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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

INTERVIEW OF
SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL
BY THE BALTIMORE SUN, THE NEW YORK TIMES AND
THE WASHINGTON POST
ON THE RELEASE OF THE AMERICAN HOSTAGES

June 30, 1985

Q Could you start by telling us what undid the glitch at the end, and what was the glitch as you see it and what unscrewed it?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yes, if I could impose on your good will, I'd like to give you, I hope, a short Senior Administration Official Crisis Resolution 101 to start with. (Laughter.)

Q -- 03?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Right. (Laughter.)

The President has expressed in the past two weeks, I think, the elements of a framework for -- or his framework of crisis resolution that, as I thought back over it this morning, seemed to have several fairly clearly articulated parts to it.

First of all, going back to the first days, when I talked to him and advised him of what had happened in Athens and his talk with me and then with George and others around the community, was to define what is it that the parties to this hijacking are after, what is their goal. Immediately, and more broader, what are the interests of the people involved? Nabih Berri? Hezbollah?

Secondly, he asked me in that first conversation pointedly, "What is it -- how do you think the Soviets will react?" But it expressed the point, the interests of third parties who may have some influence in bringing it to a close -- and I would put in that category right now the Syrians, Algerians, Russians, Iranians.

And a third element is obviously to identify what are U.S. interests in this problem? And I would say again, goals and interests, immediate goals and broader interest to be served as you work your way through this.

Fourthly, too, establish in the minds of the policy officials his sense of foundation principles that ought to be expressed however you behave.

Fifthly to identify what are your resources? What can you draw upon? What are the elements of U.S. political leverage? Economic leverage, if any? Military? Intelligence? And then, beyond the United States, what leverage can we invoke involving third countries that might be helpful, supportive, complimentary? International organizations, if any. That kind of thing.

Well, looking through those rather abstract principles and concepts -- the interests of the people involved, the other side, of us, of third parties, resources and all of that -- then you've got to get down to the nitty gritty and define your strategy for bringing, or assessing what the risks are in terms of the other side, what they can bring to bear from their side and how you can integrate the considerable resources on our side, over time, to bring a resolution of the crisis which is compatible with American values, as

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a rhetorical way of saying that you can sustain publicly with the Congress and with the American people.

Well, to apply that six-point framework to the instant case, and the President got the word two weeks ago, it seemed to him that the other side was comprised of the Shiite community in Lebanon led by Nabih Berri and, within it, the element, the Hezbollah element, that have different goals and interests.

Looking back, it seems to us that Nabih Berri's interests were political, that he saw an opportunity here to elevate his own standing within the Shiite community, if he were able to make a gain appreciable within the Shiite community, that is, the release of the prisoners in Israel. And that was his purpose, that there was a different value set within the Hezbollah. That community is broadly devoted to riding Lebanon of Western influence generally, and the United States in particular. And then, as a second but related interest, they did, too, want to get back other Shiite, which included in the prisons in Israel some extremist elements, Hezbollah. But you have to look at these as discreet players within the mix here and recognize that they're not after the same thing precisely.

And the second family of considerations was the third parties that might have some influence in bringing it to a close -- and the President recalled Syria and the Soviet Union. It seemed to us that Syria might well have an interest in influencing the Lebanese players to bring it to an end because Syria has an interest in calm stability within Lebanon, so that it can more easily assert its prevailing influence in that country.

With regard to the Soviet Union, it was not clear at the outset what might be their purposes. Their public statements are -- it's not contradictory, not entirely helpful -- they have said that they opposed the hijacking and yet they portray us as having laid the climate that invited it.

With regard to Israel, the President, in his second meeting, I think, said that, in his judgment, that Israel's purposes were to come away from this with a good solid relationship with us intact, a counter-terrorist strategy intact and, too, the release of the hostages, the humanitarian concern.

In the way of our interest and our principles, obviously, we wanted to get the Americans back, but to do it in a way that sustained a viable counter-terrorist strategy, both long-term deterrent, as well as immediate success.

In the way of foundation principles to govern as we worked our way through it, the President, on the phone call, and then emphatically at the first meeting, said that --

Q What phone call?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: When I told him about the hijacking.

Q You called him?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Correct. That, while we'll have to see how it develops, it's essential that we not make concessions to terrorists -- and expanded in the meeting to say, nor should we urge anybody else to do so.

