



(TS//SI//REL) Israel-Hizballah Crisis -- Perspectives from an Acting SLO Tel Aviv (conclusion)

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(U//FOUO) Here's the conclusion of this two-part article. If you missed it, see [part 1](#) from yesterday.

(TS//SI//REL) While the fighting raged some 50 kilometers north, Tel Aviv, for the most part, remained calm and unaffected. The beaches remained crowded, restaurants were full at all hours, and traffic was "normal" -- a relative term. One of the more visible signs of stress was the lack of vacant hotel rooms as large numbers of people from the north migrated to the safety of the city.

(TS//SI//REL) Tel Aviv was under a missile threat-warning scenario whereby (theoretically) air raid sirens would alert residents to seek shelter should the city come under missile attack. Residents were told that they had less than a minute to take cover in the basement of their home or office building; being on the 23rd floor of the hotel did not boost my confidence. As there were no other rooms available on lower floors, the hotel management apparently tried to rectify this scenario by leaving bottles of wine in my room at least 2-3 times a week throughout my stay. Work at the US Embassy was unusually hectic given the circumstances, and 12-14 hour days throughout the week became the norm.

(TS//SI//REL) Most of my time was spent reviewing literally hundreds of reports that were flooding in on the political and military situation, threat warning, tipping Station personnel to items of interest, and answering queries related to the SIGINT meaning behind a particular product. Support from the COS was superb and he took every opportunity to stress to Station personnel to "read the SI" The Ambassador's Read Book and Regional Security Officer (RSO) ledger -- packages that normally held 8-10 SIGINT items of interest -- now routinely contained 25-30 SIGINT reports of high interest. Judging by the number of questions and comments I received, **there is no doubt that the entire SIGINT system was meeting customer needs.**



(U) *Lebanese army bulldozer in Damour clears road linking Saida to Beirut that was attacked by Israeli warplanes (Reuters)*

(TS//SI//REL) Technical glitches are to be expected, and my TDY was no exception. I was plagued early on by an inoperative IC-Mail account that was only resolved two weeks into my TDY. Before that fix, my communication was limited to a secure phone connection to NSAW. As ISNU is well plugged in to the USIC (US Intelligence Community) circuit, it was at times difficult to keep a step in front of them and ensure that I was delivering the "right message." On a more personal note, it was somewhat difficult to keep my family from becoming immersed in the "doomsday" stories that were playing in the US media. Trying to dispel their fears while on an open phone line was not always easy but I was sure that some of my co-workers in FAD (the Foreign Affairs Directorate) would take efforts to assure them of my safety.

(TS//SI//REL) My only security incident of concern took place one particular evening while on my return walk from dinner. I received a call on my Embassy cell phone from Station Regional Security Officer warning me to get to my hotel ASAP because of an imminent suicide attack in the tourist section of Tel Aviv. I noticed several helicopters flying search patterns beginning at my hotel to points approximately one kilometer north along the beach, and a significant decrease in the usual numbers of joggers, bike riders, and walkers along the promenade to Jaffa. Four bombers were loose in the city, reportedly targeting the US Embassy, Mike's Place (a US hangout next to the Embassy) and the Dan Hotel. Israeli security apprehended the bombers

and life returned to "normal."

(TS//SI//REL) Despite the recent diplomatic success in arranging a ceasefire and the respective argument that can be made as to which side "won," the probability remains that a single misstep by either side could instantly re-ignite hostilities. Iranian leadership, a major supporter of Hizballah, threatens to "wipe Israel from the face of the earth." Israeli media quotes Israeli Defense Intelligence Director MG Amos Yadlin, a frequent visitor to NSA, as saying "further confrontation with Hizballah is only a matter of time." **Other noted Israeli officials describe the ceasefire as "round one being over." I would offer that the USIC should pay close attention to these statements and prepare its policies and reactions accordingly.**

(U//FOUO) This article is reprinted from the *Foreign Affairs Digest* , September edition.

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