TRANSCRIPT

Defense Writers Group

A Project of the Center for Media & Security
New York and Washington, D.C.

Gen. David Ivry, IAF (Ret.)
Ambassador of Israel to the United States
June 7, 2001

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT AND MAY CONTAIN ERRORS. USERS ARE ADVISED TO CONSULT THEIR OWN TAPES OR NOTES OF THE SESSION IF ABSOLUTE VERIFICATION OF WORDING IS NEEDED.

A: [joined in progress] ... we didn't succeed. They are going to have the ability to inspect it. That is why is it all right, from their point of view. So, there were other measures which tried to slow it down. It came to the stage that we understood in which uranium were going to be on the way. One of the conditions for the attack was such that we have to attack before uranium was going to get to the facility. Because otherwise, after attacking with uranium inside, it can cause radiation damage to the environment and so on.

So it came up that we understand that there was shipments going to be on the way. At the same time, election in Israeli is coming up. On July (?) 1981. How it is going to cope with this election. Third, the peace process with Egypt was signed 1979. It has to be ended, withdrawal from Sinai, April 1982. '81 was in between of the process of withdrawal. It could have been cause for disaster for the peace process. Sadat was the one who said fools (?). On April 1981, less than two months before, the decision got (?) two brigades of SAM-6s into the Bekaa Valley. It was such because we were shooting down Syrian helicopters which attacked Christians from Zacklam. The response of them was to immediately to send brigades of SAM batteries into the Bekaa Valley. But from our point of view was in some way crossing the red line of our air superiority flying on Lebanon. Prime Minister Begin said within two hours we are going to smash it. The United States was involved very much for sending Special Ambassador Habib, I don't know if you can recall the time, running from Damascus to Tel Aviv to try to relieve this tension.

All the tension was to the Bekaa Valley. Peace process on the way and there were some meetings between Sadat and Prime Minister Begin and one of the delays was postponing the time table because of the meeting between both so we had to postpone. The kind of political environment which we have to understand it was very delicate.

Our leading intelligence community recommended not to attack. They were opposing it. You should understand we've got a society where intelligence recommendation has a major effect. In spite of it, Prime Minister Begin decided to attack. In spite of risk to break down the peace process with Egypt. Because those are the major issues that have were at stake. Intelligence advice was you can build another reactor within five years or seven years. Are you going to attack any facility in the Middle East? Prime Minister decided that in spite of all that, reasons why not to attack, he should attack because this is his only chance to attack it before coming (unintelligible).

This is why instead maybe I am going to postpone it for three or five years only. But I have to give it a chance to other developments, other leaders who come in or any other kind of decision to be made by other prime ministers. Otherwise, I am losing the battle. Now its impact is going to be nuclear facility in Iraq.

Looking backwards now after 20 years, I think it was a very wise decision. It hasn't been very sure about it at that time. This is very important to understand. Something you don't have any (unintelligible). Only to have intermediate to respond to it and to let the other window of opportunities and developments to have a chance to be implemented. By now there is more than 20 years. Iraq doesn't have yet a nuclear military capability. It is not only because of that attack. That attack maybe gave it seven years, I don't know if I can assess it exactly. But other developments and actually Secretary Weinberger and Cheney, who used to be secretary of Defense, was writing me immediately after Desert Storm on the picture that he gave me in my office, that he appreciated very much what we did in 1981, otherwise Desert Storm could be very, very different. It has a major strategic aspect beyond just an attack on nuclear weapons. That is what I am trying to say. The decision process.

We can talk about the operation itself, but something you have to take a decision, which you don't always like it totally but you have to give a chance to others to make some decision in the future. I think this was a major courageous decision.

On the other one, if Israeli air force would say it was a big risk, nobody was launching that attack. The other professional aside, it is another decision process which we can talk about but this is not too much time to get into it. I can tell you that we had a lot of aggression (?). How many airplanes you can lose in this kind of operation? Can you answer this kind of question? Prime Minister Begin insisted to other concerns in the cabinet for approving the operation. It took him about one year to get a consensus

because there were a lot of people who hesitated. I had been each time about every two or three weeks in the cabinet again to talk about it. What does it mean? What it doesn't mean? In the meantime, we had Iran-Iraq war launched. I didn't mention it before. And we went in trying to attack it, twice. There is no success.

The cause of it was such that they were increasing defense around the facility and we had to face always more threat and more defense capabilities. So we had a kind of nice version like, can you paint it with the (unintelligible) colors? We didn't have any too much answers, of course. Radar doesn't look what kind of color you have on the airplanes. Radar is detecting radar. But this is another question, Jack can speak about it.

