corridors linking Central Asia and Russia to South Asia, China and the Far East.

Ultimately, this design is intended to weaken Russia's role in Central Asia and cut off China from Central Asian oil resources. It is also intended to isolate Iran. Meanwhile, Israel has emerged as a new powerful player in the global energy market.

Russia's Military Presence in the Middle East

Meanwhile, Moscow has responded to the US-Israeli-Turkish design to militarize the East Mediterranean coastline with plans to establish a Russian naval base in the Syrian port of Tartus:

"Defense Ministry sources point out that a naval base in Tartus will enable Russia to solidify its positions in the Middle East and ensure security of Syria. Moscow intends to deploy an air defense system around the base - to provide air cover for the base itself and a substantial part of Syrian territory. (S-300PMU-2 Favorit systems will not be turned over to the Syrians. They will be manned and serviced by Russian personnel.)" (*Kommerzant*, June 2, 2006, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=viewArticle&code=IVA20060728&articleId=2847>)

Tartus is strategically located within 30 km. of the Lebanese border.

Moreover, Moscow and Damascus have reached an agreement on the modernization of Syria's air defenses as well as a program in support to its ground forces, the modernization of its MIG-29 fighters as well as its submarines. (*Kommerzant*, June 2, 2006). In the context of an escalating conflict, these developments have far-reaching implications.

War and Oil Pipelines

Prior to the bombing of Lebanon, Israel and Turkey had announced the underwater pipeline routes, which bypassed Syria and Lebanon. These underwater pipeline routes do not overtly encroach on the territorial sovereignty of Lebanon and Syria.

On the other hand, the development of alternative land based corridors (for oil and water) through Lebanon and Syria would require Israeli-Turkish territorial control over

the Eastern Mediterranean coastline through Lebanon and Syria.

The implementation of a land-based corridor, as opposed to the underwater pipeline project, would require the militarisation of the East Mediterranean coastline, extending from the port of Ceyhan across Syria and Lebanon to the Lebanese-Israeli border.

Is this not one of the hidden objectives of the war on Lebanon? Open up a space which enables Israel to control a vast territory extending from the Lebanese border through Syria to Turkey.

"The Long War"

Israeli Prime minister Ehud Olmert has stated that the Israeli offensive against Lebanon would "last a very long time". Meanwhile, the US has speeded up weapons shipments to Israel.

There are strategic objectives underlying the "Long War" which are tied to oil and oil pipelines.

The air campaign against Lebanon is inextricably related to US-Israeli strategic objectives in the broader Middle East including Syria and Iran. In recent developments, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated that the main purpose of her mission to the Middle East was not to push for a ceasefire in Lebanon, but rather to isolate Syria and Iran. (*Daily Telegraph*, 22 July 2006)

At this particular juncture, the replenishing of Israeli stockpiles of US produced WMDs points to an escalation of the war both within and beyond the borders of Lebanon. •

Source: *www.globalresearch.ca*, July 26, 2006
(Revised, 28 July 2006)

Israel, Iran and the US: Who Will be Blamed for Nuclear War?

by Professor Jorge Hirsch

The war on Lebanon may well escalate to the point where the US will use nuclear weapons against Iran, in what would be the first use of nuclear weapons in war since Nagasaki. And the world may well blame the Jewish State.

Israel's bombing campaign which is causing immense suffering, is in blatant violation of the Geneva conventions, and deserves the strongest of condemnations. It is especially important for the Jewish community today to distance itself from Israel's immoral government policies and US's support for them. Many Jews are doing this, unfortunately, many are not. "Thousands of American Jews clogged the streets" in New York and elsewhere in the US in support of Israel's actions, reports the *Jerusalem Post*. Both Houses of the US Congress have just passed solidly backed bipartisan resolutions supporting Israel's actions in Lebanon, to "solidify long-term backing of Jewish voters" according to the *Washington Post*.

The irony is, Israel's war crimes are going to be dwarfed in comparison to the crime against humanity that would take place if the US uses nuclear weapons against Iran. Israel, by its disproportionate reaction and by accusing Iran (without proof) of being behind Hezbollah's actions, will be seen as having played a key role if the conflict escalates to engulf Iran and the United States. Yet the motivation for those that want this to happen is not to ensure Israel's hegemony in the Middle East, rather it is to ensure US hegemony in the world.

Israel's Interests

It goes without saying that Israel would benefit from the destruction of Hezbollah. Yet it is hard to see how the indiscriminate attack against Lebanon that is taking place will achieve anything other than strengthening the already strong support for Hezbollah in Lebanon and elsewhere in the Arab world. Shmuel Rosner argues in a *Haaretz* OpEd that Israel is "America's deadly messenger", being used to promote Bush's "democracy agenda". It certainly appears that Israel's current actions are irrational and self-destructive. Unless their real aim is to draw Syria and Iran into the conflict, following directions from Washington. At the very least it is clear that Israel would not be doing this in the absence of a guarantee from the US that it will intervene if the conflict widens, which in any event Bush has already publicly announced.

If Iran enters the conflict and shoots a single missile against Israel, the US will step in and destroy the military infrastructure of Iran by aerial bombardment. As suggested by Seymour Hersh and others, this is likely to involve the US use of nuclear "bunker busters".

It has been predicted that if the US or Israel attack Iran, Iran will unleash Hezbollah who will carry out devastating attacks against Israel. "Hezbollah was also seen as a means of tying our hands on the Iranian nuclear threat," says an Israeli official. Well, we are in the dress rehearsal, and we are seeing that despite all the hype, Hezbollah is a paper tiger. Green light for the Iran attack.

Iran's Interests

What is really unusual about the current flare-up in the Middle East is the barrage of strident denunciations against Iran, from the Bush administration, politicians from across the political spectrum, and the mainstream media, that uniformly accuse Iran (without presenting evidence) of being behind the Hezbollah actions. This has never happened before when there was conflict in Lebanon where Hezbollah was involved, why now?

One argument is Ahmadinejad's stated animosity against Israel. However, that has been Iran's stated position since 1979.

The other argument is that Iran is trying to "divert attention" from the nuclear issue. That defies the most elementary logic. If Iran was really intent in getting nuclear weapons and destroying Israel, it would try to keep things as quiet as possible until it gets those nuclear weapons, several years into the future.

The reality is that, whether one ascribes to Iran evil or benign intentions, Iran draws no benefit whatsoever from the current turmoil in Lebanon. Neither does Syria. Consequently the rhetoric from the US and Israel suggests a deliberate attempt to draw Syria and Iran into the conflict.

US Interests

A US attack on Iran has been predicted by analysts for several years. The US policy vis-a-vis Iran is clearly directed towards confrontation rather than accommodation. There are many reasons for the US to at-

tack Iran, including the control of energy resources, suppression of a regional power opposite to US and Israeli interests, etc. However I have argued for many months that the key reason for the US to seek a military confrontation with Iran is that it will “force” the US to cross the nuclear threshold and use low yield nuclear weapons against Iranian installations. And this is seen as essential to further US geopolitical goals.

The United States used nuclear weapons against Japan not because it had to. It did so to demonstrate to the world that it was in possession of a new weapon that packed the destructive power of thousands of bombing missions into a single one. To tell the rest of the world, beware.

Since then, it has spent over 5 trillion dollars in building up its nuclear arsenal, but nuclear weapons have become “unusable” after 60 years of non-use. America has achieved nuclear primacy but it is useless, until it shows that nuclear weapons are usable again.

Low yield B61-11 nuclear bunker busters have already been deployed, just in case “surprising military developments” give rise to “military necessity”. Once Iran is drawn into a conflict and shoots a single missile against Israel or US forces in the region, the US administration will argue that the next Iranian missile could carry chemical or biological warheads and cause untold casualties among Americans, Iraqis or Israelis. A low yield nuclear bunker buster will be touted as the most “humane” way to prevent further loss of life.

What could happen

In 1941, a vast military effort was started by the United States to create nuclear weapons, culminating in the Trinity test and subsequent bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The effort was shrouded in secrecy and any moral qualms were set aside. When it succeeded, it was argued that many American and Japanese lives had been saved by nuking Japan into surrender.

Any speculation during the period 1941-1945 that the United States had 100,000 people devoted to create a secret weapon

million-fold more powerful than any known weapon would have been dismissed as the ultimate “conspiracy theory”.

Similarly, much evidence indicates that a deliberate project, shrouded in secrecy, exists today that will culminate in the nuking of Iran, to “save lives”. Many are privy to parts of the plan, as Seymour Hersh revealed, only a few know the plan in its entirety. Low-yield nuclear bunker busters would be used, untested but as reliable as the untested “Little Boy” that leveled Hiroshima. Americans will buy the “military necessity” argument because it will be true: American troops in Iraq will be sitting ducks facing Iranian missiles, with or without WMD warheads.

After the US uses nuclear weapons again, it will have established the usability of its nuclear arsenal against non-nuclear countries. It will be possible to wage war “on the cheap”, saving many American lives in future conflicts. “Support the troops” is the one thing all Americans, no matter how diverse their views are, agree on.

It should not be allowed to happen. The President has sole authority to order the use of nuclear weapons against Iran. We know from previous actions of this administration what Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld are capable of. There have been radical changes in US nuclear weapons policies and in preemption “doctrine”, and the Bush announcement that the nuclear option is “on the table”. In response, there needs to be a strong groundswell call to restrict the absolute presidential authority of this President to order the use of nuclear weapons against Iran. By the general public, by “antinuclear” organizations, by scientific, political and professional organizations. To push Congress into action before it is too late. Without a “nuclear option”, the US will be more interested in negotiation than in confrontation with Iran.

Cui Bono?

In the short term, Israel certainly will benefit from the destruction of Iran’s military capabilities.

But Israel will not enjoy peace as a result, because the nuking of Iran will create enormous animosity against Israel in

the Muslim world and beyond. To the extent that the world buys the US fable that the nuking of Iran was required by “military necessity” and not premeditated, Israel (and Jews worldwide) will bear a heavier than deserved brunt for having contributed to “precipitate” these events.

The US will reap enormous benefits. Flexing its nuclear muscle, it will establish its absolute hegemony in the Middle East and Central Asia and beyond, and gradually squeeze China and Russia into nuclear disarmament and complete submission.

In the end of course we will all lose. Because the nuclear genie, unleashed from its bottle in the war against Iran, will never retreat. And just like the US could develop nuclear weapons in only 4 years with completely new technology 60 years ago, many more countries and groups will be highly motivated to do it in the coming years.

Think about the current disproportionate response of Israel, applied in a conflict where the contenders have nuclear weapons. 10 to 1 retaliation, starting with a mere 600 casualties, wipes out the entire Earth’s population in eight easy steps. Who will be willing to stop the escalation? The country that lost 60,000 citizens in the last hit? The one that lost 600,000? 6 million?

As the nuclear holocaust unfolds, some will remember the Lebanon conflict and subsequent Iran war and blame it on Israel. Others will properly blame Americans, for having allowed their Executive to erase the 60-year old taboo against the use of nuclear weapons, first in doctrine and then in practice, despite having the most powerful conventional military force in the world. Others of course will blame “Muslim extremism”.

And then the blaming will wither away as a three-billion-year old experiment, life on planet Earth, comes to an end. •

Source: www.globalresearch.ca/PrintArticle.php?articleId=2807 (with lots of links), July 24, 2006

US to Supply Food with One Hand, Arms with Other

by Thalif Deen

As Israel's bombing of Lebanon continues unabated into its fourth consecutive week, the United States says it stands ready to provide food, medicine and humanitarian assistance to the thousands of internally displaced Lebanese caught in the crossfire.

But Washington has also decided to accelerate the supply of lethal weapons to Israel – “perhaps intended to kill the very Lebanese the United States is planning to feed and shelter,” says one Arab diplomat at the United Nations.

“It is U.S. hypocrisy at its worst,” he told Inter Press Service (IPS), speaking on condition of anonymity, because his country receives millions of dollars in U.S. economic aid.

“The right hand obviously does not know what its left hand is up to. Or does it?” he asked.

Irene Khan, secretary-general of the London-based Amnesty International (AI), is equally harsh in her reaction. “It is ridiculous to talk about providing humanitarian aid on the one hand, and to provide arms on the other,” she says.

In the face of such human suffering in Lebanon and Israel, Khan says, “It is imperative that all governments stop the supply of arms and weapons to both sides immediately.”

Asked if there is a contradiction between the two, U.S. President George W. Bush told reporters last week: “No. I don’t see a contradiction in us honouring commitments made prior to Hezbollah attacks into Israeli territory.”

Bush also made an obvious slip when he said: “I am concerned about loss of innocent life, and we will do everything we can to help move equipment... I mean, food and medicines, to help the people who have been displaced and the people who suffer.”

In a statement released last week, AI quoted British press reports relating to two chartered Airbus A310 cargo planes filled with GBU 28 laser-guided bombs containing depleted uranium (DU) warheads and destined for the Israeli airforce landing at Prestwick airport, near Glasgow. The planes landed for refuelling and crew-rests after flying from the United States.

“Other reports claimed that the USA has requested that two more planes be permitted to land in the UK en route to Israel in the next two weeks. The reports said the aircraft will be carrying other weapons, including bombs and missiles,” AI said.

“The UK government should refuse permission for its sea and air ports to be used by planes or ships carrying arms and mili-

tary equipment destined for Israel or Hezbollah,” said Khan.

Amnesty International has also written to British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett urging the government to suspend its own sale or transfer of all arms and military equipment to Israel.

Beckett was quoted as saying: “We have already let the United States know that this is an issue that appears to be seriously at fault, and we will be making a formal protest if it appears that that is what has happened.”

Meanwhile, the New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) has accused the Israelis of using artillery-fired cluster munitions in populated areas of Lebanon.

“Cluster munitions are unacceptably inaccurate and unreliable weapons when used around civilians,” Kenneth Roth, executive director of HRW warned. “They should never be used in populated areas.”

Armed mostly with state-of-the-art U.S.-supplied fighter planes and combat helicopters, the Israeli military is capable of matching a combination of all or most of the armies in Middle Eastern countries, including Iran, Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

The annual survey of U.S. arms sales, conducted by the U.S. Congressional Research Service (CRS), shows a total of 8.4 billion dollars of arms deliveries to Israel in the 1997-2004 period, with fully 7.1 billion dollars or 84.5 percent coming from a single source: the United States.

A major factor in this trend was the rise in U.S. Foreign Military Financing – outright U.S. grants to Israel – which now totals about 2.3 billion dollars a year paid for by U.S. tax payers.

