

Hezbollah leader to The Grayzone: Israel-First Trump 'Turned America into a joke'

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#Wyatt Reed

Mr. Safa, thank you very much for taking the time to speak with The Grayzone. I'd like to begin by discussing Hezbollah as a movement. You know, Americans are told that Hezbollah is a terrorist organization, so I'd like to hear it from you. From your perspective, what is Hezbollah? Why was it formed? And what are you fighting for?

#Hezbollah leader

Hezbollah's existence and the origin of Hezbollah was to confront the Israeli enemy. When the Israeli invasion occurred in 1982, Hezbollah began to form militarily, then later evolved into a jihadist movement—that is, military and political as well—from various social and cultural aspects, etc. As for Hezbollah being...

#Hezbollah leader

In the view of the enemy, it is terrorist. We believe that resistance to the enemy and resistance to any occupation is a legitimate matter for the people. So how much more if the occupying enemy is Israel? And we also know what the Israeli enemy did through its attacks during the occupation and after the occupation. This resistance, which became the Islamic Resistance and is affiliated with Hezbollah, resulted after many long years of sacrifice and confrontation in the liberation of the year 2000.

#Wyatt Reed

Yesterday, Israel admitted that Colonel Meir Biderman was critically injured in a Hezbollah drone strike. He is the senior-most Israeli casualty of the war so far, and the unit he commanded, the 401st Armored Brigade, is infamous for having killed a young Palestinian girl in Rajah. Can you tell us anything more about this operation?

#Hezbollah leader

The resistance operations, in fact, part of them are ground-breaking, and part of them have to do with intelligence and interrogation in terms of the presence of senior officers. What happened in the last two days is not new. The Israelis are trying to hide the truth, but when it appears in the media, they have to talk about it.

#Hezbollah leader

In fact, the achievements of the resistance are many. Some of them are related to the confrontation and killing of soldiers or wounding soldiers, to the officers, like what happened to this Israeli commander, and like what happened to the commander of the brigade, who was also targeted. One of them, the commander who was targeted in Al-Kawzah, it wasn't a military operation as much as it was a security operation. As for the commander-in-chief, it was a deliberate operation, where the resistance learned about his presence and about his place of sleep or rest, and targeted him specifically, along with the presence of other people, because the commander-in-chief was not alone. He was with a group. Now, footage of Hezbollah's FPV drones has spread like wildfire all across social media, so I'd like to discuss their impact.

#Wyatt Reed

How effective have these drones been at neutralizing the Israeli military? And do you think the Israeli military stands a chance of countering the threat posed by these drones anytime soon?

#Hezbollah leader

One of the latest and most advanced weapons for the resistance was the FPV. Of course,

#Hezbollah leader

As we used to know, and as the party said before, during the 15 months that the Israelis were attacking our people and Lebanon, the party was giving a chance to the Lebanese state, for diplomatic reasons if the expression is correct, in order to stop these attacks. During this time, Hezbollah was developing its capabilities in terms of missiles and other types, and in terms of vehicles, also in terms of quantity and type, and in terms of fighters, on the level of number and on the level of type. In this last war, the Mujahideen were able to focus on this specific type of weapon, which is the FPV.

#Hezbollah leader

which in fact revealed the inability of the Israeli enemy to find specific targets or to find a solution to this problem and to this weapon.

#Hezbollah leader

In fact, this matter caused the Israeli army to get offers from about 100 companies in order to find a solution to this type of weapon, which is not complicated and not complex. It is very simple, an idea that has been used without much effort.

#Hezbollah leader

Until now, these 100 companies have not been able to find a real cure for this weapon. This is one side. On the other side, the effect of this weapon is not only on the level of injuring the enemy or killing the enemy, but it affects the morale of this army that fights. It affects the morale of the Israeli soldiers. Imagine that the soldiers now hide in the day and move at night. They move at night and hide in the day. Because, as we say in Arabic, there is no tent on the head of anyone. Even the procedure that they did, which is about the net, made it possible for the resistance to enter this car from the heart of the net. In more than one operation, it was proven. There is another matter, that we...

