

**THE CENTER FOR STRATEGIC  
AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**PRESS BRIEFING**

**A VISIT TO THE ISRAEL-LEBANON FRONT:  
LESSONS OF THE WAR AND PROSPECTS  
FOR PEACE AND FUTURE FIGHTING**

**SPEAKER:**

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H. ANDREW SCHWARTZ: Good morning, and welcome to CSIS. Thank you very much for coming to this terrific briefing that Dr. Cordesman has agreed to hold. Dr. Cordesman is just back from the Israel-Lebanon front and he can share some of his observations. In addition, there's several recent papers that Dr. Cordesman has issued that are out front, and if you haven't gotten them already, I urge you take a look.

And with that, I will throw it to Dr. Cordesman.

ANTHONY H. CORDESMAN: Thank you very much. I'm going to speak for just a few minutes since the papers get into a lot of detail, and try to leave as much time for questions as possible. Let me make a broad caveat. (Off mike.) Sorry. Let me just make the initial comment that after some 40 years of watching wars, watching what happens during them by way of reporting, seeing the first set of official reports and then seeing the official reports that follow, I have never seen a war where the data were accurate during the war; I've never seen a war where the data in the first official study turned out to be accurate, and the number of gross errors that tend to come up are so high that everyone should be aware of this.

So as I talk about this, I'm giving you the figures I was given, the kind of data that have emerged to date, but no one should claim, when they talk about initial impressions, a level of accuracy that they don't have. And I'm going to deliberately not name the people that I talk to there. I think it would be unfair given the level of political controversy that's developed in Israel, to try to highlight them. They did include, thanks to Project Interchange, senior officers in each service, senior intelligence people, people at the political level, as well as a great number of retired officers, outside experts and people we actually met at the front.

But let me make just a few quick introductory comments. There were some differences over the precise objectives in going to war, but the most senior official that we talked to set out five objectives. One was to destroy what he called the Iranian western command before it could go nuclear. The fact is that this was not, by any standard, an Iranian western command, although there was a significant Iranian advisory presence, and it was quite clear that Israel did not achieve this objective. I think from what we know that it did achieve its initial objective of striking at the key targets it knew about before the war began, which were Iranian medium- and long-range rockets and missiles. It discovered a significant number of Syrian medium-range systems which it had not anticipated before the war. It believes that it destroyed most of those launchers. It has not made statements about how many of the rockets or missiles were destroyed. IT did have the opportunity to occupy and destroy a command center for targeting rockets and missiles which had obviously been set up with Iranian support, but the fact is that given this type of system, you can basically replicate such a facility in a matter of hours simply by using portable computers. The days in which you had to use high-cost

facilities for this type of operation and make them fixed are simply over. You don't have to do that anymore.

It also is quite clear that while it's difficult to infiltrate back long-range missiles and rockets, it can be done. You simply cannot interdict Lebanon against selective resupply by any amount of bombing of roads or bridges. It's simply too easy to bring these systems in and we have a great deal of experience from Vietnam and other wars that show such missions can be helpful, but never absolute.

When it came down to the goal of destroying the shorter-range rockets, no one in Israel made the claim that they had come close to that. There were differences about the numbers, ranging from 10 (thousand) to 16,000. People said very clearly that the kind of guess of 13,000 was simply a nominal figure, but at least as of Saturday, no one claimed that more than half of those had been destroyed or lost, which meant there were still some 7,000 Katyushas inside the hands of Hezbollah forces. And quite honestly, these systems can be infiltrated and re-infiltrated very quickly. It is virtually impossible for any effort to stop people from bringing these kinds of systems in. Two people can move one; all you need to is to keep infiltrating them in in small numbers.

And again, our own history in the United States is we have zero effectiveness with any combination of air power and sensors in performing this kind of mission. In Vietnam, for example, during the most intensive use of precision-guided weapons in Ho Chi Minh Trail, the Vietnamese were actually able to significantly increase the rate of resupply, something which we only chose to make public after the conflict – several years after the conflict.

