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CBS News

FACE THE NATION

Sunday, July 30, 2006

GUESTS: FUAD SINIORA
Prime Minister of Lebanon

SHIMON PERES
Deputy Prime Minister of Israel

MODERATOR: BOB SCHIEFFER - CBS News

PANEL: Gloria Borger - CBS News/US News & World Report

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FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS
202-457-4481

BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, Israel bombs a Lebanese village, and that causes Lebanon's prime minister to disinvite Secretary of State Rice, who had been planning a visit to Beirut. We'll talk to the prime minister, and Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

The Israeli attack was on the village of Qana, and it left at least 50 people dead, half of them children. That sent thousands of anti-American and anti-Israeli protesters to the streets of Beirut. That is when Lebanon told Secretary Rice to stay in Israel. We'll go to Beirut to talk to the Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora. Then we've got Israel's side from Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

Plus, the latest from the battlefield from chief foreign correspondent Lara Logan. Then I'll have a final word on why the United States finds so many people not to talk to these days.

But first, what next in the Middle East, on FACE THE NATION.

Announcer: FACE THE NATION with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now, from CBS News in Washington, Bob Schieffer.

SCHIEFFER: And good morning again. Efforts to get a cease-fire in the Middle East are in a shambles this morning. After those Israeli air attacks on the Lebanese village, Lebanon told Secretary of State Rice she was no longer welcome in Beirut. The American version is she canceled the visit. Whatever the case, we're told she will return to Washington. Our chief foreign correspondent, Lara Logan, is in Tel Aviv this morning.

Lara, first, what can you tell us about this attack?

LARA LOGAN (CBS News; Foreign Correspondent): Well, what we know is that the Israeli Army hit a residential area in the village of Qana, and a huge number of women and children are amongst those killed. It really was a catastrophic attack. And the Israeli Army is saying, in their defense, that they did not know that civilians were present in the building at the time, otherwise they would never have launched the strike. They say that this particular area has been used to fire hundreds of rockets at Israel, and that they had warned the people living there and staying there to get out of the village a few days before this strike actually took place. But at the same time, the devastation is absolutely huge, and there are Israeli ministers coming out and saying that the loss of life is very, very tragic, and that they sincerely regret this. There are people still going through the rubble there at the scene inside Lebanon, obviously quite devastating.

SCHIEFFER: Well, also, we have seen the Lebanese prime minister this morning tell the secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, that she is no longer welcome in Beirut. And there is also, we are told, large demonstrations in Beirut today.

LOGAN: That's right. About 5,000 people protesting in Beirut, outside the United Nations. A few car windows smashed and the building broken into. People in fact shouting slogans, "Destroy Tel Aviv." Obviously, they're wanting to hit back, at last.

And what's interesting about this, Bob, is really this particular village was the site of another Israeli air strike in 1996 that killed more than 100 civilians who were sheltering at a UN base there, and it was a turning point in that operation that many people believe brought about the end of that Israeli offensive. And a lot of people here see it as another turning point, that it might, in fact, bring about the cease-fire the Lebanese prime minister has been calling for.

SCHIEFFER: Lara, what is your sense of what happens next here?

LOGAN: Well, clearly, Israel is politically weakened by this. It goes against what they were hoping for, which is to go to the negotiating table with as much damage done to Hezbollah as possible, and in the strongest position possible to get what they are looking for out of this. And now they're--they are probably going to have to, with all the international pressure, and the outrage over this, particularly as well from moderate Arab governments, who are no friends of Hezbollah, but are reluctant to be associated with, you know, the huge amount of deaths of Lebanese civilians. So there's going to be an extraordinary amount of pressure on Israel now to bring about a cease-fire first, before the other conditions are met. And that's what Israel was trying to avoid. But it really doesn't seem like there's going to be any other way forward. This might be the end of the war, it might bring it about sooner than ever.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, thank you very much, Lara.

And we want to go now to Beirut, to talk to the Lebanese prime minister, Fuad Siniora, who has made time on this day to talk to us.

Prime Minister, thank you very much. Tell us, what is the situation there this morning?

Mr. FUAD SINIORA (Prime Minister of Lebanon): Thank you, Bob.

Well, the situation is very bad. At 1:30 AM this morning and after 50 raids on the--on the village of Qana, they raided one building and more than 50 persons were--get killed in the shelter. And 50 percent of this 50 people killed, actually they are children. One of them is less than one day old.