Meanwhile, AI’s Khan said the pattern of attacks and the extent of civilian casualties show a blatant disregard of international humanitarian law by Israel and Hezbollah.

She also said that “direct targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure and launching indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks amount to war crimes.”

Francis A. Boyle, professor of international law at the University of Illinois College of Law, says that the 192-member UN General Assembly must immediately establish an International Criminal Tribunal for Israel (ICTI) as a “subsidiary organ” under UN Charter Article 22.

The ICTI would be organised along the lines of the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY), which was established by the Security Council in 1993.

“The purpose of the ICTI would be to investigate and prosecute Israeli war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide

against the peoples of Lebanon and Palestine – just as the ICTY did for the victims of international crimes committed by Serbia and the Milosevic regime throughout the Balkans,” Boyle told IPS.

Furthermore, the establishment of ICTI by the General Assembly would serve as a deterrent effect upon Israeli leaders, including the prime minister, defence minister, the chief of staff and Israel’s other top generals that they will be prosecuted for their further infliction of international crimes upon the Lebanese and the Palestinians, said Boyle, author of *Biowarfare and Terrorism* (Clarity Press: 2005) and *Destroying World Order* (Clarity Press: 2004).

Without such a deterrent, he said, Israel might be emboldened to attack Syria with the full support of the U.S. right-wing neo-conservatives, who have always viewed Syria as “low-hanging fruit” ready to be taken out by means of their joint aggression.

The Israeli press has reported that the Bush administration is encouraging Israel to attack Syria. If Israel attacks Syria as it did when it invaded Lebanon in 1982, Iran has vowed to come to Syria’s defense.

“This scenario could readily degenerate into World War III,” warned Boyle. “For the UN General Assembly to establish ICTI could stop the further development of this momentum towards a regional if not global catastrophe.”

Source: www.antiwar.com, Aug 3, 2006

Chemical Weapons used against Lebanese Civilians

by Wayne Madsen

U.S. military intelligence sources have told Wayne Madsen Report (WMR) that the artillery shell shown below being used by an Israel Defense Force member in Lebanon, is a type of dual and multi-use weapon the neocons falsely accused Saddam Hussein of possessing. Although the canister artillery shell is marketed as an anti-land mine fuel-air bomb, its payload can also include the chemicals used in thermobaric bombs, white phosphorous weapons, and chemical weapons. Thermobaric bombs contain polymer-bonded explosives or solid fuel-air explosives in their payloads. Thermobarics use a fuse munition unit (FMU) such as that seen on the nose of the Israeli artillery shell. The shell penetrates buildings, underground shelters, or tunnels, creating such a blast pressure that all the oxygen is sucked out from the spaces and the lungs of anyone

who happens to be in proximity. Israel's use of such "vacuum" weapons has been reported from across Lebanon.

The artillery shell below, with its FMU penetrator, can also be used to deliver chemical weapons, the use of which is also being reported from southern Lebanon. In addition, it can deliver white phosphorous, a substance that literally melts through skin but leaves clothing relatively intact. In Fallujah and elsewhere in Iraq, U.S. forces have used white phosphorous on civilians, leaving grotesque corpses as a psychological warfare reminder to the civilian population to surrender or evacuate an area. The photo from Sidon of a burnt and badly disfigured young Lebanese girl is a telltale sign of white phosphorous use by the Israelis. Similar photos from Fallujah were shown to this editor by a top in-

vestigative reporter for Italy's RAI television network.

U.S. military intelligence experts believe the ease at which the Israeli soldier is handling the artillery shell is an indication that the payload contains light-weight gas and not a fuel-air mixture or thermobaric bomb components. WMR continues to receive reports from Lebanon of depleted uranium shells being used by the Israelis. The New York Times today is reporting that the U.S. is stepping up its delivery of "precision-guided" munitions to Israel (see article below on Bush administration pre-planning for the Israeli invasions of Lebanon and Gaza).

Source: Wayne Madsen Report, July 23, 2006, <http://WayneMadsenReport.com>

Depleted Uranium Situation Worsens Requiring Immediate Action By President Bush, Prime Minister Blair and Prime Minister Olmert

by Dr. Doug Rokke, PhD. former Director, U.S. Army Depleted Uranium project

The delivery of at least 100 GBU 28 bunker busters bombs containing depleted uranium warheads by the United States to Israel for use against targets in Lebanon will result in additional radioactive and chemical toxic contamination with consequent adverse health and environmental effects throughout the middle east.

Today, U.S., British, and now Israeli military personnel are using illegal uranium munitions- America's and England's own "dirty bombs" while U.S. Army, U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Department of Defense, and British Ministry of Defence officials deny that there are any adverse health and environmental effects as a consequence of the manufacture, testing, and/or use of uranium munitions to avoid liability for the willful and illegal dispersal of a radioactive toxic material - depleted uranium.

The use of uranium weapons is absolutely unacceptable, and a crime against humanity. Consequently the citizens of the world and all governments must force cessation of uranium weapons use. I must demand that Israel now provide medical care to all DU casualties in Lebanon and clean up all DU contamination.

U.S. and British officials have arrogantly refused to comply with their own regulations, orders, and directives that require United States Department of Defense officials to provide prompt and effective medical care to "all" exposed individuals. Reference: Medical Management of Unusual Depleted Uranium Casualties, DOD, Pen-

tagon, 10/14/93, Medical Management of Army personnel Exposed to Depleted Uranium (DU) Headquarters, U.S. Army Medical Command 29 April 2004, and section 2-5 of U.S. Army Regulation 700-48. Israeli officials must not do so now.

They also refuse to clean up dispersed radioactive Contamination as required by Army Regulation- AR 700-48: "Management of Equipment Contaminated With Depleted Uranium or Radioactive Commodities" (Headquarters, Department Of The Army, Washington, D.C., September 2002) and U.S. Army Technical Bulletin- TB 9-1300-278: "Guidelines For Safe Response To Handling, Storage, And Transportation Accidents Involving Army Tank Munitions Or Armor Which Contain Depleted Uranium" (Headquarters, Department Of The Army, Washington, D.C., JULY 1996). Specifically section 2-4 of United States Army Regulation-AR 700-48 dated September 16, 2002 requires that:

- 1 "Military personnel "identify, segregate, isolate, secure, and label all RCE" (radiologically contaminated equipment).
- 2 "Procedures to minimize the spread of radioactivity will be implemented as soon as possible."
- 3 "Radioactive material and waste will not be locally disposed of through burial, submersion, incineration, destruction in place, or abandonment" and
- 4 "All equipment, to include captured or combat RCE, will be surveyed, packaged, retrograded, decontaminated and

released IAW Technical Bulletin 9-1300-278, DA PAM 700-48" (Note: Maximum exposure limits are specified in Appendix F).

The previous and current use of uranium weapons, the release of radioactive components in destroyed U.S. and foreign military equipment, and releases of industrial, medical, research facility radioactive materials have resulted in unacceptable exposures. Therefore, decontamination must be completed as required by U.S. Army Regulation 700-48 and should include releases of all radioactive materials resulting from military operations.

The extent of adverse health and environmental effects of uranium weapons contamination is not limited to combat zones but includes facilities and sites where uranium weapons were manufactured or tested including Vieques; Puerto Rico; Colonie, New York; Concord, MA; Jefferson Proving Grounds, Indiana; and Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Therefore medical care must be provided by the United States Department of Defense officials to all individuals affected by the manufacturing, testing, and/or use of uranium munitions. Thorough environmental remediation also must be completed without further delay.

I am amazed that fifteen years after was I asked to clean up the initial DU mess from Gulf War 1 and over ten years since I finished the depleted uranium project that United States Department of Defense officials and others still attempt to justify ura-

nium munitions use while ignoring mandatory requirements. I am dismayed that Department of Defense and Department of Energy officials and representatives continue personal attacks aimed to silence or discredit those of us who are demanding that medical care be provided to all DU casualties and that environmental remediation is completed in compliance with U.S. Army Regulation 700-48. But beyond the ignored mandatory actions the willful dispersal of tons of solid radioactive and chemically toxic waste in the form of uranium munitions is illegal (http://www.traprockpeace.org/karen_parker_du_illegality.pdf) and just does not even pass the common sense test and according to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, DHS, is a dirty bomb. DHS issued "dirty bomb" response guidelines, http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/fr-cont.html, on January 3, 2006 for incidents within the United States but ignore DOD use of uranium weapons and existing DOD regulations. These guide-

lines specifically state that: "Characteristics of RDD and IND Incidents: A radiological incident is defined as an event or series of events, deliberate or accidental, leading to the release, or potential release, into the environment of radioactive material in sufficient quantity to warrant consideration of protective actions. Use of an RDD or IND is an act of terror that produces a radiological incident." Thus the use of uranium munitions is "an act of terror" as defined by DHS. Finally continued compliance with the infamous March 1991 Los Alamos Memorandum that was issued to ensure continued use of uranium munitions can not be justified.

In conclusion: the President of the United States- George W. Bush, the Prime Minister of Great Britain-Tony Blair, and the Prime Minister of Israel Olmert must acknowledge and accept responsibility for willful use of illegal uranium munitions – their own "dirty bombs" – resulting in adverse health and environmental effects.

President Bush, Prime Minister Blair, and Prime Minister Olmert should order:

1. medical care for all casualties,
2. thorough environmental remediation,
3. immediate cessation of retaliation against all of us who demand compliance with medical care and environmental remediation requirements,
4. and stop the already illegal the use (UN finding) of depleted uranium munitions.

www.traprockpeace.org/twomemos.html
www.traprockpeace.org/rokke_du_3_ques.html
www.traprockpeace.org/du_dtic_wakayama_Aug2002.html
www.traprockpeace.org/karen_parker_du_illegality.pdf
www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/fr-cont.html
<http://cryptome.org/dhs010306.txt>

Source: www.uruknet.info, July 24, 2006

Lebanese President Accuses Israel of Using White Phosphorus Bombs in Lebanon

While Human Rights Watch is accusing Israel of using cluster bombs, the Lebanese president Emile Lahoud says Israel is also using white phosphorus. Lebanese doctors have reported witnessing the effects of white phosphorus on their patients. Independent journalist is in Beirut and has spoken to some of those doctors.

Amy Goodman: Independent journalist Dahr Jamail is in Beirut and has spoken to some of those doctors. We reached him earlier today.

Dahr Jamail: Yesterday, I went to the Beirut University Hospital. It's one of the larger hospitals in Beirut, and I was speaking with the assistant director there. His name is Bilal Masri. And he told me – first off, we were talking about the casualty situation, and then this led into the white phosphorus situation in Southern Lebanon. And first off, he said that they were receiving very many casualties there, mostly from the south, being brought into them by the Red Crescent and Lebanese Red Cross, and that 55% of all the casualties in Beirut, according to Mr. Masri, were children 15 years or younger.

He then said another startling statistic, that 30% of all the casualties are dying. And this was an extremely high casualty rate, far higher than anything they saw during the Lebanese Civil War, meaning that of every one hit, 30% of the people are dying outright. And I asked him why, and he said that it's because the Israelis are using these bombs that can penetrate through bomb shelters, that there's been so many refugees

seeking shelter in basements or in bomb shelters, and the Israelis are bombing the bomb shelters. Warplanes are bombing the bomb shelters where refugees are hiding. And also there was such a disproportionate number of children being killed and wounded, because children, he said, were the least able to really escape when the bombings began. Children were the least able to really effectively run away and get to safety themselves.

While we were talking, he said that it was actually confirmed by the Ministry of the Interior in Lebanon that the minister himself did confirm that the Israelis have dropped white phosphorus in Southern Lebanon, and interestingly, just before I had gone to this hospital, I was at a refugee camp in a city park in downtown Beirut, and I interviewed an old man, a 76-year-old baker, who had told me that they fled Nabatiya down in Southern Lebanon, which is the city where it is suspected that this white phosphorus has been used and where it was confirmed by the Minister of the Interior, and this old man told me that they left because when the bombings there began – this was within the first few days of the attack, within the first week, that is, I'm sorry – that he left because his family was so afraid, because nearby where they lived, homes were being bombed, and inside the buildings and outside the buildings, they were glowing, as he described it. He said, "There were fires, that – of course, we know what regular fire looks like, but this was not that – that the buildings were glowing. We were all very

afraid. We didn't want to get anywhere near it. And they kept bombing, and so we decided to leave."

But without a doubt, I think the most important thing that people need to understand right now is that the Israelis are using white phosphorus in Southern Lebanon, and also it's been unconfirmed, but the Lebanese Army is reporting that they are using – dropping cluster bombs from warplanes, as well, and other illegal munitions also. But that, as of yet, to be confirmed by an independent source.

Source: Tuesday, July 25th, 2006

The Israeli Air Force Prepares to Drop Bunker Busters on Lebanon

The Bush Administration, which has given its unconditional support to Israel in its colonial war against Lebanon, is now in the process of transferring large number of ultramodern weapons to Israel. In the last few days it has delivered laser-guided, Bunker Buster bombs, of the type known as GBU-28. These bombs contain as their active element depleted Uranium, whose devastating carcinogenic effects on human DNA are well known.

These bombs have reportedly been transferred from Camp Darby in Italy, and Condoleezza Rice's recent stop in Rome had as its purpose providing time for the Israeli army to continue its offensive and spread slow atomic death in southern Lebanon.

On July 23, the American secretary of state visited Israel, where she not only authorized the Israelis to continue their bombardment of Lebanon, but actually encouraged them to intensify it. And not only by her words.

On July 22, the New York Times revealed that in the previous week the Bush Administration acceded to the wishes of the Israelis and was shipping a large shipment of laser-guided bombs to Israel. This report was substantiated by anonymous sources within the Bush administration. This only shows that Israel has its work cut out for it in Lebanon.

In a press conference reported in the Jerusalem Post on July 21, an Israeli bomber pilot explained that the F-16 bombers of the first wing, which can reach Beirut in 10 minutes, had already dropped 23 tons of bombs on one of its suburbs.

But now new bombs—made in the USA—are arriving in Israel as part of a package which was approved in Washington a year ago. Among those weapons are the GBU-28 Bunker Busters, huge 2.3 ton laser-

guided bombs. In the military specifications, this bomb is described as a "special weapon, created to destroy commando bunkers hidden deep underground." The same document continues by saying that "the Israeli air force can deploy these bombs from their F-15 bombers (which, like the F-16s, have also been supplied by the United States).