This is very different than what we are facing now. This day we are facing a limited conflict. It is a limited conflict and a very wide spectrum of very use of what you do with limited conflict. Somalia, Chechnya you can find a lot of it. But there are mainly civil wars which are behind it. First, there is a limit of using power. Secondly, the provocative side is dictating the rules of game, the rules of engagement. The provocative side normally. You can see that, as in Lebanon, I will speak about it. With Lebanon, they are going as far as they can to prevent us to use our might. And, in the meantime, to use media, our sensitive for casualties, our casualties and civilian casualties even in attacking Iraq. Saddam Hussein was taking civilians to stay into targets. Military targets, to prevent the United States from attacking some. The rules of game are first of all limit using power, especially by the strong side. The provocative side is dictating the rules of game by using his weapon systems such that the other side cannot respond with his might. And he is always checking, if you have a good answer for one side, for one using of weapons, he is going to change to check another one. If you have good answer for stones, he is going to come up with rifles or maybe different or side bombs. You have a good answer for side bombs, he is going to go to Katyusha. He is looking for the point where you don't have a good answer. If you are going to use your forces, you are going to be blamed by media because he is the one who is underdog, is the one who is dictating the rules of game. And this is a major problem. And once you don't have an answer for one of the weapon systems he is using, he is going to use it. And this is some way you can look at missiles. Surface-to-surface missiles which Saddam Hussein is using against Israel. We could respond. But we couldn't respond in this case because of other concerns which we have.

Coalition here, interest of United States, involvement in this kind of war, it could change it dramatically. What I am trying to say that normally military planning is trying to plan for a major war. Deciding two fronts, one front. Deciding what kind of scenarios you have. You have all kind of capability then you select the one scenario in which you think you should prepare yourself. And once you are prepared for a major war, a major scenario, once you have prepared for this one, you can give an answer to all the others. But you find yourself always, that the other side is going to prepare himself, the

provocative side to a point in which you haven't been prepared for. Then you will find yourself if you have to change the rules of engagement, subject to train special people and special forces to the new scenarios, to the new rules of engagement. This is very difficult for a democratic society much more than for a non-democratic society. Rules of game are very much sensitive in any kind of society, media and others. That is why it is much more difficult and more difficult to plan how to build your forces and training. Now, much more than they used to be once you planned for a major war.

Q: In the current situation, I was surprised a week or so ago when Israel used an F-16 to carry out an attack on a target. I was wondering, does Israel have a large scale, conventional military option on the books to deal with the Palestinians?

A: It is a good question. It is not how much you have. The more we are going to have answered to some of the issues like stone throwing. What we are doing is protecting buses and cars against stones. Then they'll start shooting. So you have to protect all the fleet of everything against shooting. Can you do it? How much money you have? Again, because starting with stones, everybody is saying, legitimate using stones. It is all right. But it costs a lot of money to protect. Some time you are asking, well, this kind of stone you have to protect, I don't know how much, but $4 or $5 thousand dollars a car to protect it. Because otherwise, you have a child of four or five months getting a stone and in bad shape.

I think in some ways, using F-16, which you were referring to, it wasn't because of using F-16. Again, the rules of limited conflict. We wanted to have a bunker which has cement in it, no other military normal use of ground-land forces weapon system could penetrate. Only coming from the air using kind of a heavy bomb. We could have done it by 707 if you want, not by F-16. But you have to carry a bomb which is penetrating this kind of cement. This was the issue. It wasn't because of using F-16. But outside, for the media, F-16 is another step, which we didn't realize. People didn't expect it to be as such. The target was the issue, not the F-16 was the issue. And we have to penetrate the target. We saw that there is a preparation of mortars building construction, underground industry that we have to attack. If you are not efficient with mortar with a rifle, you have to come up with an efficient bomb. Now we have to be careful about it because people are measuring the delivering system and not with the target and so forth. And we try to do it such that it is going to be very accurate so nobody is going to be harmed on side of it, I mean, civilians and so on. This is what happened. Nobody, civilians, been harmed. But the judgement was about F-16s, not about the results and the way of doing it. That is what I am trying to say, to limit the conflict, which the rules of game are so much sensitive that sometimes you are doing a mistake by not reading the rules of the game. It is not F-16. We could have done it any kind of way in which is carrying this kind of bomb. It was easier to do it with F-16 because this is normal way to clear it.

Q: You said that in your opinion, I think what you said was that the Israeli leadership did not anticipate the reaction, that the public would focus on the use of the F-16 as an escalation. Are you saying that there is now a kind of self deterrence going on?