As a related point that derives from looking back over this experience, a principle that he espouses, I believe, is that you've got to expect that it takes patience to resolve one of these things and you can't be spooked into changing your position by extreme rhetoric from the other side or from your own country, for that matter. And the natural emotional reactions can't goad you into imprudent actions. You've got to take a longer view and have a

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considerable amount of patience.

The resources --

Q Clarify one thing real quickly?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yes.

Q You said in the first phone call the President said we should not react -- you can't make concessions to terrorists. Then did you say at that meeting he later then said, "Nor can we encourage others to do it"? Or was that in the same phone call?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: At the first meeting, he expanded it to --

Q To not encouraging others?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Right.

Q On the phone call, he just said, "We can't give any -- make concessions to terrorists".

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That's right.

In the way of resources that we might be able to bring to bear, we have, of course, just our own political suasion, the diplomacy at hand through embassies in the Middle East and Europe, elsewhere, among great powers.

The President believed that when you'd applied all these things to the instant case that the first requirement was to apply the principle of no concessions to induce Berri to a different strategy. Berri's strategy fundamentally was use the Americans to leverage Israel. So you had to disavow -- or disabuse him of that belief that his strategy could work here. And to do that you had to start by making it very clear that there would not be any concessions from us, nor would we urge Israel to make concessions.

Now, I think, to be candid, that in the first three days -- it took about three or four days to do that -- because, as much as he said it and repeated it, speculation from within this country and the Congress and understandable speculation from the other side -- third countries about, well, couldn't you use this or that fig leaf to make it work and go behind the scenes and all of that kind of rhetoric left open, in Berri's mind, I think, as well as thoughtful people here, that maybe there was some wink in the approach that you could take to -- to have the reality of a trade, but not the perception. The President never believed that. And it took, however, about three or four days before, we think, Berri finally got the message. But the President articulated that through our -- Rich Bartholomew, his own public statements, the press conference, my call to Berri. And I think by about the middle of last week -- I say last week, the first week -- that Berri had begun to understand that. And began then to say how could he, Berri, achieve what he wanted to in some other path.

And that's when you began to hear Berri's approaches to other governments, European ones, to see if it might not be possible for him to lay off on them responsibility for holding onto these people to get out of the -- from under the -- by this time -- growing international criticism of him personally and the induced effect of internal criticism, because he simply wasn't getting results, of his own people. And he began to look to third countries. And that played out over last weekend. And -- all of you are familiar, the French, Austrian, Italian, Swiss efforts on his part, imposing pre-conditions. And ultimately, two nights ago, the last gasp of that expired, when the French wouldn't accept pre-conditions. Nor would anybody else.

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By early this week, really, while he continued to pursue that, he began to get the impression that it wasn't really working very well. And he looked to yet a third possibility, and that was that he could possibly exercise the Syrian option of turning the Americans over to the Syrians, at least getting out from under it himself and perhaps getting something in return. And yet it was not an entirely attractive option, because were he to do so, they would have been the ones who, having gotten him off the hook, he would be beholden to, and that is not entirely appealing to him in the long term.

So, from the President's point of view, going in, he said, "Let's set down the fundamental principle, which is designed to alter Berri's strategy."

The second general guidance he gave was, he said, "Assuming we can do that, then we ought to apply, over time, the resources that we have in a deliberate fashion to

place greater pressure on Berri, but do it in a way that's compatible with what we can sustain here at home and that led him to believe first, we got to try diplomacy and we got to make it try out, it's got to be credible and not flaccid and just superficial, and so let's get every avenue we can leveraging Berri diplomatically." And he did that, and there was a long discourse between us and the Algerians -- a flurry of circular cables that went throughout the world to get this outpouring of international criticism -- dialogue back and forth with the United Nations Secretary General. And, this did induce statements and a growing climate of isolation for Berri because everybody was sniping at him -- internationally criticizing him.

As that happened, and then as public perceptions in this country are expressed in editorial opinion and you gain, as I think the President did, greater support in terms of his having tried in deliberate fashion peaceful, firm, yet unprovocative steps and Berri's growing pressure as affective, then to nudge the pace of things, add to that any nonviolent measures you might take which would alter the climate in which Berri makes decisions. Now what do I mean by that rhetoric?

