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PROGRAM Jack Anderson Confidential STATION WJLA TV  
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SUBJECT The Lebanese Crisis

ANNOUNCER: In the next 30 minutes, you will hear Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon say he personally briefed top Washington officials on Israel's plans to invade Lebanon; PLO prisoners complain that they were beaten and burned by their Israeli captors; and that the PLO is part of a Soviet plan to destabilize the Western world.

Here is the internationally syndicated columnist Jack Anderson.

JACK ANDERSON: For two months now, Lebanon has been an incendiary among the powder kegs. I've just returned from the war zone. I was able to take a camera crew to places no one else has gone. I talked to the leaders in the fighting on both sides. What you will see in the next half-hour is the inside story.

These are the last days of the PLO in Lebanon. You will see glimpses of them as they appeared to me. As we watched from the Christian side of Beirut, Israeli warplanes bombed the Palestinian sector. That same day we surveyed the damage and saw the victims of the bombing.

I found PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in his basement bunker. His triumphant demeanor had faded, but he still maintained the facade of leadership.

YASSER ARAFAT: I'm not leading sheep; I'm leading freedom fighters, and men and women who are ready to die for their targets and for the sake of their people.

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So I am very proud of this democracy. I have been elected as the chairman of PLO through this democracy.

ANDERSON: The exact figure of PLO dead in the siege of Beirut is unknown. But at least 8,000 PLO fighters were captured by the Israelis. Most of them are now being held at Amsar (?) prison camp in southern Lebanon. I'm the only correspondent Israel has allowed inside the prison camp. These are the first pictures inside Amsar.

We found several hundred prisoners from various countries, including the Sudan, Morocco, Pakistan, Canada, Kenya and India.

MAN: I don't know why I am arrested. I'm not with anybody. I don't have anything in my mind to do anything. But I work. I go to church. And I do drink and sleep. That's all right. But how I got here....

ANDERSON: Had you had any contact with the PLO?

MAN: Yeah, but I don't do anything. I don't do anything.

ANDERSON: The Israelis told us that many of these prisoners had been used as slave labor by the PLO. The Israelis are holding the hardcore PLO fighters at other locations. They let me speak with three of them.

First, I want you to understand that there are no Israelis in this room. There's no one in this room but members of my staff. You can speak freely.

Were you mistreated by the Israelis?

PLO PRISONER: The first one month, it is -- it comes every day. And after that, it is coming less. But, still, the treatment is not good, but it is better than in the beginning. I mean they don't treat us as prisoners of war, even not as human beings.

ANDERSON: What kind of beatings? Many? With fists? How?

PLO PRISONER: Well, with sticks and things. I mean this friend today in the morning, he was showing me that -- I mean, his lips -- they were firing [sic] him by cigarettes. They fire. And by sticks, by these ropes. I mean like these ones. I mean so much ways.

ANDERSON: Did you -- were you burned with cigarettes?

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PLO PRISONER: No.

ANDERSON: Were you whipped with ropes?

PLO PRISONER: Yes.

ANDERSON: And sticks?

PLO PRISONER: Yes.

ANDERSON: I asked the prisoners for proof of their allegations. They showed me scars and bruises. I reported the allegations directly to Prime Minister Begin. He expressed outrage and promised an official investigation.

The PLO, who they are and the story of the Soviet connection. I'll tell you about that when I return.

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ANDERSON: Few Americans know that the suffering of the Lebanese people is not a new story. Actually, the agony of Lebanon started years before the recent Israeli invasion. The bombardment of Beirut was excessive, but the PLO chose the battlefield. I found evidence that the PLO is a ruthless revolutionary organization. This is in contrast to the tragic Palestinian people who have suffered much.

Since 1975, 100,000 civilians have died in pitched battles between Lebanese forces, the PLO and the Syrians. The PLO moved into Lebanon as an occupying army, created its own state within a state and attacked northern Israeli towns with increasing ferocity. Intelligence reports describe the PLO as a confederation of terrorist organizations. It has waged war against civilians.