A: I think in some ways you not always can assess what is going to be the direction in anything that you are doing. You have the strong side, no doubt about it. Strong side is always with the sides of how are you going to use weapon system. The provocative side is going to push you to the point when you have to use those kind of weapon systems that maybe you are going to be criticized by media and others and yet then you can find yourself anytime with criticism. If it was used by a Skyhawk, it was better. Not an F-16. I don't know. I must tell you, I don't know. If it was different, maybe yes. Because it is not United States product. Some times you feel you are blamed for because it is used American weapon system. This is the kind of rules of game which always, the same bombs, the same targets, who was carrying it? It is not the case. The idea was such to prevent from civilian casualties as much as we can and to attack the kind of target.

Q: Following on that theme, might we see a change in the long-term investments for the IAF, for unmanned aircraft, for directed energy, for missile defense instead of as much in manned aircraft and conventional weapons?

A: I think it is going to be a change all the time. And there is a change all the time. UAVs we used in 1982.

Q: I understand. You did it first and you did it well.

A: So there is going to be the change. The problem is such that you cannot ignore the previous threats. You still have to combat and to fight in air fights with air-to-air missiles and so on. What you are changing is what kind of option each element has in the kind of budget. Because there is no change of budget, normally. It is almost same or something reduction of defense budget. Election in any democratic society is going for economy, housing, education and so on. Security defense is normally much lower on. It is not the democrats who side getting increasing defense budget. It is normally with using defense budget. Idea has to put inside the same basket new elements, what kind of priorities are you putting in. So UAVs, yes. By a lot and we did it. But it is on the account of fighter planes.

Q: What change of ratios might we see?

A: There is a change of ratio, no doubt about it. For space as well. But you cannot measure it in percentage, I can tell you. Maybe somebody can do it, but I cannot do it. It is a tendency. You cannot change immediately the tendency for those who are piloting airplanes to change the mind to go to UAVs. They are normally the other commanders,

the decision makers. It takes some more time for it.

Q: So there is resistance to it within the IAF?

A: Of course there was, using UAVs, when I started to get into it, I had a lot of resistance to it.

Q: Is there still a lot of resistance to it?

A: No, I think there is much less, but still there is some ideas about it and some people are resisting. Some of it are not doing total, yes. The evolution of change in the forces, it is one of the ideas which leaders of the air force should do it the right way. You cannot change it immediately, despite you think you are right. You have to do it in an evolution phase.

Q: May we see those UAVs used for more than reconnaissance? May we see them to carry weapons?

A: Yes. No doubt about it.

Q: Directed energy?

A: Directed energy is one of the issues which I think should be looked at very seriously because, in a limited conflict, again, because you've been judged by how much casualties and how much civilian casualties you'd have. Directed energies and non-lethal weapon system are going to have a major effect to be put in because other wise the issues are going to be, force you to answer for. I mean, you see the riots which we have, using children front and in between to shoot. You are finding yourself in a real delicate situation. Those who've been attacked. When to respond, how to respond. When it is risking your own life that you should respond. Because they are coming with stones and so on in between shooting at you. If you have some other weapon system, non-lethal one, more effective. You are not coming to a very delicate situation that you have to respond shooting.

Q: Are you putting money into non-lethal directed energy then?

A: It is not only directed energy. Non-lethal weapon system. I put it this way. It is not only directed energy, including directed energy, try to find a solution that those who are using the kind of riots which I am speaking of won't game, because otherwise you are going to find yourself in a more deteriorating situation. I think we should money or put research and development, effort into those kind of issues.

Q: Is stealth promising enough that it is working for you?

A: I think we should continue. There is a debate here on you know, cost effectiveness and those kind of issues. I think looking for long term, it should be one of the good weapon systems which both sides should get.

Q: Clearly there are a whole range of targets that Israel could have chosen to strike. Certainly, you say maybe the leadership wasn't fully aware of the reaction, there is no government as sensitive to this. What was the political message, either to the Palestinians or to the United States or the world community that you were looking to send by choosing that target that would require F-16s?

A: There is no political message. It was a military decision. Not political message. Again, it was a target. The professional side of the military side saw that this was the best way to attack it.

Q: This is the first use of F-16s in the West Bank since 1967. There must have been in the calculation...

A: We didn't have F-16s in '67 war. We didn't have any American planes in the '67 war. So, this is not the case. But you see again, if the military side is saying, we know there is some target which we have to destruct and this is the only way to be done, normally in this case, the question are, are we risking civilians? What kind of damage for the environment is this going to be? Those are the questions which people are asking in the government and insisting and I was asking some of the people who were in on the cabinet meeting, they are insisting to ask about those kind of issues--civilian casualties and so on. Once we go to answer these, no, too much risk for those kind, they pull (?). It is not because of using F-16.