Well, he lives -- he swims in a sea that is created by a community of Druze, Sunni, Christians and Shiite and Hezbollah, but how can you alter that climate to maybe add to the international criticism internal frictions? Well, the President conceived -- he said, "Well, if you could do two things, you might create some internal problems and one of them would be stop traffic in and out of BIA." Why, because the Shiite get revenues from that and so it's a short term financial effect, but more significantly, that affects the perceptions of Druze, Sunnis, Shiite. And in the latter context, if you could cut off goods and services into the -- into Beirut, that really does have an effect.

You might say, why? Well, we don't pretend to siege Beirut. The purpose was not to make people hungry; it would never work. Lebanon's a very rich country in terms of just self-sustaining food and so forth. But the opinion makers, the leaders, the people that make money, do so through that port in a very major way. And both the illegal port and the normal commerce through there are very central to the day-to-day well being and -- of the heavies in Beirut. But, the President didn't do it. He said, "Let's make clear that we're considering it so that it gets the attention of those people and Nabih Berri." And he did so.

So, by Wednesday of this week, you had Berri in a position where he knew he wasn't going to get it from the United States in terms of leverage on Israel, he had a community of criticism coming from all over the world and sniping beginning from within, plus a Syrian intervention after Assad's return from Moscow this past Monday. So everybody -- there wasn't anybody standing up and saying, "Right on, Nabih Berri," but a lot of people criticizing.

It came down by the middle of this week to Berri looking at an accelerated pace for someone else to pass the ball to and, when on Thursday the French firmly said no, the Syrian dialogue began -- not didn't begin -- it picked up in earnest -- it had been going on. And the other element at play all along which was attenuated Thursday, too, was his dialogue with Hezbollah. Hezbollah's purposes, as I said, were different -- that they went into this with a kind of a general animus against the West, but a short term interest in these prisoners. And they weren't seeing anything encouraging coming out of this, and the idea of getting them to the Syrians really didn't answer that felt need. They wanted something personally.

Well, they argued at some length with Berri and the Syrians and both of them were saying in so many words, we don't think we're going to get anything except if you let loose of the Americans, there may be some change in the future in the situation in Israel. But, that wasn't enough for them and they wanted something for their own, I think, internal purposes to point to. They focused upon the fact that there might be reprisals. I honestly do not believe that that was a central demand because they really are not very vulnerable and they know darn well they are not vulnerable to reprisals.

Hezbollah lives in urban areas. It is manifestly infeasible, and they know it, to conduct violent raids against them. But it was more in the context of Berri having gotten all the news, Berri having been portrayed as the moderate, Berri being the emergent leader in the Shiite community and them not having gotten anything out of this. That, for sustaining internal cohesion, not for deterring future reprisals as -- they picked that out and they said, "Well, let's see if there can be some kind of apparent change."

But I think really what was telling was that by this time the combination of Syrian pressure, Berri's pressure and no gain had persuaded the Hezbollah that they couldn't emerge from this with any, I mean, just holding on as they were and improving their position.

The report of their criticism of that two days ago -- it was yesterday actually, was met with a firm no. Because that had come from Berri earlier through the French and others -- his commitment to no retaliation. And the Syrians last night about 8:00 p.m. came up with a formula that clearly was almost verbatim of what we had said six times in the last two months. And they said they would portray that as sufficient reassurance. And we said, "Well, do not mistake this. This is not an expression of intent to alter our policy." And they said, "Roger that. Let us handle what we think are the mindset of the Hezbollah."

But the President had discussed it with the Secretary of State. I talked to him about it last night at about 9:15 p.m. and he said, "Well, let there be no question. Either with us and the Syrians or more broadly, that this is simply the same thing the State Department said in April twice, May twice -- that it is simply a restatement of U.S. policy. And with that, the Syrians were able to bring this to a close and that's where we are.

Why don't you go ahead with your questions.

Q Well, what caused the -- presumably the Hezbollah had this -- separate agenda all along. What caused their -- the last minute glitch and did they -- even if that wasn't their real concern, did they seize upon Reagan's speech Friday as an excuse for not doing what they didn't want to do?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Good points, Lou. I believe that what caused them to come around was, in fact, a combination of Syrian pressure and pressure from within their movement, anxiety about Berri and the future of conflict in West Beirut. So, they came to that conclusion based on those factors and nothing else.

