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Press Briefing by National Security Advisor Steve Hadley

Crawford Middle School
Crawford, Texas

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MR. HADLEY: Good morning. I'd be glad to answer any questions you folks have.

Q Steve, how are you going to get Hezbollah to sign on to this cessation of hostilities?

MR. HADLEY: The resolution will call for the Lebanese government and the Israeli government to accept the framework of a political arrangement that will be set out in this first resolution. And also, of course, to accept this call for a cessation, a full cessation of hostilities, which means Hezbollah attacks to stop and Israeli offensive operations to stop.

It's really going to be the Lebanese government that is going to have to set out and accept the arrangement on behalf of the Lebanese people. As you know, Hezbollah is a part of that government. They will have to take on that responsibility. In addition, of course, we are asking those countries with influence on Hezbollah to send a clear message, and that would be particularly Iran and Syria, to send a clear message to Hezbollah that it needs to accept the will of the international community and support the decision made by the Lebanese government.

I think it's interesting if you have a situation where the international community is calling for a full cessation of hostilities supported by the Lebanese government -- it was supported by the Israeli government, and Hezbollah says no, that will tell you something about who wants peace and who does not, and that will be a clarifying moment.

I think it's important to say that if, when this first resolution is adopted -- which we hope will be tomorrow afternoon or Tuesday morning -- I don't think you'll see an instantaneous end to the violence. As you know, historically, these cease-fires take some time to go into effect, particularly if, unfortunately, Hezbollah were to reject it.

But we would want, in any event, to move towards a second resolution, because everybody, I think, understands how this needs to end up -- which is that the Lebanese government needs to be able to exert its authority throughout the country; the Lebanese army needs to be able to move south and take control of that territory, which it has not done and has not had for the last several years; and that it is going to need help to do so. And that's what the UNIFIL force, the United Nations force that is now there can do -- but also, the multinational force is so important to strengthen the hand of the Lebanese army when it moves into southern Lebanon, and to give Israel some assurance that if Israel then pulls out, Hezbollah will not come back in.

So everybody knows that's where that needs to end up. We need a second resolution to get there, and that's why once the first resolution is adopted, we will try and move very quickly towards a second resolution.

Q Steve, is the administration now going to talk to Iran and Syria to make this point, and try to have some back-and-forth with them? As you know, many of your critics say you haven't been talking to your enemies, who actually hold the key to this.

MR. HADLEY: Well, in some sense, you know, every time someone like me gets up and talks and says what they've just said, we've sent a message to Syria and Iran. I mean, it's not as if they don't hear what has been said.

Secondly, in terms of both of these countries, there are a number of countries that are sending the same message. That's really been an approach we have had both with respect to Syria and Iran, to try and get the international community and as many countries as we can sending the same message to Syria and Iran.

In terms of Iran, as you know, we are very anxious to enter into a discussion with Iran on their nuclear program. And we have proposed to do so if they will simply do what the international community, what the Europeans, who have been handling the diplomacy with them have called for, what the IAEA Board of Governors have called for, which is to suspend their nuclear enrichment programs.

So we would like very much to be entering into a discussion with Iran on that issue and potentially other issues. But they've got to take a step to show that they are willing to come into compliance with the international community.

Q On this particular issue, though, I know Syria says they don't want to be just sent messages, they want to have a conversation about that. Is the administration open to that?

MR. HADLEY: Throughout the first term of this administration and into the second, we have had ongoing, very high-level discussions with Syria. They involved Secretary of State Powell, they involved Deputy Secretary Armitage, they involved Bill Burns, who was then Assistant Secretary of State. Those were a bit interrupted after the murder of Rafik Hariri, and evidence that the Syrian government may have been responsible for that. And at that point, we withdrew our ambassador. But we continue to have an embassy there, we continue to have a charge who does have -- attempt to have conversations with the Syrian government.

So the problem really is not that we haven't had conversations; the problem is we have not had action out of the Syrian government. It has been very clear what the international community has asked it to do. For example, with respect to Lebanon, there are three Security Council resolutions -- 1559, 1595*, 1680 -- all make clear what the parties need to do, including Syria. The problem isn't that Syria doesn't know what the international community is requiring of it -- the problem is Syria isn't doing it, that Syria is not acting.

