Patrick Henningsen: Iran's Deterrence vs. US Military Weakness

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#Nima

Yesterday, what has happened with the case of Lebanon and the United States announced that there is an agreement between the government in Lebanon and the Israelis. What are the points? What are the terms or the clauses of this agreement? The agreement is that Hezbollah must reportedly halt all attacks and withdraw from south of the Litani River — that’s the first point. And Lebanon stated that it has no hostile intentions toward Israel and reportedly designated Hezbollah as an enemy of the Lebanese state. The Lebanese Armed Forces would assume exclusive security control in designated areas, excluding non-state armed groups. Both sides reaffirm they don't seek conflict with one another and agree to continue direct talks toward broader security and peace arrangements.

And political and security negotiations are expected to resume during the week of June 22nd with continued U.S. mediation. Looking at this, is that going to make sense for anybody, do you think, in Lebanon? I'm not talking about the government, the people, and Hezbollah, because... The problem with Israel is the fight between Hezbollah and Lebanon, and the problem of the occupation of the southern part of Lebanon is not related to the Lebanese government. And how do you see the thing? Because Donald Trump is somehow desperate. He knows Iran is putting pressure on him because they said they're going to attack the northern part of Israel. And you see that he came out with this sort of... I don't see any sort of future for this agreement. But what is happening in your mind with the case of Israel and Lebanon?

#Patrick

The draft proposal that you just read there, that was written yesterday, either by Washington or a combination of Washington and Israel. They wrote it, and they would hand it to the Lebanese government and tell them, that's the agreement that you're going to put forward. It's impossible that this would have come from Lebanon or from anyone in Lebanon, realistically speaking. And what you have in Beirut is, at the moment, what we call a trustee government, a trustee government. So, like, when you have a prison and the prison warden nominates a few prisoners to be trustees to govern over the other prisoners, they have no power, they have no sovereignty, they're just there

symbolically to deal with, you know, the inmates, as it were. That's what Joseph Aoun and Nawaf Salam are, the president and prime minister of Lebanon at the moment.

These are effectively appointed by the United States and Israel. So this is total American and Zionist control over Lebanon. And their goal, the United States' goal, they've been very public about it. Tom Barrack is Trump's former fixer, business fixer in the region, and then he got promoted to special envoy or ambassador to Turkey, and then he's suddenly special envoy dealing with Lebanon. He's been very open that he wants to see a civil war in Lebanon. He's not using those exact words, but he's talking about using the Lebanese military to disarm Hezbollah. That's effectively promoting the idea or forcing the idea of an armed civil war in Lebanon. And, you know, this is very easy for Americans to be talking like this because they have no – they're not Lebanese. They have no stake in Lebanon.

Lebanon is just a space on a chessboard for the Americans. And for Israel, it's future territory that they want to annex. That's all. So when you hear Tom Barrack or Trump or anybody from the U.S. or from the Atlantic Council or the State Department — what passes for a State Department these days in America, which is basically an annex of the Israeli embassy, effectively — when you hear this type of rhetoric, this is just basically denouncing the U.S. working with Israel, pretending to be separate parties, the U.S. pretending to want to restrain Israel, when in fact they're an absolutely, completely perfect partnership. And they're reading from exactly the same page. Americans do not care about Lebanese civilians. As far as Americans are concerned, Arabs living in South Lebanon are a nuisance.

And they would like to see them moved out. They would like to see that area depopulated, like Gaza and the West Bank, to make way for more settlements, more expansion of Israel. So that's an important part of the Greater Israel Project — the annexation of South Lebanon, not just to the Litani River, because Israel needs the freshwater source. They can't be dependent on desalination. They need Lebanon's fresh water. So effectively, Israel has always coveted Lebanon’s fresh water. They want to steal it. You know, they want to steal that river, that water, just like they've stolen the Golan Heights, just like they are planning to steal. And this is important, Nima — it's not just the Litani River. Israel would like a buffer zone above the Litani River.

Why? Because it's not just about what's on land in Lebanon. It's what's offshore. We're talking about natural gas deposits off of Lebanon. The United States, through its various agents and financial institutions, and by creating a lot of sectarian division and arguments among Lebanese billionaires, Lebanon has not been able to exploit its natural gas deposits off the coast of the Levant. Hence, while the billionaires are arguing over who's going to get it, it's not being properly exploited. Lebanon continues to be a sort of defunct economy, dysfunctional economy with a currency in free fall, you know, complete disaster. That's all by design because Israel has always wanted to maintain that as a non-performing energy asset of Lebanon to buy time, so whereby they could get into position to take it. And now they're very close to getting it.