The gasp for some element of emergent credibility in the wake of this thing led them to cast about for what might we seize on that has been said in the last few days. They happen to have picked this. I honestly don't think that that was a -- expressive of an important Hezbollah goal because it is simply not something to which they are vulnerable.

Q So what do they get out of it? They get nothing.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: They get what I assume they will portray as having protected their people. But their people are protected inherently by where they live.

Q Why was there this last, what would seem to be a problem with four of the hostages yesterday -- where four were not in the original roster. What -- who were the four? I mean, why were they --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We haven't seen the roster of yesterday. We assume they were the four held by Hezbollah.

Q Oh, I see.

Q Could we just back up a bit. Are you fairly certain at this point that the Hezbollah people did the hijacking --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yes.

Q And what then prompted them to turn over the hostages to Berri? What is your reading of that? Why did they give them up?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Jerry, I am speculating. I think that those who did it were not directed to by the senior echelons of Hezbollah. I think Hezbollah, you have to recognize, has elements within it, and people are fairly autonomous, and individuals will go out and do something like this -- as not terribly sophisticated hijackers. The two guys that brought it to Beirut were overcome, really, by force measure. I mean, Berri had twelve guys that were -- that outnumbered them and were more, probably, skilled in terrorist tactics and took it over.

Q What is your sense of why they singled out that one Navy man, subsequently beat him, and then killed him, and why that one person?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: It is -- I couldn't say with any precision, Bernie. I would guess that they checked the ID cards of everybody and the taking of a military person, given the history of the U.S. military in Lebanon, and so forth, is a publicly natural thing for them to express their animus against Americans, especially against American military people.

Q When you were considering this range of options that the President -- these discussions the first few days -- was there at some point a viable military option, such as rushing the plane, seizing it, when it was in Algiers, or at any point was that an option that was available to the United States?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, generically -- and this was the motive for putting -- for assuring the capability of doing it. In a crisis like this, you want to have at hand all the resources you can have, and so having them in theatre was a sensible thing to do. You are making sure there was in the theatre the elements you would need. We did not do it, point one, with the intent that we ought to try it. We did it to be ready. Was there in fact the option? Theoretically, yes. Politically, no. And by the time that they got off the airplane, a forceful rescue was virtually out of the question.

Q Do you think -- two questions. Do you think that the airport and port threats were successful? How much success do you think you got out of that in terms of Berri's behavior in changing his strategy? And secondly, from your account it strikes me that Assad and Syria have changed a great deal since Lebanon of a year ago. And I just wondered -- your assessment as to what his motives are, and if I accurately described that, has Assad turned over some kind of new leaf from the Assad that we knew in our last Lebanon experience?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Good questions, David. On the first point, I am guessing -- and this probably is self-serving, but I did sense a change in the pace of Berri's negotiation after Tuesday, and that was after we made these references -- and that is a post hoc ergo proctor hoc -- but I believe that -- that it may also have involved word coming in from places as distant as Moscow, and surely Damascus, that the Americans are serious about this. And the second part of your question, I think Syria acted throughout out of self-interest. I mean, I don't think that it represented some new value set on the part of Syria or latent altruism, which has been -- escaped us all these years. I

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think, really, that Syria has a very high interest in stability in Lebanon.

Secondly, I think they do have an interest in elevating Berri to have a reliable surrogate whose standing is improved by an outcome here. But foremostly their interest was calm in Beirut.

Q And calm was threatened as long as these hostages were held?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That is right.

Q What about -- how did we do with the Israelis? I mean, there is widespread suspicion that, in fact, we gave signals, we made -- we said, "do it." What did we ever do with the Israelis?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: At no time, from the first day to the last, did we ever urge, cajole, suggest, directly or indirectly by any U.S. official to my knowledge, absolutely never any hint of it from the President, that they alter their policy about no concessions or, in this case, releases, at any point on the prisoners at Atlit.

Q Well, then, what was the gist of our policy and our communications with Israel? Were we saying, look, we want -- we would like you to stand firm? We would like you not to release these prisoners under pressure? Did we ever say that?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think a kind of a benchmark for that issue was Rabin's appearance on Nightline --

Q When he said, "playing games?"