Q: What was the process?

A: You see if you have information about something being done some place and it is risking your next day or second day about attacking villages and in same time you know that mortars have been used quite a lot. Why not? This is a target that you have to demonstrate to the Palestinians they shouldn't do non-legal because mortars are against Oslo agreement and they are doing it and doing it in their own, why not? This is a question. Nobody assessed that this F-16 is going to make this kind of (unintelligible).

Q: Twenty years ago, despite the assurance of the IAEA and various other groups that Iraq's nuclear program was under control and would not pose any danger, the Israeli decided that wasn't the case. Now we are being told once again that the Iraqi nuclear program is under control, repeatedly, as least by this administration, since the end of

the Gulf War. Does that square with your understanding of the situation?

A: First, I don't think that this administration or any administration has said that everything is under control in Iraq. Both administrations have said that it is not under control and that it why they are insisting that they go, UNSCOM in the past, UNSCOM and not UNLOMIQ (?) which has not been implemented. Everybody is concerned about the Iraqis nuclear plans. Everybody is very much concerned about the version of technologies which related to nuclear to Iran. You see, again it is a limit of using power. United States has a nuclear capability. Can they use it in Iraq? Can they, any information that can go up and check it and attack in spite, might say as a global superpower. There is still a limit to using power because of the sensitivity for global political background and other countries in the region very much concerned of it. Even when they know that they should be very much worried about what is happening in Iraq, they cannot always do what they wanted.

Q: But do you have any specific information about the current progress of the Iraqi nuclear program?

A: This is one of balance. People know that they have the know. We don't know now too much about what they are doing because there is no inspection of it. About three years now that UNSCOM left.

Q: How long do we wait? Have we waited too long?

A: I have no answer for you. The answer is when the political environment is going to be such that people can react. You see that any lesser power cannot react by Iraq.

Q: For example, the Israelis don't have an itchy trigger finger to go back in and hit something because you have no evidence that they are no the verge of something. Is that a fair statement?

A: No.

Q: You do have an itchy trigger finger?

A: No. I am not saying anything. What I am saying is that even Israel has its own rules of game from political point of view. They have their own restrictions. We are not doing just anything because you've done it in the past. There is no circumstances you have to take into account and I am not referring only to military acts. First, we think United States can do the best whatever can be done to prevent from getting technology to Iraq. And they are trying to do it. And I think we should insist or encourage any country to assist United States in trying to prevent them from getting technologies. This is what we

should do. I mentioned it on the decision process on that in Iraq.

We tried for almost three years to do whatever we can in a political-diplomatic channels to try to prevent Iraq from getting it. To the end of it we found that we have to adapt. It is not our own threat, if you want, by now. People understand that the Iraqis are a threat to stability in the region. United States has its own goal in it. We cannot be the policeman of all the globe. Israel shouldn't be. We have to act according the circumstances and try to go in it with United States and other countries. But it is a very different background than it was in 1981.

Q: Where have U.S. export controls caused problems?

A: I think there is a lot of cooperation with United States military forces, first. There was annually plans of exercises which have been part of the annual plans in Israel have been made by mainly EUCOM forces but there is Marines and others who are coming over there to use some of our ranges. We are not getting into details. We have some annually maritime exercises, mainly search and rescue coordination and so on which are taking part in the Mediterranean. There is a lot of cooperation over there. Sixth Fleet is very much nicely hosted in Haifa and very pleased to go over there and need always come, friendly harbors to find themselves, to find themselves in a friendly environment. I think there is good cooperation.

On the other hand, there is some good project planning on together for research and development like the arrow missile it was very much done in cooperative way. I think it is a good achievement. Same with the salvage mentioned and some others more issues which are coming on. So, there is good cooperation. I know that there is a concern about the export control which you mentioned. Not related to this kind of relationship. Again, each country is a sovereign country, has its own policy and has its own export control. I don't think there is any demand from United States, maybe there is some ideas, but not to demand control the export of Israel. There is a commitment and we are keeping it very much not to sell to any third party any American technology or American product without permission, license gotten from the United States and we are keeping it very strict. The concerns are, in my opinion, it is not on the American technology. The concern is such that maybe some different attitude towards [END OF SIDE]

...We are dealing with, the idea for now for a long time would be to deal with the issue case by case. Once there is complaint or any kind of argument about their coming these facts and discussing. We are not speaking about details or cases of themselves because normally we are committed not to go out on what we are doing under export unless there is an agreement for the customer that we are selling. Normally we are not speaking outside about any military export unless our customer agrees to do it. That is why you are not going to refer to any kind of issue itself on the case itself. But this is the policy

which we have. We are keeping very strictly and there is a very tight decision not to sell any technology or American technology to any other country unless we get license from the United States.