#Hezbollah leader

We believe that the FTV drone is similar, as a response to the Pager operation. The Israeli goal behind the Pager is not so much to cause death as to cause injury to the eyes or hands. The Israeli enemy now admits that there have been many injuries.

#Hezbollah leader

If we don't say that the resistance now, as they were surprised in this hearing, the FPV, is there another weapon that will surprise the enemy?

#Wyatt Reed

I'd like to discuss these pager attacks. In September 2024, Israel killed dozens of people and injured thousands with a coordinated detonation of explosive-laden pagers. Many of the victims were members of Hezbollah, but many were not. Nevertheless, Western governments and media outlets cheered this so-called precision strike, and members of both U.S. parties began publicly joking about it. For many people in Lebanon, however, there was nothing funny about it. And I understand that your child was injured by one of these pagers. So I'd like for you to discuss the impact of these attacks, perhaps first on a personal level, and then if you could tell us what has been the impact of these pager attacks on Hezbollah as a whole.

#Hezbollah leader

We will not talk about the details, and to be honest, it had an effect on a group of brothers who work in the Islamic Resistance. The personal issue related to the family applies to the families that were harmed by the pager issue, and this is not less for them. The damage that happened did not

affect the work of the resistance. Yes, there are many brothers who were hurt in their eyes and hands, but the numbers of the resistance are very high. We remember that Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah said that there was a party of 100,000 fighters. Yes, there were thousands who were hurt, but that did not prevent the progress of the resistance. Just sticking with your family for a moment here, I understand that this is kind of a personal question, and I hope you'll forgive me for asking, but...

#Wyatt Reed

There are reports that your son, who is serving with the resistance in southern Lebanon, has not been heard from for about two weeks. I was wondering if you could confirm that that's the case or give us any kind of update on the situation.

#Hezbollah leader

In fact, our children are in the resistance, and all our children are. But when it comes to my children, one of them was hit by a bomb and the other is on the front. Yes, there is no news about him. But the main idea is that the children of the officials in the resistance are also present on the field. They fight, maybe they are killed, maybe they return, maybe they are wounded. This is normal. We do not differentiate between fighters who are the sons of officials or the sons of non-officials. The feature of Hezbollah, in fact—and I'm not talking about my children as much as I'm talking about a large group of Hezbollah—is that their children are in the field. And there is a large group of their children who are martyrs.

We are talking about the death of Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah. We are talking about the death of Hajj Imad Mughniyeh. We are talking about children who are responsible now, who are on the front line. And some of them, there is no news about them. They fight, and of course, when we are in a battle, it may be hard, it may hurt, they may win and return. This is left to Allah and to the field. There is a beautiful saying about our children in the resistance, that our children are in the trenches, not in the palaces.

#Wyatt Reed

You mentioned that these FPV drones represent kind of an answer to Israel's pager attacks. Now, for many years, Israel has maintained a technological advantage over the resistance movements in terms of its weaponry, its massive bombs, and in terms of infiltrating society—not just in Lebanon, but in Iran—to be able to co-opt different figures, to be able to plant bombs, assassinate members of the resistance. I'm wondering, do you think these FPV drones represent a turning of the tide in terms of asymmetrical warfare? And does the party have any other surprises in store for the Israeli forces?

#Hezbollah leader

I pointed to this matter and said that there are two paths. The first path is related to this new weapon and is capable of evolving. And there is another path that may form a surprise for the enemy, related to its security and military confrontations. The resistance has accustomed us to surprises in all its wars. If we talk about the 2006 war, the surprise for the Israeli enemy was the Kornet missiles, which became famous later on. One of its surprises was the Israeli ship that witnessed the explosion in the sea. Another surprise was the suicide of the Israeli enemy. Today, in this war, yes, there are surprises. The first or the last one is the FPV bombing, but before that was the Meydan surprise.

