

Patrick Henningsen: This is NOT 2006: The New Phase of the Hezbollah-IDF War

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#Nima

The negotiations between Iranians and Americans in Switzerland, and one of the main issues, the major issues, was the case of Lebanon and the ceasefire in Lebanon. For more than 48 hours, we haven't heard anything from Lebanon in terms of the ceasefire. It was all, everything was somehow calm there. Then moments ago, just an hour ago, we've learned from Lebanon that Israelis again are killing Lebanese people. And what is the story? The Israeli military said its forces struck a group of armed Hezbollah operatives near the Ali Taher Ridge in southern Lebanon early today. And Hezbollah rejected the Israeli account, saying that the strike targeted a group of civilians who were clearing roads and recovering bodies from beneath rubble near Nabatiyeh. It's the whole region, Nabatiyeh, Ali Taher, that fortress.

Many people were killed in that region. You remember Israel tried to capture that fortress, which was filled. Six times they tried to capture that fortress. That was totally filled, and there were many casualties on the part of Hezbollah and on the part of the Israelis. So they're clearing out the region somehow successfully, taking out the bodies from the region. But that was the case, and that was the excuse on the part of the Israelis to attack and kill. I don't know. So far, we haven't learned about the casualties of this attack. It seems two people were killed and some people were injured. We don't know that. We don't have the full picture. And here is what's going on in Lebanon. What is happening? How far the negotiations, the talks between Iran and the United States, could put restrictions on the Israelis and their actions in the southern part of Lebanon?

#Guest

Yeah.

#Nima

How do you see it? What is the extent of the negotiations? How can these negotiations help the situation in Lebanon as we see Israelis killing more people?

#Guest

I don't think they can, because the way that the issue is framed, you know, I would even say the Iranians need to clarify a little bit more, you know, what does this entail? Because the way the United States, the way Israel is framing it, is that they have a free hand within Lebanon, that they can put troops in there and they can do as they want under the aegis of anti-terror operations within Lebanon. So, and that's not a violation of the ceasefire, or they might stop firing. But I even think that Netanyahu and the Prime Minister's office and the IDF issued statements to that effect, like no offensive operations, only defensive only. But how do you define that?

Israel defines defensive operations as offensive operations. So if they claim that there's a terrorist there, then they have a right, defensively, to go and do an offensive strike. You know, that's what you're dealing with with the Israelis. They're absolutely rapacious murderers, and they have no compunction whatsoever regarding civilian lives. And, you know, they have no problem massacring, and then they'll just make up an excuse after the fact, saying that they were targeting Hezbollah, which they define as terrorist. But Hezbollah are Lebanese. And Lebanese, whether they're civilians recovering bodies in this case, or whether they're Hezbollah, they have a right to move within their own country.

They're not attacking Israel. They're not attacking Israelis within. Now, if Israel attacks Lebanon, then Hezbollah is well within their rights and the laws of war to retaliate, even inside Israeli territory. Now, let's just wind the clock back a little bit, Nima. How did this all begin? How did this cycle of escalation begin between Hezbollah and Israel? A lot of people don't remember. It was October 8th. October 8th. And the claim by Israel is Hezbollah attacked Israel, and then the Israelis responded with overwhelming force, and then the conflict began. It hasn't finished since. But the beginning claim by Israel was a lie. It was a lie. They pushed it out into the global media. Hezbollah did not attack Israel on October 8th.

They fired on IDF positions inside the Shebaa Farms, which is illegally occupied territory by Israel. It's an important fact. That's how this started. So whatever happens after that, and things spin out of control and both sides are hitting each other, the fact of the matter is Israel is in illegal occupying positions within Lebanon. They have been holding land after 2000 that they were supposed to, that they were obligated to withdraw from 25 years ago. Multiple UN resolutions to that effect. They just ignored them. The United States backed them in the UN, okay? So the whole basis of this is Israel started it. They are the instigator. They're the aggressor. Hezbollah is within international law, 100%.

Israel is in violation of international law, 100%. And this is exactly the identical pattern, Nima, of the Lebanese civil war. Israel invaded Lebanon in the early 80s based on a claim that the PLO tried to assassinate an Israeli diplomat who was assigned as an ambassador to Britain, Shlomo Argov. And before any investigation took place, Israel just used that, invaded South Lebanon, and that caused a series of events that led to one of the most catastrophic civil wars in history. And guess what? It was based on a lie. The PLO had nothing to do with it. Yasser Arafat had nothing to do with it. If

anything, this probably was conjured up by Israeli intelligence to give a pretext to invade. So they've done it before.