Q: Do you anticipate a time when this will happen?

A: There is no agreement, until now it hasn't been agreed on nothing. We committed ourselves to inform United States and we are doing that. But there is no any agreement has been signed. TALCM was indigenous technology of Israel. We stopped it because we understood it the internal security interests of the United States, responding to it cost a lot of money. (Unintelligible) we did not get finished yet, the problem over there. But we are responding some times against our own interests to the interests of the United States because the United States is a major ally which we have and we are getting annual assistance here and the political backing which is so important to us.

Q: I wanted to go back to the F-16 example. A different platform, though. The Apache helicopter drew some criticism when Israel used it, surgically some would say, a number of times against individual Palestinian leaders or in aerial assassinations, your critics would say. A number of human rights groups in Washington put out a letter about two or three months ago urging the administration to block additional upgrades to your Apache fleet until the U.S. looked into the use of the Apaches we had sold Israel. Does the same logic apply in terms of use of Apaches in one-on-one attacks when applied with the F-16 in terms of minimizing collateral damage. How do you answer critics who say, this is an anti-tank system and you are using it against individual people and cars?

A: What we are looking at is the target, not the bagel itself. The target is a terror pew which we have a lot of evidence that this guy already did terror attacks. If you would know, as an American that there is a less of seven people in the near days are going to come with a suicide bomb and there will be an attack on a shopping mall or bus station, you know on the list those who are trained to and are going to do it. Is it right to attack them, yes or no?

Q: Yes.

A: That is what we are doing here. Only option was, could it be in this Apache or that. This is what we are trying to do. We are trying to attack only people we can related to terror, either they did it and we know they did and there has been intentional planning more and more or those who have been on the way to attack. This is to prevent more escalation, in my opinion, it is better to do it by Apache if you can do it only by Apache to prevent them from doing, having escalation because of bombing and so on. We are very conscious about it. I know that we are getting some criticism because it is always the strong side is going to be criticized because you are strong in kind of limited conflict.

I am going to say it again, the underdog will always get the sympathy. The underdog is going to provoke to such that you have to use such that other people are going to criticize.

Q: Did the Clinton Administration criticize you privately for the use of Apaches back in November?

A: I cannot recall but as much as I know we didn't get any criticism by any administration on using the weapon systems. There were some signals, but not an official criticism. All kind of giving us to understand it is not very much in favor of any administration but we haven't gotten any kind of criticism of it.

Q: The question of missile defense is once again getting a lot of attention in the United States. What is your best sense right now of Iraq and Iran's progress in developing longer range ballistic missiles? Is there evidence that Iran is aggressively building a longer-range ICBM type missile?

A: They declare it so I have to listen to what they are saying. If you are ignoring it, this is a mistake. They said they are going to Shahab 4 and Shahab 5. They are speaking about a 2500 kilometer range and then 5,000 kilometer range. That is what they said. I don't think that anybody has a proved how much they've made progress on it, but we know that they have the effort and they declared it themselves about three years ago starting, they have the Shahab three and declaring that they are going to Shahab four and five. How much they have been on research and development, I cannot say.

Q: The Arrow would adequately take care of the Shahab three?

A: Yes. You see, the more, the faster the speed of the missile which you get penetrating is limiting the footprint of the effectiveness of any kind of air defense. Because the average speed, you have to react much faster because it is going to have shorter time from detecting to attack so the idea is such that you have to have more batteries for having the same defense to get against Shahab three. Because the speed is higher, the footprint is smaller you need for the same coverage three batteries instead of two. This is the idea. The higher the speed of penetration is going to be, the more batteries you are going to need.

Q: You are asking the U.S. to help fund the third battery, is that the current?

A: This has already been approved, the third battery. Because until now to cover the defense of Israel against Hussein and Scud C was about two batteries. With Shahab three you need another battery. Against a Shahab three from Iran, you need at least one other battery.

Q: And the U.S. has agreed to help co-fund?

A: It has agreed upon about two years ago.

Q: What is going on militarily and diplomatically? Why is Israel holding its fire, agreeing to moving toward a construction freeze? Lifting the economic restrictions and basically doing what ever the U.S. asks? Do you expect somehow this will end the Palestinian guerilla campaign?