And this raid against this Qana--this village of Qana, is in fact the repetition of another raid that they committed, at that time a crime 10 years ago, and they killed more than 100 people in the outpost of a UN position. Those people at that time went to--for shelter in that--in that place and they got killed. Today, more than 50 persons got killed. At that time, they called that invasion the grapes of wrath. I believe that this invasion today is the grapes of hatred. The Israelis are committing, really, state-sponsored

terrorism.

SCHIEFFER: Ambassador...

Mr. SINIORA: This thing is--yes, please.

SCHIEFFER: Prime Minister...

Mr. SINIORA: Yes. Yes.

SCHIEFFER: ...the Israelis are saying that the people in this area were warned that these raids--and this came by air, right? These were bombing strikes. Were they warned? Were there warnings given?

Mr. SINIORA: When? They were not warned, and in fact, the village had more than 50 raids at that time. All night. And people got shelter in the building and they were killed in the shelter.

SCHIEFFER: So...

Mr. SINIORA: It is a repetition of what they have done 10 years ago. Yes.

SCHIEFFER: So you're saying there were 50 separate strikes here on this village?

Mr. SINIORA: Yes. There were--they--they had--they had these raids and in fact, they bombarded that building.

Now, what we are really saying is this, is that Israel for the past 18 days has been subjecting the whole country to continuous raids. More than 700 people got killed by now, and more than 3,000 are injured. And in fact, they have been cutting the whole country into pieces. They destroyed more than 70 bridges so far. And already they are putting the whole country into its knees.

SCHIEFFER: All right.

Mr. SINIORA: What we have been trying to do in the past few days. We came with a seven points position in the meeting of Rome in which we asked for an immediate cease-fire, an unconditional one.

SCHIEFFER: Prime...

Mr. SINIORA: In which we tried to redefine solution to all the problems that preceded and that followed the incident of 12th of July.

SCHIEFFER: Prime Minister, was it after this raid today that you said that the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice would be unwelcome in Beirut?

Mr. SINIORA: Well, what I've said to Secretary Rice, that we have been all the past days working and trying to find out a way to really bring an

immediate cease-fire. What we have really been witnessing is something beyond--beyond description. And this is something that is unacceptable, and that's why we are asking for an immediate and unconditional cease-fire. We cannot continue discussing under the sword of blood that is being put on our

necks. This is the thing that we are asking from the international community. I would like to seize this opportunity of addressing the American people and the American mothers. Can they tolerate this type of crimes that are being committed? These crimes are against humanity that are being committed by the Israelis. It is high time to really ask the American people to stand for peace and to ask for an immediate cease-fire. It is not possible for this small country to be subjected to this war machine, the most sophisticated war machine.

SCHIEFFER: All right.

Mr. SINIORA: And it is creating this type of killing.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you this, prime minister.

Mr. SINIORA: I--please. Yes.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you this. Do you have no influence whatsoever on Hezbollah? Can't you exert your influence? At this point, your government seems to have done nothing to stop them from firing these rockets at Israel.

Mr. SINIORA: Well, Bob, from day one we've said that the Lebanese government did not know about this incident and takes no responsibility and disavow itself from what really have happened.

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Mr. SINIORA: Well, Bob, from day one we've said that the Lebanese government did not know about this incident and takes no responsibility and disavow itself from what really have happened. And we said that we are ready to step in, to find a solution for the Lebanese detainees and for the abducted soldiers. And at the same time, we said that it's high time to look into the matter and find a solution.

What is the problem? Why this thing has been continuing? Because Israel is still occupying a part of Lebanon. The Shebaa Farms are still being occupied by Israel. It's high time to find a solution. We have been always looking at things and the--and the world opinion and the world leaders, they are looking into the symptoms of matters. It is high time to really solve the issue.

We've said that the Lebanese government is ready to prevail all over--all over the Lebanese territory and to be in charge. And, at the same time, that no weapons are in Lebanon except that of the Lebanese authority.

SCHIEFFER: Prime Minister...

Mr. SINIORA: And this would be in line with the--with the withdrawal of the Israelis from the Shebaa farms.

SCHIEFFER: Well, Prime Minister, Hezbollah now says they are going to retaliate for this attack today. Will you try to dissuade them from that? I mean, wouldn't that be one way to try to work toward a cease-fire?