David Siegel, press secretary for the Israeli embassy in Washington said, "We need this precision ordinance in order to neutralize the military capacity of Hezbollah but also in order to keep civilian casualties to a minimum. The GBU-28s are therefore "humanitarian bombs." The latest shipment from the United States contains at least 100 GBU-28s.

These bombs, which are intended for use in the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Near East, have been stored at the logistics command center at Camp Darby in Italy. Camp Darby lies halfway between the harbor of Livorno and the airport at Pisa. Most of the bombs which have been deployed in the wars in Iraq and Yugoslavia have been shipped from Camp Darby. Since the Bush administration decided to ship these bombs as quickly as possible, it follows that they were shipped from Camp Darby. Global Security (an organization whose reports have proven to be reliable) substantiates this hypothesis by claiming that the 31st munitions division, which operates Camp Darby, is "responsible for the most important conventional weapons arsenal of the American Air Force in Europe." This support group has at its disposal 21,000 tons of bombs in Italy and two munitions depots in Israel. There is close organization coordination between the munitions depots in Italy and Israel. We can therefore assume that the bombs which will get dropped on Lebanon will come from Camp Darby in Italy. Co-

operation between the armies of Israel and Italy is regulated by Italian Law, number 94, passed in May 2005.

We need to keep all this in mind in order to understand the statements which Condoleezza Rice issues from the Palazzo Madama, the seat of the Italian government. According to a statement published in the July 21 edition of the Washington Post, she said, "President Bush considers the war in the Near East as a step toward peace. The president is against an immediate cease fire because he thinks that there is now an opportunity to drive Hezbollah out of Lebanon which needs to be exploited, even if serious consequences follow from it. The president is pained whenever life is lost but he is convinced that the moment has arrived to bring clarity to the situation."

The only thing that's clear at this point is that Israel has been planning this war for quite some time and that they have been doing it in coordination with Washington. The capture of two Israeli soldiers—on Lebanese territory and not in Israel!—served as a pretext for war. This provided the excuse to submerge Lebanon in a sea of blood and fire and to prepare the way for the invasion of Syria and Iran.

The peace negotiations in Rome (which proceeded without the participation of either Hezbollah or Syria) will only serve to give the Israeli air force time to complete their work of destruction so that the only thing left for the "international peace troops" to do is guard the gaping craters left by the Bunker Busters.

Author: Manilo Dinucci

Source: www.planetenonviolence.org (french),
Translation: Current Concerns

Poisonous Gas dropped on villages by Israeli military in southern Lebanon

Wayne Madsen Report (WMR) reported that the Israeli military was using poison gas on villages in south Lebanon. According to a former U.S. weapons expert who served in Iraq, the artillery shell in a photo taken in Lebanon (below) is a chemical weapon delivery device. It is being handled by an Israeli Defense Force soldier and Hebrew lettering can be clearly seen on the armored vehicle. Another chemical weapons shell of the same type can be seen lying on the ground to the right. It is not known what type of chemical is in the chemical canister, however, gas dropped by the Israelis in vil-

lages in southern Lebanon has resulted in severe vomiting among the civilian population.

Media commentators have scoffed that Israel, with its relatively unique history, would ever use chemical weapons or poison gas in any war. It is precisely because of that perception that they are using such weapons. The deniability factor prevents the media from taking seriously the credible reports of banned weapons being used by the Israelis. •

Source: Wayne Madsen Report, July 21, 2006,
<http://WayneMadsenReport.com>

Statement of Concern for the Public Health Situation in Gaza

Open Letter of Canadian health professionals, 31 July 2006

As Canadian health professionals, we are deeply concerned by the silence of the Canadian government and the Canadian media about the humanitarian disaster in Gaza. We are calling on the Canadian government and the media to truthfully recognize the humanitarian situation and to respond with compassion and effective help.

Even before the capture of Cpl. Gilad Shalit on June 25, 2006, and even before the election of the Hamas government, the humanitarian situation in Gaza was dire.

- When the settlers left Gaza in August, 2005, the Israeli army left all of the land they occupied covered in millions of tons of rubble, rendering it unusable for cultivation. Israel continued to control all access to Gaza and continued to control water resources.
- After the Hamas government was elected, the Palestinian health system collapsed due to the freeze of tax revenues by Israel and the stoppage of international aid (led by Canada). Physicians for Human Rights-Israel reported at the time that Israel is responsible for the outcome of the collapse of the Palestinian civil society in general and the health system in particular. Specific to Gaza, PHR-I stated that Shifa Hospital, the central hospital in Gaza, has not received (for at least a month) the essential medicines it needs for basic care, such as furosemide (a diuretic medicine that reduces fluid pressure on the lungs and other organs) and erythromycin (broad-spectrum antibiotic).

“Immediately Put Down the Weapons”

Statement by Pope Benedict XVI

In the name of God, I appeal to all those responsible for this spiral of violence, so that they immediately put down their weapons on all sides! I ask governing leaders and international organizations not to spare any effort to obtain this necessary halt to hostilities and so to be able to begin to build, through dialogue, a lasting and stable concord for all the people of the Middle East.

I appeal to all people of good to continue and to intensify the shipment of humanitarian help to those populations so tested and needy. But especially [I ask that] every heart continue to raise the hopeful prayer to the good and merciful God, so that he grants his peace to that region and to the whole world.

*Pope Benedict XVI,
Castel Gandolfo, Italy, July 30, 2006*

In Shifa Hospital four patients already have died as a result of the reduction in the number of their dialysis treatments from three per week to only two. James Wolfensohn, Special Envoy for Disengagement to the U.S. Foreign Relations Committee, stated on March 15, 2006, that the collapse of health services and the education system, which addresses the needs of one million children, would be a total failure for the new government, and would have tragic consequences for the Palestinian people. This should not be permitted under any circumstances.

- Six months before the capture of Cpl. Shalit, PHR-I filed a petition and a request to the Israeli Supreme Court for a temporary injunction to stop the sonic booms, deeming it a collective punishment of the civilian population that particularly traumatized children. The petition was rejected and the sonic booms persist. According to *The Guardian Weekly* (June 16-22), daily life was violent: 3000 Qassam rockets were fired into Israel over the past five years from Gaza, killing five people; on the other side, Israel dropped 6,000 shells on Gaza since the beginning of April, claiming the lives of elderly farmers, children, and women as well as the family of Huda Ghalia on the Gaza beach; no figures were given about Israeli ground assaults in the same five year period. The June 8th report of MSF-USA, however, reports that Israeli bombing in north Gaza was particularly intense, in one incident killing 45 cows which affected the food supply; MSF continues that bombing since the beginning of the year was so intense in the north that people could not access health-care facilities. Extra-judicial executions and kidnappings by the IDF persisted, and the day before Cpl. Shalit was captured, the IDF kidnapped a Gazan doctor and his brother.
- Before the current offensive, UN aid relief workers were giving daily food rations to 735,000 Gazans, more than half the overcrowded territory's population of 1.4 million people. 79 percent of households were living under the poverty line and unemployment was 40 percent. (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, report July 12, 2006)

Since the capture of Cpl. Shalit, the situation is far worse in Gaza because of the destruction of the water, sanitation, food, health, and electricity infrastructure. As of July 8, 2006

- World Health Organisation (WHO) reports that the public health system is facing an unprecedented crisis. WHO

estimates that though hospitals and 50 percent of Primary Health Centres have generators, the current stock of fuel will last for a maximum of two weeks. WHO, based on UNRWA's data related to communicable diseases, stated that the total number of cases of watery and bloody diarrhoea amongst refugees for the last week in June and the first week in July has increased by 163 percent and 140 percent compared to the same period last year (also reported in *Defense for Children International-Palestine* section). WHO estimates that 23 percent of the essential drug list will be out of stock within one month. WHO is also alarmed by the tightening of restrictions on patients needing to leave Gaza for treatment.

- The World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that in June 70 percent of the Gaza population were already unable to cover their daily food needs without assistance. As of 8 July, WFP has 20 days of emergency food stocks to cover its expanded caseload of 220,000. Given the escalating crisis, there are growing numbers of people who now need assistance. WFP believes it is essential that a humanitarian corridor for relief items and personnel remains open to avert a further deterioration in the food security situation at this critical time.
- UNICEF reports that children are living in an environment of extraordinary violence, insecurity and fear. Care givers say children are showing signs of distress and exhaustion, including a 15 percent-20 percent increase in bedwetting, due to shelling and sonic booms.
- The Office of the Co-Ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) states that since destruction of the electric plant, the lives of 1.4 million people, almost half of them children, worsened overnight. In the hottest time of the year, most Gaza residents have power for only 6-8 hours/day. In urban areas, water is available between 2-3 hours/day. The water authority has enough chlorine for two months. UNRWA reports that the Water Utility's daily operation has been cut two thirds, resulting in water shortages and a critical situation at the sewage plants.
- On 19 July the Palestinian Human Rights Centre reports that since 28 June 2006, 115 people, mostly civilians, have been killed in Gaza, 550 have been wounded, passage of food, fuel and medicine is denied, six bridges have been destroyed, and transportation and access to medical clinics is disrupted.

According to the provisions of the Geneva Conventions (1977), the onus is on the

warring state to protect the civilian population from the impact of military operations. As the occupying power, the State of Israel is bound by the Fourth Geneva Convention Articles 19 and 50 to treat humanely Gaza's wounded and sick, to protect hospitals, to protect and care for children. Article 55 states that the Occupying Power has the duty to ensure the food and medical supplies of the population. Article 56 states that the Occupying Power has the duty, in cooperation with the national local authorities, to ensure and maintain medical and hospital services, public health and hygiene. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, and Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, demand Israel's immediate compliance with the Geneva Conventions and restoration of Gaza's infrastructure.

The undersigned Canadian health professionals fear for the lives of Palestinian people. We ask the Canadian Government to demand that Israel fulfil its responsibilities as a signatory of the Fourth Geneva Convention and take immediate and effective measures to provide protection of the civilian population in Gaza, to reduce severe risks to public health, and to secure appropriate medical care. We ask our own government for the immediate restoration of Canadian aid to the elected Palestinian government to ensure that water, food, medicine and the necessities of life are immediately available and accessible in Gaza.

Signed (as of July 31, 2006)

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Roy Male, M.D.
Debra Mandel, M.Ed., psychotherapist
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Tanya Suvendrini Lena, M.D., MPH
Teresa Tran, M.D.
Wahida Valiante, M.S.W.
Cheryl Wagner, M.D.
Scott Weinstein, R.N.
Judith Weisman, psychotherapist
Gordon Yanchyshyn, M.D.
Tanya Zakrisson, M.D. Chief Senior Resident University Health Network

Source: Science for Peace, http://scienceforpeace.sa.utoronto.ca/Posted_Letters/Statement_Page.html

Robert Fisk Reports From Lebanon on the Israeli Bombing of Qana That Killed 57, Including 37 Children

by Robert Fisk, Veteran war correspondent, London Independent, reporting from Beirut

Lebanon is marking a national day of mourning, a day after Israeli warplanes bombed the village of Qana killing 57. Israel has announced it will halt air strikes for 48 hours in Southern Lebanon, but its ground troops continue to fight. Robert Fisk was in the nearby city of Tyre, where many of the victims were taken following the attack. He joins us from his home in Beirut.

After the attack, Israel released what appeared to be video footage of Hezbollah rockets being launched from Qana towards towns in northern Israel, and the Israeli military said that Qana had been targeted because Hezbollah had been using the village as a base from which to launch rockets. This is not the first time that Qana has been devastated by Israeli fire. In 1996, more than 106 villagers died after Israel bombed the UN compound where they were seeking refuge. In the aftermath of the strike 10 years ago, reporting by Robert Fisk led to the United Nations condemnation of the attack. Robert Fisk had just returned from Tyre, where the victims from Sunday's Israeli air strike in Qana were taken following the attack.

Amy Goodman: Following Israel's bombing of the town of Qana, that killed nearly 57 people, we turn to veteran war correspondent, Robert Fisk. I reached Robert Fisk early this morning at his home in Beirut. Robert Fisk's reporting in Lebanon led to the United Nations condemnation of the Israeli attack on Qana ten years ago, in 1996. Early this morning, when we reached Robert Fisk, he had just returned from Tyre, where victims from Sunday's Israeli air strike in Qana were taken, following the attack.

Robert Fisk: I went to Tyre, Amy. By the time this has happened – to get from Beirut now to the south takes four to six hours, because of the broken bridges and the bombed roads, and I realized that by the time I got down there, the wounded would have been in the hospitals in Tyre, and the dead would be already brought from Qana to the villages. So when I got there, I went straight to the government hospital in Tyre, where many of the wounded – and there weren't many, because most of them died – had been taken and where they were counting the number of children.

When I arrived there, there were a number of, maybe 20, 30 children, the corpses of children, lined up outside the government hospital, hair matted, still in their night clothes. The bomb that killed them was dropped at 1:00 in the morning. And they ran out of plastic bags. They were trying to put the children in plastic bags, their corpses, and they would put on it, you

know, "Abbas Mehdi, aged seven," and so and so, aged one, and use a kind of sticking tape on it. But then they ran out of plastic bags, so they had to put the children's corpses in a kind of cheap carpet that you can buy in the supermarkets, and they roll them up in that and then put their names on again. I was having to go around very carefully and write down, from the Arabic, their names and their ages. It would just say "Abbas Mehdi, aged seven, Qana."

And, of course, every time I saw the "Qana," I remember that I was actually in Qana ten years ago when the massacre occurred there then. This is the second massacre in the town whose inhabitants believe that this is the place where Jesus turned water into wine in the Bible, most of whom, 95% of whom, are Christians – I'm sorry, are Muslims. I think all who died were Muslims. The 5% is Christians who have been there for hundreds of years, their families, because they do believe it is the Biblical Qana. There is a claimant to the rival of Qana in Galilee in northern Israel actually.

The Lebanese soldiers were trying take down the names of all who had died, but I found a man with a clipboard who had taken down 40 names, and he said that they weren't accurate, because some of the children were blown into bits and they couldn't fit them together accurately and there might be – they couldn't put the right head on the right body, and therefore they might not be able to have an accurate list of the dead. But he was doing his best in the circumstances of war to maintain the bureaucracy of government.

One by one the children's bodies were taken away from the courtyard of the government hospital on the shoulders of soldiers and hospital workers and were put in a big refrigerated truck, very dirty, dusty truck, which had been parked just outside the hospital. The grownups, the adult dead, including twelve women, were taken out later. The children were put in the truck first. Pretty grim. As I said, the children's hair, when you could see the bodies, were matted with dust and mud. And most of them appear to have been bleeding from the nose. I assume that's because their lungs were crushed by the bomb, and therefore they naturally hemorrhaged as they died.

