

Both the United Nations and Israel agree that minutes before the Israeli attack, Hezbollah guerrillas had fired Katyusha rockets at Israel from a position roughly 300 meters from the refugee camp. Clearly the Israelis were responding to the Katyusha attack, and unintentionally hit the refugee camp. Israeli officials, including Foreign Minister Barak, have issued assurances that Israel is not targeting civilians and would not have fired intentionally on a U.N. base.

If today's early news reports are correct, then we have witnessed a tragedy in the classic sense of the word—the deaths of these innocent civilians need not have occurred. Hezbollah has no right to launch rockets in such proximity to a refugee camp, apparently hoping to use the refugees as a shield against Israeli retribution. Israel, by the same token, has no right to respond as it did if it had any inkling that civilians would be harmed. If either party had put the best interests of the refugees first, then some 75 innocent noncombatants would be alive right now.

I do not dispute that Israel has a right to its own self-defense. I have taken care not to criticize Israel for its actions in Lebanon for the past 8 days because I understand well the threat that Hezbollah poses to Israel's security. I am keenly aware of—and condemn—Hezbollah's actions and intentions towards Israel. There can be no doubt that Hezbollah aims squarely to undermine the Middle East peace process, and I, in fact, agree with the widely held public sentiment that Israel was prodded into this latest operation in Lebanon. The overwhelming carnage of the past 8 days, however, compels me to call attention to what increasingly looks to be a disproportionate Israeli response. We cannot wring our hands about Hezbollah attacks against civilians and say nothing of Israeli excesses, whether or not they were intentional. Human life, after all, means as much on one side of the border as the other.

In the effort to root out Hezbollah, the Israelis appear to be attempting to cripple Lebanon's civilian economy and infrastructure. But as it tries to turn Lebanon against Hezbollah, Israel is running the risk that Lebanese Government and people will lose any stake in settling their differences with Israel peacefully. I fail to see how such an outcome serves Israel's long-term interests.

In being critical of Israel, I do not wish to absolve the Lebanese Government or Syria of their own responsibilities. Lebanon does not have the luxury of throwing up its hands and saying that it has no control over Hezbollah, and then complaining when Israel takes matters into its own hands. That is having it both ways. And I reserve special criticism for Syria. Syria has both the power and the means to shut down Hezbollah, but cynically lacks the will and has allowed Hezbollah's terrorism to go unchecked.

President Clinton has just announced that U.S. Special Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross—and subsequently Secretary of State Christopher—will go to the region to try to end the violence. I join the President in calling for an immediate cease-fire. After today's tragedy, I would urge Israel—our friend, ally, and presumably the most advanced democracy in the region, to show greater restraint. As the stronger and more enlightened party, Israel even should contemplate a unilateral cease-fire. I understand fully that Israel faces enormous security risks, but its obligations to avoid miscues such as today are equally great.

Several Senators addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate majority leader.

HEALTH INSURANCE REFORM ACT

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I wonder if we can get the yeas and nays on the Dole-Roth amendment. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

Mr. DOLE. Maybe that vote can follow the statement of the Senator from Delaware, if it is all right with the Senator from North Dakota to wait for a later time.

Then after 3 minutes for the Senator from Delaware, we can start the vote on the Dole-Roth amendment.

TRAGIC MISTAKE IN LEBANON

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I thank the majority leader. I was not going to take the occasion today, but in light of the distinguished Senator from Rhode Island speaking on this issue, I do not take issue with what he said but emphasize a very important point, from my point of view: this issue of sovereignty in Lebanon and whether or not there was a tragic mistake made in this particular raid. I do not deny there was a tragic mistake that was made.

I know we all know and heard that the Israeli military had no intention of striking the target they, in fact, struck. That happens in war. But the full responsibility, in my view, falls on the Lebanese Government and the Syrian Government. How can we talk about sovereignty, how can we talk about the notion that you cannot violate a nation's borders when, in fact, one nation—and the nation in this case, Lebanon—has within its borders Hezbollah that is, in fact, not under its control but within its mandate, and take no action to stop the action they are taking, firing Katyusha rockets into civilian populations into Israel and Syria, which has control of much of that area, refusing to do anything to stop it, and then criticize Israel for acting.

I just ask you all, what would happen if across the Mexican border Katyusha rockets were being fired into El Paso, TX, on a regular basis and the Mexican Government did nothing whatsoever to stop the terrorists from that action? Is there any American who would say we should withhold taking action on the grounds that we are crossing an international border? I think we would not even think twice about it.

I regret deeply the mistaken target that was, in fact, hit. I am confident the Israelis do as well. But we should be putting international pressure on Syria and Lebanon to act and deal with the Hezbollah operating almost in plain view across the Israeli border terrorizing Israeli citizens.

I yield the floor and thank my colleagues.

HEALTH INSURANCE REFORM ACT

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 3676, AS AMENDED, AS MODIFIED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question occurs on agreeing to amendment No. 3676, as amended, as modified, offered by the majority leader.

The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. LOTT. I announce that the Senator from Colorado [Mr. CAMPBELL] and the Senator from Florida [Mr. MACK] are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DEWINE). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 98, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 73 Leg.]

YEAS—98

Abraham	Feinstein	Lugar
Akaka	Ford	McCain
Ashcroft	Frist	McConnell
Baucus	Glenn	Mikulski
Bennett	Gorton	Moseley-Braun
Biden	Graham	Moynihan
Bingaman	Gramm	Murkowski
Bond	Grams	Murray
Boxer	Grassley	Nickles
Bradley	Gregg	Nunn
Breaux	Harkin	Pell
Brown	Hatch	Pressler
Bryan	Hatfield	Pryor
Bumpers	Heflin	Reid
Burns	Helms	Robb
Byrd	Hollings	Rockefeller
Chafee	Hutchison	Roth
Coats	Inhofe	Santorum
Cochran	Inouye	Sarbanes
Cohen	Jeffords	Shelby
Conrad	Johnston	Simon
Coverdell	Kassebaum	Simpson
Craig	Kempthorne	Smith
D'Amato	Kennedy	Snowe
Daschle	Kerrey	Specter
DeWine	Kerry	Stevens
Dodd	Kohl	Thomas
Dole	Kyl	Thompson
Domenici	Lautenberg	Thurmond
Dorgan	Leahy	Warner
Exon	Levin	Wellstone
Faircloth	Lieberman	Wyden
Feingold	Lott	

NOT VOTING—2

Campbell Mack

So the amendment (No. 3676), as amended, as modified, was agreed to.