#Nima

Patrick, sorry for interrupting you. If it was the PLO, why did they need to invade Lebanon? Because the PLO is in the West Bank.

#Guest

No, no, because the PLO was in Lebanon. Yes, Israel had pushed them into Lebanon. And then, exactly like today, the claim was from Menachem Begin and the IDF: we need to stamp out the terrorist threat, a threat to our security in Lebanon, which was the PLO, which had established offices and a presence in Lebanon because they were pushed out basically from occupied Palestine.

#Nima

It reminds me of Hamas going to Qatar.

#Guest

Yeah, it's that too. But it's identical in a sense to Hezbollah, because all they have to do is label an armed liberation struggle—an indigenous Levantine armed liberation struggle from Palestine, the Palestinian Liberation Organization, like that's their name, the Palestinian Liberation Organization—just label them terrorists, get the United States and their allies to treat them the same. Although it wasn't so easy to do back then because there was a different, I think, international climate.

But they've done the same regarding, of course, every single Palestinian resistance organization. Hamas and everybody else are just labeled terrorists, even though they don't have an international expeditionary terrorist wing. But yet the Israeli lobby has ordered the United States government, and then the U.S. has pressured all of their allies to do the same. Ditto with Hezbollah. Hezbollah is not an expeditionary terrorist organization, despite all the fake, what I think are totally bogus and dubious statements attributing the Burgas, Bulgaria bus attack, a synagogue in Argentina. I mean, really, almost ridiculous on its face.

And then there's the big one, which is the U.S. Marine barracks bombing in Beirut in 1983. The group that took credit for that was the Islamic Jihad Organization at the time because there was no Hezbollah. There was no Hezbollah at the time. But what the U.S. did was retrospectively label that a Hezbollah terrorist attack through a civil court proceeding, which was a case brought to federal court by the families of the Marines who died in the Beirut barracks bombing in '83. And what they

needed was, they wanted to grab frozen Iranian assets—\$1.5 billion and another tranche of \$2 billion. And to do that, they needed to label Hezbollah as, A, a terrorist organization, and B, that they carried out the Beirut barracks bombing.

So the CIA produced a lot of fabricated intelligence and reports, which were used in that trial, among other pieces of dubious evidence, to sort of retroactively construct the narrative that the Islamic Jihad was really Hezbollah secretly in disguise, but yet hadn't come out publicly until 1985. I mean, they constructed a total conspiracy theory. And this is what intelligence services can do because nobody really checks their work. They don't have to prove the provenance of any of their claims. They just piece it together, and then that's it. That's the party line: Hezbollah did the 1983 Marine barracks bombing. But historically and, I would say, forensically, there's no way you could make that claim. Okay.

It's a political claim. It's, it's, uh, completely manipulative. And the, the, uh, the object was to use it to grab billions of Iranian frozen assets, you see, through lawfare. So, I mean, if you really want to drill down, it's hard for people to defend that claim. But yet, that is what it is. And this is why we have the situation, Nima, because that's the entire Israeli basis of being in South Lebanon, of killing Lebanese, of destroying towns and cities in Lebanon, is this claim that an indigenous armed liberation struggle is, in fact—a local militia for South Lebanon is, in fact—a terrorist group. Now, they are legally in the U.S., according to the EU, Germany, France, Canada, and Britain, and a few other countries, but not—most of the world does not have them designated as a terrorist organization.

They're certainly not a threat to anybody's national security. But that is the whole basis of this conundrum that we find ourselves in. And people just need to be reminded, Nima, that Hezbollah would not exist if not for the brutal Israeli occupation of South Lebanon in the '80s. It was brutal, and it was illegal on every level. And the people of Lebanon have a right to resist. It's in the UN Charter, even to take up arms if necessary, even to use violence if necessary. That is their right under the UN Charter. So this is where we have this legal argument and this designation. And by the way, the Lebanese army can't defend the southern border. They are not able to. The policy of the Lebanese armed forces is not to engage with Israel.