I don't think anyone made the claim that they could get rid of the 802 missiles, the anti-ship missiles. It was quite clear that most of the UAVs remained in Hezbollah hands. There was no claim made that there was any ability to remove the RPG-29s, the advanced ant-tank guided missiles, or that anyone even knew what types and numbers of surface-to-air missiles were inside the hands of the Hezbollah forces. And when we looked at casualties, it was very clear that Israel had not estimate before the war began of Hezbollah core fighters and reserves that was meaningful, something which was equally true if you look at unclassified U.S. reporting on the Hezbollah. The numbers were significantly higher than they anticipated. The training and readiness levels were higher than they anticipated. At most, if you take the most dramatic claim they heard, they probably got about 15 percent of Hezbollah strength, and that includes wounded as well as killed, in the forward area, which is not a decisive type of battle.

I think that they were able to get most of the forward strong points and fix defenses. But one of the lessons I suspect both sides learned is that these have some utility, but quite frankly, in a heavily build up area with a lot of ground cover, a lot of this is unnecessary effort. Well-trained troops don't need fortified strong points. When you have cities of 2,000 to 20,000 built-up roads, narrow roads with mountain territory, the truth is that banging away at fortifications is useful only if you know who is in them or there are large weapon stocks. Otherwise it is a very time-consuming, bloody effort, but

it is one where a well-trained force can easily improvise equally effective facilities from what people simply billed as a normal part of civilian life.

One of the issues – perhaps one of the most intense debates we encountered in Israel was the credibility of Israeli deterrence. I think perhaps the most important comment is not mine; it is really from Israelis. We didn't meet anyone who was outside the active service or government who did not feel that Israel's deterrence was actually weakened by the war. The problem, I think, is one of perceptions. The truth is that while the IDF had flaws, it performed quite well. It retains the same conventional superiority it has had in the past, and there were many areas where it may turn out to have won this war if the Hezbollah is disarmed, if the Lebanese forces move south, and if the international peacekeeping force is effective. But in a broader sense, the overall impression is that the IDF is honorable; that Israel is honorable; that asymmetric war works; that movements like the Hezbollah and other non-state actors can be effective; that fixed, narrow areas of defense to separate Israelis from Palestinians and others like the security fences can be bypassed, that they are not an effective way of defending Israel, that the Israeli government is not the kind of government that provides clear and effective management of war. The same message is one that is being communicated about the senior command of the IDF.

And let me note, this is not something that is coming out of the Arab media, although the Arab media are certainly covering it. If you look at Israeli newspapers over the last two weeks, this is the almost universal theme of the newspapers, and they are quoting some of the most experienced political and military and intelligence leaders in Israel.

Perception is the reality in terms of deterrence. Force Lebanon to become and act as an accountable state and end the status of Hezbollah as a state within a state. This did not work during the war. I think that many of us were amazed at the idea that you could intimidate the Lebanese government into sending in the army and dealing with Hezbollah on its own. This is a government which always turns to the outside world for help and support. Somebody once in the State Department described Lebanon as “the crying game.” And I think there is a certain brutal truth to this as a description of how it behaves under pressure. Whether it will become responsible with the help of outside advisors and support to the army, the international peacekeeping force, I think is very unclear.

A great many people have questioned whether the Hezbollah will emerge as one of the dominant forces in Lebanon as a result of this. It is already uncertain what's happening with the peacekeeping force, whether France will play a major role, much less lead. It is certainly unclear that anyone will disarm the Hezbollah, even in the forward area, and the descriptions to date have made it clear they are not going to have an extensive effort to try to shut off Syrian and Iranian resupply unless something very dramatic changes over the present.

Damage or cripple the Hezbollah with the understanding that it could not be destroyed as a military force and would continue to be a major political actor. The Hezbollah was damaged; by no conceivable standard was it crippled. If anything, you now have very large numbers of very experienced combat people who have spent more than six weeks in active engagement with the IDF and have, if not won, learned enough so they will be a far more serious problem in the future, plus the motivation for volunteers is serious.

Get the two Israeli soldiers back. Well, the ceasefire terms call for this, but we simply don't know. I'm not going to speculate on the effectiveness of the ceasefire beyond what we have already learned, but let me turn briefly to a few military lessons and then open things up for questions.

One very impressive difference about Israel from the United States is that everyone, including surveyed people, expected an almost immediate review, some kind of commission to look at the actions of the political and military leadership, at their strengths and weaknesses. I think the United States tends to have accountability in reverse. We sort of begin with the sergeant and perhaps work our way up. I'm much more impressed with the Israeli approach of beginning with the top and working their way down. I think there's a real lesson for the United States in that.

