

IN THE NEWS
Israeli troops leave part of S. Lebanon

Israeli forces began handing over areas of southern Lebanon to Lebanese army control.

Israeli troops and tanks on Wednesday quit the uppermost areas of the zone of conflict that was overrun during Israel's monthlong war on Hezbollah.

Some 15,000 Lebanese troops are expected to move in and establish their control after midnight, allowing for further Israeli troop withdrawals on Thursday.

Israeli committee to probe Hezbollah war

Israel's defense minister appointed a committee to probe the war with Hezbollah.

On Wednesday, Amir Peretz named the former Israel Defense Forces chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, to head the commission.

The committee will investigate the IDF's level of preparedness for the war and the way top military officials managed the war.

Costa Rica moving embassy to Tel Aviv

Costa Rica decided to move its embassy in Israel from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv.

Costa Rica's president, Oscar Arias, announced the decision after the cease-fire took hold between Israel and Hezbollah.

"Given the fact that Costa Rica is a shining light of democracy in Latin America, this action against another democracy, Israel, is particularly painful," David Harris, the American Jewish Committee's executive director, said in a statement released Wednesday.

Costa Rica was one of only two countries to maintain embassies in Jerusalem, Israel's capital; the other is El Salvador.

Arias, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for brokering an end to the Nicaraguan civil war, had pledged before February elections to move the embassy.

WORLD REPORT

PUBLISHED WEEKDAYS BY JTA—THE GLOBAL NEWS SERVICE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE · WWW.JTA.ORG

Both sides claiming victory, but real outcome may not yet be clear

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The aftermath of Israel's war with Hezbollah is looking a lot like Oscar night without the envelope: No one knows anything yet, so everyone claims victory.

In the scramble to Monday-morning quarterback the war, the claims were predictable: Israel and the United States said Hezbollah lost the war it launched July 12; Hezbollah, backed by Syria and Iran, said it had won a historic victory and dealt a deathblow to perceptions of Israeli invincibility.

"Both sides are trying to convince their own public the leadership has not made a big mistake," said Stephen P. Cohen, a scholar with the Israel Policy Forum. "And it's true that on both sides there's good reason to criticize the leadership, not taking into account how many civilian casualties there would be."

Lebanon lost more than 700 civilians in the conflict, according to its counts, and Israel lost more than 30.

President Bush ridiculed Hezbollah's victory claims.

"Hezbollah, of course, has got a fantastic propaganda machine and they're claiming victories," Bush said after a meeting with top staff to assess the war's outcome Monday, just hours after the guns fell silent. "But how can you claim victory when at one time you were a state within a state, safe within southern Lebanon, and now you're going to be replaced by a Lebanese army and an international force?"

The answer came Tuesday from Syria:

Hezbollah, simply by resisting Israel's war machine, had won the war of perceptions, Syrian President Bashar Assad said.

"In this current crisis, Israeli aggression toward Lebanon resulted in more failures for Israel and has allowed the national resistance of Lebanon to capture the hearts and minds of millions of Arabs and Muslims," he said.

Bush's version seemed validated by the facts on the ground.

Israel controls a chunk of Lebanon stretching 15 miles north of its border, to the Litani River.

If Israeli estimates that Hezbollah lost up to 500 fighters are correct, it's a body blow to an organization with a standing force of less than 10,000, and by some accounts as few as 2,000.

Hezbollah acknowledges less than 100 combatants dead.

More substantially, Hezbollah's yellow flags no longer flutter triumphantly from villages bordering Israel, as they have since 2000, when Israel withdrew unilaterally after 18 years of occupation, a pullout that Hezbollah also claimed as a victory.

If war is assessed according to territory — the fundamental measure of traditional war-making — then Hezbollah clearly did not win, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told the Knesset.

"There is no longer a state within a state," he said. "There is no longer sponsorship for a terror organization by a state. And no longer is a terror organization allowed to operate within Lebanon, as the long arm of the axis of evil which reaches out from Teh-

Continued on page 2

NEWS
ANALYSIS

Analysts say the real result of the Israel-Hezbollah conflict may not be clear for weeks

Continued from page 1

ran to Damascus, uses Lebanon's weakness and transforms it, its citizens and its infrastructure into a tool for its war."

In addition, though Hezbollah is buoyed by Arab support right now, many observers believe its standing in Lebanon will take a blow as anger at Israel recedes and Lebanese begin asking the Shi'ite militia why it brought such destruction upon their country, which was just rebuilding after a devastating 15-year civil war.

On the other hand, perception is key to assessing 21st-century wars saturated by media coverage, and the perception of Israel's deterrence has taken a battering.