Amy Goodman: Robert Fisk reporting from Beirut. After the attack Sunday, Israel released what appeared to be video footage of Hezbollah rockets being launched from Qana toward towns in northern Israel. I asked Robert Fisk about the footage.

Robert Fisk: I've seen the video footage. It's impossible to tell from the footage if indeed this is from Qana. You know, you have to realize that last time the mas-

sacre occurred at Qana in 1996, when they killed 106 refugees who were sheltering in the then-UN base that was there – it doesn't exist anymore, but it did then – more than half of them children, again. They said that missiles had been fired from within the UN base. It turns out that they were fired from half a mile away. They then said that they didn't have a live time pilot-less aircraft over the UN base at the time. And, in fact, on the Independent, I found a UN soldier who did have a videotape, showing clearly at the time of the bombardment – this is in 1996 – a live time photo reconnaissance unmanned aircraft over the base. The Israelis were later forced to admit that they had not told the truth: indeed there was a machine over the base at the time. You know, you can do what you want with photo reconnaissance pictures and with photographs after the event. It's interesting that we weren't shown these pictures before the massacre. We were only shown them after the massacre.

But they may be correct. The Hezbollah are firing missiles from villages in southern Lebanon, just as, for example, when the Israelis entered southern Lebanon and go into places like Bent Jabail, they're using civilian houses as cover for their tanks, so the Hezbollah use houses as cover for their missile launching. But the odd thing is the idea that for the Israeli military that somehow it's okay to kill all these children; if a missile is launched 30, 90 feet from their house, that's okay then. We've got some film to show the missiles were launched; that's okay then. I mean, did the aircraft which dropped this bomb, a guided weapon, by the way – they knew what they were hitting. It's a guided weapon. We know that because the computer codes have been found on the bomb fragments. Did they say, "Oh, well, then, the man who launched the missile is hiding with the children in the basement of the house we're going to hit"? Is it the case now that if you happen to live in a house next to where someone launches a missile, you are to be sentenced to death? Is that what Israel thinks the war is about?

I'm sitting here, for example, in my house tonight in darkness – there's no electricity – next to a car park. What if someone launches a missile from the car park? Am I supposed to die for that? Is that a death sentence for me? Is that how Israel wages war? If I have children in the basement, are they to die for that? And then I'm told it's my fault or it's Hezbollah's fault? You know, these are serious moral questions.

It's quite clear from listening to the IDF statement today that they believe that family deserved to die, because 90 feet away, they claim, a missile was fired. So they sen-

tenced all those people to death. Is that what we're supposed to believe? I mean, presumably it is. I can't think of any other reason why they should say, "Well, 30 meters away a missile was fired." Well, thanks very much. So those little children's corpses in their plastic packages, all stuck together like giant candies today, this is supposed to be quite normal, this is how war is to be waged by the IDF.

The fact that when they made these comments, they went unchallenged on television, was one of the most extraordinary scenes I've seen. I got back from Tyre on a very dangerous overland journey on an open road, which was under air attack, and I got back, and just before the electricity was cut, I saw the BBC reporting what the Israelis had said, but without questioning the morality that if someone fires a missile near your home, therefore it is perfectly okay for you to die.

Amy Goodman: We'll return to our interview with Robert Fisk of the Independent newspaper in Britain, reporting from Beirut.

Amy Goodman: We return to our interview with Robert Fisk of the Independent. He has been based in Lebanon for the last 30 years. I spoke to him early this morning, after he had just returned from Tyre. I asked him to respond to Israel's announcement it would suspend air strikes over southern Lebanon for 48 hours.

Robert Fisk: That would certainly give the United Nations and particularly the International Red Cross the opportunity of getting thousands of people out of the region. But whether you can arrange convoys for thousands of people to leave in that period of time, I don't know. The people who the haven't left are either too frightened to leave, or they're too poor, or they have no cars, or they're too elderly or too young. Can the International Committee of the Red Cross with whom I have been traveling for some of the last few days – does that give them enough time to get people out? Does that mean there will be no shells on the road, or is it just air attacks that are stopping?

You know, it's very interesting that the Israelis should say now, now after all these days, they're going to give 48 hours. Why didn't they give an extra 48 hours at the beginning to get the people out? Why now? Is this a bonus, a plus point, something you – a supermarket extra card that you win because you've killed so many people? Is it a monopoly board that you're going to gamble? Okay, you get 48 hours free of air attack, because you killed so many people yesterday. Is that what this is supposed to mean?

Amy Goodman: In an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, it voted Sunday not for a cessation of hostilities – the U.S. was opposed to that – but to deplore what happened in Qana and an end to the violence. I asked Robert Fisk to respond.

Robert Fisk: John Bolton, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, has consist-

ently opposed any kind of ceasefire, because he believes, as Mr. Bush does and as our own dear prime minister, Lord Blair, as I call him, does, that the Israelis can accomplish these hopeless political military aims. Well, the Israelis believe that they can actually destroy one of the most disciplined and most ruthless guerrilla armies in the world. They can't, anymore than the Americans could destroy the Vietcong or the North Vietnamese or British could destroy the IRA. And, believe me, the Hezbollah are not as weak and cowardly as the IRA was. But they can't. These are hopeless political aims. All the United Nations is doing by postponing a ceasefire is condemning more Lebanese to death. I wrote in Saturday's paper, before Qana, that the actions of Blair and Bush, and Bolton by extension, and Condoleezza Rice, were going to condemn more innocents to death.

You know, I went into a hospital in Marjayoun last week, and I saw this very beautiful young woman lying in bed, and her skin had been pitted with very familiar wounds, the little tiny round crimson holes of cluster bomblets. We used cluster bombs in Iraq in 2003. I know exactly what the wounds look like. I identified them at once. Indeed, she described the cluster bombs falling like grapes, as she put it, out of the sky, oddly enough an expression used by an Iraqi woman in 2003 to me. This young woman had been wounded 48 hours before I saw her. Had Bush and Blair insisted on a ceasefire at the beginning, this woman, her skin would not be destroyed in the way it has been.

On the ground, when you're here, when you see the wounded, see the dead, you realize the immorality, the obscenity, the atrocity of statesmen, as they think they are, claiming that, you know, it isn't yet time for a ceasefire. A hasty ceasefire would not be a good thing, as Condoleezza Rice said. 24 hours before, I saw a picture of her on a beach in Malaysia. And people remember this. People remember this. In the hospital it was a young man who said – turned to me, he said, "Why have you done this to us? Why have you done this to us?" And the woman I was talking to said the same: "Why does the West want to do this to us?"

You know, this has been going on for more than two weeks now. I'm traveling around the south, increasingly outraged at what I see, as a human being. And I'm not a Muslim. I'm not a Muslim. And I keep saying to myself, "If I was a Muslim, how much more outraged might I be?" I turned to an American friend of mine tonight back in Beirut before I came home, and I said, "You know, I've been watching this now for more than two weeks, and there's going to be another 9/11." There's going to be another 9/11, and then we're going to hear all the usual claptrap about how it's good versus evil, and they hate us because we're good and democratic, and they hate our values,

and all the other material that comes out of the rear end of a bull that your president and my prime minister talk.

What's going on in southern Lebanon is an outrage. It's an atrocity. The idea that more than 600 civilians must die because three Israeli soldiers were killed and two were captured on the border by the Hezbollah on July 12, my 60th birthday – I've spent 30 years of my life watching this, this filth now, you know – is outrageous. It's against all morality to suggest that 600 innocent civilians must die for this. There is no other country in the world that could get away with this.

You know, when – I wrote in my paper last week, there were times when the IRA would cross from the Irish Republic into northern Ireland to kill British soldiers. And they did murder and kill British soldiers. But we, the British, didn't hold the Irish government responsible. We didn't send the Royal Air Force to bomb Dublin power stations and Galway and Cork. We didn't send our tanks across the border to shell the hill villages of Cavan or Monaghan or Louth or Donegal. Blair wouldn't dream of doing that, because he believes he's a moral man, he's a civilized man. He wouldn't treat another nation like that.

But when the Israelis treat Lebanon like that, it's okay, and Blair doesn't want a ceasefire. You can't have a real ceasefire. In other words, we've got to have the Lebanese on their knees to sign the dotted line, before we give them a ceasefire. And that dotted line means the disarmament of Hezbollah, which will be impossible for the Lebanese to do without restarting the civil war, because to disarm Hezbollah, you must use the army, and most of the Hezbollah are, of course, Shiite Muslims, and most of the army are Shiite Muslims. So you're going to have brothers assaulting brothers to take their weapons away. It will not happen. However much you may wish it and however much I may wish it, it won't happen. And, again, this double morality: Blair wouldn't dream of attacking the Irish Republic because the IRA crossed the border from Ireland, but it's quite in order for Israel to attack the Lebanese Republic because the Hezbollah crossed the border from Lebanon.

Source: www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=06/07/31/1435219, July 31, 2006

“The Palestinians are strongly united against the sanctions”

Exclusive interview with the Palestinian Vice-Prime Minister

by Silvia Cattori, Swiss journalist, Ramallah (Palestine/Israel), Aug 4, 2006

Doctor Naser Dine Muhammad Ahmad Shaer is the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Education and higher learning in the Palestinian government formed by Hamas. Born in 1961, originally from Nablus, father of six children, this professor of law and legislation, rector of the Faculty of Law at the National University of Al Najah, hunted by Israel, finds himself obliged to live in clandestinity. He talks here about a subject the “West” refuses to admit: that Hamas is well integrated into the social fabric and that, confronted with Israeli oppression — as with the Lebanese and Hezbollah — Hamas is “like a fish in water” in Palestine.

Silvia Cattori: The Palestinians voted for Hamas in an election considered as free and honest by the international observers. However, the result wasn't accepted by the United States and the European Union both of whom still refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the new government. The West tells you: “We will give you our financial support only if you put Hamas aside”. Moreover, the European Union stopped its financial aid until the new government is put aside. So, for the first time in history, we could see a people under occupation submitted to international sanctions for having voted freely. How will you overcome these obstacles and avoid even more suffering for your people already stricken by the occupation?

Naser Shaer: There is a misunderstanding, an incredible misunderstanding on the part of the “West” about us and about our government. We must remember that two-thirds of the Ministers and MPs who accepted to work with the government formed by Hamas are not members of the Hamas movement. This government is formed by technocrats, professors, men and women educated in and graduated from western universities, and who are specialists in such and such fields.

Which party do you belong to?

I was never involved in politics, and I don't belong to any party.

The Palestinians I meet day after day do not understand the punishment imposed by these states, states that always speak about human rights and disregard the crimes committed by Israel. In order to get out of this impasse, will you not be obliged to form another government?

When Hamas won the elections, it had three ways of forming a government. The first one was to form a government composed only

of people belonging to Hamas. The second one was to compose a government comprised of all the parties. The third one was to form a government composed in part of people belonging to Hamas, and in part of people who do not belong to Hamas. Hamas acted in a pragmatic way. The choice was made based upon people's competences and not on the basis of the fact they belonged to Hamas. We have Christians in the government. The Minister of Planning, for example, has worked previously in this field, demonstrating real competence. As for me, as Minister of Education, I have fifteen years of experience in this field. That is to say that this government, which was wrongly qualified as Islamic, includes a majority of technocrats and of highly qualified specialists. The ministers who belong to Hamas are a minority.

At the end of June when the Israelis kidnapped half of your government here in the West Bank – that is to say 8 ministers and 15 MP – was your name not on their list? They tried to arrest me, but I was not at home the evening when the soldiers came. That is why I have to be very careful not to be arrested. Look, I shut off my phone. I never sleep at the same place; I change places every night. I hope now that it will become easier than it was during these last weeks.

Can the Israeli army suddenly appear?

Yes, they can. That is why I spend just a few minutes in an area, and why I will to leave you soon.

Is it possible to govern under such conditions?

It is very difficult. But, even so, we still work. Our employees go on working in the ministries. When the Hamas government was formed, the employees of the ministries were not changed except in the leading positions.

Was there not some reticence on the part of those who, feeling attached to the former government, didn't accept the arrival of Hamas?

Before they arrested some of the members of the government, there was some tension among Palestinians. We did our best to put an end to dissensions. We work together, we are united, we help each other. We are happy now that there is no serious problem, even if we have some disagreements on this or that point. But, in general, we have agreement. We are happy to work and to share power with our President Abou Mazen. We

plan to form a new government. But not before the Israeli release the ministers and MP they arrested.

You seem to be optimistic?

Optimistic, yes.

Through their sanctions, Israel, the United States and the European Union did not hide that they wanted to bring down the Hamas government. They are waiting until the people, in complete distress, end up by revolting against you. Will their strategy fail?

They have already failed. They didn't succeed changing the minds of the people. That is why in the last few days they have allowed for several tens of millions of dollars to be paid by an Egyptian Bank. That means to us that they find themselves in a position which is morally unacceptable and that they will have to find a way out to put an end to these sanctions.

Can you understand why the European Union is aligning itself with the positions advocated by Israel and the United States, thus classifying your government as a terrorist organization?

Because of Israeli propaganda which is overwhelming in the “West”, and also, maybe, because the United States and Europe do not want to listen to our voice, to our suffering. As you know, most of us studied in the West, most of us spent five, ten, fifteen years in America and in Europe. We know western culture. Myself, I studied at Manchester University. After getting my PhD, I went to New York University. We know everything about the West. The problem is not with us as persons, our culture, our religion; the problem is that Israel does not want this government to succeed. Israel would like us to fail. That is why Israel is goes on saying to the world that there is not any Palestinian that they can talk to. First, I reiterate here that our government does not close the door, everyone is welcome. We are open and ready to get in touch with all states and their representatives. We keep the door open, we are ready to have relations with any government in the world. Secondly, when people outside think that we might fail, after six months of this regime of sanctions they can see that our people are still with us, at our side, even though there is no money, no salaries and a worsening situation.

You can go into the street, and you can ask the people what they think. They will tell you that they like us, that they need us to continue with dignity, and that they need us go on maintaining an honourable stand.

Believe me, should some Israeli soldiers come now in order to arrest me, you would

immediately see people coming to warn me to leave the area. In a minute I will be in shelter far from here.

Do you mean that the majority of the people here will not move away from Hamas, even though the "West" goes on with its policy designed to strangle them?