Fighting in civilian areas and the problem of collateral damage. I don't know how many of you have any military experience. I don't know how many of you have seen tapes of what this kind of combat is actually like. The truth is that whether it is fighting in built-up areas or the use of air power, we don't have the kinds of sensors or situational awareness, the targeting capabilities or battle damage capabilities to avoid major collateral damage and civilian casualties. This idea of surgical war, whether it's Israel, us or anyone else, simply is unrealistic. We don't have the capability to do it today. And this is particularly important here because one thing was very clear: The Hezbollah basically used civilians and civilian facilities as its first line of defense. It embedded itself in or near civilian facilities. It developed tactics where you could see videotapes of people rushing into a home, putting a rocket in a second-floor window, firing the rocket, rushing out. And these were in the areas which were the built-up areas.

Most of their facilities are in civilian facilities. Most of their activity levels constantly use civilian cover. The problem here, quite frankly, for Israel, for the United States, for everyone, is how to deal with this tactic because the reality is that people will perceive strikes that have high levels of civilian casualties, collateral damage and humanitarian implications as being things which from highly sophisticated powers with advanced weapons, with democratic governments, are not acceptable. We can't simply say that we have to do this, we have to find much better ways to deal with it.

I think one key message that came across in Israel – it may be a message for the United States; all of you may have your own views of this – is Israel did a really terrible job of managing the media, of communicating its message. Some people blamed the media for this. They said they had tried and it was unfair. Others who were deeply

involved in this presented a very different view, and one which I think in some ways mirror images the United States. A country so concerned with its own internal politics that it talks to itself and does not talk to the world, that does not really see political, perceptual and media as a key and equal element of warfare to the kind of fighting on the ground, a country that does not have the kind of spokesman who really can speak easily and flexibly to the world, and without reminding you of some of the realities here, I don't think that's that different.

The word "proportionality" was a critical word in Israel. It's one we too need to remember. How do you explain, how do you assign, how do you know the level of conflict you can escalate to under the laws of war? What is proportionate? I think that one real problem here, a question Israel raised which may be one for the United States in the future is, when it came to attacking military targets, there was no question. When you could show that the military target was directly embedded in a civilian facility, there is no question about the legitimacy, although there is a great deal of question about perceptions and politics.

When you go beyond that and you attack Lebanese targets, which are only loosely associated with the Hezbollah or are not associated at all, technically under the laws of war this is perfectly legitimate because Lebanon failed to exercise its responsibilities as a state and bring the Hezbollah under control. But I don't believe the world, particularly the Arab world or the Lebanese, will ever accept a technical explanation based on the laws of war. We have no picture of how many of these strikes were conducted versus strikes which could be directly tied to military targets. The numbers are very high. There were over 20,000 artillery rounds fired into a narrow border area, most of them at towns, because that's where the Hezbollah were. There were at least 10,000 strike sorties and helicopter attack sorties. These obviously hit a great many bridges and other targets, but it's going to take, I think, time to figure out what really happened. And unfortunately, I suspect the judgments have already been made, and outside the United States and Israel, they will generally be critical of Israel, whether that's fair or not.

A couple of final points. It was very clear that the government began this war rapidly, without proper preparation, without proper training of the reserves. It seems to have put far more emphasis on airpower than the capabilities that the airpower justified. It put the idea of ground forces into a kind of combat where it had to fight the Hezbollah on its own terms in forward bases, in a narrow area where they had relatively secure rear areas, the ability to disperse and resupply. It was obvious that some people in the IDF recommended a much deeper set of strikes, a war or maneuver that would envelop the Hezbollah, cut it off from the rear, and achieve much more ability to operate in depth. It was quite clear that most of the actual areas involved in Katyusha launchings were not areas where the IDF fought until the final days of the war. And that is something that has to be borne in mind.

The reasons given for this ranged from debates over whether too many of the IDF senior leaders were in the Air Force, to reluctance to reengage in a lasting presence in Lebanon, what was called the Lebanon syndrome, to problems with casualties. Beyond

that, I think, frankly, I'm going to leave the paper in your hands and simply open things up for questions.

Yes?