Israel lost 116 soldiers, the biggest blow in a short-term campaign since the Lebanon War in 1982.

Its vaunted intelligence failed to assess the degree to which Hezbollah and its weapons were ensconced in southern Lebanon.

Israel's North emptied out, creating an internal refugee crisis unknown since Israel's 1948 War of Independence.

Most significantly, Israel stopped firing before achieving the ambitious goals Olmert set out at the war's launch: routing Hezbollah from southern Lebanon and securing the unconditional return of two soldiers captured by Hezbollah on July 12, the attack that precipitated the conflict.

Olmert acknowledged those failures.

"I see and hear those voices which express discontent, even disappointment,

as if their expectations have yet to be realized," he said.

"And I say to them and to all of us: Friends, patience. Patience."

Assessments of failure may be premature, and Israel's actions in the coming weeks could determine whether it won or not, said Shlomo Aronson, a political scientist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

"What you need is to get ready for the next round," he said.

That meant studying Hezbollah's military strengths in case the sides return to war, especially the Russian-made anti-tank missiles that wreaked devastation on the Israeli ground forces, as well as the short-range missiles that terrorized civilians in the North.

"Hezbollah's heavier missiles proved to be a failure. They promised to bombard Tel Aviv; nothing like that happened," Aronson said.

More significantly, Israel needs to seize the diplomatic upper hand it derived from a U.N. Security Council resolution that emphatically blamed Hezbollah for the war, Aronson said.

"The main thing is to get into negotiations with Syria to drive a wedge between Syria and Tehran," Aronson said, arguing that cutting off Hezbollah from its main supplier in Iran could starve the terrorist group.

Israeli leaders were already seizing that opportunity.

"Every war creates opportunities for an extensive diplomatic process," Defense Minister Amir Peretz said Tuesday in a Tel Aviv speech.

"I'm certain that our enemies understand they cannot prevail over us. I plan to do whatever I can to restore diplomatic support for Israel.

We need to resume negotiations with the Palestinians. We need to hold negoti-

ations with Lebanon and lay the groundwork for negotiations with Syria."

Across the Golan Heights, the Syrian territory Israel captured in the 1967 war, Assad echoed the sentiment, suggesting that the appearance of a victory by Hezbollah could lay the ground for peace-making.

Israel's failure "has given rise to a Middle East brimming with Arabism and Arab dignity. Through these changes,

Syrian aspirations for peace continue," he said in translated excerpts of his speech that the Syrian Embassy in Washington e-mailed to the Jewish media. "Syria has chosen the strategic option for peace and will work toward a just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict," he added.

At the same time, Syria's president hinted darkly that Syria still had

other possible options than peace.

Still, it was a deliberate intimation of the "victory to peace" formula Egyptian President Anwar Sadat followed, from the 1973 Yom Kippur War — which he touted as an Arab triumph despite the outcome of fighting on the ground — to peace with Israel in 1978.

The problem with that formula is that, as much as Israel might favor it, Washington's distaste for Assad's corrupt dictatorship could still thwart it.

Israeli officials have complained for months that the Bush administration, frustrated with Syria for its failure to control insurgents infiltrating Iraq, has inhibited outreach to the Assad regime.

And Israel does not take bold steps without holding Washington's hand, according to Tzali Reshef, a founder of Peace Now.

"The green light from the United States is considered a prerequisite," he said — a green light that hasn't been forthcoming.

Though Hezbollah is buoyed by Arab support right now, many observers believe its standing in Lebanon will take a blow as anger at Israel recedes and Lebanese begin asking the Shi'ite militia why it brought such destruction upon their country.

JTA WORLD REPORT

Daniel J. Krifcher
President

Mark J. Joffe
Executive Editor and Publisher

Lisa Hostein
Editor

Michael S. Arnold
Managing Editor

Lenore A. Silverstein
Finance and Administration Director

Noa Artzi-Weill
Marketing Director

JTA WORLD REPORT is published five days a week, except holidays, by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., 330 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001-5010. For more information about how to subscribe by e-mail, fax or regular mail, call (212) 643-1890, or visit our Web site at www.jta.org.
© JTA. Reproduction only with permission.

Returning residents survey damage

By DINA KRAFT

KIRYAT SHMONA (JTA) — The entire Gigi family was cleaning out Hamburger House, a small fast-food restaurant along Kiryat Shmona's main road.

Jars of condiments, cases of orange soda and stainless-steel pans lined the sidewalk as the family prepared for its reopening Wednesday, after the restaurant closed during a month of war.