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Playing games, and --

Q And "why don't you ask us?"

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That they would respond to a public request -- and I guess I predated Nightline, but the "playing games" reference there. And you may recall that right after that there was a very pointed reference -- Larry may have made it, or the President, I am not sure -- the United States -- I mean, the very next day -- does not make concessions nor will we urge anybody else to do so. It was public. Now, we repeated it in exchanges diplomatically with Israel.

Q Well, just in the time frame on that -- In fact, Larry's very high visibility enunciation of that came on the first Sunday, I believe, of the crisis. The Nightline that you were referring to was several days later.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: When that happened, we pointedly said it again, just to make the point, but we said it privately to Israel, too. And we did not, in those private exchanges, ever say that we are going to try to work the hostage issue under the assumption, under the expectation, or urging that, after that you all move out with the prisoners. We did not say that -- ever.

Q But was it your reading of it that the view in Israel was one that -- it was in their interest, or interest in terms of U.S.-Israeli relations, that they in effect free the Lebanese prisoners, or sort of resolve this -- try to resolve this impasse by doing that?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, I would have to say that it seems to me that in the first few days, there must have been in Israel the tentative judgment on their own that maybe we would feel better if they said that in principle they were prepared to. But that was not induced or the result of any kind of suggestion by us. And when they began those hints -- well, they weren't hints,

they were statements -- we said no, we are not asking you to -- don't intend to.

Q You said that privately through diplomatic channels? You specifically said, no, we are not asking you to?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't recall what we said exactly.

Q But that was the tone --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We said, we are not asking you to.

Q -- the meaning of what you said?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That is right, yes, clearly.

Q Is there, as a result of this, a way in which this crisis seems to have been solved, going to be a new -- kind of following from Dave's question -- a new rapprochement with Syria? I mean, is this going to sort of end with this incident, or is there some way in which the United States government is going to try to actively work with the Syrian government to promote stability in Lebanon, or do anything else in the Middle East?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, Lou, the thing -- the question, I think, that has emerged as a result of this two weeks is the question really, does Syria have a different attitude about terrorism than it has had? To the extent that this Syrian role has been constructive as a counterterrorist performance by them, we will urge that they continue it and be willing to cooperate on counterterrorist things with us. Our agenda more broadly in the Middle East is one of disagreement on a number of areas in the peace process. We have been, and will continue to promote, the Hussein Initiative. Syria has said that it opposes it. We believe that the disintegration of the PLO -- at least the fostering of --

Excuse me -- I will be just ten seconds.

Q Sir, was there any realistic hope that all the hostages, including the seven who were being -- were kidnapped over the past year, would have been released? I mean, at one point this week, there was all the talk about every hostage.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think that was probably my mistake, to tell you the truth. Mistake in the sense that what had been a part of our diplomacy in the private exchanges from the beginning had always included the seven; but that I had never urged or asked Larry to make it part of the seven. And when George put it in his speech, it was, I think, probably the first time in this two-week window where we had made it public. But you can check with the governments that we dealt with, we wanted all of them back.

The second part of your question, there were efforts made. Syria tried in earnest to get the seven and we think they're still trying.

Q It's our understanding now that you did not get them?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The report is simply that there are 39 people there, so that's a --

Q We believe they're controlled by the Hezbollah?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yes. I couldn't tell you that the same elements of Hezbollah that held the four hold the seven. I couldn't -- I don't know that.

Q Well, why isn't Syria, if they are being as cooperative as they seem to be and have the muscle that they appear to have, why couldn't they get some of these people back? I mean, don't they know where they are or do they think they've done enough with this -- getting the 39 out? What's your reading of that?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, I think that over time, Syria may well be able to succeed in that effort. But, to be fair, it is true that there are Hezbollah elements and Hezbollah elements. And in a place like Burj Al-Burajinah or Hay es-Sallum or those just squalid, very violent neighborhoods -- I couldn't fault somebody for not being able to find somebody in two weeks time, not even the Syrians. It's very hard to do.

Q Do you think this is -- their staying there, remaining there is tied in any way to fears about retribution or something -- their being used to try to guard against that, wanting to discourage that fact, or something?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That probably is psychically accurate, that they take some comfort from having a hostage. But that isn't the foremost reason for two reasons -- because I think they look to those hostages as possible leverage to secure a different political end, like getting their own brothers out of prisons here and there around the Middle East; or for -- well, just, I guess, the comfort that we may be deterred while Americans are at risk.