Yes. And why? Because they know that this government that the "West" is punishing is working for the interests of all the Palestinians, and not of the interest of this or that group. We do not work alone; we work with our people, for all the Palestinians. That is why people like us so much. That is why this government will not fail. It is clear for them that the authorities they

elected want their weal, want to succeed, want to do everything to ease their difficulties and to force the occupation. That is why the western governments tried to divide us and to make pressure on us through money.

The problem is that, on December 27, 2001, The Council of Ministers of the European Union put Hamas-Izz al-Din al-Qassem on the list of terrorist organizations. Then on September 6, 2003, Hamas itself was put on the list, responding to the will of Israel and the United States. If there is no hope that these latter states reconsider their position, do you think that the Europe will end up revising its position?

It is my wish. The Palestinians need a support in many fields, and the Ministry of Education I am heading is badly affected by that situation. Education is of utmost importance for our youth brutalized by the occupation and we cannot leave a vacuum.

Some countries, like Switzerland, for instance, did not put the Hamas movement on the "terrorist" list. They are not bound to the sanctions. Can they partly fill the vacuum?

Yes, they have to know that every country is welcome. We are open to work with everybody without any condition. •

Conflict in the Middle-East: a concern of Mayors for Peace

The association Mayors for Peace wishes to express its profoundest concern regarding the situation currently prevailing in the Middle-East, where cities and civilians are deeply affected by the hostilities.

Dr. Tadatoshi Akiba, Mayor of Hiroshima and President of Mayors for Peace, calls for an immediate ceasefire and an urgent dialogue so that affected populations may live in peace, harmony, and justice.

On behalf of the Executive Cities of Mayors for Peace, Dr. Akiba declared:

"Cities Are Not Targets!" The bombardment of cities and towns in Lebanon, Israel, and Palestine with artillery, rockets, and bombs is unconscionable. The livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of innocent citizens are being destroyed. Hundreds have been killed, thousands wounded, many just children. With excessive and indiscriminate firepower, military action has lost all sense of proportion. Continued armed conflict cannot be condoned. There must be an immediate ceasefire.

"Everyone wants and deserves to live in dignity and security. The overriding imperative is to promote a dialogue among all people in the region. Retaliation must be forewarned; reconciliation must be the touchstone. Peace is possible even now."

'Cities Are Not Targets' refers to a project recently launched by Mayors for Peace to end the targeting of cities by nuclear-armed states. Mayors for Peace opposes excessive and indiscriminate conventional attacks on cities not only because they are immoral in and of themselves, but also because they weaken the taboo against the destruction of cities with nuclear weapons that has prevailed since the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

Encouraged by a proposal from the Mayor of Montreal, Mr. Gerald Tremblay, the President of Mayors for Peace, with the unanimous consent of the Executive Cities, is urgently calling for peace in the Middle East. The Mayors for Peace Executive Committee comprises Hiroshima (Japan), Nagasaki (Japan), Hannover (Germany), Malakoff (France), Manchester (U.K.), Muntinlupa (Philippines), Volgograd (Russia), Akron (U.S.A.), Christchurch (New Zealand), Florence (Italy), and Laakdal (Belgium).

Mayors for Peace was founded in 1982 and now has a membership of 1,403 cities in 119 countries and regions throughout the world. The Executive Committee, on behalf of all our member cities, hereby demands an immediate end to the violence and a good-

faith effort to resolve the conflicts to the satisfaction of all parties.

Tadatoshi Akiba
President
Mayor of Hiroshima

Ichio Itoh
Vice President
Mayor of Nagasaki

Herbert Schmalstieg
Vice President
Mayor of Hannover

Eugeny P. Ishchenko
Vice President
Mayor of Volgograd

Catherine Margate
Vice President
Mayor of Malakoff

Jaime R. Fresnedi
Vice President
Mayor of Muntinlupa

James Ashley, JP
Vice President
Mayor of Manchester

Donald L. Plusquellic
Vice President
Mayor of Akron

Garry Moore
Vice President
Mayor of Christchurch

Leonardo Domenici
Vice President
Mayor of Florence

Patrik Vankrunkelsven
Vice President
Mayor of Laakdal

Source: www.mayorsforpeace.org

48 Hours Ceasefire

Amy Goodman: Mohamad Bazzi*, what happened during what was called the 48-hour ceasefire around the Israeli air strikes? What actually took place in that period?

Mohamad Bazzi: It was supposed to be – Israel said it would cease aerial strikes in Lebanon. It actually did not. There were fewer air attacks than there were in previous days, but even from the very first day there was fighting in some villages with Hezbollah. One of the villages was Srafa. There was the village of Aita al-Shaab. These are villages fairly close to the border. And there were pretty intense air strikes on those villages. And then there was on Tuesday, the second day of this 48-hour break, there was more air strikes in different parts of the south. There were air strikes on Baalbek late last night, Tuesday night. And all through this time there were Israeli troops entering the south, thousands of troops, as you've mentioned, entering different villages, going in and out of Lebanon, hundreds of tanks and armored vehicles also going in the various villages.

Source: www.democracynow.org,
August 2, 2006

* Mohamad Bazzi is Middle East Bureau Chief for Newsday, has been based in Beirut for the past three years, was actually born in Beirut.

They Came – They Wasted The Land

by William A. M. Buckler, Australia

The world is a spectator to one of the oldest and most cruel tools of war. It is now taking place before our very eyes in Lebanon.

Antecedents

This tool of war has been used through history. During the Peloponnese War, Sparta sent its army up to the walls of Athens and then used it to utterly destroy the agriculture, structures, bridges and wells. Then they tore out or felled all the trees, leaving a desert of destruction behind.

The same thing was done by the Germanic tribes before they crossed the Rhine into Roman territory. US General Sherman during the American Civil War left an utterly wasted land behind him as he advanced to Atlanta and the sea. The “tool of war” was used by the German Army of WW II in its retreat from Stalingrad – the Russian Army advanced into a desert.

NOW – It Is Happening In Lebanon

This time, the destruction is being done from the air. Israel’s aerial assault on Lebanese infrastructure has battered bridges, roads, power plants, airports, grain depots, electricity grids, apartment buildings, mosques, community centres, several major hospitals, civilian homes, gas stations, ports and most of the small country’s critical life-support systems. There is a wandering taking place from southern Lebanon as people try to seek safety further north. But each time people come to a river, they find the bridges down so they leave their cars behind and cross on foot. Western nations are trying to evacuate their own nationals and an armada of ships is heading for the shores of Lebanon. And the air raids continue.

Two Wasted Muslim Lands – And Syria

Iraq’s physical infrastructure is already a wasteland. Lebanon’s is now close to being the same. It will take a decade, or even longer, to even partially repair the damage. But Syria stands undamaged as the last Muslim nation with a border to Israel. And officially, Syria and IRAN are formally allied nations.

What Israel Expects – Or Suspects

Israel expects – or suspects – that the US is buckling at the knees from its own escape in Iraq and might start pulling out of Iraq later this year or next. If that happens, Israel faces an intractable strategic problem. Israel is fighting a two front war – one in Gaza and now the one in Lebanon. For Israel, the sole strategic “solution” to this two front war is the destruction of Syria and the creation of a third wasteland.

Israel And Its Geo-Strategic Problem

Since its inception in 1948, Israel has had a fundamental strategic problem. It has no

depth. It could not and cannot afford to lose a battle on its own borders, having no space or room to retreat and regroup.

It is this fundamental strategic fact which has caused Israel, preemptively or otherwise, to always be the first one to attack when it saw itself under threat from surrounding Muslim nations. Having attacked, Israel had to advance, and fast, for the grand-tactical purpose of gaining a military decision through arms and gaining further manoeuvre space. Lastly, Israel cannot afford any kind of long, slow war.

Military Theory – The Wasteland And The Counter Scarp

When the first cannons arrived, they made all previous fortresses obsolete. Across Europe, castles of vast renown fell in hours or a day or two when faced with cannons, though in previous centuries the same castles had stood sieges of months and even years. But the techniques of defence caught up with the cannons and new forms of fortification arrived which again made sieges long-term affairs. What these fortifications had in common was that while they still had walls and ditches, they added a prepared zone in front of them which they could sweep with their own cannon fire from higher ground. The areas in front of such fortifications had often been prepared for years in advance, so that when the defending cannon fire flew out, their natural range was following a terrain which descended at the same rate. This enabled the projectiles to fly low over this prepared ground and to hit with precision.

The Fortress State

Israel is, in modern military terms, a nation which is this kind of fortress. But now a new strategy is on the way, one where a vast infrastructure and logistic space is destroyed across the borders of the nation – see today’s Iraq and Lebanon. Now, the only remaining undamaged infrastructure and logistic space is Syria. Devastate Syria and Israel has, for the first time in its history, a wasteland all around it.

A Wasteland And A Forward Swept Ground

If Syria is destroyed, the wasteland will reach from the Mediterranean all the way to the Persian Gulf and to the borders of Saudi Arabia. If this is “achieved”, Israel can then “sweep” this vast area with its Air Force in a like manner to the fortification cannons of old. The US did something very similar with its two “no fly zones” over Iraq between Iraq War I and Iraq War II. Iraq’s Saddam Hussein could not move an inch, in military terms, before the US saw what he was doing. US air strikes followed in short order.

The Longer Term Problems With Such A Strategic Policy

If Syria is militarily destroyed over the next year or so, Israel will stand geo-strategically “safe” for the first time in its short history. Iran, which is by its own words the sworn enemy of Israel, will be facing an approach march across a wasted Iraq of more than a thousand miles. Israel will see it coming – and act.

If such a strategic outcome entailing the destruction of Syria and making it part of the wasteland can be reached this year or next, the US Armed Forces can indeed retreat claiming mission accomplished.

But the strategy itself inherently entails that Iraq, Lebanon and Syria never be allowed to rise again. That will necessitate periodic Israeli air strikes across this entire wasteland, which will in turn cause untold human economic misery for many millions of Muslim people.

Then, the only way that Israel can be militarily challenged by Iran is if Iran makes a nuclear missile attack on Israel. And that is why Israel is today and always has been, the world’s fiercest opponent of Iran’s development of nuclear technology.

The Greatest Distraction Is Always War:

While the enormous sectarian strife in Iraq bordering on a full scale civil war and the US occupation of this country has to large extent faded into the global background as a dull, distant rumble from far away, the present events in Lebanon have exploded across the headlines of the world’s press and television.

If The Cannons Are Firing To The Far Left – Look To The Right

The Lebanese “distraction” is the reason why nobody has noticed an extraordinary study out of the US Federal Reserve of St. Louis. This study states bluntly that the United States is heading for bankruptcy.

Looking In The Right Direction

A ballooning budget deficit and a pension and welfare time bomb could send the economic superpower into insolvency, according to research by Professor Laurence Kotlikoff for the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Professor Kotlikoff said that, by some measures, the US is already bankrupt. He says this: “To paraphrase the Oxford English Dictionary, is the United States at the end of its resources, exhausted, stripped bare, destitute, bereft, wanting in property, or wrecked in consequence of failure to pay its creditors? The US government is, indeed, bankrupt, insofar as it will be unable to pay its creditors, who, in this context, are current and future generations to whom it has explicitly or implicitly promised future net payments of various kinds.”

In a more "normal" context of events, such a report from one of the full-scale Federal Reserve banks would have been making headlines in Barrons and the Wall Street Journal.

Two other American professors drove right in with their own parallel study during the same week as the St. Louis study dealing with the same matter. They had found that the "US fiscal gap" between all future government spending and all future receipts will widen immensely as the baby boomer generation retires and as the amount the government will have to spend on health-care and pensions soars. That total fiscal gap is now an incomprehensible \$US 65.9 TRILLION, according to Professors Gokhale and Smetters.

Professor Kotlikoff had reached the same conclusions as Professors Gokhale and Smetters, having also looked into what it would take to cover this "US fiscal gap". Prof Kotlikoff said this: "This figure is more than five times US GDP and almost twice the size of national wealth". One way to understand \$US 65.9 TRILLION is to ask what fiscal changes would be needed to eliminate this red hole. One solution is an immediate and permanent doubling of US personal and corporate income taxes. Another one is an immediate and also permanent two-thirds cut in Social Security and Medicare benefits.

The Real US FUNDED Debts

A study of credit market debt as a percent of the US GDP by Mr Ned Davis appeared in the July 3 issue of Barrons. The article's title is "Paying Up". In it, Mr Davis states that credit market debt is now more than \$US 40 TRILLION, or 315 percent of US GDP of \$US 12.8 TRILLION. The \$US 40 TRILLION, though, only deals with the "funded debts" inside the US. These are the debts of the US Treasury, the States and all other smaller local governments which have borrowed money as well as all business loans, mortgages, car loans, personal loans and sums owed on credit cards etc.. Add that to the "fiscal gap" detailed above and the total is \$US 105.9 TRILLION. That's at least 830 percent of current US GDP.

A Gigantic Bankruptcy Waiting To Happen

It is true that The Privateer has made the point about the utter unsustainability of US debts many times before. It truly needs to become known. When we see others, especially Americans, who do all the hard work to discover this – as the above gentlemen have done – we like to give them due credit.

The Ongoing Export Of US Dollars

Moving on from the US "balance sheet" and to where the US economy stands in the world at present, one discovers that over the

year so far, the US trade deficit is running at an annual rate of \$US 763 Billion. That is 6.5 percent higher than the total for 2005 of \$US 716.7 Billion, an all time record.

Foreign nations are the recipients of these exported US Dollars, as can be seen from their climbing holdings of foreign exchange reserves. Emerging nations hold a record \$US 3.07 TRILLION while developed nations hold another \$US 1.33 TRILLION. The combined sum comes to \$US 4.4 TRILLION.

The US UN-Balance Of Trade

US May goods imports were up 13.4 percent year on year to \$US 154.3 Billion. US May goods exports were up 12.6 percent to \$US 84.2 Billion. At \$US 63.8 Billion, the May 2006 US trade deficit was the largest since January. US June import prices were up 7.2 percent year on year. The US goods deficit with China rose 4 percent from April to May, increasing from \$US 17.0 Billion to \$US 17.7 Billion. The goods deficit with the European Union increased from \$US 9.4 Billion in April to \$US 10.8 Billion in May. The goods deficit with Japan decreased from \$US 7.8 Billion in April to \$US 7.1 Billion in May. The global end result is that the US exports its US Dollars and receives the world's goods in turn.

