



June 25, 2006

**Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Center for Special Studies (C.S.S)**

Terrorism and humor: a satirical show severely criticizing Hezbollah was shown on Lebanese LBC-TV. It focused on Katyusha attacks and Hamas's boasts concerning a "balance of deterrence" with Israel and "liberating" the Shebaa Farms. Lebanese Shi'ites rioted and the satirical show was quickly taken off the air.



"Hassan Nasrallah" (right) interviewed by a man dressed in women's clothing.

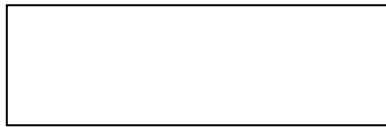


An "orphan" rocket launched into Israel: no terrorist organization would take responsibility for it (both pictures from LBC-TV, June 1).

Overview

☀ On June 1, 2006, the Lebanese television channel LBC (identified with the Christian Lebanese Forces) broadcast a satirical show highly critical and scornful of the policies and strategies Hezbollah has presented in the national Lebanese dialogue. The show's main themes were the following:

- ✦ Hassan Nasrallah's boast that Hezbollah can maintain a "balance of deterrence" with Israel was ridiculous;
- ✦ Hezbollah's claim that it was working to "liberate" the Shebaa Farms was nothing more than a ploy to disguise unknown long-term aims; and
- ✦ Hezbollah's attacking Israel with Katyusha rockets or making it possible for the Palestinian terrorist organizations to do so is ridiculous and irresponsible.



[Click here to see scenes from the show](#)

☀ It is **extraordinary** that a television show criticizing Hezbollah, its leader and strategies would be shown on Lebanese TV, and it led to a wave of Beirut-focused protests among the Hezbollah-supporting Shi'ites. The protests were restrained by Hezbollah, which feared a deterioration of the situation and loss of control. The series was **quickly taken off the air on the pretext** that the broadcasting schedule was full because of the World Cup.

☀ The affair was another manifestation of the **sectarian tensions** in Lebanon which accompany the **Lebanese national dialogue**. It also served to point up the **deep sectarian fissures** among the Lebanese power centers regarding the **nature and identity of Hezbollah**. The anti-Syrian coalition (the March 14th Forces which support Lebanon's New Order) demands that Hezbollah be disarmed. Hezbollah,

however, still justifies its existence as an armed organization by claiming it “defends” Lebanon, works to “liberate” the Shebaa Farms, maintains its own policy of attacking Israel and preserves what it considers to be a “balance of deterrence” with Israel. Those topics, which were dealt with by the television show, will continue to be the focus of strong differences of opinion in Lebanon’s national dialogue.¹

Description of the show

✿ The forum used to criticize Hezbollah was a **satirical television show called *Bas Mat Watan*** (a play on words in Arabic which can mean either “**the homeland is dead**” or “**homeland smiles**”), a series dealing with political and social criticism, produced and directed by **Charbel Khalil**. For the past ten years, according to Khalil, it has been broadcast every Thursday.



Charbel Khalil, producer and director of the series *The Homeland Is Dead (or, Homeland Smiles)* (Al-Ilaf Internet site, June 10).

✿ In the show broadcast on June 1, an actor portraying Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah was a “guest” on the show and was “interviewed” by a man wearing women’s clothing who asked questions about fundamental controversial topics now being discussed. The main points of the “interview” were as follows:

✦ **Nasrallah’s boasts that his organization could maintain a balance of terror [i.e., a balance of deterrence] with Israel:²**

¹ For further information see our Information Bulletin entitled “Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah boasts of the organization’s ability to maintain a balance of deterrence with Israel...,” at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hezbollah_e0506.pdf.

² That is the fundamental claim “justifying” Hezbollah’s continuing as an armed organization [by means of generous supplies of arms sent from Iran]. See the previously-noted Special Bulletin.

Interviewer: “Every time you appear in the media you say, we will cut off their [Israel’s] hands, break their necks, rip out their livers.”

“Nasrallah:” “**That’s a tactic [used] in the balance of terror [with Israel]...**
Do you [really] believe we have opened a butcher shop and are selling hamburger meat?...”

“Nasrallah” and the interviewer discuss the balance of terror



❖ **The custom of attacking Israel with [Katyusha] rockets and not taking responsibility:**

Interviewer: “Four or five days ago rockets were fired into northern Israel and no one took responsibility for them. Interesting... how did they launch themselves?”³

“Nasrallah:” They were wild, unbridled rockets. You know that we have rockets, and that our Palestinian brothers have rockets, and that the [global?] jihad movements have rockets, and apparently, **when no one was looking, they mated and illegitimate rockets were born...** [They are] founding rockets and they’re out of control... [They are] **bastard rockets**, and usually it is the welfare ministry that takes care of bastards.”

