

attacks Israeli positions along the border, the IDF will exact a “heavy price” from the Hezbollah right then and there, in order to keep the situation from escalating!

The Bush Administration seemed to get the message. U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Vincent Battle reportedly delivered a warning to the government in Beirut, that Israel is preparing to attack Syrian military positions and installations in Lebanon, in response to a Hezbollah attack along the Israeli border. Battle warned Lebanon not to allow the situation to escalate along the border.

Ambassador Battle’s statement followed comments by

President Bush on Oct. 23, during his meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Peres, in which Bush said that the United States views Hezbollah as a terrorist group with “global reach.”

A Bush Administration official was quoted by the *Jerusalem Post* as saying, “The President said very clearly that Hezbollah is one of those terrorist organizations that qualifies within his scenarios of global reach.” The term “global reach” is apparently the term that the administration has applied to organizations it considers in the same category as Osama bin Laden.

Israel Buried Reagan Peace Plan In Blood

The possibility of an Israeli “breakaway ally” war provocation, ostensibly triggered by the assassination of Israeli Gen. Rechavam Ze’evi, had been under active consideration by the Sharon government and leading circles within the Israeli Defense Forces, prior to the Ze’evi murder. On Oct. 12, days before Ze’evi’s assassination, in response to news coverage of a Bush Administration peace plan to formally recognize a Palestinian state, Cabinet minister Dan Nevah warned: “All history shows that when the Americans put a plan on the table, like the famous Reagan plan, the programs did not achieve their aims.” Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s personal spokesman, Raanan Gissin, seconded the Nevah threat, declaring days later, “The United States will never submit to Israel by surprise a plan for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The United States has never imposed a plan that both sides have not accepted.”

Nevah’s scornful denunciation of the “Reagan plan” could not have constituted a more direct, violent threat against President Bush’s revitalized peace efforts.

On Sept. 1, 1982, President Ronald Reagan launched a Mideast peace initiative. The President declared, “The war in Lebanon has demonstrated . . . [that] first the military losses of the PLO have not diminished the yearning of the Palestinian people for a just solution of their claims; and second, while Israel’s military successes in Lebanon have demonstrated that its armed forces are second to none in the region, they alone cannot bring just and lasting peace to Israel and her neighbors.” Reagan went on to call for direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and the Arab states of the region, for the “transfer of territory” in exchange for peace, and he declared that the “final status of Jerusalem” should be “decided through negotiations.”

That initiative, far less ambitious than the past decade’s Oslo and related proposals, was immediately sabotaged by Israel’s 1982 invasion of Lebanon, and by the massacres of unarmed Palestinians, including women and children, at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps near Beirut.

On Sept. 18, 1982, the morning after the Sabra and Shatila massacres, President Reagan addressed the American people, and held Israel responsible for the mass killings: “All people of decency,” he declared, “must share our outrage and revulsion of the murders, which included women and children. . . . We [had been] assured that Israeli forces would not enter west Beirut. We also understood that following withdrawal, Lebanese Army units would establish control over that city. We were thwarted in this effort by the Israeli occupation that took place beginning Wednesday. . . . We strongly opposed Israel’s move into west Beirut . . . for fear it would provoke further fighting.”

Then-Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon has recently been accused in a Belgian court of war crimes, for his role in the Sabra and Shatila mass murders, and one former Reagan special envoy to Lebanon, Morris Draper, has told BBC’s Panorama that Sharon was a pivotal figure in that act of genocide against unarmed civilians.

President Reagan continued the peace efforts, until the Spring of 1983, when two terrorist attacks—the car-bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut and the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks near the Lebanese capital—forced him to withdraw American peacekeepers from Lebanon.

Israeli military forces refused to leave Lebanon (they finally withdrew in 1999, after a 20-year occupation). At the time of the Embassy and Marine barracks bombings, there were widespread reports that the Israeli intelligence services had known in advance about the attacks, but neglected to inform the United States.

—Michele and Jeffrey Steinberg