And that's one of the main prizes in all of this, besides fresh water, and also to steal the very, very fertile agricultural land. In much the same way, the Israelis have already stolen and illegally occupied the Shebaa Farms. That's Lebanese territory as well. And so that's very profitable, fertile agricultural land, which Israel is seeking to take and then to eventually export their product from there. And if you look at what Israel does whenever it steals territory, it very quickly goes to develop the economic assets of the lands that it steals, and then it will want to make that a performing economic asset. And that just further, sort of in their mind, justifies the fact that they're there. They're going to occupy it illegally, and they're going to take it. And they say, well, you know, the people who were here before, the Palestinians or whoever, they weren't doing anything with this land.

So we just took it, and now it's profitable. Now it's developed. And it's because of us, the Israelis. So if they're allowed to, they will continue this pattern of behavior into Lebanon, onshore and offshore. That's the first thing. So they've cloaked this under the idea of security, okay? And then one of the big sort of frauds in all of this, unfortunately, and really this is at the core of a lot of the problems in the region, and the big enabler of Israel, is to label everybody a terrorist — anybody that is opposing their aggression, their occupation. And remember, Nima, Israel has, throughout all of this and years prior to October 7th, always maintained possession illegally of Lebanese territory.

They never fully withdrew from South Lebanon. They still maintain illegally occupied pieces of land in South Lebanon. That is why Hezbollah exists. From the beginning, Hezbollah, as a political movement, as an indigenous organic militia, defense militia, armed liberation struggle, opposing an illegal occupation of their land. By definition, under international law and the UN Charter, that's the classification of Hezbollah. And that goes for Palestinian resistance as well. Okay. That is why they have a mandate to do what they're doing. And so it's about defending the border because the Lebanese army, what they call the Lebanese army, bless them, but they're just a jumped-up security force, a domestic security force.

The Americans, because of—and this is coming from Israel—one of the important roles of the Israeli lobby in America is to make sure that pressure is placed on Washington to dictate terms for the Lebanese military, okay, what they can and what they cannot purchase as a military, okay? And Israel has insisted that Washington impose restrictions on the Lebanese military so they cannot have any air defense, forbidden by the Americans. So they cannot have an air force, forbidden by the Americans. That's kind of ridiculous if you think about it, but that is the actual state of play in Lebanon, because Israel needed to have full occupational control over Lebanese airspace for the last few decades.

One of the important reasons for that is Israel wanted to have access to Lebanese airspace in order to send its IDF jets into Lebanese airspace to fire missiles on Syria for 15 years and to do it with total impunity. And if Lebanon had air defense or any ability to police their own airspace, Israel would not have been able to basically act as the moderate rebel or al-Qaeda—their air force of al-Qaeda and the moderate rebels in Syria from 2011 forward until al-Qaeda took control of Damascus

with Mohammed al-Jolani, al-Sharar, as he's called now, Ahmed al-Sharar. So, Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, Ahmed al-Sharar. I think I got that right. Yeah, so the former deputy to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, an ISIS leader, and the founder of al-Qaeda in Syria, who Donald Trump has lauded and invited to the White House and sprays perfume on him and does selfies.

That's a head-chopping Al-Qaeda leader, okay? He benefited from Israel's air support. He and all the other terrorists backed by the United States, backed by Israel, trained and backed by Jordan, backed by Turkey, backed by France, backed by the Netherlands, backed by the UK, backed by Germany, backed by pretty much NATO full stop, backed by Saudi Arabia, backed by Qatar, backed by the UAE, backed by Kuwait. So Lebanon is very important because that allowed for constant and very safe deployment of air missiles and munitions and so forth, hitting targets constantly in Syria. That ultimately led to it being a failed state, hitting infrastructure, claiming that they were targeting Hezbollah. So that's very important. So it's very easy to create this civil war situation in Lebanon.

It's very easy for the United States and Israel to try to engineer this, okay? But the fact remains, the Lebanese army, they're not equipped to fight Hezbollah. They won't. I don't believe they can credibly do that. It would lead to a sectarian civil war in Lebanon, you know, after the country has recovered from, you know, decades of Western and Israeli-imposed civil war, which the first Lebanese civil war was characterized in such a way that even Lebanese were brainwashed to think that it was between factions within Lebanon. So they're constantly suspicious, taking sides, partisan, sectarian mentality that developed in that country, where it's very clear when you look at the history and you step back, that it wasn't a civil war, it was a foreign war.

Lebanon was used as the battle space for it. That was really, in many ways, a war between Syria and Israel as much as anything. And Lebanon was the battlefield for that. And it was the United States working either behind the scenes or in the front of house during the Reagan administration, and then later behind the scenes with USAID money, the CIA working behind the scenes, to maintain this level of instability and dysfunction in that country. And so here we are in 2026 — America, the neocons, the warmongering party led by Donald Trump and Netanyahu in Israel — they believe they're very close to achieving their ultimate goal, which is to wipe out any dissent, any resistance in the Levant. And the problem is that it's probably not going to be practical.