Mr. SINIORA: Look, Bob, you know that blood calls for blood. We have been putting our position very clear: We are asking for an immediate cease-fire, and we are asking for the withdrawal of the Israelis from the Lebanese territory. And immediately we have all to step in with all the leaders at the--at the Security Council and everywhere to really push for a real solution to the problems that is causing this continuous bloodshed.

Israel has been occupying the Shebaa farms for years and years, and they have not withdrawn. Israel has been keeping certain Lebanese detainees in its prisons for the past 28 years, and it--and it does not want to release them. Israel has been denying Lebanon even one little thing, of providing Lebanon with the maps for the landmines that they have planted in Lebanon. And they are not really yielding to our--to our request of providing us with the maps that is killing, every month, a number of Lebanese.

SCHIEFFER: But...

Mr. SINIORA: This situation is unbearable. We are saying that we want peace. We want peace under the initiative of the--of the Arabs that was made in the year 2002. In the meantime, what you are calling, we want to have a cease-fire and to really lean towards having the--the--everybody to comply with the armistice of 1949 that was signed at that time.

I think this is the right--the right way, how to solve matters, and that this will lead towards really working for the ultimate peace that should be the objective of all concerned. All peace-loving nations should be working towards having a real peace in the region.

SCHIEFFER: All right. All right, Mr. Prime Minister, we have to leave it there. We thank you for taking time to talk to us this morning. Thank you, sir.

Mr. SINIORA: Thank you very much, Bob. Thank you for all the--to all the American people, as well.

SCHIEFFER: So, an impassioned prime minister of Lebanon. We'll be back in a moment with the Israeli vice premier and deputy prime minister and Nobel laureate, Shimon Peres, in a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And joining us now from New York, the Israeli vice premier and deputy prime minister, Shimon Peres.

Minister, thank you very much for coming. Well, you just heard the prime minister of Lebanon saying that nothing can happen here until there can be a cease-fire. But there is a report now coming out of Jerusalem on the Associated Press that says that the prime minister, Olmert, of Israel, has told Condoleezza Rice that Israel may need another two weeks to get the job done there. Does that sound right to you?

Mr. SHIMON PERES (Deputy Prime Minister of Israel): Before I should answer the question, let me say how sorry am I to see the children that lose their lives. Every child alive is a hope for humanity. Every child--Jewish, Arab, American, doesn't matter--that loses his life is a tragedy for all of us. I really feel sorry and sad for what has happened.

Now, Mr. Siniora, the prime minister of Lebanon, does need a moment to have his cease-fire. He can tell Hezbollah to stop firing, and there will be a cease-fire. You know, I'm 83 years old, I went through all the wars and all the peace. It took us four wars with Egypt before we have had the peace. There were times of disappointment, but we got peace. It took us two wars to get peace with Jordan, finally we have peace. With Lebanon, it's hard for us to understand. There are already four wars, none of them was launched by the Lebanese, but each of them was launched from Lebanon by foreign forces. And the Lebanese government was like a bystander, as though it doesn't belong to them.

In '82 there was the PLO, and finally the PLO was pushed out because we have had to push them out. They fired at us all the time. Then again, in '96 when I was prime minister, the Hezbollah started to fire on Israel, God knows what for. What was the reason, what was the purpose? For a week time our people were in shelters. I didn't reply. I asked the United States, I asked the Syrians, we asked the Lebanese, they didn't stop. We were left without a choice but again to reply.

Now believe me, nobody in our country understands what does Hezbollah aim at. What do they want? Why did they started to shoot like crazy? What do they want to achieve? The Shebaa story is a...(unintelligible)...story; it doesn't belong to Lebanon, it belongs to Syria. And the United Nations didn't ask us to leave. I am suggesting to the prime minister of Lebanon not to wait for anybody. Tell the Hezbollah to stop shooting that moment, that gradually will end.

SCHIEFFER: All right. But let me just ask you about that. I twice asked him about that, and he sort of side-stepped the question. But do you think that the government of Lebanon actually has the capacity to make Hezbollah stop? Could they, if they did try to do that?

Mr. PERES: Well, if they don't--if they don't--if they don't do, they don't have a state. They have 80,000 soldiers, the soldiers didn't try to stop the Hezbollah. How can you know they are--the Hezbollah is maybe six or 8,000 people. They could have stopped them, they could try to stop them. The Lebanese are really carrying tragedies for no reason, without justification, without need. They are not our enemies. We left their land, we didn't ask

for their water, we don't intervene in their politics. We feel that we can live together fairly and honestly. They're a great people, the Lebanese, we don't hate them.