Q: Andrew Schneider from the Kiplinger Letter. Given the people in the political sphere you spoke to, and what you said earlier on the second point, what do you think is the likelihood that the Olmert government will be able to – would stand further inquiry into the conduct of the war? Is it likely to fall sometime in the near future?

MR. CORDESMAN: You know, that is not really a question for a military analyst. I think that there certainly was a general feeling that this is a very serious issue, but there were three basic approaches to what happened here. One was that a government which was uniquely lacking in military experience and in diplomatic experience at the level of the prime minister, the minister of defense, and the foreign minister, was guilty of major errors. Another is that the IDF had come to change since 1982, that its initial planning and command structure failed to provide the political leadership of Israel with the kind of plans and execution that were necessary to be effective. And then a third concept was that this was really the fault of both – an inadequate military leadership meeting and an inadequate political leadership.

But part of this is simply frustration. Part of this is the idea that Israel should always have the success that it had in 1967 and anything else is a failure. I think that one real question here is what's going to happen if these commissions rapidly produce a study. Another is how will people see this if the Olmert government can survive long enough, and if the international peacekeeping force and Lebanese army are effective because that could excuse a great deal, particularly if the prisoners are released. But certainly the attitudes in Israel while we were there were extraordinarily critical, with some leading journalists calling for the resignation of the government – a front-page op-ed in Ha'Aretz being one case – remarkable amounts of criticism from people in a wide spectrum of Israeli politics of the government as inadequate.

The one comment I would make is that when we asked, well, who comes next and why they are better, we triggered more of a debate over who would be the successors and their potential quality than we did even over the future of the Olmert government.

Yes, in the back?

Q: Stephen Donehoo from Kissinger McLarty Associates. I have two questions. The first I think is an easy one. Would you evaluate the value of the short-range Katyusha rockets and whether or not they actually are anything more than a harassment weapon? And secondly, given your comments about the new use of asymmetric warfare as an effective tool against modern, normally constituted armies, what does this mean to those armies in the countries who have those armies in terms of the law of land warfare and how that applies to this new kind of warfare?

MR. CORDESMAN: They're both very good questions. I think that the easy answer on the Katyusha is it's a harassment weapon. It isn't accurate. We talk about the very large numbers fired against northern Israel. Actually, when you had 80,000 Katyushas fired in a single four-hour period during some of the major offensives in World War II, one has to be a little careful about just how intense this fire really is.

The problem is, it drove people out of northern Israel. It put them into bomb shelters and created major amounts of political disruption. I think that if you're used to this, if you've been under artillery fire as a journalist, it may be in the so-what category, but that's kind of irrelevant if you happen to have a home in the area and children and you're not paid to go and study military affairs. And I think one thing that you always have to remember is these asymmetric wars are fundamentally political. They're perceptual. They're not based on casualty counts; they're not based on who emerges from the war having lost the most soldiers or the most equipment.

So I think from the viewpoint of what they were intended to do, the Katyushas were very effective. And one problem is that I think a lesson for a lot of people is going to be, well, the extended-range Katyusha is a good sign that we need an even longer-range Katyusha, and since we're talking about World War II technologies, moving on to better systems over two to three years is scarcely a challenge. I would think that one of the key lessons here for both people supplying these movements and these movements is to get as many, better man-portable weapons as you can as soon as you can. High technology, asymmetric warfare works.

As for the new use of asymmetric war, I think what was new is it was done against the Israelis by a sophisticated, well-equipped, well-trained force, which very clearly demonstrated that this is a completely different reality from dealing with people with almost no supply in training that are hopelessly divided and often killing each other, as you see in Gaza and the West Bank. This was Israel's first experience with something we've seen in Kosovo and Somalia, that we've experienced in Iraq. And I think, in frankness, no army is going to immediately be ready for that.

But your question about the laws of war and the customs of war is a very good one because, frankly, it isn't even the laws of war that count. Technically speaking, it is perceptions of the laws of war. It is how do people see the political impact of this fighting? And as we've seen in Iraq, as long as a non-state actor can attack you at the political level, can attack you in a war of attrition, where if you respond in ways which seem excessive, the world and your own domestic politics won't accept it.

