

# TELLING THE HISTORY OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY AS IT REALLY IS

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 16, 2006

## THE US AND ISRAEL HAVE FAILED TO PROVOKE WAR WITH SYRIA AND IRAN.

Apart from using the excuse of wanting to secure the release of the two Israeli soldiers captured by Hezbollah on the 12 July 2006 to launch an all-out attack on south Lebanon, the Israeli government within just a few days announced that the aim of the attack was also to destroy Hezbollah 'for good'.<sup>[1]</sup> A little over a month later as a brokered ceasefire tenuously takes hold, it is clear the Israelis have failed in their stated war aims and as a result Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah leader, has claimed an 'historic victory'.<sup>[2]</sup>

On the surface Israel's war aims seemed straight forward; they wanted their soldiers back and they wanted to destroy Hezbollah. They have certainly failed to destroy Hezbollah and, at the time of writing, the Israelis have as yet not had their soldiers returned to them, so, as the ceasefire takes hold, neither of Israel's stated war aims have been successful.

But then, were Israeli war aims as simple as that? Could Israel really have been so naïve as to think that it could destroy forever the Hezbollah organisation by simply destroying physical structures and killing hundreds of Lebanese civilians? How could Israel have so utterly underestimated the tenacious strength and the support that Hezbollah has demonstrated that it has when for decades Hezbollah had shown itself to be more than capable of resisting Israel's military might?

Clearly Israeli war aims were more than a simple hot pursuit of guerrillas that had captured two low-ranking Israeli soldiers. Yet the capture of the two soldiers, as Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert quickly announced, was indeed the given Israeli casus belli for war after saying that the capture of the soldiers constituted 'an act of war'.<sup>[3]</sup>

However, the speed at which the conflict escalated exposed the shallowness of Israel's stated casus belli. The extent and rapidity of the escalation demonstrated that Israel had prepared for their attack on Lebanon well before the two Israeli soldiers had been captured.

A revealing article in the Jerusalem Post on 12 July 2006 – the very same day that the two Israeli soldiers were captured – told readers that: "Only weeks ago, an entire reserve division was drafted in order to train for an operation such as the one the IDF is planning in response to Wednesday morning's Hizbullah attacks on IDF forces along the northern border."<sup>[4]</sup>

Initial news bulletins that were published on 12 July 2006 reported that the two Israeli soldiers had been captured inside Lebanon at the village of Aitaa al Chaab.<sup>[5]</sup> Even Forbes.com, a neoconservative-sponsored media outlet owned by staunch Israeli supporter, Stephen Forbes, initially reported: "The militant group Hezbollah captured two Israeli soldiers during clashes Wednesday across the border in southern Lebanon..."<sup>[6]</sup> The story about them being captured inside Lebanon however, was quickly denied and virtually all later articles reported that Hezbollah fighters had crossed into Israel to seize the two soldiers. The earlier reports that they had been caught inside

ABOUT ME

DAMIAN LATAAN  
VERDUN, SOUTH AUSTRALIA,  
AUSTRALIA

Aeronautical Engineer, Historian  
and general carer of what goes on  
in the world.

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Lebanon were barely mentioned again. By the following day when Israel were already letting loose with their attacks against southern Lebanon, the mainstream media had already 'adjusted' history in the mind of the news hungry public to suit Israel's rationale and stated casus belli for war.

In order to increase the pressure on Hezbollah the Israeli government issued a statement to the effect that it held the Lebanese government responsible for what was happening because it, the Lebanese government, had allowed "Hezbollah to operate in its sovereign territory".[7] By Friday 14 July 2006 the Israelis were ramping up the war aims publicly with Isaac Herzog of the Israeli security cabinet saying: "We've decided to put an end to this saga and to change the rules of the game whereby a terrorist organisation that is part of the Lebanese government can push the region to the abyss", while Brig. Gen. Ido Nehushtan of the Israeli general staff said bluntly: "We want to put Hezbollah out of business." [8]

Meanwhile, the neoconservative commentators in the US and elsewhere had already begun to work themselves up into frenzy blaming Syria and Iran for the conflict. Michael Ledeen wasted no time in launching into a predictable rant telling readers: "No one should have any lingering doubts about what's going on in the Middle East. It's war, and it now runs from Gaza into Israel, through Lebanon and thence to Iraq via Syria. There are different instruments, ranging from Hamas in Gaza to Hezbollah in Syria and Lebanon and on to the multifaceted "insurgency" in Iraq. But there is a common prime mover, and that is the Iranian mullahcracy, the revolutionary Islamic fascist state that declared war on us 27 years ago and has yet to be held accountable." [9]