SCHIEFFER: Yet...

Mr. PERES: They are great builders, but the Hezbollah is great destroyers.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, now, Hezbollah has just said this morning that they intend to retaliate for this attack that Israel made on this village. What--do you think they will, and what will Israel do if they do?

Mr. PERES: Well, they can increase the lack of reasons, as until now. I mean, I am really asking why did they start? And by increasing their retaliate--their retaliation, they increase the tragedy for them, for us, for the world. And nobody understands why. What are they firing? Now...

SCHIEFFER: Let me go back and ask you about what I asked you in the beginning. Do you think that Israel is going to need another two weeks there, as the reports coming out of Jerusalem are suggesting this morning? In other words, you're not ready for a cease-fire now; do you think it's going to take two weeks before you will be ready?

Mr. PERES: I don't think that the prime minister said something like it. I think it's a speculation. Condoleezza Rice in Israel, we would like to her successful in her mission. We want, really, to make sure that the Hezbollah will participate in the cease-fire. The problem is the prime minister of Lebanon, that he has expressed his view but the Hezbollah said they won't respect it. As they started for no reason, they are continuing without reasons--I am afraid to serve somebody else, but doesn't matter now.

It's a misunderstanding. Lebanon is a great country with a misunderstanding that has invaded their land and killing their future, their growth, causing tragedies, endlessly. With Israel, they don't have any conflict. We don't want anything from Lebanon but good relations. I don't see that the Lebanese has something to ask for from us. The border between us and Lebanon is internationally recognized. The Israeli has deployed themselves in accordance with United Nations resolution, and I don't see any other judge that can judge better.

SCHIEFFER: Minister, let me ask you this: why did Israel launch this attack? And you heard the prime minister say they gave the people in the area no warning. I understand you argue that you were--you did warn these people. Why did you launch this attack?

Mr. PERES: The attack we launched because they'll do something like it. You know, in the Israeli case, we distinguish between the military and a civilian. We shall never put arms in civilian surroundings. The Lebanese--the Hezbollah--is very cynical. They put their rockets and missiles in civilian life so we have to go from a place to a place and destroy it. And then to hid the places from which they are firing rockets and missiles over our heads.

And every day we have 100, 122 missiles and rockets hitting schools, restaurants, synagogues, streets, children--what for? And...

SCHIEFFER: Mr. Prime Minister--let me ask you one other thing, Minister. Are you--do you worry that this--these--this response that Israel has made could bring down this government in Lebanon? Because it is a pretty fragile government.

Mr. PERES: I wish they would had a government that governs, but the government that doesn't govern is not of a great value. We wish they would govern. I do believe that the prime minister, Siniora, would like to have peace. But, alas, he doesn't have influence upon his own land. This is the problem.

SCHIEFFER: All right. All right, well, I'm sorry, sir.

Mr. PERES: And we shall do it--one sentence.

SCHIEFFER: I must...

Mr. PERES: For us a victory will be peace with Lebanon. That...(unintelligible).

SCHIEFFER: All right, we must stop there. The clock has run out. Thank you so much, minister. Thank you.

Back in a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally, here is my question about the events of last week: Why aren't we talking to Syria? The answer to that, we're told, is for the same reason we don't talk to Iran and North Korea lately: To talk now would be a reward for bad behavior. And there's no question Syria is guilty of bad behavior, as have been Iran and North Korea.

I can't think of much to admire about the leaders of any of those countries, but we stayed in touch with the leaders of the Soviet Union through the long decades of the Cold War. It would've been dangerous not to. But these days, we seem to find more and more people not to talk to. Then, when we need to talk, we can't, for fear of rewarding bad behavior.

The truth is that it would be difficult, if not impossible, for Iran to funnel weapons to the Lebanese terrorists without the help of Syria. If we could drive a wedge between Syria and Iran, Israel and Lebanon would be safer places. But how do you do that without talking?

No power on earth--Israel or us--even if we wanted to, could kill every Arab who wants to destroy Israel. There're just too many of them. That leaves but one option: convince countries like Syria that it's in their own self-interest to take another approach. Is that simplistic? Hardly. It

worked with Egypt--once a far greater threat to Israel than a small, poor country like Syria could ever be.

America's Middle East policy needs to be broader and more complex than just after-the-fact crisis intervention. We should be talking on a daily basis to any and all who want to talk.

That's it for us. We'll see you next week right here on FACE THE NATION.