MAN: They were raping our wives in the streets. They will stealing our cars. They were arresting us on roadblocks. And we are the owners of the country. We were arrested at their roadblocks for ID checking. The Lebanese army was not able to move freely in the country, because the Palestinians were preventing them to do so. The Lebanese government was not able to act as a sovereign government, because the Palestinians are preventing us to do so.

ANDERSON: These documents, captured by the Israelis, are PLO orders to attack civilian targets inside Israel. Its commanders have been trained in the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc countries.

So you arrived in the Soviet Union in 1977?

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PLO PRISONER: In 1977, yes.

ANDERSON: How long did you stay in the Soviet Union?

PLO PRISONER: Six months.

ANDERSON: What training did you receive there?

PLO PRISONER: Well, it is a kind of -- I mean commanding a battalion.

ANDERSON: Officer training.

PLO PRISONER: Yes, officer training. Yes.

ANDERSON: Who trained you?

PLO PRISONER: Well, Soviet officers.

ANDERSON: How many other officers were in the camp being trained?

PLO PRISONER: Well, about 75 from the PLO. And there's hundreds from other national movements from all over the world.

ANDERSON: Did you meet some of the others?

PLO PRISONER: Yes. From Africa, from -- and other Arab countries.

ANDERSON: How many people, all together, in the camp?

PLO PRISONER: Well, more than 1,000.

ANDERSON: On impulse, I stopped in the seaside town of Damour. This was once a beautiful Christian village in southern Lebanon. Now it's a ravaged relic of war. I was told that the PLO had massacred hundreds of villagers before taking it over as a training camp. On my own, I wandered through hastily abandoned PLO barracks. I found enough documents left behind to confirm the connection between the Soviet bloc, the PLO and terrorist groups throughout the Western world.

I'm reporting to you from an abandoned PLO headquarters somewhere in war-torn Lebanon. For years I've been reporting that the Palestine Liberation Organization didn't represent and consists purely of Palestinians [sic], that it was, in fact, a cover for international terrorism. Well, here in the rubble of this abandoned headquarters I found confirmation.

For example, here's a document calling for the overthrow

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of the Republic of Oman. You may recognize this fellow. It's a cardboard cut-out of Ayatollah Khomeini, one of their heroes. This is a Palestine Liberation Organization passport. It doesn't prove much, except that the man travelled a great deal in countries like Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Oh, this little fellow. This is a grenade. According to the lettering, it was made in France.

Here's a Hungarian document. This document -- I'm not quite sure what it is, what it's supposed to mean. But apparently, a man named Mohammed Abdullah received some training in Hungary. Another man whose name -- well, it's probably the same man, Mohammed Abdullah, also went to East Germany and received some training in East Germany.

But I find this even more interesting. This license plate, set of license plates, come from West Germany. You can tell by the symbol here. And I think this might even interest the authorities in Belgium. This is a map of Belgium. I found it here at PLO headquarters deep in the heart of Lebanon. And there are several key points marked on the map.

The Israelis have captured an enormous arsenal of equipment, including Soviet made tanks, armor, artillery, light arms and surveillance equipment. This ingenious machine is used for boring 18 foot high tunnels in mountains to hide the heavy artillery which shelled Israeli settlements. The variety and amount of this captured weaponry is vast. The PLO clearly had the firepower to make a better stand than they did against the Israelis. Most of the PLO's military hardware came from the Soviet bloc. But the PLO also obtained the weapons it wanted from practically every Western country, even, as these photos indicate, the United States.

These photos show several cases of American-made tank shells intended for 75 millimeter howitzers. Here are some French-made mortar shells shipped by France to Iraq, then transhipped to the PLO.

Some of these arms were camouflaged as machinery parts; some as supplies for the Palestinian Red Crescent, their Red Cross. In Lebanon, the PLO forces used the civilian population as a shield. Yasser Arafat took me on a personal tour of a West Beirut hospital to see the damage done by Israeli shelling. My Lebanese driver heard the doctor there complain to Arafat in Arabic that the PLO gun placements in front of the hospital had invited the Israeli attack.