Citing the laws of war is largely irrelevant. It's also, in honesty, somewhat an anachronism. The laws of war were written by regular armies and they deliberately excluded the idea of non-uniformed combatants from having legitimacy under the laws of war. We tend to, I think, forget this, but it was perfectly legal during World War II to take out any member of the OSS or other services and shoot them, and they did, and no one ever described this as a war crime. This simply was a reality. Any non-uniformed resistance could be killed legally, and this simply is the law of war. Whether it today is

relevant to the reality of war, the answer is no, it isn't. I think we have seen with Guantanamo with detainees that, frankly, relying on the laws of war leads to political defeat, and if the war is primarily political, you can't afford that.

Sorry – yes?

Q: Can I ask you about the prospects for an enlarged UNIFIL and joining with the Lebanese army? From what you said in your opening remarks, the U.S. has said – both Secretary Rice and the State Department – that their goals for the new UNIFIL are rather limited. They're not going to go in there and disarm Hezbollah. They are there to prevent the rebuilding of some of the bunkers in Southern Lebanon. They are there to prevent the fixed sites for launching missiles. From what you said in your opening remarks, neither of those are particularly useful to Hezbollah, that these are largely mobile, missiles. The fixed bunkers are not particularly useful to Hezbollah either.

That being the case, what are the prospects for UNIFIL to actually do anything productive in that area – I mean, the Israeli's concern that it was not given robust enough rules of engagement to deal with the problem there.

MR. CORDESMAN: Well, I think that we need to be very careful. The truth of the matter is we don't know what they're going to do. When you start parsing out the words of people which are at press conferences before you actually have a clear agreement on the rules of engagement and you know what forces are involved before the Lebanese army and the Lebanese government has the ability to define this, while the Hezbollah is still posturing and may or may not consistently pursue the policies it has today, you are going to get a great deal of uncertainty.

But the fact is that this is an extraordinarily difficult mission. Unless you do aggressively seek out the Hezbollah's weapons, unless you will essentially screen people to see if they are Hezbollah fighters that have remained behind – which is going to be exceedingly difficult because that probably is a good part of the male population in much of the area – you are not going to solve the problem. You have to find the best compromise you have. You also have to remember that if this expanded force fails here, the precedent it sets is that people will expect similar efforts to fail indefinitely in the future.

We don't know whether the French will come in and take an active lead or how many troops will be there. We don't know who the other participating countries are. We have heard no description of what the U.S. effort to train the Lebanese army will be, when it will occur, and what level of support will be provided. We have not seen in this any description of the surrounding context.

You focused, I think correctly, on the narrow military dimension, but to be perfectly honest, if the end result of this is the Hezbollah, with outside funding, is the source of credible aid to people in the forward area, and the international community shows up three months later with a bunch of forms, it doesn't matter what happens at the

military dimension because the Hezbollah scored a decisive victory at the political level. And I am not a great believer in the competence of the Lebanese government. Its ability to politicize has never been matched by its ability to execute. And I'm not a great believer in our ability to rapidly come in and compete with the Hezbollah in aid and assistance. I think we need to watch this very carefully. I would hope that there would be constant pressure on everyone involved to make this effective because if it isn't, I don't think next time it's going to be the way it was this time.

What happens in the future? From the Hezbollah's viewpoint, they have got to get more modern weapons in, longer-range missiles and rockets, rockets and missiles with guidance systems and more lethal warheads. They have to get as many longer-range fire systems as they can. They have to prepare to fight in-depth and along the roadways and roads that Israel occupied and to deal with vertical envelopment from helicopters, all of which they can do and prepare for if there is not a very aggressive effort to solve this.

From Israel's viewpoint, you have to use force even more against civilian targets. You have to attack deep. You have to step up the intensity of combat and you have to be less careful and less restrained. And if someone injects into this even one or two crude chemical weapons or radiological weapons, the message and the intensity becomes something which is very difficult to see that can be controlled. One problem is it isn't today that matters; it isn't even next month; it's how this unfolds over the next five years.

Yes?

Q: Expanding a little – Paul Courson from CNN – expanding a little on your point about Hezbollah and competing with them to supply aid to the forward areas, are they likely to take a page out of the U.S. book as to how to win the hearts and minds of the people there in rebuilding if they have the credibility and they have resources to do so more quickly?