Omri Gigi, 25, who opened the restaurant just more than two years ago, hopes its reopening will herald better times in his hometown.

"It will be hard, but we have to keep going," he said.

The streets of Kiryat Shmona still were largely empty Tuesday, with only a handful of residents trickling back since a cease-fire was declared Monday in Israel's war with Hezbollah.

Busloads of residents who took shelter in the center of the country slowly are making their way back to the city. Residents, some of them gone for the entire month, had a chance to survey the damage — the shattered windows and crumpled ceiling of a ceramics shop, the gaping hole in the ceiling of one of the city's main shopping malls.

Nurit Masiky, 43, got off a bus after almost three weeks of wandering between family and hotels, and could not stop smiling.

"I want to kiss the ground. This is what we have been waiting for," she said, her two daughters by her side.

Across the road, a new, cream-colored house with red shingled roof lay in silent disarray: A Katyusha rocket had crashed through its roof and through the second floor.

Most of the shingles lay scattered in the garden below. Exposed silver roof beams reflected the harsh afternoon sun.

The family that lives there had yet to return. But a neighbor from an adjacent house arrived home Tuesday and tried to grasp the new landscape of the city he has lived in since he immigrated from Iraq in 1956.

"Kiryat Shmona has been destroyed," said Yehuda Yehuda, 75, looking at the house and then to the nearby hills, where

forest fires have destroyed what was a view of endless green.

Nearby, Shaked Perets, 23, sat in the ruins of her father's ceramics shop which before the war sold bathtubs, tiles and building supplies.

The store's large showroom was empty; all the merchandise had been destroyed when the store took a direct hit from a rocket.

"I think of all it took to build this business, and now it's all destroyed and we'll have to start again," she said.

Perets wondered out loud if govern-

ment compensation would come in full. She said she resents the government for giving partial payments at first, forcing people to pay out-of-pocket with money they don't always have.

Sitting on a black leather couch, the one piece of furniture that remained unscathed, Perets said she feels numb. Not only were her father's shop and her own apartment damaged, but she's grieving the death of a friend, killed in Lebanon over the weekend, just before the cease-fire went into effect.

"This is just property," she said, looking at the remains of the store. "Nothing compares to the lives taken." ■

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

U.S.-born spokeswoman big asset to Israel

By DINA KRAFT

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Miri Eisen fixes an eye to the camera and speaks clearly and deliberately — and, most importantly for Israel, convincingly — to the world media.

The American-born Israeli government spokeswoman was an important strategic asset in a war against Hezbollah, where victories and defeats depended not just on developments on the battlefield but also on international perception.

Though a cease-fire has ended the fighting, at least for now, Eisen will remain in the public eye, becoming

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's foreign press spokeswoman later this month.

"I don't expect to win the media war, but I don't intend to lose. We have managed to hold our own with our messages," Eisen recently told a group of visiting American Jews in her native English.

During the war, Eisen tried to stay on point with the government message that Israel wants peace and that Hezbollah, backed by Iran and Syria, has been the aggressor in this conflict. But her mission was a difficult one, especially when competing with disturbing images of

Lebanese civilians suffering from Israeli airstrikes.

Eisen speaks openly about the link between Israel's coverage in the world media and how world Jewry is affected.

The former army intelligence officer with an easy smile was busy as the face of Israel's foreign media outreach, giving more than 80 interviews to international media networks and newspapers during the war.

Eran Lerman, executive director of the American Jewish Committee's Israel/Middle East office in Jerusalem, has known Eisen for about 20 years. They first met while working as officers in Israeli intelligence

'She really is who she is, and at the same time she understands military issues, and that resets people's expectations.'

Eran Lerman

American Jewish Committee

units.

Lerman listed Eisen's assets, including "her broad outlook, her command of language and profound understanding of how Americans in particular and generally people beyond Israel's borders set their priorities."

"She is a woman who is a mother who cares about suffering on both sides," Lerman said. "She really is who she is, and at the same time she understands military issues, and that resets people's expectations. One of our main struggles is to overcome people's preconceived notions of who we are and what we stand for." ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

NORTH AMERICA

Israel, U.S.: Lebanon must disarm Hezbollah

Israel and the United States expect Lebanon to disarm Hezbollah. "It's important to realize that the Lebanese government will be in charge of disarming Hezbollah, and we expect that to happen," Tony Snow, the White House spokesman, said Wednesday.

Hezbollah is pressuring the Lebanese government to allow it to keep its arms, suggesting that it otherwise will resist any Lebanese Army attempt to deploy in the South.