Here is more proof. These exclusive Israeli surveillance photos, never before released, show that the PLO placed

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their field guns and anti-tank missiles literally a few yards away from homes, schools, hospitals and embassies in Ramlet el-Beta (?), a well-to-do neighborhood in West Beirut.

The front man for the PLO is its chairman, Yasser Arafat. I have here a secret psychological profile of Arafat prepared by U. S. intelligence. He's described as a man of mystery. Little is known of his past. But U. S. intelligence has been watching him closely since he came to power. Now this report says he's ingratiating, arrogant and petty; that he cannot or will not control dissenters in his own ranks. Lately he has tried to change his physical image. The beard is less ragged. The cloth and headcovering and ill-fitting uniform have been discarded. He now wears a military cap, a smart uniform, a gold necklace, and, of all things, he carries the symbol of British colonialism, the swagger stick. That is today's Yasser Arafat.

In a moment, a meeting with the man dedicated to destroy Arafat, Israel's Minister of Defense, Ariel Sharon.

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ANDERSON: His name is General Ariel Sharon, affectionately called Arik by his soldiers. He's been called the George Patton of the Israeli army, a military genius, but an implacable, unyielding foe of Israel's enemies. If Arafat has difficulty controlling his dissenters, the Israelis reportedly have equal difficulty controlling Sharon.

I spent several hours with him at his working farm in Beersheba. He's running the war, and he appeared to be physically drained. Here are highlights of the interview.

In your heart of hearts, do you believe that you're going to have to move into Beirut?

GENERAL ARIEL SHARON: The only thing I could tell you is that we will try to avoid it as much as possible, as long as possible. But if we'll have to do it, we'll not hesitate to do it.

ANDERSON: Do you expect to move into Beirut?

SHARON: I hope that we'll not have to do it. But if we'll have to do it, we will do it.

ANDERSON: I think what outraged the American people the most was the use of the cluster bombs. Was that your decision?

SHARON: Yes, it was my decision to use cluster bombs.

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ANDERSON: And given the same circumstances, would you do it again?

SHARON: First, we were sorry, and we are sorry that we had to use [them]. But we are fighting two military organizations, the Syrian army, equipped with the most sophisticated modern weapons. And the same with the PLO terrorist organization. We are fighting tens of thousands of terrorists with the most modern, sophisticated weapons; weapons that some of it, or part of it has never been seen yet in the Western world. And they were deploying these weapons among civilians.

We had the feelings, and we were right, that the number of civilians there were altogether limited. But we never intended to attack civilian populations by cluster bombs. We never had the intention. The problem was that we had to attack these artillery batteries, these rockets, rocket launchers, these heavy mortars, these tanks being deployed in populated area[s].

But altogether, we will try to avoid it as much as possible.

ANDERSON: You mentioned that you had captured weapons so advanced that the Western world didn't know about them. These are Soviet weapons.

What can you tell us about these weapons?

SHARON: We are studying these weapons now. These are, of course -- we know much more now about SAM 6. We know about the SAM 9. We know about -- much more about the T-72 tank, which is still the most advanced Soviet tank, unknown yet in detail -- unknown in details to the Western world. We know much about -- now about the SAM 8. That is the latest and the most advanced surface-to-air missile, which we destroyed just a few days ago. We found the most advanced personal anti-tank launchers, which are, again, unknown again to the Western world. We are studying these now, and we hope that it may help, I would say, the Free World to face this threat in the future.

ANDERSON: The Pentagon wanted to send a mission to examine these captured Soviet weapons. I understand you turned them down. Why?

SHARON: I don't say that we turned them. I think that we are still checking these weapons ourselves. But in the same time, I would like to emphasize that we believe that relations should be based -- should be mutual, should be based on mutual interests. Cooperation should be based on mutual interest. We are ready to -- we're ready to teach; we want to learn. We're ready to help; we would like to be helped.