Contributory US Causes – Millions Of Them

American borrowers pushed up overall outstanding consumer credit by 2.4 percent or \$US 4.4 Billion to \$US 2.173 TRILLION, the Fed said on Monday, June 10. Credit cards and other forms of revolving debt added to the overall number. US consumers added \$US 6.7 Billion to their revolving debt in May, which is up 10 percent from the prior month! Economically, when consumers are seen to add 10 percent to their already outstanding consumer debts over a month, it is a version of dancing the plastic-fantastic with the hope that tomorrow never comes. Or, much more serious, it is millions of Americans who are no longer able to meet their normal daily or weekly costs of living so, in desperation, they put it on the plastic.

Then, after all these purchases are on the plastic and the goods are in hand, the US trade deficit blows out.

The FED Says Don't Expect This To Change

Here is a quote from Federal Reserve Vice Chairman Donald Kohn: "The first thing to keep in mind about global imbalances is their scale. The US current account deficit is enormous on the order of \$US 800 Billion or 6-1/2 percent of gross domestic product and it is not likely to shrink substantially in the immediate future, given the current configuration of economic activity and prices around the world."

The Other Wasteland – The US Financial System

As has already been demonstrated in this Global Report, the US financial system is today so inundated with present real and future unfunded liabilities that there is no way out, excepting a real and prolonged economic recession to clear the decks. Fed Reserve Vice Chairman Kohn makes this clear (see his quote above). He too sees no immediate way out of the enormous US current account deficit which means that there is no open economic road to a future US financial recovery. This literally means that the US will roll even further into both climbing debts, both internal and external, as its internal credit expansion spills over into the rest of the world through its trade and current account deficits. This also means that the sum total of US external debts will keep right on climbing, as will the piled up sums of US Dollars circulating outside the US. Historically, it is worthwhile to remember that the last time the US had worked itself into a near similar situation internally was way back in the mid-late 1920s. Back then, its funded debts had climbed to 260 percent of US GDP. The end outcome was the October 1929 crash of the US stock market, followed by the closure of the ENTIRE US banking system in 1933.

The G-8 Summit Becomes A Side Show

The leaders of the G-8, representing Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, Britain, and the United States, have met in St. Petersburg. The summit include not only the G-8 leaders, but those of India, China, Congo, South Africa, Brazil, Mexico and Kazakhstan. These got invited to lunch with the "main players", and then the Israeli aerial assault upon Lebanon swept the entire show off stage.

Bush And Blair – Open-Mouth Episode

A mike on their table was live. Neither of the two "statesmen" knew it, so the world got to listen in. Bush solved the Middle East problem instantly, quote: "See, the irony is what they need to do is get Syria to get Hezbollah to stop doing this shit, and it's over. I felt like telling Kofi (The General Secretary of the United Nations) to get on the phone with (Syrian Leader) Assad and make something happen."

No mention of the fact that only a couple of years ago, the Syrian Army was fully emplaced in Lebanon.

The Christians there had invited the Syrian army in to maintain public order after Lebanon's tragic 15 year long civil war. Back then, the Syrian Army was in fact sitting firmly on top of Hezbollah, until the Bush Administration forced it out of Lebanon. That left the new fragile Lebanese Government and its small Army of 50,000 men to cope with a Hezbollah Force that both outnumbers it as well as outmatches it in war fighting terms. So, according to

President Bush, the Syrians, who are now no longer there, are supposed to stop the Hezbollah, while still staying in Syria! No mention was made in this "open" talk between President Bush and Prime Minister Blair about Israel's pitiless demolition attack on Lebanon.

Later, White House official spokesmouths intoned the political line that Israel was acting in self-defence.

Message From Teheran

On Friday, July 14, the day before the G-8 Summit began, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was quoted as saying this in a telephone conversation with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad:

"If the Zionist regime (Israel) commits another stupid move and attacks Syria, this will be considered like attacking the whole

Islamic world and this regime will receive a very fierce response."

Message From Israel

Israel has indicated that it: "...Will not end its military activity until a new situation is created that will prevent Syria and Iran from using terror organizations, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, to threaten its security." No mention was made of the now well reported fact that the Israeli Air Force has hit bakeries in Beirut, having hit granaries there the day before. This air campaign is literally creating a wasteland.

Message From The Israeli Defence Force (IDF)

The IDF has mobilized a reserve infantry division in preparation for a possible ground incursion into south Lebanon, the Jerusa-

lem Post has learned. The move is the beginning of a new effort to push Katyusha rocket launching cells away from the Israel-Lebanon border. This division was setting up command posts on the northern border while all its tanks and armoured personnel carriers were being transported northward. Israel is mobilising its civilian reserves, as it always does before a ground war.

A Message From SYRIA:

DAMASCUS (AFP) – Syria has warned it would respond directly and by all means necessary to any Israeli attack on its territory in its first official reaction to Israel's offensive on neighbouring Lebanon.

Source: *The Privateer*, 2006 Volume – Late July Issue – Number 557, p 1-5, www.the-privateer.com

A Quick Retrospective – To Give Perspective

by William A. M. Buckler, Australia

The last "legitimate" (because it was declared by Congress, even if they were tricked into it) war fought by the US was WWII. When the US entered that war at the end of 1941, Treasury funded debt was about \$US 42 Billion. Unfunded debt was as yet comparatively minuscule, the entitlement programs instituted by the Roosevelt Administration being as yet less than ten years old. By 1946, the year after WWII ended, the funded debt had ballooned to \$US 260 Billion. Twenty five years later, in 1971, it was up to \$US 400 Billion. In 1971, Mr Nixon severed the last tenuous tie between the US Dollar and Gold.

Today (July 20, 2006), funded Treasury debt is \$US 8,415 Billion. Before 1971, it took two world wars and a massive welfare program (Mr Johnson's "Great Society" program of the mid 1960s) to push the debt up to \$US 400 Billion. After 1971 and the banishment of Gold, the debt increased twenty- one fold. 95.2 percent of funded Treasury debt outstanding has been accumulated since the US Dollar and Gold were split asunder in 1971.

And consider this. When the Fed was established at the end of 1913, TOTAL Treasury debt (there was no unfunded debt back then) was \$US 2.9 Billion. That is less than 5 percent of the present MONTHLY US current account deficit. The population of the US in 1913 was about a third of what it is today. In 1913, total US Treasury debt per capita was \$US 29.00. In 2006, the funded portion is \$US 28, 050.00. The population has tripled in the intervening 93 years. The debt is up almost 1000 times.

Making The World "Safe" – For The US Dollar

For more than half a century, ever since Europe finished the initial task of digging

out from under the rubble of WWII, the US has run a chronic and almost unceasing trade deficit. As far back as 1961, a main theme of President Kennedy's inauguration speech was the trade deficit which the US had been continually suffering for the previous decade. How can any nation, no matter how powerful, go on receiving more of the world's goods than it sends out to the world for such a long time?

The answer is that "any nation" can't. Only a nation which controls the key or RESERVE currency can. The US is, of course, this nation, and it has been since 1944. A non RESERVE currency is useful to the extent that it can be spent in the nation of issue and/or used to buy goods from the nation of issue. A RESERVE currency can also be used for these purposes, but it can ALSO be used by the Central Bank of any country as the RESERVE on which to build its own financial system. This is the inestimable advantage which the US Dollar has enjoyed since the end of WWII. This is the inestimable advantage which, above all else, has allowed the US government to amass such power in the world. And THIS is the advantage which the Bush Administration, and the US political establishment, is now defending with ever more desperate measures, both outside and INSIDE the US.

The power of any government, whatever its scale in the global scheme of things, ultimately rests on the viability of its money. The acquisition of political power is a very expensive process. The maintenance of that power is an even more expensive process. And as every would be aspirant to world empire in history has learned, the time always comes when the "end" outstrips the "means" available to attain it. As both the burgeoning of debt and the blundering on

the international stage perpetrated by the Bush Administration makes crystal clear, that point is either here or it is VERY close for the US government.

Everything we are seeing in the world at present – from the tyrannical domestic posturing of Mr Bush and his Administration to the debacle in the Middle East to the propping up of markets to the purposeful savaging of the Gold "price" over the past week – has the same goal. That goal is the preservation of the global reserve currency status of the US Dollar. Lose that, and the power of Washington DC and Wall Street crumble to dust as the "prosperity" of America is exposed as one of history's gigantic con jobs.

The US government stands or falls on the viability and acceptability of the US Dollar. And they know it.

"Preserve, Protect And Defend" – What?

As we state on "The Gold Pages" at our website: "Political power grows out of the ability to interfere in the voluntary interaction between individuals. In a society in any stage of advanced development, the way to do that has always been to gain control of what the society or nation uses as its money."

As has been the case for every empire in history, the source of power is the control of what the world, or large parts of it, uses as its money. Since WWII, that has been the position enjoyed by the government of the US. And once all the smoke, mirrors, obfuscations, hypocrisies and outright lies are swept away, it is THIS position which the Bush Administration AND the Congress are grimly determined to "preserve, protect and defend". Their problem is the age-old one of all grasping after outright

power. In the process of gaining and striving to keep power, they have hollowed out the very instruments which provided it in the first place. Yes, the US financial system and currency is indeed bankrupt. The great struggle now is to prevent those who don't know this from learning this and those who DO know it from acting on their knowledge. The struggle will fail, as it has always failed. The tragedy lies in the cost of that failure. •

Source: *The Privateer*, 2006 Volume – Late July Issue – Number 557, p 11-12, www.the-privateer.com

The G-8 Summit Really Was Russia's Show Case

Russia has returned. Russia's foreign currency and Gold reserves, now the world's fourth largest, have risen to a record \$US 250.6 Billion, boosted by high oil and gas prices. The reserves rose \$US 3.4 Billion in the week ending June 30. New foreign investments are storming into Russia. Russia got \$US 16.1 Billion of capital inflows in the second quarter, a record high, the Central Bank has said. That net inflow compares with a revised \$US 4.7 Billion outflow during the first quarter and \$US 5.3 Billion of outflows in the same period a year earlier. The world is looking for profits and it is now investing in Russia.

"I believe the future of our country can be ensured only if we feel fully-fledged and equitable members of the world community and the European family." Vladimir Putin said this a two-hour TV appearance during the G-8 Summit. The Russians fully expected this Summit to be their entry into the WTO. After all, China is a member. But the Bush Administration closed the door during the summit, leaving Russians furious and Europeans stunned. Then Israel launched its attack upon Lebanon and the summit stopped.

Source: *The Privateer*, 2006 Volume – Late July Issue – Number 557, p 8, www.the-privateer.com

Beware of the "New Order" Israel is imposing

by Siddharth Varadarajan*

No peace or stability can emerge in West Asia through occupation, subjugation, and the military slaughter of civilians.

On July 28, 1989, a detachment of heavily armed Israeli commandos descended upon the southern Lebanese village of Jibchit. The time was 2 a.m. They burst into the home of Sheikh Abdul Karim Obeid, leader of the Hizbollah militia, beat up his wife, and shot dead a neighbour before bundling the Sheikh and two other men into a helicopter. One of those seized was a young man named Hashem Fahaf who had no connection to Hizbollah, the other was the Sheikh's bodyguard.

According to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which carries a helpful if damning account of the kidnapping on its website, "Israel had hoped to use the sheikh as a card to affect an exchange of prisoners and hostages [held by Hizbollah] in return for all Shiites held by it."

So brazen was Israel's action that the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed a resolution (No. 638) calling for the "immediate safe release of all hostages and abducted persons, wherever and by whomever they are being held." Needless to say, Tel Aviv ignored the resolution. After all, kidnapping non-combatants, including minors, and holding them hostage, was an integral part of Israel's military strategy. In May 1994, Israeli soldiers abducted a prominent Lebanese businessman and former commander of the Shia Amal militia, Mustafa al-Dirani, and brought him into Israel. The aim of that kidnapping was to try and get information about the location of Ron Arad, an air force navigator who had been shot down over Sidon in 1986 during Israel's ongoing aggression against Lebanon.

Mr. Fahaf, whose presence Israel refused to recognise for years, spent 11 years in jail before the Supreme Court finally ordered his release. He was allowed to return home along with 18 other Lebanese nationals who — the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported in August 2003 — had been held "according to the official version... as 'bargaining chips' for Ron Arad". Two of those released had been kidnapped as boys and had grown into adulthood in captivity.

Sheikh Obeid and Mr. Dirani were finally released in 2004, after being held hostage by the Israeli government for 15 and 10 years respectively. Both men spent extended periods of time at Camp 1391, dubbed Israel's Guantanamo, a prison whose existence the Israeli authorities do not freely admit to. There, Mr. Dirani was raped, sexually abused, and tortured by Israeli soldiers. A lawsuit filed by him against the State of Israel is currently pending before a judge in Tel Aviv. He is claiming NIS 6 million (\$1.5 million) in damages.

The 2004 release was part of a general prisoner swap brokered by the German government in which Hizbollah released an Israeli businessman and reserve colonel seized in 2000 in order to force Tel Aviv to free Sheikh Obeid. Hizbollah also returned the bodies of three Israeli soldiers killed in action. In exchange, Israel set free the Sheikh, Mr. Dirani, and 33 other Lebanese and Arab hostages, as well as 400 Palestinian prisoners. It also returned the bodies of 59 Lebanese nationals killed by its security forces over the years.

It is necessary to recall this entire sordid episode in order to put in perspective Hizbollah's foolish action of seizing two Israeli soldiers across the blue line dividing Lebanon from Israel. Thanks to Israel, kidnapping and hostage-taking — as well as the targeting of non-combatants and even children — have become "acceptable" military

tactics in the region though one would be hard pressed to come across any reference to Sheikh Obeid or Mr. Dirani in the international news coverage that followed Hizbollah's action. The Shia militia wants Tel Aviv to free the handful of Lebanese prisoners still in Israeli jails who were promised freedom in 2004 but never released. Most prominent among them is Samir Kuntar, captured in 1978 during a guerrilla raid on an Israeli settlement near the Lebanese border. Kuntar was found guilty of killing a civilian man and his young daughter and sentenced to more than 500 years in prison by an Israeli court. The Israeli authorities may balk at releasing a "convicted child killer." But in rejecting the possibility of a negotiated settlement and indiscriminately bombarding Lebanon, Tel Aviv has turned its own soldiers into the executioners of children. When a well-marked United Nations post takes a direct hit and ambulances are struck — according to a recent dispatch by Robert Fisk — with missiles that pierce the Red Cross and Crescent symbol right at the centre, it is hard to accept the Israeli claim that all civilian deaths were unintended.

Real war aims

Recalling the recent history of kidnappings is also necessary for another reason: To puncture the myth that the disproportionate and utterly criminal Israeli military response that is pulverising Lebanon and its people today is somehow driven by an urge to free its two kidnapped soldiers.

