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Weather

Steele: There are burnt-out tanks

By: Jonathan Steele in Marwahin on: 07.08.2006 [13:15] (1175 reads)



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There are burnt-out tanks, but few Israeli troops

Evidence in border villages shows heavy price paid for limited incursion

Jonathan Steele in Marwahin
Monday August 7, 2006
The Guardian

It is perhaps the world's most dangerous road, snaking up and down through boulder-strewn hills and wadis along the Lebanese-Israeli border. By Israel's account, its forces are moving between four and six miles beyond it to take control of a long strip of Lebanese territory before the UN security council votes for a cessation of hostilities.

But reporters travelling along the border road on Saturday found few signs of an Israeli presence, let alone success. People in only one

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SW, 3 m/s

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village had seen Israeli troops recently. Elsewhere, there was evidence of Israeli failures: burnt-out or crippled tanks. Despite the message of success Israel's generals and politicians are giving their public, the reality on the ground appeared mixed.

At the western end of the border road just inland from the headquarters of the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon (Unifil) at Naqura, Hizbullah fighters were launching Katysuha rockets from positions within three miles of Israel. Scarred

Driving east through Aalma ech Chaab and Dhaira, reporters could see clusters of antennae and army huts on the Israeli side of the border but no sign of any incursion.

At Marwahin, where the road offers a clear view of the greenhouses and neat red-tiled roofs of the Israeli community of Zarit only 200 yards away, the ground was scarred with tank tracks. A broken metal towing cable lay on the ground, an apparent sign of mishap. Nearby were bits of caterpillar track. A mile further at the junction of the side-road to Debel a burnt-out Merkava tank was stuck in the trees, its cannon pointing limply downwards.

Here the border runs along the top of a hill where a heavily fortified Israeli base sits cheek by jowl alongside UN monitoring position 5-42, a collection of white trailers and a watchtower inside blast walls. The road to Debel was littered with more broken tracks and towing cables. Hizbullah's resistance had clearly made its mark.

Beyond the Debel turnoff, reporters could hear a fierce battle for the village of Aita ech Chaab. Israeli shells and tank rounds were pounding it and setting fire to bushes on the hillsides to deny Hizbullah fighters cover. It is the only place on the north-south border where Israel seemed to be trying to advance.

Israel has not sought to penetrate the next village of Rmeish, which has a Christian population of several hundred. The last portion of the border before it turns north towards Metulla -the current centre of the fighting - contains the towns of Bint Jbeil and Aitaroun, which Israeli forces tried to take in the first days of the war and then withdrew after losing nine men.

The trip along the border road became possible when Israel allowed a UN convoy to bring food aid to the isolated Christian village of Debel. This was the first access to border villages for 10 days.

With one white armoured personnel carrier in front and another at the back, three UN food lorries set off from Naqura. The thump of outgoing tank and artillery rounds provided a constant accompaniment from the Israeli side.

In a press car behind the convoy sat the Archbishop of Tyre, clad in a white cassock. The Israeli onslaught has hit Shia Muslim villages hardest because of suspected links with Hizbullah's guerrilla fighters, but many Christians have stayed, their houses intact but their supplies dwindling fast.

Control

"They have the dignity of mountain people. They don't want to live as refugees in a school in Beirut", said Archbishop Chucrallah Hajje, while French and Ghanaian troops unloaded food parcels outside the small church.

Before the convoy set off from UN headquarters, monitors said Israeli forces came in by day but pulled back at night, remaining a few hundred yards inside the border. As a claim to control territory this seemed less than convincing. Israeli troops were still being shot at from villages, the observers said.

The deepest Israeli presence inside Lebanon that the convoy encountered was at Jibbain, a Sunni village two miles from the border. The archbishop wanted to give aid here too, in part to show his concern was not only for bringing aid to Christians.

On Sunday Israeli commandos landed near Mansouri on the coast north of Naqura, killing a Lebanese army intelligence official and wounding seven soldiers. The purpose may have been to squeeze the Hizbullah launch teams between Jibbain and Mansouri.

If so, it would confirm that, rather than an occupation of south Lebanon, the Israelis are going for limited gains.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,1838601,00.html>

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Article and comments

Excellent, excellent!

by Morgane on 07.08.2006 [13:40]

Shows the Israelis are all mouth - and no trousers!

Zionist Janjawids

by Morgane on 07.08.2006 [13:53]

On the angryarab.blogspot.com they have this brilliant new name for the invaders under a picture of an innocent baby victim

<http://photos1.blogger.com/blogger/2871/232/1600/aaaa.79.jpg>

Zionist Janjawids destroyed his house in Rafah.

a chilling thought

by picard-fortune-500 on 07.08.2006 [14:19]

Tom Ricks, Washington Post reporter and author of the #1 best-seller "Fiasco," was on Howard Kurtz's "Reliable Sources" CNN show this morning, with some interesting news:

KURTZ: Tom Ricks, you've covered a number of military conflicts, including Iraq, as I just mentioned. Is civilian casualties increasingly going to be a major media issue? In conflicts where you don't have two standing armies shooting at each other?

THOMAS RICKS, REPORTER, "THE WASHINGTON POST": I think it will be. But I think civilian casualties are also part of the battlefield play for both sides here. One of the things that is going on, according to some U.S. military analysts, is that Israel purposely has left pockets of Hezbollah rockets in Lebanon, because as long as they're being rocketed, they can continue to have a sort of moral equivalency in their operations in Lebanon.

KURTZ: Hold on, you're suggesting that Israel has deliberately allowed Hezbollah to retain some of its fire power, essentially for PR purposes, because having Israeli civilians killed helps them in the public relations war here?

RICKS: Yes, that's what military analysts have told me.

KURTZ: That's an extraordinary testament to the notion that having people on your own side killed actually works to your benefit in that nobody wants to see your own citizens killed but it works to your benefit in terms of the battle of perceptions here.

RICKS: Exactly. It helps you with the moral high ground problem, because you know your operations in Lebanon are going to be killing civilians as well.

Some burnt out boats

by Syrian on 07.08.2006 [16:32]

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