

# Regional Powers Key To Lebanon Peace

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

When the conference of the Lebanon Group of 15 nations ended in Rome on July 26, without any agreement on an immediate cease-fire in the Israel-Lebanon war, Israeli Justice Minister Haim Ramon concluded—rightly—that this meant that Israel had been given “authorization” to continue its two-week-long aggression against Lebanon. True enough: Thanks to the indomitable efforts of U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her British counterpart, Margaret Beckett, the other 13 governments, plus United Nations General Secretary Kofi Annan, were blocked from forcing through a resolution calling for an immediate truce. It was a green light for Israel. And the U.S. veto the same day at the UN Security Council, against a statement condemning Israel for bombing a UN base, which killed four UN workers, sent a similar message.

Furthermore, the United States has been shipping weapons to Israel. British Foreign Secretary Beckett protested to Washington that two cargo planes loaded with 5,000-pound “bunker-buster” bombs had stopped over at Prestwick airport near Glasgow.

But “authorization” does not mean guarantee of military success. In fact, on the same day the ignominious Rome conference met, Israel suffered its worst casualties in years, when at least 9 (and possibly 13) soldiers were killed, and another 27 were wounded, in fierce house-to-house combat in the town of Bint Jbail in southern Lebanon.

The casualty figures, enhanced by the report of a third downed Israeli helicopter, sparked a debate in Israel about how to proceed. While Israeli radio opined that this could be a turning point in public opinion, which has so far supported the war, others pushed for a more determined effort, aimed at liquidating Hezbollah and establishing a security buffer zone of somewhere between 2 and 20 kilometers into Lebanon. Gen. Udi Adam, head of the northern command, said, “In a number of weeks we will be able to declare a victory.” Similar jingoist statements were to be heard from *Ha’aretz* military expert Zev Schiff, who called it was a “must-win” situation, in which Israel could not afford anything short of victory. A war of attrition was to be ruled out, Schiff wrote, otherwise there could be a victory for Hezbollah.

Nevertheless, the hard-nosed facts of the conflict on the ground hint at another scenario. Hezbollah is determined to continue defending the country. Press reports outside Israel indicate that the Israelis have been surprised at the level and

depth of resistance they have met. Soldiers are quoted saying, that the Hezbollah “know where we are coming from. They know everything. They shoot us whenever they like. It’s their country.”

And, another cultural-ideological factor is relevant: As Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrullah stated, whatever casualties they sustain are considered “martyrs” to be proud of. In contrast, for Israel, the more casualties, the more pressure from public opinion to stop the conflict. There is already psychological pressure on the Israelis. One retired senior U.S. intelligence official who spoke to *EIR* emphasized that the city of Haifa is now virtually a ghost town, with the vast majority of residents either fleeing to safer locations or hiding in underground shelters. The psychological impact on Israel, he emphasized, is unprecedented.

Hezbollah’s aim is maximum damage to the enemy. Nasrullah has announced that his force will soon attack targets farther away than Haifa, perhaps meaning the port city of Netanya. It is a classic case of guerrilla warfare, which, as Vietnam, Iraq today, and Israel’s own 18-year quagmire in Lebanon should have taught, cannot be won militarily. For this reason, Israel is seeking an international force, preferably NATO, to be sent to Lebanon to police a buffer zone.

This will not work. First, as NATO countries are quick to point out, the troops are not available. As for a UN force, no one seems enthusiastic about deploying troops, especially in light of Israel’s bombing and artillery attack on a UN base July 25. France, invited to “lead” such a force, has said, “No, thank you,” and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, in response to reports that Condi Rice would like a first contingent of 10,000 peacekeepers, to be made up of Egyptians and Turks, has said, “no way.”

Pentagon generals are scratching their heads over U.S. media leaks July 27 that the United States could send a large contingent to lead such a peacekeeping force. U.S. forces are stretched to the limit in Iraq and Afghanistan, and competent military planners say that the United States should be either pulling out of Iraq or sending in another 150,000 combat troops—which don’t exist.

Furthermore, even were such a force to be rallied and deployed quickly, it would not have the ability to “disarm” Hezbollah, as Rice and company demand. Anyone conversant with the realities of Lebanese politics, knows that Hezbollah, which was formed in response to Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 1982, is not a “guerrilla” force, but a political and social organization with an armed wing, which represents the only fighting force in the country at present. As Lebanese political figures have indicated, the issue of Hezbollah’s status is an issue for the political groups in Lebanon—all of them—to work out, in a sovereign manner.

## Assembling a Political Solution

The history of irregular warfare teaches that there is no military solution. Therefore, a political way out must be



U.S. State Department

*Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora following the so-called Lebanon Core Group meeting in Rome, July 26, 2006. Rice's refusal to back a cease-fire has given a green light to Israel to continue its atrocities in Lebanon.*

found, to end the destruction of Lebanon's infrastructure, economy, and people. Several preliminary steps are obvious: an unconditional cease-fire, followed by negotiations for the exchange of prisoners, and then talks to reach a political solution, including the return of occupied territories.

To achieve this result, the regional governments that wield effective power must be brought into the equation. This means not only Lebanon and Israel, but also Syria and Iran. Ironically, although Rice et al. continue to complain that Syria and Iran are the powers "behind" Hezbollah, they refuse to talk to them. Instead, Rice, like a prim school marm, continues to lecture that Syria "knows what it has to do"—that is, disarm Hezbollah, etc.