#Hezbollah leader

The Israeli enemy thought it had eliminated the resistance and its weapons, but the resistance surprised it with the quantity of rockets it possessed, their numbers, and also surprised it with its presence in the field, preventing the Israeli enemy from advancing toward Lebanese territory. At the beginning of the last war, the Israelis set a plan to reach the Litani. In the war, they couldn't reach the Litani, but they reached about 4 to 6 kilometers from the Lebanese border. During the defeat, Israel advanced. One of the examples of what Hezbollah says is that they won.

#Hezbollah leader

When the enemy's plan fails, it means that Hezbollah has won. The enemy's plan in 2006 was to overthrow Hezbollah and eliminate it. He couldn't do that, so we say that Hezbollah won. Today, in this war, he set a high ceiling to eliminate Hezbollah's weapons.

#Hezbollah leader

And he couldn't do that. Then he went back a point and said that the Israeli president said it is not their intention to dismantle Hezbollah's army or rebuild Hezbollah. This is not because he doesn't want to, but because he is not able to do this. He couldn't reach the Litani, so he stopped at the limit he reached. Israel's defense minister, Israel Katz, has suggested that Israel may attack Iran and Lebanon again.

#Wyatt Reed

Netanyahu has called for early elections, and a significant opposition figure, Avigdor Lieberman, has said that Netanyahu may make a military move for electoral purposes. With all of this in mind, do you anticipate Israel attempting to launch a renewed large-scale ground assault in Lebanon?

#Hezbollah leader

Even in the context of the existence of a hudna or a stop to the fire, the attacks are great and still ongoing. The most possible thing the Israelis could do is to do it in the south. Of course, we expect everything from the Israeli enemy.

#Wyatt Reed

This week, we saw another social media post from Syria's new leader celebrating his relationship with Donald Trump. And I'm wondering what the change in political leadership in Syria has meant for Hezbollah. To what extent have they restricted your ability to operate and rearm? And to what extent has the party been able to recover from this shift?

#Hezbollah leader

Of course, the closure of this path from Syria had an effect, but not to the extent that it makes the resistance not have weapons. The resistance has a set of options. One of these options was from Syria, and there are other ways for the entry of weapons to Lebanon. And there is also the possibility, because the resistance, as we said, has developed a lot. It became possible to manufacture missiles and weapons. By the way, the FPV machine is from the Islamic Resistance industry, because the resistance has the capabilities and scientific abilities that enable it to develop and maintain the era.

#Hezbollah leader

Think about it.

#Wyatt Reed

Obviously, Syria was not the only government that was offering assistance to the resistance. When Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah was killed by Israel, he was standing alongside an IRGC general. So I'm wondering, how is the relationship with the IRGC at this point? Are they still offering the same level of assistance, or has the party been operating a bit more independently?

#Hezbollah leader

We are not ashamed of our relationship with the Revolutionary Guard. On the contrary. But our movement and our actions are certainly independent. There is permanent coordination, but there is no decision-making. The resistance, with all its decisions, is independent and cooperates with the Iranians and takes arms and money from the Iranians, and this is not a shame. The Revolutionary Guard are brothers, friends, helpers, and financiers, but not to the extent that they take our independence in decision-making.

As for what concerns Hezbollah and Iran, Hezbollah is a unifying point for all of Iran, whether it's the Guards, the Iranian army, or the political leadership in Iran. The leader supports Hezbollah, and so does the Revolutionary Guard. There are no disagreements or differences of opinion toward Hezbollah. Hezbollah is an entity that everyone should help and take care of as they should. We've heard some questions about the extent to which these U.S.-Iran negotiations include Lebanon.

#Wyatt Reed

Does the proposed ceasefire that's being negotiated still extend to Lebanon? And how much is Iran capable of forcing the U.S.'s hand when it comes to extending this umbrella to cover Lebanon?