A: I think all the decisions that have been made by Israeli government itself and not by any pressure coming from United States. I think the decision even on the cease fire by Sharon has been surprising even in Israel, that is why it has been criticized. You are saying this is in some way imposed by United States. It is not such. I am not trying even to say that it was any dictation coming from United States. I think everything was launch and decided in Israeli government. People understand that you cannot gain or achieve peace by military force. This is beginning one. We are trying to do whatever we can to try to come back to negotiation of peace, to achieve peace. This is long-term goal not to revenge or attack that because we have been attacked. I can say let's say after the mortars have been launched, which was really a provocation on the language of Saddam Hussein, the mother of provocation because it was very close to the followup of Sharon himself. It was done on purpose. The military side decided to do into the Gaza Strip and to prevent them from using mortars from this point. The simple military solution is to stay over there in the effective range of mortars so there are no more mortars against Iraq. The political side decided that if we are going to stay in Azon, there is no option for peace negotiation anymore. It was a political decision to resort. The military side, the military response is part of the political policy. That is why Sharon took this initiative and ordered the military to withdraw. And we've been condemned here for it, excessive and not for personal power. But this is idea, you have to play political steps, military steps combined to find the best way out to look for the long-term goal of peace. I think the idea by now is to try to give a chance for peace, in spite we've been having a lot of casualties and this was a real disaster bombing on the last fighter. But the idea if you want to give a chance for peace, some times you have to do restraint.

Q: Do you think your adversary understands that?

A: I am not sure. But we are trying to make them understand. At least he is not using the same words and same logic at any other place he is using. We are trying to make them understand if not (unintelligible) are confident that they are going to understand. But we have to try.

Q: There was talk of a supplemental package of funding for Israel. What is the status of

that?

A: We are now still speaking about supplemental. The request was proposed before the Hill as a supplemental last September or November. We are not speaking about Lebanon by now because almost we've been resolved there is more than one year by now. We are speaking more in the long-term strategy coming up. You see, for the last three or four years, we are trying to weave together the United States, mainly, to prevent from diversion of technology to Iran on surface-to-surface missile technology from North Korea and other countries. There is not too much success. Iran is continuing with their program very intensively. In spite we thought maybe there is going to be solution. There is no solution. And actually the threat is becoming more and more realistic. And we have to build up our capabilities to respond to those kind of long-term threats of surface-to-surface missiles, non-conventional capability of chemical, biological and others. This is the idea by now to try to get supplemental for those kind of missions. It is on a (unintelligible) of this administration. I know that there are a lot of support on the Hill. I think there is budget problems here and we tried to convince people that this is the right way to do it.

Q: What is your price tag on it?

A: We are speaking about $800 million for two years--this year and the next one, divided. I mean, not $800 for each year, but divided for two years...this is related to long-range capabilities like intelligence gathering, (unintelligible) the threat. Secondly, the ability of our air force mainly to go to longer ranges to be affected by air refueling and such. And (unintelligible) missile.

Q: It doesn't sound like Ariel Sharon. It sounds like Ehud Barak.

A: I didn't decide what this is for. I am saying for what our government has decided upon.

Q: But as you say yourself, it surprised a lot of people in Israel. It also surprises a lot of people in America that the Friday night attack did not elicit a response. Everybody thought you were trying to figure out what to do--it would take a couple of days a way to respond...

A: I must say that we should first of all understand that this is a unity government in Israel. It is not only one man. If you want to keep a unity government, you have to compromise. There is no other alternative. I think this is output of compromise to having a unity government. This is why the policy is such. It is not because of any one decision by one man. If you want to keep unity government, you have to compromise and to speak together and to come up to consensus about what should be done to steps.

Q: What are you expectations of the George Tenet visit? What is it Israel would expect from Palestinians in terms of resumption of security cooperation?

A: I think first, Tenet has only arrived and he has to check himself what he can achieve. But you see before this starting of violence, there were good cooperation and coordination, I would say, between the security levels, different level, brigade level and others to try to go over it against terror activities. After the violence started, everything stopped. In the past we have combined the tools, as Palestinian police with our troops to try to prevent any kind of hostilities. Now, after the violence, there is a lot of mistrust and lack of confidence and I am not sure it is going to be very easy to get it back. My opinion, Tenet visit was to try to encourage some cooperation of security levels, meetings and so on. How much is going to be succeeding, it is a very good question. I think, at least you have to start moving on building up some confidence between the security forces so it is going to be much more difficult now after the violence started But in spite of it, if you want to come up to an option for peace negotiations, you have to build it up. Military report is saying that we have, first of all, unconditional cease fire which we have to have as a condition for second step and second step is what is called cooling off. How to cool it off and to make it a stable cooling off, this is a question. I think Tenet is trying to check what he can do to encourage it.