Read what Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former U.S. National Security Advisor, told a small gathering in Washington last week about this. "I hate to say this but I will say it. I think what the Israelis are doing today for example in Lebanon is in effect — maybe not in intent — the killing of hostages. The killing of hostages... Because when you kill 300 people, 400 people, who have nothing to do with the provocations Hizbollah

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staged, but you do it in effect deliberately by being indifferent to the scale of collateral damage, you're killing hostages in the hope of intimidating those that you want to intimidate. And more likely than not you will not intimidate them. You'll simply outrage them and make them into permanent enemies with the number of such enemies increasing."

On a par with the fantasy that the latest Israeli aggression against Lebanon is about protecting the legitimate security interests of Israel is the demand being raised in various quarters for a NATO peacekeeping force to be deployed on the Lebanese side of the border in order to disarm Hizbollah. Frequent reference is made to Security Council resolution 1559 of 2004, which called on the Lebanese government to assert its sovereignty over the whole of its territory and disarm the Shiite militia. When it suits Israel and the United States, United Nations resolutions such as 242 and 338 on Palestine or 638 on releasing hostages can be ignored for years on end. But other resolutions acquire a Biblical patina and instant compliance is required of them. By grossly interfering in Lebanon's internal affairs, Resolution 1559 was clearly ultra vires of the UN Charter. That is why it passed with the barest possible majority. Russia and China chose to

abstain rather than exercise their veto because the resolution envisaged no enforcement mechanism. In any case, it is absurd for Israel — which is bombing Lebanon at will and sending in its troops — to speak in favour of a resolution that calls for the Lebanese government to assert its sovereignty.

As the Israeli peace bloc, Gush Shalom, has said, the current offensive against Lebanon — like the 1982 invasion which led to two decades of occupation — was prepared in advance in anticipation of a suitable provocation. Hizbollah's kidnap raid provided the Olmert regime the excuse it needed to launch a war for the physical elimination of the militia and the eventual installation of a pliant regime in Lebanon that would do Israel's — and the U.S.' — bidding. In many ways, the script is not that different from the manner in which the abduction of an Israeli soldier by Palestinian guerrillas gave Tel Aviv the pretext to do something it was itching to do ever since Hamas won the elections.

In both cases, Israel and its principal international backer, the U.S., have proved how bogus is their vision of a "New Middle East" centred around respect for democracy and human rights. By attacking Gaza and Lebanon, that too with such overwhelming

and disproportionate military force, Israel has decisively turned its back on the possibility of a negotiated peace settlement with the Palestinians and Syrians. The Olmert regime has no intention of relinquishing its illegal control over land and aquifers that belong to others. The U.S. does not want democracy to flourish in the region. Nor does Israel. What it wants are partners who are too weak, isolated or pliant to insist on their rights. What it has in mind are unilateral outcomes, imposed through gunboat negotiations if possible or through war if necessary. In both cases, the active support of the Bush administration and the silence of the rest of the world are essential.

The refusal of the UN to condemn the Israeli aggression against Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority, its failure to bring about an immediate ceasefire despite the mounting civilian toll, and its inability to get Israel to lift its inhuman blockade of Gaza and release the Hamas Ministers and MPs it kidnapped last month are paving the way for a human tragedy of monumental proportions. As long as the world continues to appease Israel in this manner, the people of the region — and especially the Israelis — will never know peace. •

Source: *The Hindu*, July 29, 2006

The Qana massacre and the UN Security Council

The role of a Chapter VII resolution or a UN peacekeeping force must be to protect Lebanon from Israeli aggression

by Siddarth Varadarajan

The primary role of any Chapter VII resolution or expanded UN peacekeeping force must be to protect Lebanon from Israeli aggression.

Tel Aviv's announcement of a 48-hour suspension of air operations following the international outcry over the massacre of 56 Lebanese civilians — half of whom were young children — is not so much an act of contrition as an attempt to shift the American-Israeli war aims against Hizbollah and Lebanon on to a higher, more effective plane.

The fact that the Israeli authorities are granting this 'grace period' primarily in order to allow the United Nations to evacuate any civilians who wish to leave southern Lebanon is itself a blatant declaration of the Olmert regime's intention to continue bombing residential areas. Serving notice on non-combatants and then flattening their dwellings does not exonerate Israel's commanders from culpability for violating the laws of war. Would Israel protest any less if Hizbollah preceded its barrage of Katyushas with a general warning to all residents of Haifa and northern Israel that they leave the area?

While the announcement of 48 hours breathing space is intended to allow anti-Israeli opinion around the world to settle down a little, its main purpose is to give Washington time to try and impose on the government of Fouad Siniora in Lebanon a NATO-led "international stabilisation force" armed with a 'robust mandate' under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

The purpose of such a force would be to put into effect Resolution 1559 — a non-binding resolution of the Security Council passed in 2004 calling on the Lebanese government to disarm Hizbollah and assert its military control over the entire territory of Lebanon. The purpose of the force would certainly not be to facilitate a just political settlement and protect Lebanon from the kind of aggression Israel has regularly been launching since 1978.

Ever since UNIFIL (the UN Interim Force in Lebanon) was first deployed 28 years ago, Israel has displayed utter contempt for the presence of international peacekeepers across the blue line. In 1996, it bombed a UN post at Qana, killing more than 100 civilians. Last week, it "accidentally" killed four peacekeepers and refused

to allow the UN to join the investigation into the incident. Surely America, France or Britain would not allow the UN to probe an incident which occurred on their territory, Dan Gillerman, Israel's Ambassador in New York, argued lamely. Forgetting, conveniently, that the flattened UN post at Khiyyam was on Lebanese and not Israeli soil.

Mandate of UN force the key

Given its track record, Israel will allow the UN Security Council to stay its hand in Lebanon only if this results in the deployment of a well-armed U.S./NATO/European-led force — a force that would complete Tel Aviv's stated war aims for it. This is something that suits the Bush administration too. The U.S. sees Hizbollah as a powerful detachment of "international terrorism" and a tool of Syria and Iran. Thus, getting a 'stabilisation force' on the ground in Lebanon — and on Lebanon's border with Syria, as Condoleezza Rice said on Monday — would be a relatively low-cost alternative to the more direct forms of military pressure on Damascus and Teheran that Washington can ill afford to exert for the moment.

Since the 'war on terror' has been defined by American ideologues as an 'endless war', the U.S. will not deploy in Lebanon unless it is confident of staying there indefinitely. Like Bagram in Afghanistan, Camp Bondsteel in Serbia and the enormous bases coming up all over Iraq, the proposed stabilisation force under the overall control of U.S. Central Command is likely to dig itself in. Therefore, if the Siniora government accedes to the deployment of the kind of force George W. Bush and Tony Blair have in mind, it might as well forget about asserting sovereign control over its "entire territory" for the foreseeable future.

But more dangerous than any symbolic affront to national honour what this will entail is the very real possibility that the 'robust' international force would be no more effective in disarming and defeating Hizbollah than the Israeli armed forces have been in the past two weeks. Eventually, as Anglo-American casualties mount, sectarian militias are likely to be promoted as a conscious military strategy to undermine and contain Hizbollah. If the Lebanese people are lucky, the clock will be turned back to the chaos and mayhem that plagued them in the 1980s. If they are unlucky, they will become the next Iraq.

There is, of course, another alternative, if only the world could find a way to insist that the U.S. and Israel agree to it.

The starting point has to be the Israeli recognition of a simple fact: that it is Isra-

el's legacy of disastrous wars against Lebanon that lies at the root of the present problem. Tel Aviv cannot take refuge under the claim that Hizbollah attacked first. Israel remains in illegal possession of Lebanese territory — the Sheba Farms — and is thus an occupying power. Secondly, there has hardly been a day since its withdrawal from Lebanon two years ago that Israel has not violated Lebanese air space or territorial waters. Thirdly, Israel has refused to provide the Lebanese government with a map of the thousands of landmines it buried throughout its erstwhile occupation zone in southern Lebanon, leading to the death and maiming of Lebanese civilians on an almost monthly basis. Fourthly, it is Israel that first placed civilians, including its own citizens, at risk by indiscriminately bombing Lebanese towns and villages.

Despite these provocations, the Lebanese people and government are entitled to question the wisdom of Hizbollah in unilaterally undertaking a mission to abduct two Israeli soldiers from across the Blue Line. And the seven-point formula presented by Prime Minister Siniora contains within it all the elements necessary for peacefully resolving the ongoing conflict as well as addressing the security concerns of Israel.

In a nutshell, what the Lebanese government and all major parties in parliament (including Hizbollah) are saying is that there should first be an unconditional and immediate ceasefire. A 48-hour suspension of air

attacks is not the same thing. The ceasefire would then be followed by a number of steps, including an exchange of prisoners by both sides; the return by Israel of the Sheba Farms to Lebanon; an independent probe into the indiscriminate bombing Israel launched; the deployment of the Lebanese army all the way down to the border with Israel; the disarming of Hizbollah as an independent militia following national consultations; the provision by Israel of maps indicating the location of its land mines in southern Lebanon; and, finally, the deployment of a UN-led blue helmet force, which would help the Lebanese army ensure that Lebanon is never again attacked by Israel.

This is the big package the Security Council must act upon when it meets this week to resolve the crisis caused by Israel's latest aggression. Substituting this package for the one-point agenda of disarming Hizbollah through military means and attempting to dictate a broader political settlement with the Damocles Sword of Israeli air strikes hanging over Lebanon will only make matters worse. •

Source: *The Hindu*, August 1, 2006

Secret 2001 Pentagon Plan to Attack Lebanon

Bush's Plan for "Serial War" revealed by General Wesley Clark

by a Concerned Citizen

"[The] Five-year campaign plan [includes] ... a total of seven countries, beginning with Iraq, then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Iran, Somalia and Sudan"

*Pentagon official
quoted by General Wesley Clark*

According to General Wesley Clark – the Pentagon, by late 2001, was Planning to Attack Lebanon

"Winning Modern Wars" (page 130) General Clark states the following:

"As I went back through the Pentagon in November 2001, one of the senior military staff officers had time for a chat. Yes, we were still on track for going against Iraq, he said. But there was more. This was being dis-

cussed as part of a five-year campaign plan, he said, and there were a total of seven countries, beginning with Iraq, then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Iran, Somalia and Sudan. [...]

He said it with reproach – with disbelief, almost – at the breadth of the vision. I moved the conversation away, for this was not something I wanted to hear. And it was not something I wanted to see moving forward, either. [...] I left the Pentagon that afternoon deeply concerned."

Of course, this is fully consistent with the US Neocons' master plan, "Rebuilding America's Defenses," published in August 2000 by the Project for the New American Century (PNAC)

And, as PNAC's website (<http://www.newamericancentury.org>) notes, that the

lead author of that plan, Thomas Donnelly, was a top official of Lockheed Martin – a company well acquainted with war and its profit potential.

It's no surprise that Republicans are starting to talk about withdrawing troops from Iraq; the troops will be needed in Lebanon. And maybe Sudan and Syria? •

Source: www.globalresearch.ca, July 23, 2006

Note: More on General Clark – and his failure to mention all this in his pre-Iraq war commentary on CNN – is in Sydney Schanberg's 9/29/03 article "The Secrets Clark Kept: What the General Never Told Us About the Bush Plan for Serial War" at <http://www.villagevoice.com/news/0340,schanberg.47436.1.html>

Israel's Criminal Accomplice

by Paul Craig Roberts*

There never was any doubt of the Bush Regime's complicity in Israel's naked aggression against the Lebanese civilian population. Bush has protected Israel from world condemnation. Bush has blocked those who attempted to bring a stop to Israel's bombing of residential neighborhoods and civilian infrastructure, and now Bush rushes more bombs for Israel to drop on Lebanon.

On July 22, the New York Times revealed the full extent of the Bush Regime's participation in the heinous war crimes being inflicted on the Lebanese people: "The Bush administration is rushing a delivery of precision-guided bombs to Israel, which requested the expedited shipment last week after beginning its air campaign.... The decision to quickly ship the weapons to Israel was made with relatively little debate within the Bush administration, the officials said."

Obviously, Bush and his government do not think Israel has yet murdered enough Lebanese. Bush denounces Syria and Iran for allegedly arming Hezbollah, while he rushes more deadly weapons to Israel.

The entire world is appalled at the Bush Regime's support for Israel's policy of expanding its borders through naked aggression.

Every Arab and Muslim now knows that the US is Israel's enabler. Arab hopes are dead that the US will pressure Israel to behave more humanely toward people not armed with American fighter planes, tanks, and high explosives.

America's complicity in Israel's war crimes is more than America's UK lapdog can stand. According to the French news service, AFP, "The United States is starting to look isolated in its refusal to rein in Isra-

el's attacks on Lebanon with key ally Britain criticizing the wholesale killing of Lebanese civilians and widespread destruction."

AFP reports that Britain's deputy foreign minister Kim Howells "questioned Israel's military tactics and slammed Israel's killing of 'so many children and so many people. If Israel is chasing Hezbollah, then go for Hezbollah. You don't go for the entire Lebanese nation.'"

But is Israel after Hezbollah or is Israel after the real estate that comprises southern Lebanon?

Rightwing Israelis say Israel needs southern Lebanon as a buffer against Hezbollah. If Israel were to succeed in driving Hezbollah out of southern Lebanon, Israel would then want a buffer for southern Lebanon, where Israeli settlements would quickly spring up, And after that buffer, another, just as Israel has gobbled up Palestine.

The American people need to understand what everyone else in the world understands: The Bush Regime is empowering the Israeli state to push out its borders by stealing land from other people.

This Israeli policy is the source of the Middle East conflict.

It is ignorant and immoral to blame the conflict on Hamas and Hezbollah. These organizations were created by Israeli aggression. Lacking American jet fighters, tanks, ordinance, and resupply, these organizations resort to terror, which is the only weapon that they have. Otherwise, the world would pay no attention as Arabs are ground under by Israeli expansion.

The fault is America's more than Israel's. The American government and the brainwashed American public are the source of the conflict. If America did not enable Israeli aggression, Israel would have to behave responsibly and endeavor to co-exist with its neighbors.

Israel is an artificial state created in Arab lands by European colonial powers after

World War II. Instead of working to win acceptance and overcoming Arab hostility to Europe shipping off "the Jewish problem" to the Middle East, Israel has antagonized its Middle East neighbors. Israel can play the bully-boy role, because the US acts as Israel's big brother. With its policy of fang and claw, Israel endangers its own right to exist.

Many distinguished Israelis came to this conclusion long before I did. I am only repeating what can be read in more eloquent writings of distinguished Israelis.