Disarming the terrorist group was a condition of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701 that brought about a cease-fire in the Israel-Hezbollah war.

Nations likely to join a peace-keeping force already have said they will not disarm Hezbollah.

Shimon Peres, the Israeli deputy premier, echoed U.S. sentiments later Wednesday, a day after his meetings in Washington with the U.S. secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice.

If Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora "normalizes two armies, what comes out of this?" Peres said. "He's lost."

Pentagon, Israel in anti-rocket talks

The Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency said it is working with Israel on ways of countering rocket attacks.

"We have been working with the Israelis as they go through with development of their own indigenous capabilities for that threat," Air Force Lt. Gen. Henry Obering, head of the agency, told reporters at a missile-defense conference Tuesday in Alabama.

Israel and the United States, which worked together on developing the Arrow-II anti-missile system, recently resurrected a shelved project to shoot down smaller rockets using a chemical laser.

That decision followed Israel's realization that it needed better countermeasures against the Kassam rockets fired by Palestinians in Gaza and Hezbollah's Katyushas from southern Lebanon.

Alleged Seattle shooter pleads not guilty

The alleged shooter in the Seattle Jewish federation shooting pleaded not guilty.

Naveed Haq, who entered his plea Tuesday, is being held on nine counts, including aggravated homicide and malicious harassment — Washington state's hate crimes statute — in the July 28 attack that left one woman dead and five injured.

At an Aug. 10 arraignment, Haq surprised the court and his attorney, public defender C. Wesley Richards, when he attempted to enter a guilty plea, but apparently changed his mind in the interim. The Kings County prosecuting attorney, Norm Maleng, has 30 days to decide whether Haq will face the death penalty.

MIDDLE EAST

Israel allowed Arab overflights

Israel allowed planes from unfriendly Arab nations to fly over its airspace to deliver humanitarian supplies to Lebanon, Shimon Peres said.

The deputy prime minister, on a U.S. tour to raise funds for reconstruction in the North, said Wednesday in Washington that he could not name the countries.

Israel said it allowed 57 planes to land at Beirut International Airport to deliver food and medicine.

Peres: Unilateralism less likely

The Lebanon war has diminished the prospects of a unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank, Shimon Peres said. "Today we must

emphasize more than ever bilateralism," the Israeli deputy premier said Wednesday in Washington in the middle of a U.S. political and fund-raising tour.

Peres was asked what the monthlong war, which ended Monday, meant for the prospects of unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank.

Peres' Kadima Party, headed by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, won elections in March on a campaign envisioning a unilateral withdrawal.

Israel withdrew unilaterally from southern Lebanon in 2000 and from the Gaza Strip last year.

In both cases, in the absence of peace treaties, terrorists launched cross-border assaults on Israel.

Livni: International role key in Lebanon

The international community must ensure that the United Nations resolution ending Israel's war with Hezbollah is fully implemented, Israel's foreign minister said.

Addressing media Wednesday morning in New York, where she was to meet later with U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Tzipi Livni said there is a "window of opportunity" to change the reality in southern Lebanon and prevent Hezbollah from keeping an open military front with Israel in order to advance the interests of Iran, the terrorist group's patron.

It will be especially important to implement clauses in Security Council Resolution 1701 that call for an arms embargo on Hezbollah to prevent Syria and Iran from resupplying the group, Livni said.

"Maybe this is a new road that can lead to stability and even peace," she said, "but it depends firstly on the Lebanese government and the international community."

2 die in strike on arsenal

Israeli forces killed two Palestinians in a strike on a Gaza Strip arms cache. Artillery fired on a house in the northern Gaza town of Beit Hanoun on Wednesday after the military warned residents to leave.

The building, which contained arms, collapsed, killing an Al-Aksha Brigade terrorist and his father.

Military officials noted that in several other recent strikes there were no casualties, as residents of the houses heeded warnings and left in time.

WORLD

European Jews help northern Israelis

The chairman of the European Jewish Congress gave \$3 million to the Jewish Agency for Israel to help with summer camps for children from northern Israel.

The funds were collected from French Jews. They were presented this week by Pierre Besnainou, main backer of the French group AMI, which works closely on aliyah with the Jewish Agency.

E. European Jewish leaders visit Israel

Leaders from the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress are visiting Israel to learn about the effects of the recent war.

Leaders from the group, who represent 14 countries in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Asia, are in Israel on a four-day solidarity mission through Thursday.

The mission includes talks with Knesset members, visits to camps for children evacuated from northern Israel and to areas affected by Hezbollah rocket attacks.

In the past few weeks, the group has raised close to \$1 million to aid victims of the attacks.