MR. CORDESMAN: Well, they have already done it or begun to do it. They have already made promises. Now, whether they can execute the promises is another issue. It's very easy to talk about this. But expectations are not that high. And if money and starts come from the Hezbollah and not from the Lebanese government – and this already is occurring in the villages that the IDF is leaving – then the image is the Hezbollah works and the Lebanese government and the international community doesn't.

And I think we need to understand, you can describe Hezbollah as a terrorist movement if you want, but it is grossly inaccurate. It is a very successful political movement. It has many of the elements of civil society. It operates at many different levels, and terrorism, if you call the attacks on Israel that, is only one of them. It also is perhaps the most effective organized structure in Lebanese politics. There are all kinds of various political groups in Lebanese politics, but the Maronites, when they are not involved in conflict with others, are always perfectly happy to attack each other's families. Amal has been gutted, essentially, as a force in Shi'ite politics. The Druze talk but have learned not to act. And the Sunnis basically are there at the political level, but

have very little capability to execute. These are realities that we are going to have to watch and may have to live with.

Q: I had a follow up, because you also made the comparison to Iraq, and you have now out-looked what Lebanon may face in the future. Are we moving too slowly in Iraq, and has that also provided a foreshadowing of what may happen in Lebanon, please?

MR. CORDESMAN: Moving too slowly where?

Q: We are talking Iraq.

MR. CORDESMAN: Yeah, I understand –

Q: Are you frustrated – oh, you're making the point, sure.

MR. CORDESMAN: No, I mean, when you say too slowly, in doing what?

Q: In trying to consolidate an aid, and if the U.S. to make its hearts-and-minds case with the Iraqi people, has that moment been lost?

MR. CORDESMAN: You know, you are in – many of you in the business of media – first, if the U.S. is winning hearts and minds in Iraq, I have yet to detect exactly where it is winning them. It is probably one of the most dangerously amateur efforts I have ever seen. And certainly that is reflected in Iraqi attitudes. When it comes down to the execution of aid, I think we have done a great deal of good in some areas, but the overall aid plan, as the special inspector general for Iraqi reconstruction reports show, has been so filled with problems that it does not win hearts and minds; it often alienates people that it should have been winning the support of. The great problem I have is should we be doing better? Yes. Does doing more of what we have been doing more rapidly help? No.

Yes, in back.

Q: (Off mike) – News Service. There has been criticism of the performance of the IDF and its questionable – you have mentioned senior leadership. Did you get the perception that the troops in the field were not adequately prepared for this, or was it the game plan, the strategy that they were – (off mike)?

MR. CORDESMAN: There are three issues here. First, the war plan, to be honest, to an outsider never made any sense. You went in with air, and if you are going to do that, you had to stop because air simply can't defeat by itself a dispersed guerilla movement like the Hezbollah. You then went in to fight in the forward area, which meant you were fighting in a very restricted line-of-sight area just near the border, and you had to fight them on their own terms, usually at line of sight. That simply did not

make sense because it gave up the conventional advantages – maneuver advantages and many of the firepower advantages the IDF had.

Now, the ground war in the sense of striking deep began after really only last Saturday night and was never fully executed. The training obviously had serious defects. The reservists were not prepared for this kind of fighting; they were not prepared for the kind of maneuver involved. They had to be given refresher training. It was clear that the IDF active forces had real problems in terms of preparation, rear area defense, a whole group of just minor technical issues.

The problem with that is nobody is ever really ready for a new kind of war, so you have to be careful about the criticism, and the other problem is throughout the period before they decided to go deep, they were constantly being jerked around: We're going to go in, we're going to go out, we're going to go deep; no, we are going to wait. You can't do that to an army without disrupting its entire rear area and method of operations. And it's very difficult and unfair to judge it when it is put under these kinds of conditions, particularly when it's an operational army and not one that sort of tries to look good with kind of peacetime gloss. So a lot of the imagery of the Israeli army is that it's sloppy because it isn't pretty. Well, things get kind of dirty and messy pretty early on in combat, and pretty isn't really a very demanding criteria.

Yes?

Q: (Off mike.) Do you think it would have been to the Israeli's advantage to have continued the war?

MR. CORDESMAN: The problem is, to do what? I mean, could you have occupied a lot more space? Well, the maximum figure I have heard is 30,000 troops. Others take it down to 15,000, 20,000. You probably could have moved into Southern Lebanon. If you were willing to stay, you should have found most of the depots, the arms caches over time. I have no idea how long it would have taken.