Israel's greatest friends are its own peace movement and those few in America who dare to criticize Israel's self-destructive policies. It is not anti-semitic to hold Israel to the same standards as other civilized countries or to report facts instead of Israeli propaganda.

Israel's greatest enemies are the American neoconservatives, who hold the power in the Bush Regime. What we are witnessing in the Middle East is the unfolding of the neocon plan to destroy all vestiges of Arab/Muslim independence and to remove all opposition to Israel's agenda. Can five million Israelis, even when backed by the United States, forever suppress hundreds of millions of humiliated Muslims stewing in their humiliation?

This is a recipe for perpetual conflict and the eventual destruction of Israel.

Neocons believe that deception of the American public is a legitimate way for them to achieve their plan. Bush's so-called "war on terror" is the cloak for neocon deception.

Bush's war is not on terror. Bush's war is on Muslim states not ruled by American puppets. •

Source: www.counterpunch.org, July 24, 2006

* Paul Craig Roberts was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in the Reagan administration. He is coauthor of *The Tyranny of Good Intentions*.

Russia to defend its principal Middle East ally: Moscow takes Syria under its protection

by Ivan Safronov

The following report was published in the Russian daily *Kommerzant* in early June. It points to Russian military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean as well as support in the modernization of Syria's air defense system, the modernization of Syrian tanks and ground forces. The question is whether in the current context, this military build-up of Syrian capabilities, supported by Russia, will act as a deterrent to an attack on Syria by Israel.

According to our sources, Russia is deepening the port of Tartus (Syria) where it has a naval materiel and technical supplies center. This may be regarded as evidence of Russia's determination to make Syria a bridgehead for boosting its influence with Middle East.

Russia has had a naval materiel and technical supplies center in Tartus since the 1970s. Vladimir Zimin, advisor on the staff of the Russian Embassy in Syria, says that the port is being made deeper at present. Similar work is under way in the port of Latakia. All this may be regarded as evidence of Russia's determination to make Syria a bridgehead for boosting its influence with Middle East. The materiel and technical supplies center may eventually gain the status of a base of the Black Sea Fleet.

Defense Ministry sources, speaking anonymously, hint that Moscow has some far-reaching plans indeed. A group of ships under the missile cruiser *Moskva* (Black Sea Fleet flagship) is to be formed within the next three years. The group will be stationed in the Mediterranean Sea on the permanent basis. Among other tasks, it will participate in counter-terrorism operation *Active Endeavor* with NATO forces. Hence the necessity to make the Tartus and Latakia facilities ready for the Russian surface warships – ships of the Black Sea Fleet and eventually the Northern Fleet as well. (The latter will be used to reinforce the Russian Mediterranean naval group whenever necessary.)

But a source in the Naval Main Command said that establishment of a fully-fledged base in Tartus could help Russia with warships and tenders withdrawn from Sevastopol in the Crimea. In fact, once the bottom of the Tartus port is deepened, the port will be able to receive all ships of the Black Sea Fleet without exception.

Defense Ministry sources point out that a naval base in Tartus will enable Russia to solidify its positions in the Middle East and ensure security of Syria. Moscow intends to deploy an air defense system around the base – to provide air cover for the base itself and a substantial part of Syrian territory. (S-300PMU-2 Favorit systems will not be turned

over to the Syrians. They will be manned and serviced by Russian personnel.)

According to our sources, Russia and Damascus reached an agreement on modernizing Syria's air defenses. Its medium-range S-125 air defense systems will be upgraded to the Pechora-2A level. The upgrade will certainly improve Syrian air defense, which uses hardware supplied to Syria back in the 1980s. Moscow is prepared to offer Syria more sophisticated medium-range Buk-M1s as well. Close-range *Strelets* systems sold to Damascus last year are all the Syrian air defense system has to show by way of sophisticated gear at this point (these systems use *Igla* SAMs).

Syria wants more than that. A contract for modernization of 1,000 T-72 tanks was drawn and signed. Yesterday, Arms-TASS news agency reported successful tests of T-90C tanks "in a certain Middle East country" and Rosoboroneksport's negotiations over their sale. Other Russian-Syrian arms talks under way concern two *Amurs* (Project 1650 diesel submarines), some *SU-30MKI* fighters

along with *YAK-130s*, and modernization of *MIG-29* frontal fighters. Damascus also aspires for a consignment of the latest *Pantsir-C1* air defense systems designed in Tula.

Establishment of a base in Tartus and rapid advancement of military technology cooperation with Damascus make Syria Russia's instrumental bridgehead and bulwark in the Middle East. Damascus is an important ally of Iran and irreconcilable enemy of Israel. It goes without saying that appearance of the Russian military base in the region will certainly introduce corrections into the existing correlation of forces. Russia is taking the Syrian regime under its protection. It will almost certainly sour Moscow's relations with Israel. It may even encourage the Iranian regime nearby and make it even less tractable in the nuclear program talks. •

Source: *www.globalresearch.ca*, July 28, 2006, original Russian: *Kommerzant*, Moscow June 2, 2006

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De Facto declaration of War against Iran and Syria

cc. On July 18, the US Congress (Senate and House of Representatives) passed Resolution 921, a bill which contains 14 points and amounts to a declaration of war against Syria and Iran.

The bill begins by assuring Israel of America's "unconditional support" (Art. 1). Then any state which supports Hamas or Hezbollah is accused of direct responsibility for their attacks (Art. 6). (Just for the record, Hezbollah is a democratically elected party of the state of Lebanon and is not included in the European Union's list of terrorist organizations. Hamas is the freely elected majority party in the Palestinian territories.)

In the same resolution, both Syria and Iran are explicitly condemned for their sup-

port of these organizations (Art. 7). Congress then concedes to Israel the right to defend itself "on the territory of any country which constitutes a threat" (Art. 8).

Finally in Article 10, the president is urged to support Israel with all of its power whenever Israel "reacts to terrorist organizations and their state supporters" (i.e., Iran and Syria).

Sources in the Kremlin have described this resolution as the US Congress declaring de facto war on Syria and Iran. According to the US Constitution, Congress is the agency responsible for declarations of war.

At any rate, the text of the resolution can be interpreted as giving Israel the right to move against Syria and Iran mili-

tarly and as binding the US to support Israeli aggression with all possible means (munitions support, satellite pictures, intelligence reports, as well as political and economic pressure). This gives weight to Thierry Meyssan's thesis that the war in Lebanon is the United States' war being carried out by Israel.

By the middle of the 2006 summer vacation, it has become obvious that the Necons in the United States and their lackeys in Europe have put the world in a situation that is even more dangerous than the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

Please read the translation of the Resolution attached below. And ponder what it means.

Resolution 921

Now, therefore, be it Resolved,
That the House of Representatives

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>(1) reaffirms its steadfast support for the State of Israel;</p> <p>(2) condemns Hamas and Hezbollah for engaging in unprovoked and reprehensible armed attacks against Israel on undisputed Israeli territory, for taking hostages, for killing Israeli soldiers, and for continuing to indiscriminately target Israeli civilian populations with their rockets and missiles;</p> <p>(3) further condemns Hamas and Hezbollah for cynically exploiting civilian populations as shields, locating their equipment and bases of operation, including their rockets and other armaments, amidst civilian populations, including in homes and mosques;</p> <p>(4) recognizes Israel's longstanding commitment to minimizing civilian loss and welcomes Israel's continued efforts to prevent civilian casualties;</p> <p>(5) demands the Governments of Iran and Syria to direct Hamas and Hezbollah to immediately and uncondi-</p> | <p>tionally release Israeli soldiers which they hold captive;</p> <p>(6) affirms that all governments that have provided continued support to Hamas or Hezbollah share responsibility for the hostage-taking and attacks against Israel and, as such, should be held accountable for their actions;</p> <p>(7) condemns the Governments of Iran and Syria for their continued support for Hezbollah and Hamas in their armed attacks against Israelis and their other terrorist activities;</p> <p>(8) supports Israel's right to take appropriate action to defend itself, including to conduct operations both in Israel and in the territory of nations which pose a threat to it, which is in accordance with international law, including Article 51 of the United Nations Charter;</p> <p>(9) commends the President of the United States for fully supporting Israel as it responds to these armed attacks by terrorist organizations and their state sponsors;</p> <p>(10) urges the President of the United States to bring the full force of po-</p> | <p>litical, diplomatic, and economic sanctions available to the Government of the United States against the Governments of Syria and Iran;</p> <p>(11) demands the Government of Lebanon to do everything in its power to find and free the kidnapped Israeli soldiers being held in the territory of Lebanon;</p> <p>(12) calls on the United Nations Security Council to condemn these unprovoked acts and to take action to ensure full and immediate implementation of United Nations Security Council 1559 (2004), which requires Hezbollah to be dismantled and the departure of all Syrian personnel and Iranian Revolutionary Guards from Lebanon;</p> <p>(13) expresses its condolences to all families of innocent victims of recent violence; and</p> <p>(14) declares its continued commitment to working with Israel and other United States allies in combating terrorism worldwide.</p> |
|--|--|--|

Source: <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/C?c109:.:ltemp1~c1096dE4QK>

Lebanon: The DFA appeals for an immediate cease-fire to protect civilians

The massive escalation of the military operations in the conflict raging in Lebanon has increased by multiples the number of civilian victims. In particular, the air strike on Sunday against the village of Qana in southern Lebanon caused the deaths of several dozen civilians, mostly children. The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs considers that although international law recognises the right of states to defend themselves against attack, such operations must adhere strictly to the rules of international humanitarian law, which stipulates that "Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat [...] shall in all circumstances be

treated humanely." The DFA welcomes the holding of an urgent meeting by the United Nations Security Council, and hopes that it will lead to an immediate cease-fire in order to avoid further killings of innocent people and allow supplies of emergency humanitarian aid to reach those in need.

Since July 13, the DFA has been urging all parties to the conflict to halt the spiral of violence. Today, it reiterates in the strongest possible terms its condemnation of violence regardless of where it originates. It recalls that indiscriminate attacks against civilian populations are a violation of international humanitarian law. •

Source: Pressrelease, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, July 30, 2006

Don't Shoot the Messenger

Letter by Harold Pinter, Jose Saramago, Noam Chomsky and John Berger

The latest chapter of the conflict between Israel and Palestine began when Israeli forces abducted two civilians, a doctor and his brother, from Gaza. An incident scarcely reported anywhere, except in the Turkish press. The following day the Palestinians took an Israeli soldier prisoner – and proposed a negotiated exchange against prisoners taken by the Israelis – there are approximately 10000 in Israeli jails.

That this "kidnapping" was considered an outrage, whereas the illegal military occupation of the West Bank and the systematic appropriation of its natural resources – most particularly that of water – by the Israeli Defense (!) Forces is considered a regrettable but realistic fact of life, is typical of the double standards repeatedly employed by the West in face of what has befallen the Palestinians, on the land allotted to them by international agreements, during the last seventy years.

Today outrage follows outrage; makeshift missiles cross sophisticated ones. The latter usually find their target situated where the disinherited and crowded poor live, waiting for what was once called Justice. Both categories of missile rip bodies apart horribly – who but field commanders can forget this for a moment?

Each provocation and counter-provocation is contested and preached over. But the subsequent arguments, accusations and vows, all serve as a distraction in order to divert world attention from a long-term military, economic and geographic practice whose political aim is nothing less than the liquidation of the Palestinian nation.

This has to be said loud and clear for the practice, only half declared and often covert, is advancing fast these days, and, in our opinion, it must be unceasingly and eternally recognized for what it is and resisted.

Tuesday, 25 July 2006

Letter later endorsed by:
Tariq Ali, Eduardo Galeano, Naomi Klein,
Arundhati Roy, Giuliana Sgrena,
Howard Zinn

Ireland Foreign Affairs Committee Condemns Violence in Lebanon

Statement, The Joint Oireachtas* Committee on Foreign Affairs, 2 August 2006

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs

Condemning

The fact that over 600 civilians, including many children have died in Southern Lebanon and in Israel in recent weeks;

The damage done to civilian infrastructure in Lebanon on such a scale as to render over 750,000 people homeless;

The indiscriminate attack on a United Nations outpost in South Lebanon, involving the deaths of four UN Peacekeeping personnel;

Recognising the important role of Unifil and the Irish Defence Forces' contribution to that body;

Appalled at the most recent slaughter in Qana over the weekend just passed;

Affirming its belief that the taking of civilian life is never lawful;

Condemns the loss of life that is occurring in Israel and in Southern Lebanon;

Calls

For an immediate ceasefire; for immediate support of initiatives along the lines of those set out by the Lebanese Prime Minister; including the sustained deployment of humanitarian relief to the people affected by the violence;

For Ireland to use its influence at United Nations level to call on the Security Council, and General Assembly, to give its support to such a resolution as would facilitate an immediate ceasefire in the region;

That Ireland raise at the next meeting of the EU Council of Ministers the implementation of sanctions on Israel under the terms of Article II of the Euromed Trade Agreement on grounds of human rights abuses;

That consideration be given to taking legal action against Israel for compensation for its killing of UN personnel and the civilian population and destruction of facilities;

Condemns the seizure of water resources by Israel in the region and urges the UN to establish a permanent specialized team to control and ensure the fair distribution of all water resources.

Further calls

For a rejection of militarism and a sustained engagement by the European Union and the UN on such a set of political proposals as would support the establishment of a viable contiguous Palestinian state, and would enable a true security to be provided for Israel based on accepted borders, and withdrawal from occupied territories;

For the International community to work for the demilitarisation of the region, and to engage in such talks with all of the states in the region as would enable a demilitarisation to take place and the basis for sustained peace and development to be created.

For the Irish Government to advocate at EU and UN level the establishment of an internationally sponsored Peace Process, with a permanent secretariat, to bring together all sides including Israel and the United States for negotiations. This process can build on existing peace efforts in the region such as the Road map. The Peace Process should have an eminent independent chair or chairs sponsored and funded by the UN and the Quartet and should be the instrument for agreeing a permanent political settlement which reaches the causes of the conflict. •

* The Oireachtas is the "national parliament" of the Republic of Ireland

China on Israeli Attack on South Lebanon

On July 30th, an Israeli airstrike against Qana village, south Lebanon caused severe civilian casualties. China strongly condemns this act. The Lebanon-Israel conflict has led to grave humanitarian disaster to Lebanon. China strongly urges the two sides to cease fire immediately and unconditionally so as to avoid even greater disaster. •

Source: Pressrelease, July 31, 2006, www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/swfw/