#Hezbollah leader

And the withdrawal from Lebanon — this is a matter that exists in the agreement. And this is what we were informed of by the Iranian Foreign Ministry. And we were also informed by the leaders of the Revolutionary Guards. Iran cannot — and here, by the way, Iran is struggling with its allies, not as America is struggling with its allies. The comparison here, between what Netanyahu did, or what Trump did as a ceasefire in Iran without going back to Netanyahu — and Netanyahu was very angry in the previous phase — we can say that he abandoned Israel at that moment. Iranians do not abandon Hezbollah. And therefore, any agreement — Lebanon is involved in this agreement. There is no doubt about this. If Lebanon is outside of this agreement, then there is no agreement. Yes, Iran has the ability to impose this matter, considering that it does not leave an alliance.

#Wyatt Reed

This week, there's been a lot of discussion about an alleged plan by the U.S. government to create a unit within the Lebanese army specifically focused on disarming Hezbollah. This is something that a lot of Lebanese people fear would lead to Israeli occupation or outright civil war. On Tuesday, a Hezbollah member of parliament said that the resistance would treat any such unit as a hostile force and therefore a legitimate military target. Now, the relationship between Hezbollah and the Lebanese army is complicated, although the party has always insisted on maintaining good relations with the Lebanese military. The forces operated in tandem at one point in 2017 when they were liberating border towns like Aarsal from ISIS. Can you tell us anything else about the resistance's response to this attempt to create a unit specifically to disarm you? And can you tell us anything else about the current state of relations between Hezbollah and the Lebanese army?

#Hezbollah leader

The golden ratio that we expressed — the army, the people, and the resistance — we won in 2006. We started this matter, and we still consider that the Lebanese army, in its doctrine, sees Israel as an enemy. We saw this on the ground when the Israelis shelled and killed a number of Lebanese

army soldiers. We do not expect the Lebanese army to form a force to confront Hezbollah or to remove Hezbollah's weapons. But we reject this matter, and we reject the American pressure that is pushing for it. And if this happens, it will be an introduction to something that does not benefit the country at all.

#Hezbollah leader

If they want the benefit of Lebanon and the benefit of family peace, they must not establish this brigade. The philosophy of establishing this brigade was because the Israelis were unable to do this. They were unable to remove the party's weapons or defeat the party, so they went to this point in coordination with the Americans. Because they know that this will be a fitna in the country, and they know that this matter will be a shock to internal stability in Lebanon. For that reason, we say, think carefully and be aware of this matter.

#Wyatt Reed

While we're on the topic of these negotiations, I was wondering if you could tell us where Hezbollah stands. Do you consider these attempts to negotiate with Israel to be a violation of the Lebanese constitution? Does the government have any real leverage in its attempts to negotiate without including Hezbollah? And what would be the impact on Lebanon if the resistance were to unilaterally disarm, as some who are involved in these negotiations insist that it do?

#Hezbollah leader

We said that we reject the establishment of the Lebanese state in direct negotiation with the Israeli enemy, for a number of reasons. First, because the Lebanese state does not have such a decision. Second, because the Israeli enemy did not give it and will not give it anything. The enemy always understands the language of power. The problem of the government or the authority in Lebanon is that it has submitted to a number of delays for free, and there is no reason to do this. So she went to send a civilian to the mechanism. Then she went to meet directly with the Israeli enemy, at the level of the embassies, then at the level of a political personality.

#Hezbollah leader

Little by little, the authorities offered what they had, and Israel gave them nothing. So, does the authority have any decision-making power regarding the implementation of any decision that comes out of, or results from, the bilateral or trilateral meeting in Washington? We don't think so.

#Hezbollah leader

The only solution is to benefit from what the resistance does, and not from what failed diplomacy does. We are convinced that what will happen in Lebanon

#Wyatt Reed

So you see this not as the primary battlefield, but as...

#Wyatt Reed

An extension of a broader regional war?