If you really enveloped from the north, you could have stopped some of the evacuation and dispersal of the troops and weapons. If you were willing to go village by village and interview every young man, or man period, and look through every house, you could have perhaps figured out who the Hezbollah were, but you would be stuck in Lebanon. It's not quite clear at that point you could broker what you got, which is a ceasefire. And with every day or week that passed, I think you would have unified Lebanon and the Arab world against you. I'm not sure what you really would have gained. If you had gone in very quickly, been very decisive while the Hezbollah was disrupted, was not really well organized, did not know you were going to go in deep, it might have been a different story.

But all we have to do is look at what has happened in Iraq or Somalia or elsewhere to realize that you don't go in and win these kinds of wars decisively. You

don't go in and suddenly defeat the enemy. You can't find the enemy quickly. You can't find its supply, and the enemy can always disperse and withdraw and move to the north.

Let's see, in back.

Q: (Off mike.) How have relations between the U.S. and Israel been affected by – (off mike)?

MR. CORDESMAN: I don't think that there has been any significant change in U.S. and Israeli relationships. There will be a question coming out of this as to what the Bush administration was told by Israel as to its initial goals, the timing. But the question for everybody will then be it certainly probably was not deception of the United States. If there were mistakes made, it was self-deception of Israel communicated to the United States.

I don't think that you are going to find that there is a basic difference in the U.S.-Israeli relationship in military or political terms. What both Israel and the United States do have to ask after this, given the reaction in the Arab and Islamic world, given the political instability in Lebanon, given the possible message to Gaza and the West Bank that if it worked for Gaza and the West Bank, you should do it in Gaza – I mean, in Lebanon – you should do it in Gaza and the West bank.

Should you really out of this have a peace process that is more intensive? Do you need to rethink separation, and particularly unilateral withdrawals? I think these are real issues that have to be addressed, not only between the United States and Israel, but between the United States and its Israeli allies. I don't think the United States came out of this well in the rest of the world. And certainly there is a need for damage control and more active policies.

Yes?

Q: We just came from a breakfast, some of us, with Nicholas Burns, and I wanted to read you a couple of the things he said because they address your question. He said, it's no surprise that Hezbollah was the first out with aid because that is where they live. And he said, but over the course of time, as Lebanon rebuilds, people are going to have to ask if that war was worth it. And I'm wondering if you have thought on what the Lebanese people will say, whether or not Hezbollah was their heroes or their villains.

He also said that, I would say Lebanon, in a relative sense, has a greater capacity to build a democratic government free of large-scale foreign influence now than any time over the last three decades. I wonder if you think that is true.

MR. CORDESMAN: Well, I have not served in Lebanon in more than 30 years, but I have never seen the Lebanese agree on anything. The conceptual reality of Lebanon has not gotten better. I don't see signs as yet that this war has basically unified the people outside the Shi'ite group, which is the largest single minority in Lebanon. It may

well be that significant numbers of Lebanese do blame the Hezbollah, as well as Israel. In fact, that is already clear; many of them do.

It's also true that many people that were initially hostile to the Hezbollah became supporters over time simply because of the sheer level of violence and damage being done. But those same people can change their minds and become opponents of the Hezbollah.

One problem I have in watching this type of issue over the years is people don't really know till it happens. There are all kinds of interesting efforts to guess at Lebanese behavior under these conditions. There are all kinds of theories of deterrence and politics and intimidation. But for all of the work done in this area, quite frankly, if none of it had been done and you were flipping coins, you would have produced the same level of reliability. What you have is a vast amount of strategic and academic rubbish that doesn't help you predict the future. So in this case, you simply have to observe.

In terms of foreign influence, if I were in Nick Burns' position, that is what I would say. But what will the influence of Syria and Iran be? How credible will our actions be? Will they have the scale they need? How much of a problem will occur here because not Arab governments but Arab people see this as a major victory against Israel? How will this influence the behavior of outside Arab states?

All of this really is going to play out over time, and so much of it depends on the quality of the execution of the ceasefire and the peacekeeping force and the role of the Lebanese government that, no, I think it is incumbent on any serving State Department official to say what Ambassador Burns said.