Syria has a choice to do what the international community has asked -- to come into increasing relations in the international community, or to defy the international community and to continue to isolate itself and to become a handmaiden of Iran, which is really what they've become. And so the problem is not that Syria doesn't know what's being asked of it, it's not that a lot of people aren't talking to them, it's not that we haven't been talking to them over the years -- the problem is they're making choices, they're making bad choices. They need to make different choices.

Q Mr. Hadley, you say the first resolution won't bring about an instantaneous end to the violence, it's going to take a second resolution that will bring in this international force. Given that, when do you anticipate that we'll get a vote on the second resolution? And how soon do you expect a force to be able to get in there to back up the Lebanese army?

MR. HADLEY: We would hope -- let me just be clear: We would hope that the first resolution would, over time, result in the cessation of violence. It will call on the parties to do what I said: Hezbollah to stop its attacks, Israel to stop its offensive military operations. But I'm just saying as a practical matter, as you sort of look forward and try and anticipate what might happen, we know, historically, that even if all parties agree to the cease-fire, it takes time for it to come into place. And we want to move very quickly, in any event, towards the second resolution. Our hope is that it would be days, not weeks. The long pole in the tent, as they say, of course, is the formation of this multinational force that takes some time.

And, quite frankly, that's why we had to divide it into two resolutions, so that we could get the violence down, while we took the time that's going to be required to put together this multinational force. We hope we're going to do it as quickly as we can, but these things are difficult. We also hope, let me just say, that the adoption of the first resolution will free up the international community and a number of folks who may contribute to that force to be able to focus on that effort and put together the force as quickly as we can.

Q And just so we understand, the U.S. still has no intention of contributing forces to that force?

MR. HADLEY: We have talked about supporting that force, and there are things that we may be able to do with those kinds of unique capabilities the United States has -- you know, we've done this before with other forces -- lift, intelligence, command and control, logistics and those things. But, you know, given the history, we think that the idea of putting U.S. ground combat forces on the ground, this probably doesn't make sense; it isn't going to be something that will be designed to advance the objectives that the international community and that the President has set for us. So we think that wouldn't really advance the cause.

Q The resolution calls for Israel to stop its offensive military operations. But Israeli officials have always said these are defensive maneuvers against Hezbollah's attacks. So how do you reassure the Lebanese that, short of having Israeli forces withdraw from Lebanese territory, that Israel would stop its attacks and stop the violence?

MR. HADLEY: It will be called on to stop its offensive activities. And I think the choice of that word is to recognize, of course, that if Hezbollah does not cease all attacks, as the resolution will call for it to do, and does attack Israeli forces in southern Lebanon, they're going to have to have the right to defend themselves. That's what that's trying to do.

Q Has Israel had any offensive attacks yet?

MR. HADLEY: I'm sorry?

Q -- described anything so far as being offensive that they've been doing? Or this has all been defensive, right?

MR. HADLEY: Well, when people talk about offensive military actions they would be thinking about the air strikes that have occurred out of the southern area, and they would be thinking about the military

operations that the ground forces have been undertaking. Those, I think, would be, in common parlance, viewed as offensive military operation.

Q Can you talk to us a little bit about the time you spent with the President yesterday? How much time did you spend briefing him? And, also, are there any plans for the President to call any of the other foreign leaders involved to, perhaps, move things along?

MR. HADLEY: Yes. The Secretary of State and I flew down on an airplane yesterday, spent most of the time on the phone with Israeli leaders, with those folks on the ground talking to the Lebanese leaders, because, obviously, we want to come up with a resolution that is acceptable to the Security Council and will work, in terms of Lebanon and Israel.

When we got down, we sat down with the President and reported on those conversations, so he knew exactly where we were. We also reviewed with him the situation, and, quite frankly, got some pretty clear guidance from him on the way forward as to how he wanted to proceed in not only the second resolution, but beyond. He's in the process, obviously, of developing an overall strategy for the Middle East as to sort of what comes next -- which is something that the President is good at and encourages us to do: How does this fit into an overall strategy? We had an opportunity to talk about that at lunch.

We then went off and did a number of things, in part carrying out what the President had directed us to do and then to get some additional information. Before dinner that evening we had another discussion and, in some sense, had a sort of strategic discussion of: Okay, let's assume we get through the first and second resolution, where do we head, in terms of the Middle East, more generally? This kind of a brainstorming session.

