

Phares: Seniora's cabinet in charge until a free President is elected

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Washington DC, NRO: Thomas Smith from National Review's Military Blog spoke with Dr Walid Phares, senior fellow at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies in Washington regarding the situation on the ground in Lebanon today. Phares said:

"Departing pro-Syrian President Emile Lahoud today issued a decree putting the Lebanese Army in charge of security across the country because as he stated "the current government [democratically elected] lacks legitimacy."

Lahoud, acting on the instructions of the Syrian and Iranian regimes planned on having the Lebanese Army competing over security with the sitting government of Fouad Seniora. According to the Lebanese constitution, if the president leaves without a successor elected by the parliament — as is now the case — presidential power is to fall into the hands of the council of minister "until a new president is elected."

Lahoud — an ally of Hezbollah — wanted the Lebanese Army to take over "national security" from the Seniora government while at the same time protecting Hezbollah.

However, Lahoud's plan may not work as designed: According to Lebanese constitutional sources, a departing president — who loses legal authority — cannot "estimate" the legality of the sitting and democratically elected government. More importantly, the army according to the constitution is under the authority of the government - not above or equal.

So the Lebanese Army as of Friday midnight is under the authority of the Seniora cabinet as an institution, not as a prime minister. Also, the Lebanese Army has already warned it will not side against the cabinet and that it will not tolerate the use of weapons inside Lebanon, a message that militia activities will not be tolerated.

As of now, according to the law, the Seniora government is in charge until a new president is elected. But this time-frame isn't very long. First, the last decision made by the speaker of the parliament, pro-Syrian Nabih Berri, was to designate next Friday as the day for the election of the president. Second, the March 14 movement, the anti-terrorist alliance, can technically hold a meeting and elect a new president. But there are other considerations slowing that move."

Meanwhile, Seniora's office has reportedly declared Lahoud's move regarding the army as "not valid and is unconstitutional. It is as if the statement was never issued."

You can read it at: (link)

<http://tank.nationalreview.com/post/?q=MGJIZmEwNGMxNGUxODhhZGYwOTEwZGEzOWEzZjMxYWU=>

On BBC 5: "Lebanese army will be supported if Hezbollah agreses"

Speaking to BBC 5 in London last night, Phares said: "The Lebanese Army is in charge of security now until a new President is elected in Lebanon. If threatened by terrorists, it will be backed by the UN and Lebanon's friends worldwide as would be the case of any Government under Terror attacks. The Seniora Government is in charge as a cabinet but the Lebanese MPs have the duty to elect their new President. They can't dodge their mandate as legislators. Hezbollah and its allies are threatening to use force with Lebanon's civil society if the MPs elect a President abiding by the UN resolutions. In that case, said Phares, the international community will have to assume its responsibilities."