#Hezbollah leader

Because the government, because the authority could not do anything, could not stop the Israeli attacks, there is someone who came to help Lebanon stop these attacks. We can say to him, hello and welcome, that the resistance came from Iran to offer assistance. Otherwise, God forbid, if the resistance could not stand firm, there would be no one after Iran to intervene. But the hatred between them in this war will remain what preserves the unity of the axis as an axis, from Iran to Lebanon.

#Wyatt Reed

To myself and to many Americans, it seems that the United States, under Trump certainly, but also to an extent under Biden in terms of his negotiations with Hamas, is using these negotiations as an excuse to prolong the conflict — a way to buy more time for Israel. Is Hezbollah hoping for a political shift in the United States? Do you think it would even make any difference?

#Hezbollah leader

This will certainly happen, because Trump's behavior and his misguidance of the American people will certainly affect him and his party. Also, when this change happens, this behavior toward the region may change, and there are voices in America questioning Trump's mental fitness and his eligibility to lead America, or that instead of making America great again, he has made America...

#Hezbollah leader

This means that the people have become...

#Hezbollah leader

But always with this behavior that Trump shows, in order to make Israel's interests come first, and not America's interests or those of the American people. Trump's program, his goals, have become vague and unclear, and they don't appeal to anyone. Today we see that a large number of Congress members and a large number of senators do not follow what Trump wants, because they saw that what he did made America a laughingstock, in fact, and put Israel's interests above America's

interests. He is now working to make America weak again, not strong and not great. America used to benefit from Israel in the Middle East to confront Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and so on. It was a relationship of benefit — Israel was America's protégé in the region.

#Hezbollah leader

Today, we saw the opposite. We saw that Israel leads America for its interests. Netanyahu specifically uses America's influence for his personal interests. And America sacrifices its soldiers, its officers, and its military units for Israel's interests. So today, Israel leads America and benefits from America. And everyone knows that it has become clear that this war is an Israeli war and not an American war.

#Wyatt Reed

Sayed Hassan Nasrallah very famously stated that he viewed the United States as Hezbollah's primary opponent and that he viewed Israel as a sort of extension of the U.S. empire. But it seems to me that you're suggesting something a little different. Has there been a shift in the party's position on this issue?

#Hezbollah leader

Trump later was convinced that he was involved in this matter.

#Hezbollah leader

Because it's about Netanyahu's interests. The wars, whether they were in Iran, Gaza, or Lebanon, were all for Netanyahu's interests. And I also believe that all the American victims and the American military machine that was damaged in this war are for Israel and for Netanyahu. I want to discuss the situation in southern Lebanon, where Israel currently occupies large swaths of territory, but a long-term occupation seems untenable.

#Wyatt Reed

Meanwhile, we're hearing statements from Israeli ministers like Itamar Ben-Gvir declaring their intention to establish permanent settlements in the south of Lebanon. So how do you interpret these statements, and what is your response?

#Hezbollah leader

Yes, if the Israelis could control a large area of the south, they would do it. And they are not ashamed to say that they want to establish settlements in the south of Lebanon. Al-Muqawama is the only language that can prevent this project. I am surprised that Israel declares that its project,

the big project of Israel, is not only the south of Lebanon. It is the south of Lebanon, Syria, part of Saudi Arabia, and part of the Gulf region. And despite this, they do nothing. Today, Al-Muqawama fights against Israel and Syria. Given the heavy price that people in Lebanon have paid, especially in the south,

#Wyatt Reed

I'm wondering, does the resistance still stand by the decision to intervene and open up? Given the heavy price that people in Lebanon have paid, especially in the south, I'm wondering, does Hezbollah still stand by the decision to intervene after October 7th and open up a new front in the fight against Israel?

#Hezbollah leader

Yes, what the resistance did on the 8th of October was something it was convinced of and is still convinced of. This was a sad thing, and there is no doubt about Hezbollah's entry into this war, because we thought that the Israelis would take similar steps toward Lebanon.