He has been in touch with world leaders on this issue, where it is appropriate and where it will advance the diplomacy. A lot of what's happening in New York right now is now into the details of draft language, which is not appropriate for heads of government to be negotiating Security Council text over the phone.

He did have a good discussion with Prime Minister Blair of the United Kingdom today. It was comparing notes on where we are, in terms of this first and second resolution; again, beginning to talk a little bit about the strategy for the Middle East more generally, after we get through this current crisis. It was a good conversation; it's a conversation they've had from time to time, for some time.

Q But no calls on the horizon, either to the Lebanese or Israeli Prime Minister?

MR. HADLEY: If it will advance diplomacy, the President will do it.

Q Mr. Hadley, given the ultimate goal of Iran, Syria and Hezbollah -- which is the destruction of Israel -- what's in it for them to go along with this resolution at this point in time?

MR. HADLEY: Well, they're going to have to make a decision about how far they're prepared to go in defying the international community. I think what's interesting is that the attack by Hezbollah came on the 12th of July, and by the 16th of July, four days later, you had a G8 statement by the leaders, the G8 leaders -- these are major industrialized countries -- that were meeting in St. Petersburg.

And, it's interesting, if you go back and look at that document, it sets out the framework that we have really been pursuing since then. One of the things that's very interesting is that it made clear -- unanimously adopted by France, the U.K., Germany, Italy, Japan, Canada, the United States and Russia

-- it made clear that Hezbollah was the offending party. It was an unprovoked attack on Israel. It was in a position -- it did it in defiance of the Lebanese government, without informing the Lebanese government, and it had been able to do so because the Security Council resolutions that I referred to have not been carried out. And it also made clear that they were supported by Syria and Iran.

So the international community has made very clear who the offending party here is. It will now make clear in the Security Council resolutions what needs to happen to get out of this crisis. It will be calling on all states to facilitate that process. And Syria and Iran are going to have a choice to make as to whether they are prepared to try and confront and defy the international community.

Q Again, what is the incentive for them? Despite all of the language that came out of the G8, the weapons have continued to flow into Lebanon from Iran, probably elsewhere. So what's, you know, the carrot out there?

MR. HADLEY: Well, part of it is do they want to be increasingly isolated by the international community; do they want to be in a situation where there are financial measures and, ultimately, international sanctions imposed against them. There are sanctions that are available for violations of arms embargo, for example. There are penalties -- and we've made it clear, particularly, for example, in the nuclear discussions, that there are two paths, and if they defy the international community there will be consequences and sanctions, increasing isolation and increasing difficulty in doing business and being part of the international community. And the question is whether they want to walk down that road.

Q But what changes that now? I mean, Iran has been dealing with sanctions and isolation since --

MR. HADLEY: No, they haven't. On the contrary. Iran is very much integrated into the international community. We have had sanctions on Iran, but the international community has not, the Europeans have not. It's interesting, Iran is a different case than North Korea, which has already isolated itself. Iran has not. Iran has commercial relations, it has diplomatic relations, it sees itself as a regional power and a global power. And the question is whether it wants to go in a situation where the international community basically turns its back on Iran. That would be a situation we've never had before.

And, indeed, one of the things that has been, I believe, this President's achievement has been if you look at where we were with the Europeans in the 1990s about our views on Iran, it was not a shared conception. The Europeans, the Russians did not view Iran as a threat, let alone the strategic threat that it has become. And one of the things this President has done is get to the point where we have now the whole international community saying Iran is making a strategic challenge to us all by its support for terror, by its supporting Hezbollah, for the kinds of things we see in Lebanon, by the way it treats its own people, by its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Think about how difficult this crisis would be now if Iran had a nuclear weapon.

And what we're heartened by is the international community is beginning to understand what is at stake in the broader context of this current struggle. That's why the G8 report and statement was so important. That's why it's been interesting that Russia has gone from supporting Iran's nuclear program to, in recent years, cooperating with the rest of us in trying to rein that program in.

So there has been a sea change, and Iran needs to take that into account. It is really confronting the international community. And the international community is waking up to the challenge.