It did not take too long for the Bush administration to also point the finger of blame toward the Syrians and the Iranians. At a press gaggle on board Air Force One on 12 July 2006, Tony Snow, the Presidents press secretary, said when asked to respond to the situation in Lebanon and the Israeli soldiers: "A couple of things. Number one, the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers -- we saw this in Gaza, but also in Lebanon -- is simply unacceptable. And that the governments of Iran and Syria implicated in this; Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. We are hoping that the Lebanese government is going to be able to get control of the situation. But certainly Israel has the right to defend itself and it has assured us that it is trying to proceed us in a way as to avoid civilian casualties..." And then when asked if the US is troubled by Israelis going into Lebanon, he answered: "We believe that Israel has the right to protect itself." [10]

A Presidential statement issued the same day said: "The United States condemns in the strongest terms this unprovoked act of terrorism, which was timed to exacerbate already high tensions in the region and sow further violence. We also hold Syria and Iran, which have provided long-standing support for Hezbollah, responsible for today's violence." [11]

By Saturday 15 July 2006, the Israelis were expanding their assault and bombing Beirut airport. At a press conference the following day Condoleeza Rice made a significant statement. In response to being asked; "Why not call for a cease-fire...?" Rice answered, "We want a sustainable cessation of violence." Then, to an interjected question saying, "you want the violence to end?" Rice replied: "I can tell you that -- of course, we want violence to end. But I can tell you right now if violence ends on the basis of somehow Hezbollah or Hamas continuing to hold in their hands the capabilities anytime they wish to start launching rockets again into Israel, if violence ends on the basis of no change in the underlying political support for Resolution 1559 or for the work that President Abbas is doing, if violence ends on the basis of Syria and Iran being able to turn on the key again anytime, we will have achieved very, very little, indeed, and we will be right

back here, perhaps in a worse circumstance because the terrorists will assume that nobody is willing to take on what has been a very clear assault now on the progress that is being made by moderate forces in the Middle East.”<sup>[12]</sup> Secretary Rice will no doubt be hoping that these words are not well remembered as Hezbollah remain armed and remain in place.

Now let's examine the bigger picture. It is Syria and Iran that seem to be the key to any real analysis of the cause for this particular crisis. From day one of the war on Lebanon both Syria and Iran have featured heavily in the rhetoric of Israel and its backers, the US and Britain. Indeed, as one examines the actual and circumstantial evidence retrospectively, the picture that emerges is not one of Israel wanting so much to primarily destroy Hezbollah but that the real reason for Israel's attack on Hezbollah was to deliberately provoke Syria into the fray which, in turn, would have brought Iran in as well, which in turn again would have involved the US as it rushed to protect Israel, in what would become the determining final battle that would dictate the long term future of the Middle East.

Every day as the war on Lebanon progressed and escalated there seemed to be an ever increasing reluctance from the US to demand a ceasefire and a stop to the carnage and destruction Israel was inflicting on Lebanon. Every day as Hezbollah increased its retaliatory attacks against Israel so the US and its allies sought to increase their rhetoric against Syria and Iran accusing them of supplying arms and weapons to Hezbollah but neglecting to mention their own seemingly inexhaustible supply of arms and weapons to Israel that was being used against the Lebanese people.

The problem for the US and Israel however, was that neither Syria nor Iran were biting. Nothing came of claims that Iranian Revolutionary Guard troops were on the ground in Lebanon fighting Israel<sup>[13]</sup> and Israeli claims that Iranian troops had been found among Hezbollah dead on south Lebanon's battlefields.<sup>[14]</sup> As it became apparent that neither Syria nor Iran were going to be drawn directly into the conflict and the carnage continued in Lebanon, so the US and the UK tried to play for more time by agreeing to be part of UN talks that would end the conflict. But while they agreed to talk they still did not demand an immediate ceasefire. Israel entered and pushed into Lebanon with tanks and ground troops but still the Syrians and Iranians refused to be drawn. There eventually came a point for the US where there was simply no more time left to play with and they could dither no longer over creating a peace plan that would ultimately see Israel the loser. Syria and Iran were steadfast in holding back from entering the war. Neither Israel nor, especially, the US could be seen to make a first strike against Syria or Iran.

The moment had passed. The opportunity to breathe fresh life into an old plan had again moved out of reach. The Israeli and US nerve had failed and the neoconservatives that had initially planned the 'Clean Break' will now, as William River Pitts observes, be seeking new opportunities and excuses to attack Syria and Iran.<sup>[15]</sup>

It may well be some time before all of the facts are known well enough for the events of the past few months to be documented as a lasting history but one can rest assured that that no matter what the propagandists of Israel and their neoconservative backers around the world say, nobody risks World War Three just because a few low ranking soldiers go missing. No. The real reasons for this war can only be surmised at the moment but there is much evidence already to suggest that it was well planned in advance, that it had the backing of President Bush and indeed, was likely planned, as Wayne Madsen has recently suggested, in collusion with the most senior members within the Bush administration and also with the most influential and senior

Israeli Zionist politicians and their neoconservative cohorts in the

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