



LIVE FROM...

Violence Continues as Secretary Rice Makes Mideast Tour; U.S. Military Delivering Humanitarian Supplies to Lebanon; Syria Demands Proper Channels for Talks; Relief, Fear for Lebanese-American Family

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Sending bombs and missiles into Lebanon, sending a message to Iran and Syria. Middle East analysts say that's what Israel has been doing during its 13-day offensive. Adib Farha is a former Lebanese government adviser. He's now with the American-Lebanese Coalition. He joins us once again from Wichita, Kansas. Adib, good to see you again.

ADIB FARHA, AMERICAN-LEBANESE COALITION: It's good to be back.

PHILLIPS: Let's talk about Condoleezza Rice first and the secretary's trip to the Middle East. Is this going to do anything for what's happening right now?

FARHA: I don't -- I don't know how many it's going to accomplish right now. I think Secretary Rice and President Bush are determined not to call for a cease-fire until they feel that the Israeli campaign has reached or almost reached its target.

The best that the Lebanese people can hope for from Dr. Rice's visit is that perhaps the United States government could talk the government of Israel into avoiding targeting civilian Lebanese civilians, the Lebanese army and the Lebanese infrastructure. If the Lebanese government is going to have to take over, deploy the army to the south and replace the Hezbollah's role in which it supplies health care, education and social services to its constituents. We have to make sure that the Lebanese infrastructure is not damaged any more than it has.

PHILLIPS: Let's talk about Hezbollah, a couple of things I want to ask you. And correct me if I'm wrong, have you told me in the past that former President Bill Clinton, you felt that he came very close to dealing with the Hezbollah situation before he left office. Am I remembering that correctly?

FARHA: I'm sorry, Kyra, I didn't hear the question very well. Could you repeat that?

PHILLIPS: You bet. Former President Bill Clinton, if I remember right, you thought that he did a good job with dealing with Hezbollah in the past, that he came close to achieving something with this organization. That right? Am I remembering that correctly?

FARHA: No. I think what I was referring to was that President Clinton's peace initiative had almost succeeded when it got stuck on the last 10 yards that former President Assad, the current president's father, insisted on Israel pulling out all the way to Lake Kinneret. Israel insisted on keeping that last 10 yards. In retrospect, if President Clinton had pushed Israel into giving up those additional 10 yards, I think peace between Israel and Syria would have been realized 10 years ago. So it is unfortunate. Go ahead, please.

PHILLIPS: Well no, which leads me to my next question. Last week I had a chance to talk to a marine who was in Beirut when that horrendous attack happened on behalf of Hezbollah, killing 200-plus marines and he said that Ronald Reagan made a big mistake in pulling the marines out at that time because it sent a message to Hezbollah that it won.

Do you believe that if those marines wouldn't have been pulled out of Beirut at that time that Hezbollah would not be as strong as it is now?

FARHA: Well, the mistake back then was not pulling out the marines, the mistake was sending them. If they were sent to do something, there were too few, and if they were sent to die, there were too many.

The contingent that President Reagan sent was, like I said, too large to sacrifice and too few to be effective. What we will need at the end of this campaign is hopefully U.N.-sponsored peacekeeping mission that has a wide enough mandate to be able to maintain the peace.

I hope it's not going to be an extension of the current United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, which does nothing more than count how many rockets are exchanged from each side. We need a force that is, as has been expressed before, robust, that has enough teeth and the mandate to actually do something and maintain the peace.

PHILLIPS: And Adib, you've said considering the current events as tragic as they are, you say this could be a positive step toward regional peace because you believe it could play a tremendous impact on Iran.

FARHA: Well, without a doubt, if Hezbollah's military capability is sufficiently downgraded, that would have effectively eliminated or seriously downgraded Iran's western assets and that would make Iran more malleable to pressure from the United States, particularly if the European Union would join forces with the United States and take a more solid position against Iran and impose more strict sanctions.

It would be easier to tame the Iranians or to subject them to one kind of pressure or another if the western assets that are represented by Hezbollah is diminished. Once you take care of the Iranian threat, once it's contained, hopefully, that would be followed by a serious Middle East initiative spearheaded by President Bush and the United States whereby the United States would take an active role and carry the peace initiative to a successful end.

But that's looking in the medium- to long-range future. The most immediate concern now is for this campaign to be concluded with positive results, if one can say so, despite all the damages that have been inflicted on the Lebanese infrastructure and the Lebanese civilians.

PHILLIPS: Former Lebanese government adviser Adib Farha, thanks for your time again today.

FARHA: Thanks.