Q Steve, two quick ones for you. One is, have you had explicit conversations with Japan and Germany

about ultimately imposing international sanctions on Iran? And the other is, do you need this second resolution -- you said in days, not weeks, do you need this second resolution to start talking with the logistics of an international force, or has that already begun?

MR. HADLEY: There have been some conversations, but there's been a reluctance to do it until we could get and be sure that the international framework is in place. And so we hope that this first resolution will hasten that.

Secondly, in terms of sanctions on Iran, as you know, there was an agreement in the nuclear context that if Iran did not suspend its enrichment activities and reprocessing activities and come back to the negotiating table, that there would be action in the U.N. Security Council. There was a resolution, as you know, adopted a week ago, that says that if Iran does not comply with what the international community has asked of it by August 31, it will return to the Security Council under Chapter 7 and under a provision of Chapter 7 that envisions economic sanctions. So that is already on the table, with respect to Iran.

Q So you think this consensus will hold, moving out of a nuclear context and into the Lebanon/Israel context?

MR. HADLEY: We would hope that it would. And we think it's interesting that in the middle of this Lebanese crisis we did have, I think, the United Nations Security Council did adopt, by a vote of 14-1, the resolution on Iran's nuclear program. And I think it was, in a way, fortuitous, that it was a signal to Iran, even in the Lebanese crisis, that the international community is united on the broader issue of Iran.

Q Mr. Hadley, is there any sense that Hezbollah's military capability has been weakened as a result of all this fighting?

MR. HADLEY: It's hard to know. I think the answer is that it has been weakened. That's certainly, I think, what the Israelis think. I think what is important is that the diplomacy now makes clear that we're not going back to the status quo ante; that a situation where Hezbollah controls the south, continues to be armed, basically has a kingdom within a kingdom -- that is not acceptable anymore to the Lebanese government or to the international community.

And that's what, of course, getting the Lebanese army into the south, getting the multinational force to support it is all about, to send that message to Hezbollah that the rules of the game have changed. And we think that will be a great setback to Hezbollah and a great thing that will strengthen the Lebanese government, and to become really a sovereign, democratic government in charge of all of its territory. That's where we want to go.

Q Can you talk about your plans and Secretary Rice's plans -- how long are you guys planning to stay here? And she had mentioned that she may not go to New York.

MR. HADLEY: I'm not aware that she said she may not go to New York.

Q She would go if and when it was necessary. Do you know --

MR. HADLEY: Well, I think what we hope is that we've had a good opportunity to speak with the President yesterday; we will today. We've also been on the phone pretty constantly working the diplomacy. Our hope would be that in New York there is agreement on this resolution. And then, of course, the issue will be whether the foreign ministers will come and sit in the Council to vote on it or

not. I think that's still an issue that's being worked. But we would like to get to the point where the resolution could be voted on, on Monday or Tuesday.

Steve Holland, last question.

Q You've said that the international force is the long pole in the tent. What are the complications in setting that up?

MR. HADLEY: It's the normal stuff: Who's going to contribute forces, when will they be ready to move, who's going to lift them to get them into the theater; once they're in the theater, where do they go. I mean, it's all the nuts and bolts of moving people and heavy equipment; getting a command and control, taking disparate pieces and integrating them into a single force with a unified command and control.

You know, these things are things militaries do -- they just take time, because they're big movements.

Thanks very much.

Q What is the timeframe for the force? When do you think the force might come in?

MR. HADLEY: We'd like to do it in days, not weeks, but it's going to take some time. We're going to try and move it as soon as we can, but I can't give you a timeframe.

Q So by the end of the week?

MR. HADLEY: I can't give you a time.

Q Wait, Steve. Days, not weeks -- that's for the deployment of the force, or the second resolution?

MR. HADLEY: We would like to have days not weeks for the second resolution, which would authorize the force. And, obviously, as soon after that as the force can move, the better, because it's what we all want -- it's what the international community is going to want, what the Lebanese and the Israelis -- how many days that is, how long that will take, I can't tell you. That's what the force planners are going to have to come up with, in putting this force together.

Q That's what my question was --

MR. HADLEY: I'm sorry.

Q -- the logistics of getting that force together.

MR. HADLEY: I got you. I didn't give you a good answer, I'm sorry.

Thank you.

END 9:23 A.M. CDT

* The correct resolution is 1559.