³ A reference to the volley of eight 122 mm Katyushas fired on May 28, 2006, at Mt. Meiron in northern Israel. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility and later recanted. Hezbollah denied any involvement in the affair. For further information see our Information Bulletin entitled “Katyusha rockets fired deep into the Galilee led to a day of exchange of heavy fire between the IDF and Hezbollah, ” at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hezbollah_be0506.pdf.

“Nasrallah” and the interviewer discuss firing rockets without taking responsibility



After the “interview” a short skit involving a “weeping rocket” was broadcast. The rocket has received orders to “go to Israel” without having been adopted by anyone, and it “doesn’t know how to go by itself,” so it tries to find someone to show it how to get there. It begs the “resistance” [i.e., the terrorist organizations] to lead it to Israel. However, “Jibril” [a reference to Ahmad Jibril, head of the PFLP-GC, a Palestinian terrorist organization working in collaboration with Hezbollah] and the PIJ [a Palestinian terrorist organization also working in collaboration with Hezbollah] do not agree to lead it to Israel [a reference to the fact that no terrorist organization is willing to take responsibility for the attacks from Lebanon on Israel]. In the end, the rocket appeals to a figure in uniform [possibly hinting at the Lebanese government] and asks to be “adopted,” but the figure refuses paternity (“Your parents will launch you.”)

The “poor little rocket” that got orders to go to Israel

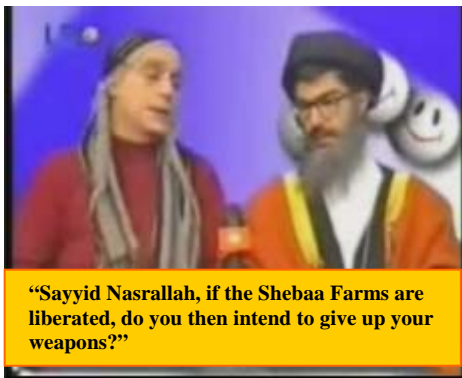


❖ **Hezbollah’s claim that its goal is to “liberate” the Shebaa Farms:**

Interviewer: Sayyid [Hassan] Nasrallah, if the Shebaa Farms are liberated, do you then intend to give up your weapons [to the central Lebanese government]?

“Nasrallah:” We do not have weapons because we love them but rather to realize our right [to do so] [a claim often made by Nasrallah]... **After [the liberation of] the Shebaa Farms we will liberate Abu Hassan’s garden in Detroit, USA...** [i.e., Hezbollah’s claims that its activities are meant to “liberate” the Shebaa Farms is merely a pretext which will be followed by other pretexts, equally absurd...]

“Nasrallah” and the interviewer discuss the “liberation” of the Shebaa Farms



Interviewer: “And after that... will you give up your weapons?”

“Nasrallah:” “No. We will still have to get rid of the American-imperialist-Zionist satellites which are circling overhead and passing over our air space and infringing on our sovereignty...”

Reactions to the show

☀ The show led to riots in the Shi’ite neighborhoods of Beirut. “An angry mob” of Hezbollah supporters, most of them Shi’ites, took to the streets to protest the show.

They blocked main thoroughfares and burned tires. The demonstrations spread to other cities in southern Lebanon (Al-Manar TV, the Hezbollah channel June 1).



Hezbollah supporters burning tires in the streets (Al-Manar TV, June 1)

☀ Hezbollah general secretary Hassan Nasrallah and other key figures in the organization **rushed to defuse the situation and issued an appeal to the demonstrators to disperse**. Senior Lebanese public figures such as General Michel Aoun, the Sunni Mufti and members of the Lebanese parliament expressed their support for Nasrallah and stressed that a **national and religious Lebanese symbol was not to be offended**. However, the March 14 Forces, the coalition supporting Lebanon’s New Order, was highly critical of the riots, claiming that Hezbollah was infringing upon the right to free expression.



Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah at a press conference: in favor of humor and comedy, but not “at the expense of others...” (Al-Manar TV, June 5)

☀ After the wave of protest Hassan Nasrallah called a press conference. He stated that the protest had been spontaneous but nevertheless took responsibility for the events. He claimed that when he learned of the demonstrations he called upon all

Hezbollah activists to take to the streets to defuse the situation. He attacked what he called the New Order forces which, in his opinion, were trying to “put an end to the resistance” [i.e., Hezbollah’s terrorist activities]. He stated that his organization supported freedom of expression, humor and comedy and said that even if he customarily used jokes in his speeches, it was never “at the expense of others” (Al-Manar TV, June 5).

Epilogue

☀ **Charbel Khalil**, who produces and directs the series, was summoned for questioning by the Lebanese security forces (Al-Mustaqbal, June 3). He later issued an apology, noting that he has a great deal of respect for Hassan Nasrallah and that he had not meant to offend him (Daily Star, June 3). However, **the series was taken off the air**, on the **pretext** of scheduling changes due to of the World Cup. **Khalil quickly left Lebanon for France**, apparently after having received death threats.