Q So is there any prospect that they're ever going to get out? I mean, do you have any feeling now that they're -- any time in the short term?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, I don't like to predict about things in the Middle East. We did get four of them by people of the same strain of thinking.

Q There's a lot of people who say the President laid down the marker at the beginning of his term with the swift and

effective retribution and that, although he has enunciated another parallel thing about not hurting innocent civilians that somehow, to maintain his credibility after this thing is over, he needs to somehow follow through on that and -- may be consistent with the other. Do you agree with that?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, as tragic as this has been, one -- to the extent that there's an improved awareness in the American people of the nature of terrorism, the complexity of dealing with it, then there are benefits. And it's in the context of an improved understanding of how it works and how complex it is to deal with it, but finally, of the need to deal with it, of the catalyzing effect of this thing in urging Americans to care enough to criticize and urge action that you see a nexus between the President's theoretical assertion and the political practicalities. That is, to take strong, swift retribution, to succeed must be done within a climate that understands it and can distinguish between impulsive violence and purposeful sustained action over time.

I think that we are seeing emerge here the foundation, the base for sustaining firm action in the coming months. And I think perhaps, too, to sustaining proposals for legislation to have more resources and greater legislative -- or legal authority to act and to apprehend and to follow, track, identify and detain people.

Q It seems to me what you're saying is that the effect of this has been to get the American people to support whatever -- many of the measures the President might feel he wants to take to react to this. That being the case, is the President going to retaliate, and what is he going to do?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I would put the emphasis less on retaliation and more upon the purposeful use of all U.S. resources, including force, in a consistent way to deal with the global problem. In other words, we want to transcend what has happened in Lebanon to focus upon dealing with the infrastructure of terrorism and not an isolated example of where it lives and exists; but to look at what is it that has created this infrastructure, why is it sustained, and why does it flourish, and what must you do at the roots of that infrastructure to deal with it.

Q You seem like you're talking about a general question right now. But right now, we're dealing in the context of a hijacking crisis in which the President said those responsible will be held to account. How is he going to hold them to account?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, if, over time, the tentacles of a movement see the body being treated, their survival as the digit on the end of the tentacle, the finger, the knuckle, becomes less secure, and their ability to rely on that infrastructure leads them to change their course, or it can, or at least they are cut off.

So dealing with the foundation, the body, the brains and the inspiration, whether theological or otherwise, is important.

Q Is there a new opportunity here to deal internationally against terrorism? During the same period that our hostages have been held we've had that Air India disaster, we've had the bomb in Frankfurt, we've had other things. Is there anything that the United States can or should do that this administration will do to try to get a kind of international attack on terrorism beyond this thing you were talking about the other day, about Beirut Airport, since you don't have that specific situation?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yes. We have, to be fair -- we've brought it up before -- the London summit, and the purpose of the London summit was to get some specifics put down behind the scenes on what each country would commit to do better in the next year. And it has worked. You have found an incredibly

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higher order of cooperation in the last year than we had before that.

There are about sixty-some odd examples in the past year of preventive terrorism. And it's been prevented on those sixty occasions because we and the British, French, Germans, Japanese, or others in the summit seven have conveyed information to each other better, detained people quicker. But, you know, it's the dog that didn't bark -- there's sixty times that we have rounded up -- 15,000 weapons in this country alone have been apprehended in the last year.

MR. SPEAKES: We'd better stop so we can get the transcript out by --

Q Can I take one last quick question, or is that it?

MR. SPEAKES: No. You can take one last quick question.

Q It seems to me that what you're saying is that the U.S. is going to respond in a broad way to this in trying to deal with the roots, causes, and everything else. But what we appear to have is two Hezbollah who grabbed the world and shook it around for two weeks. Two Hezbollah. Not Syria, not Lebanon, not Nabih Berri. How do we respond and, if you will, avenge that? Or are we not going to?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, vengeance is not a satisfactory basis for policy. It isn't to say that retaliation doesn't deter; it does. But it will be a combination of attack on fundamental infrastructure and the purposeful use of force where it can be done in an unambiguous, effective way that will follow.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

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