Yes, down there.

Q: Ellie Monhan (ph) with Congressional Quarterly. Given what you said about the success of asymmetric warfare in Lebanon and perceptions in the Arab world, and the similarities between the way the Israeli and the U.S. government has handled itself, what would you say the developments in Iraq and in Lebanon say about the success, or otherwise, of the war on terrorism and the wisdom of declaring one in the first place?

MR. CORDESMAN: Well, I think we have to make a clear distinction. I'm not sure what Lebanon has to do with the initial declaration of the war on terrorism, and I'm not sure what Iraq has to do with the initial declaration of the war on terrorism. People went to war for very different reasons, and some effort to root out the kind of violent extreme neo-Salafi movement that al Qaeda symbolizes.

I think it is a warning that has already been picked up in the United States. I mean, the new draft manual on counterinsurgency basically says we entered the Iraq war without knowing what we were doing as a military force. The reorganization of the U.S. Army, the retraining of the U.S. Army and the Marine Corps, says this same thing. DOD Directive 3000.05, which I'm sure all of you have read and memorized – (laughter) –

basically says that it is absolutely essential as part of warfare to have stability operations to conduct civil military affairs, to have conflict termination which deals with the political dimension of war. It basically rejects every idea that we went to war in Iraq with about avoiding nation building and quick termination.

That doesn't mean that we will succeed in Iraq or that we know what we are doing; it is simply a statement that we are fighting different kinds of war and we are trying to learn and adapt. I think Israel is going to have to go through exactly that lesson. And it is one, if you look at it, many Arab countries have had to go through. Saudi Arabia has had to reorganize its entire force structure to emphasize internal security. Egypt has been focusing on a low-level civil war, which is now a decade old, and which it's largely won. Algeria had a far more intense conflict dealing against very tiny elements which had almost no re-supply but were able to divide large parts of the country, at least in the coastal area.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Folks, I apologize. We have time for one more question. And we'll go to Khalid (ph) over here.

Q: I have a question about – in Israel, what is the impression about Iran's influence on this war and possible future complications. Is it seen merely as basically a war by proxy – (off mike) – between Iran and Israel and the United States of America?

MR. CORDESMAN: It depends exactly on who you talk to. But I think one of the more important issues is when you talk to the people serving in the intelligence services, as distinguished from people who are retired, many of whom see Iran as the force, they feel that Iran very actively supported the Hezbollah. They have a great deal of evidence. I mean, the arms shipments, the serial numbers, everything make that clear. Captured documents show there were almost certainly Iranian advisors present. Some of the facilities found in Lebanon clearly had Iranian support.

But having said that, they believe Hezbollah operated on its own in starting this. They point out that Nasrallah had warned long before that he would try to take more prisoners. They see the escalation that occurred on both sides as being something that Hezbollah and Iran did not plan. They feel Iran is concerned because it lost longer-range and medium-range rockets to very little purpose in terms of its own intentions.

When you look at what has happened here, you see that out of the captured weapons and the inventories to date, at least half of them came from Syria. This is not an Iranian-dominated affair. The physical evidence is absolutely clear here. The operational intelligence center that was set up in Damascus during the war was a Syrian operation with Iranian and Hezbollah participation, not an Iranian one. And I think this is really something that is, in general, true of almost all of the operations we are dealing with here.

Whenever you have this idea of an outside, rigid hierarchy of control rather than a network of mutual interests of people exploiting each other, using each other to their own advantage, that is probably wrong. Even within al Qaeda there is no evidence of central

direction. And indeed, if you look at virtually all of the literature that has emerged on al Qaeda in the last two years, it talks about distributed networks, informal networks, independent cells, independent areas of operation, groups of affiliation.

And when you talk about Iran and Syria and Hezbollah, I think that is overwhelmingly the case. That doesn't mean that Iran doesn't want to use the Hezbollah; it does. It also doesn't mean that the Hezbollah is some kind of action arm of the al Quds force in the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

Q: Could you just – in a slightly different direction, I'm sorry –

MR. SCHWARTZ: I'm sorry; we are really out of time. Maybe we can talk out in the lobby right afterwards.

Thank you all very much for coming, and please let us know if we can be of any assistance. We will be sending out a transcript later today.

(END)