It's not going to work. And the idea that you could get a Lebanese government to say that they wish no harm on Israel after Israel has been massacring Lebanese civilians, massacring people in Beirut, people in Tyre, people right across Nabatieh, right across the entirety of the south — it's laughable, and it's such a betrayal of the Lebanese people by this puppet, this U.S., American, and Israeli puppet government. It's shameless that any Lebanese official would read such a statement, but you can tell it was drafted in Washington. It's very clear.

This is, uh, it's a very, um... the arrogance in that statement. It's a foreign-drafted statement, probably more like drafted in Tel Aviv, rubber-stamped in Washington, and then handed to the Lebanese president and prime minister, and they'll stick it on their desk and say, "Read that. Read

that." And that's that. So realistically, it's almost impossible for them to implement this. Besides the fact that, you know, Israel's just been bombing with impunity. They're now bombing the UNESCO World Heritage protected site, the city of Tyre. There are so many different civilizations layered on top of each other in Tyre. It's a wonderful and amazing piece of history.

And Israel has no qualms, nor does the United States, about leveling that city, turning it into a pile of rubble, and then getting Jared Kushner or whoever to build some new high-rise towers there and say there's going to be a resort there. They have no problem with that at all. Alexander the Great, Egyptian, Byzantine, Roman, further afield going back — there's so much history in Tyre. And then the excuse that Israel says is, well, there's Hezbollah hiding in the Christian area, so we're going to flatten that and kill, you know, an 80% civilian, 20% combatant kill ratio, casualty ratio. So many civilians will die. But it's not just that.

It's about destroying the dwellings. There's also a major Palestinian refugee camp still in Tyre. I don't know how many people there are. It's very densely packed. I've been to Tyre many times. I know it very well. Very densely packed, 200-plus thousand people in that very, very small Palestinian refugee camp. So Israel will use these as excuses, as they have done forever. This is constant. During the Lebanese Civil War in the 80s and 90s, the whole basis of Israeli involvement was that they were taking out Palestinian terrorists in Lebanon. And now it's Hezbollah. Same exact excuse. Hezbollah would not exist if not for Israel's illegal and brutal occupation of South Lebanon.

Full stop. And Hezbollah is not a proxy of Iran. That is a fake talking point that keeps being pushed ad nauseam by the United States, okay? They're not. They're absolutely from South Lebanon. There's no question about that. And they don't have an expeditionary terrorist branch, okay? It's not al-Qaeda or ISIS, okay? Whatever you believe those organizations actually are, but it's nothing like that. But that's how it's been classified legally and proscribed by the United States, Israel, Brussels, the UK, Germany, France, and a few other European countries, Canada and the US, and that's it. And that gives you basically carte blanche to carpet bomb anywhere where you suspect that these so-called terrorists will be, including, look at Gaza.

That's the whole basis of the genocide in Gaza. It was a war on terror. That was the banner that Israel perpetrated this genocide under. Simple. So it's the same. This is the source of so many problems in the region. It's the prescription and the labeling that give the perpetrators, the state actors, the license to enact state terror policies of total annihilation in the war on terror, according to their legal justification. And that creates the instability. It creates the crisis. It creates the wars. It's the same reason that the U.S. and Israel have been attacking Iran. They're claiming that Iran is a terrorist state, that they're funding terrorism and so forth.

But the bottom line is, if you strip back all of these labels, anybody who's resisting the U.S. or Israeli aggression or occupation will, at some point, be labeled a terrorist by the legal system in the West and by Israel, of course. And that's just a constant pattern that keeps repeating itself over the last 50 or 60 years. Well, let's say 50 years, and especially in the last 30 years. And I will argue from an

academic, objective point of view that we cannot have any dialogue or any meaningful, objective analysis, dialogue, or any solutions, much less any political settlement, so long as the U.S. and its allies cling to this policy of extrajudicially proscribing, labeling, and then any resistance to war crimes or genocide or occupation or apartheid, labeling them terrorists.

And it's kind of a problem historically. I think we'll look back at this period in history, Nima, the last 40 years especially, and we'll realize what an absolute catastrophe it's been. And it's been a catastrophe because it's been given legal cover, pure and simple, to override international law, you see. So this idea, this is the basis of all Israeli action, is that they don't believe that they have to abide by or recognize any humanitarian, any UN, any international law, nothing, because they are waging a war on terror, pure and simple. And I think, stepping back in history, if we are lucky enough to live long enough as a society to be able to look back and analyze the last 40 years, I think that's exactly what the experts will conclude, despite what people say today.