Kofi Annan broke the taboo even prior to the Rome conference, when he announced that Iran and Syria should be involved. French President Jacques Chirac, echoed his recommendation in an interview July 26 with *Le Figaro*. German personalities who were involved in successful prisoner exchanges in the past (1996 and 2004), have also voiced their readiness to try the same again, thus signalling Berlin's willingness to engage with Syria and Iran.

Chirac made several pertinent points. First, that a political agreement on all sides must be reached, before there is any deployment of an international interposition force. Second, such a force should not be run by NATO, which is seen as the "armed wing of the West." Chirac calls for an immediate cease-fire, because "there is no military solution to this problem." The political agreement, "which supposes a cease-fire, must be negotiated, on the one hand, between the Lebanese

government and Hezbollah, and, on the other, between the international community, Israel, and Lebanon."

As for the question of whether Hezbollah is a terrorist organization, Chirac responded, "It is not at the moment, when you want to have a return of Hezbollah, if possible, within the Lebanese community, and its transformation into a political party, that questions of this nature should be raised." As to who would disarm Hezbollah, if it refuses to do so itself, Chirac said: "I do not think that an international force . . . has the possibility of disarming Hezbollah. It is up to the Lebanese government to do so. Which means a political agreement. Hezbollah is presently in the Lebanese government. One could well imagine, or, at any rate, wish, that Hezbollah draws the consequences of its presence within the government, and that it transforms itself into a political force. . . . It is in the nature of a disarmed Hezbollah to be a political force in Lebanon."

Concerning Iran, Chirac proposed separating this issue from the controversy over its nuclear energy program. He said Iran had "legitimate" demands to be a regional factor, and recalled Iran's cooperation at the time of the Lebanese elections.

Such indications of openness to deal with these regional powers, especially the statements coming from the UN Secretary General, have not fallen on deaf ears. The bankruptcy of the Rome conference delivered a further signal, that these regional forces must enter the fray. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was the first in the group, July 26, to call for a cease-fire, followed by talks. Former Iranian President and current head of the Expediency Council, Hashemi Rafsanjani, sent a letter to the Saudi leadership, also promoting a cease-fire. The same day, Syrian Information Minister Mohsen Bilal, stated: "To resolve the crisis in the region, it is necessary to declare a cease-fire, proceed with a prisoner exchange, and for Israel to withdraw from all occupied Arab territory." This means the Golan Heights as well as the Shebaa Farms in Lebanon. Syria's Foreign Minister stated explicitly that Damascus could help solve the crisis, saying, "We are ready to play a positive role. We ask that the United States put pressure on Israel to accept a cease-fire and an exchange of prisoners."

Last but not least, Hezbollah issued its call for a cease-fire. Mohammad Raad, the leader of the party's parliamentary bloc, said, "The position for the Lebanese government is to establish an immediate and complete cease-fire and to start indirect negotiations for a prisoner exchange. Anything other than that," he added, "is not acceptable."

## Addressing the Root Causes

Were there the desire for peace, these steps would be the precondition—but they would not be sufficient. To put an end to conflict in the region, the root causes have to be addressed and solved; and these are not the so-called root causes put forward by Rice, such as the presence of Hezbollah and the existence of Syria and Iran. Rather, the main cause for the current conflict lies in the determination by the synarchist financial oligarchy, to spread chaos and anarchy in the region as part of its drive for world dictatorship. (See “Know Your Actual Enemy,” in this issue, by Lyndon LaRouche.)

As far as the historic, regional dimension is concerned, the root causes go back decades, to the 1967 war, the Israeli occupation of Palestinian, Syrian, and Lebanese lands. Numerous United Nations resolutions (such as 242 and 338) have been passed demanding an end to the occupation, but these have been ignored by Israel and the “international community.”

Since then, especially since the post-9/11 synarchist drive for permanent war, new “root causes” have been created: the devastation in Afghanistan, and the destruction of Iraq, both situations now exploding into civil war.

If peace is to be established between Lebanon and Israel, then peace must be established in the region as a whole, between Israel and its neighbors. This means that *all* the regional powers must be brought into the equation. Lyndon LaRouche outlined an approach for regional peace in April 2004, which remains the only viable proposal on the table. In his “Southwest Asia: The LaRouche Doctrine,” he wrote that, to establish stability in Iraq, a regional security arrangement must be struck with the neighboring countries, emphatically including Syria and Iraq, as well as Egypt. Such a regional security arrangement, as was discussed recently at a conference of these nations in Tehran, can work *only* if endorsed and supported by the United States. In this context, a durable peace agreement must be reached between Palestine and Israel, for a two-state solution.

LaRouche stressed that such peace negotiations could work, only to the extent that they were underpinned by agreements for economic cooperation to develop the infrastructure (especially water infrastructure) for the region as a whole. The vast destruction wrought upon Iraq during the war and the continuing conflict, followed by the total destruction of Lebanon’s infrastructure, make this economic reconstruction approach all the more urgent.

The regional parties (excluding Israel) have signed up for a cease-fire and the beginning of negotiations leading to a comprehensive peace. Iran and Syria are willing to use their influence to reach an equitable solution. Nothing will or can happen, however, unless a radical, urgent change is effected in Washington’s foreign policy. This is the fight that LaRouche is leading in the United States: to resurrect the Democratic Party into a fighting force, to take the reins of policy out of the hands of the madmen around Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, UN Ambassador John Bolton, et al.