

America is tired

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Thursday, 22 May 2008

US silence on Lebanon coup shows we can only count on ourselves

Nahum Barnea Published: 05.20.08, 10:08 / Israel Opinion

President Bush stood up at the Knesset plenum last Thursday and said things that every Israeli would be touched by. One of the declarations that would be remembered from that speech expands the limits of America's commitment to Israel and almost turns it into the 51st state. Should Israel need to defend itself, the president said, 300 million Americans will stand by the seven million Israelis.

President Peres proposed that Israelis listen to those words through Arab ears. Only that way, he said, they will realize how meaningful they are. Dov Weissglass, who was Ariel Sharon's emissary to the White House and acquired great experience in contacts with the Americans, wrote two days ago that "I will not exaggerate if I say that never before have such words been uttered by an American president." Bush's words, he said, will be filed in the archives of America's diplomatic tradition and saved for generations to come.

I hope they are right. Yet unfortunately other, less festive events that took place last week prompt second thoughts. Within a few days, with almost no resistance, Lebanon fell into Hizbullah's hands. France, Lebanon's historic patron, muttered something and then went silent. The Sunni Arab states that view Fouad Siniora's government as a protégé voiced weak protest and eventually sent a delegation to Beirut that raised a white flag.

And the great, powerful America, which attached huge importance to Lebanon's independence and boasted of Syria's removal from there as its only Mideastern achievement stood silent on the sidelines.

US can only provide words

In a different era, the Americans would send the Sixth Fleet to dock in the Beirut port or bomb Hizbullah strongholds from the sea. But not now. America is tired, emasculated, and torn on the inside. It can only provide its protectorates in the Middle East with words — which takes us back to Bush's touching speech.

If the Israeli Air Force attack, which according to foreign reports targeted a Syrian reactor in September 6th of last year, was meant to convey to Iran the message that it is not immune to a military strike, the paralysis that has overcome America and its allies in the face of Lebanon's "Hizbullahization" conveyed the opposite message. Deterrence is gone. For countries like Egypt and Jordan, this is a grave result. For Israel, it is destructive.

The lesson is simple, and dates back to the establishment of the state: We cannot count on anyone but ourselves. The 300 million Americans will only stand by us if we do the job ourselves. If we run away from taking responsibility we will discover that the Americans, not to mention the Europeans, are running away much faster than us.

Therefore, it would be proper to treat America as an ally, a partner for peace, and a supporter during war - not as an apron that we can hide behind when the moment of truth comes.

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3545490,00.html>