Q: What do you expect of the Palestinians, though?

A: What I am expecting is good coordination. But I want to be realistic.

Q: Do you expect them to arrest the militants and put them in jail? Or, are you not that ambitious at this point?

A: We are very much ambitious. We think this is very important. On the Mitchell Report is part of the third phase. We think it is very important now because any kind of suicide bombing can disrupt all the processes which is very sensitive by now started. Is it going to be successful or not, there is a lot of doubts about. But we have to give it a chance. Re-jailing is one of the factors which we expect Palestinians to start and to start it very intensively. Because, otherwise, it can risk all of the processes we started.

Q: Hamas has refused to participate or recognize Chairman Arafat's call for a cease fire. If they or Islamic Jihad were to stage another attack that did not involve the Palestinian Authority and Chairman Arafat's security force, would that be enough for Israel to abandon the cease fire and resume military activities?

A: It is a question which nobody can answer. We are a democratic country, with a democratic government. What is going to be the case and act is the government is going

to sit down as I mentioned, a unity government, and decide what the next step is going to be. It is not just saying that if they are going to be such, we are going to respond such because I think you have to take into account all the political measures or acts which have been beyond it and try to give chance for long-term peace. This is ideal. I cannot respond with this kind of answer on this question because you have to look at what the government is going to discuss and what response they are going to decide upon. And I must say in spite of being what was said before, the government is acting with a lot of responsibility, trying to check it and judge it and try to respond accordingly.

Q: You had said your $800 million plus package, part of it would be to improve the air force's ability for long strike.

A: I didn't say. I say long-range. You said strike. I didn't say strike. Long-range capabilities.

Q: At the end of the Clinton Administration...

A: Because otherwise people are going to say I said strike and I am not striking anybody. I am a diplomat now.

Q: Clinton at the end of his Administration said that Israel would be among the first nations to get the F-22 fighter, export version. You remember that?

A: Yes, I remember.

Q: Did Israel request that or is that something, Clinton, without consulting your government, out of the blue, announced?

A: There are very few issues we are not consulting with each other, especially this kind of one. So it went consulted. The idea is such that my opinion, it is much more political gesture than a selling or marketing issue. Why? It was to ensure that Israel is going to get, to keep the quality of the edge and to keep the kind of, always being one of the first to get any new weapon system in the Middle East or any other place. I think this idea, nobody is putting any sitting down from a (unintelligible). Beyond it, I am not sure what kind of F-22 you are going to get in the United States. It has not been decided yet. Can you sell something which has not been yet decided upon? This is the question. That is why I am trying to say, it is much more political...to say the United States is committed to the quality of the rights of Israel. Nobody was speaking about anything on contra.

Q: But you don't have a long-range budgeting for potential F-22 sale?

A: No, we don't have any long-term budgeting for F-22. Not at all. And first, we are

looking here what is going to be on the Hill. It is going to be pool this or not. I think it is going to be, but I am not sure.

Q: But it was a gesture from the Clinton Administration. It wasn't encouraged by Israel?

A: It was encouraged, yes, because we want to get any kind of encouragement for the quality of the edge which United States is committed.

Q: What would the F-22 give to the IAF that it doesn't already have?

A: Again, it has not been a decision to make it to have it. I cannot even refer to it. But of course, once the real threat comes from countries like Iran and others, it good to have an F-22. It has a very good capability against other threat like cruise missiles and others. It is a good airplane. I am not trying to say it is not a good airplane. This is not the case. It is not on the agenda yet. It was much more a political gesture.

Q: A symbolic gesture.

A: Symbolic if you want to put it this way.

Q: Is stealth on your agenda?

A: Stealth? Israel is stealth by itself. It is so small nobody can see it.

Q: Is using stealth technology for your aircraft?

A: Yes, we have all kind of capabilities. I am not going to speak about it.

Q: You have stealth capabilities?

A: We have different kind of stealth capabilities in Israel as well. Stealth is a lot of variety of technologies. What you are speaking about is one type of airplane. I am not speaking on this case. Technology of stealth is all kind of technology of stealth that we have. If you want to have, for instance, UAVs, you have something.

Q: If you want to have long-range capability, you need stealth to go with it to make it viable.

A: You can understand what you want to understand. I gave you an answer. We have some stealth technology in Israel. This what I gave you the answer. You can imagine what you want.

Q: As a military man, you would know that there would be two variants of the F-22, the air combat version and the ground version.

A: That is what I am trying to say that we haven't been decided yet. We haven't discussed it yet.

Q: As a military man, would you be more interested in Israel acquiring a stealthy air-to-ground system as opposed to an air combat system?