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We are -- we are, for instance, facing a situation now that is the result of the last war. A contract that we had to sign about certain number of F-15 was postponed. There're many other things, I would say. Relations. Relations between allies cannot be based upon sanctions. It's impossible.

ANDERSON: I've heard that Habib is on a useless mission. Do you agree?

SHARON: I don't think it's a -- the failure is not a failure of Ambassador Habib. I think there is a certain naive approach by the American administration when they deal with the PLO. There is a certain naive approach. Maybe it's hard for people that do not live in this area, do not understand the mentality and don't face -- and do not face the daily problems that we were facing I could say for the last 100 years.

ANDERSON: Well, now you're bogged down in endless negotiations. Now this lapse of time: isn't this hurting you?

SHARON: We have patience. We, the Jews, have been existing now for 3,700 years. We are patient. We can wait. But that doesn't mean that it's some kind of endless waiting.

ANDERSON: Isn't it true that just ten days before the military operation in Lebanon, you briefed both Secretary of State Alexander Haig and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger? Ten days before....

SHARON: Ten days -- ten days before the war, being in Washington, meeting with Secretary Weinberger and Secretary Haig, I told them that we are coming to a situation that we will have to act. And I told them of the situation.

ANDERSON: What was the reaction of Haig and Weinberger when you told them these things?

SHARON: We were always called to show self-restraint.

ANDERSON: On the question of whether or not Israel had informed the United States about its plan to invade Lebanon, the State and Defense Departments both officially denied they had any knowledge of this. But I spoke to ex-Secretary of State Al Haig's assistant, Mike Ledeen. He confirmed that Sharon had warned Haig in advance about his plan to march up the coast and eliminate the PLO from Lebanon.

Speaking of Sharon, he's a man who must be reckoned with in the resolution of the Middle East problem. However, the discipline and single-mindedness required in waging war must give way to compromise and understanding in the search for peace.



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Will he be able to make that transition?

In a moment, we'll look to what the future may hold for the Middle East.

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ANDERSON: Now the future.

The Israelis, the Palestinians and the Lebanese have much in common. They have felt the heavy hand of oppression. They know what it's like to be driven from their homes. They cry out together for peace. Lebanon must rid itself of the PLO if it's to regain its independence and stability.

This was best articulated by Christian Bashir Gameyel, who's likely to be Lebanon's next President.

BASHIR GAMEYEL: This country is a very small country. It's smaller than your Connecticut. It's only 10,452 square kilometers. We have a population of 3,000,000 inhabitants. We don't have oil. We don't have resources. We don't have natural resources. We are relying on our banking system, on our tourism, on our services. And we really cannot afford having the 600,000 Palestinian refugees in such a small country, in such a poor country, poor not in our minds, but poor. We don't have all the resources. We cannot afford having all this burden on our shoulders.

The military strength of the PLO should leave immediately the country, unconditional withdrawal. And for the population, we have to discuss with the Arab countries what can be done to have this burden being on the shoulders of all the Arab countries, not only on the shoulders of the Lebanese. We cannot afford it any more.

ANDERSON: Do you think the other Arab countries will take them?

GAMEYEL: I think that nobody would like to take them. President Carter promised that he would like to give a homeland to the Palestinians. I don't know if he was thinking about Plains, Georgia. I'm sure he was not thinking about the Lebanon or other places in the country.

We will not allow that any more. We will defend ourselves. We will protect our sovereignty. We will defend our independence and our liberty, and let the Palestinians now, since they stayed here 30 years, it's enough, and they should find another station where to go before coming back to Palestine. Maybe in 2,000 years, in 3,000 years, they can go back. But they

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should not wait 2,000 years in the Lebanon. It's over.

ANDERSON: The Arabs must recognize Israel as a legitimate country whose people have been in quest of their homeland for 2,000 years. And Israel must recognize that the Palestinians have the same right to a homeland. Concessions must be made. Accommodations must be reached. This is the price that must be paid for peace. The cost of war, as we have seen, is much higher.

Thank you.