A: Israel, as a principle, this is not United States at all. The Israel air force will use any airplane as a multi-war plane. Any. And one which is only related to air superiority of air strike, we are using any airplane to all kind of purposes. That is because we are a small air force. We don't have too much power. So everybody has to do all the work...Once there is a strike, people are joining the strike. You see, in '67 war, all the air force launched for the attack, only two airplanes left to protect Israel. Two airplanes. I can say because I was on one of them. On patrolling to prevent any other attack. Because it was a risk to take and to make the first surprise attack so effective that everybody has to go respond. The idea for Israel this is basically. It is not related to F-22. Multi-role mission.

Q: But if you had to attack a target, a la Osirak, at some distance and you want to put a bomb on that target, it would be useful to have a stealthy aircraft to do that, would it not?

A: If you don't have it, you are doing a disaster. That is why we did F-16, which is only alternative that we have.

Q: A couple of weeks ago or last week, there was a ship, a boat that was intercepted by the Israeli navy and a large amount of armaments were found on board. Eventually the PFLP in Damascus owned up to it. Where are the Palestinians arms supplies coming from? And are there any state that is involved in supplying weapons to the Palestinians?

A: There is no one state which claim that they are supporting Palestinians weapons systems. Of course, you can imagine. None officially I can say there were, Islamic Jihad but now it is claiming that they are sending it. They are not an official state of course. They are gaining their weapon systems from Iran. And they are gaining it from Syria. Some of the weapon systems are routed in Damascus from Iran going through Damascus to Lebanon, Bekaa Valley mainly, other places supported by the Hizbollah. Islamic Jihad is locating command in Damascus. It is with the blessing of Syria, some of it. I am not sure they know always where the weapon system is going. They think it is going to Hezzbollah or Jihad Islamic, some of it is going to Palestinians. This is my assessment. So this is one of the challenges and the ship was one of them. The boat that you mention. There are other intentions to smuggle weapon systems and Egyptian port

used to be one of the places and we tried to prevent it now by making it a kind of much more deep canal along the border with (unintelligible) which some of the shooting take part over there because of it. I don't know if it is officials of Egyptian know about it, according to what they say, they don't know about it. But we know that there is some smuggling from the Egyptian border. I must say I am not sure we know about too much Jordanian border being infiltrated because I think Jordanian military forces are trying to do the best to prevent any kind of friction over there. But maybe there are. Because infiltration is not always the kind of issue which you can always know. Sometimes you know only after. There is a tendency but I must say beyond there is sometimes taking it from Israeli forces as well. Sometimes getting into camps and stealing and so on. They are trying to achieve weapon systems from any sources they can.

Q: But you said there are weapon systems that have been coming into Damascus from Iran that then go to the Palestinians?

A: No doubt about it. Some of what has been captured is coming is being from Iran.

Q: You are you saying there is Iranian government complicity?

A: I have no doubt about Iran encouraging terror. I know that they are encouraging and they are doing it very much involved in Hezzbollah encouragement and they are declaring daily that they want the destruction of Israel and they are encouraging, or they say they are based on national resistance, which is coming on encouraging it. They are not just stating they are behind it.

Q: On Osirak, could you do it again today?

A: Myself? I am too old.

Q: Lots of things have changed, one very important thing is overhead satellite surveillance. Now everybody has access to that kind of surveillance and I presume that would be a major problem in the planning of such an operation, because your preparations could be detected. Could Israel actually do that again?

A: If you are asking me about a capability to go to the range of Baghdad, we can do it. We've proved it in the past and maybe I think we can do it even better now. I am speaking about the range. I am not speaking about the target. Then you have to check again the target, like I mentioned in other issues. It is first do you have a kind of target to see. United States was attacking over there in 1990-1991. Was all the facilities they thought were related to non-conventional and surface-to-surface missile. In spite of it, there is some other construction going on, maybe under ground. Maybe you don't know some of it. So it is a difference in area...

[end of tape, switch to other side]

.... I am not sure we can have the same effectiveness like we had in 1991. You see, to compare it to 1967. In 1967 we smashed ..., in this kind of mission, the air forces of the three countries--Egypt, Jordan and Syria-- (unintelligible) Because if it is outside different lines, we could attack it, strafe it.... The lessons was such that they had (unintelligible). We cannot do the same in spite of the fact the range of the air force is very capable. But the target has been changed. So you have to look at the targets now. It is a very different target. It is not like you have a normal target over there. It is not anymore. Again, you have to check it. Not what we can do. We can do a lot. What does it mean? It is a different way of using your capabilities.

END TEXT