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Israeli General Says WWII Is Here: The Retired Military Leader Blames Iran for Most of the Problems in the Middle East

By Peter Bacqué

World War III has already begun, a retired Israeli general says.

"International terrorism is the third world war," Baruch Levy, a former major general in the Israeli Defense Forces, said yesterday in Richmond at the national convention of the Jewish War Veterans of the United States.

"It is affecting almost all the world," Levy said, pointing to the disruption to trans-Atlantic air travel this week caused by the foiled terrorist plot to blow up airliners.

"We are at war," he said. "The United States is at war."

Supporting Israel is in America's interest, he said. "We share the same values ... and we share the same fight."

Levy spoke to about 120 people at the meeting at the Omni Hotel Richmond.

Israel's forces, including Levy's grandson and son-in-law, have been fighting Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon for the past month.

"It has been taking too long," he said. "We thought we could clear the area in ... a shorter time."

Hezbollah rocket attacks have forced a million Israelis to live in blast shelters, he said, adding that the country's economy is taking a severe hit.

Hezbollah, labeled an Islamic terrorist group by the U.S. government, has had five years since Israel pulled out of Lebanon to prepare to fight, he noted.

"It was our mistake to allow Hezbollah to be [6 feet] from the border of Israel," Levy said.

Hezbollah is "the commando brigade of the Iranians." Iran supplies Hezbollah with money, equipment and training, he said.

Levy decried the deaths of Lebanese civilians in the fighting. "There is no justification [for] killing innocent people," he said. But, he pointed out, "All of us are innocent," too.

Iran, which has called for the destruction of Israel, appears to be on the path to developing nuclear weapons, and the United Nations Security Council has demanded Iran suspend its nuclear activities.

Turning to Iraq, Levy - who was born in Baghdad - said he expected that nation will have to be divided among its Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish populations.

"Only then will there be some quiet in that painful part of the world," Levy said.

An adviser to Israel's late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Levy is the chairman of the board of Israel's Galilee College.

He holds a doctorate in social policy from Brandeis University in Massachusetts, as well as degrees in law and education from Israeli universities.

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Quadrennial Defense Review: Excerpts from Remarks by Maj. Gen. Howard Bromberg to the 111th Annual Convention of the JWW, August 10, 2006

By Maj. Gen. Howard Bromberg

The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) report came up with two important facts at the very highest level. One is that we need to start changing and reorienting the capabilities of the joint forces so that we can meet the new challenges that we see today. These are the new challenges that we're all going to face in the 21st century. The second imperative is that the organization itself needs to change. We need to move away from our industrial age organization in the department to an information age organization and do things more horizontally instead of vertically, as we've always done.

The operational experiences come from many lessons learned. Principal among those lessons is the uncertainty and the unpredictability of the time in which we live, the post 9/11 world. More than on September 10, 2001, I can tell you now that U.S. forces, in all probability, will be engaged somewhere in the world in the next decade where we're not currently engaged today. I can't tell you with any great resolution or any crystal ball where that engagement might be, or when it might be, or how it might be.

The lessons which we've learned operationally are in four general areas. One, of a prolonged, irregular conflict, and we're learning those lessons in Afghanistan and Iraq today. Second is the pursuit of a larger, global war on terrorism, and the key is that we're fighting an enemy that's not a nation, but we're fighting it within the borders of a nation with which we're not at war. This is very different from the past in that it's not against a nation-state. Then on the humanitarian front, which I think is going to be very key in support of those who will eventually help us defeat the terrorist networks that we're faced with today. The differences that we can make there in a humanitarian nature, such as the relief efforts in the Pakistani earthquake, and you see the relationship to Pakistan today in the news. So how can we do the humanitarian piece that can help us win this war across all the fronts? Finally, the operations that we've done in support of civil authorities here in the homeland, such as airport security, the National Guard that we used after 9/11, and the unfortunate disaster in Katrina. We've internalized these lessons learned, and we've implied these challenges which we believe we face ahead, and we have gleaned four key insights from that: 1) We face unpredictability and uncertainty.

How do you keep changing along this continuum? 2) We have to build partnership capabilities. We have to enable others because we can't do it ourselves, and many times an indirect approach rather than the U.S. doing it will be the best approach to winning in the future. 3) The value of anticipating the proper measures so we can do things to prevent problems from becoming crises, and crises from becoming conflicts. 4) We need to work collaboratively, not just with our own department and nation, but within the U.S. government and, more importantly, among our alliance and our coalition partners.

With regard to defeating terrorist networks, it was very obvious to us that the value in sharing ideas, culture, and technology with regional partners would lead to rendering these networks ineffective. We could not defeat these by ourselves again. We have to involve others to help us do this worldwide challenge. The capabilities to defeat the terrorist networks span the spectrum of operations, from our traditional methods of combat power through the reaches of irregular warfare, to include an increased role in the numbers of our special operating forces, better use and collection of human intelligence, persistent surveillance, and the use of multi-purpose forces that can work closely with local forces. We need to be better at finding, detecting, and defeating these networks through new technology, tactics, and enhanced cultural awareness.

Convention 2006 Overview

By Cheryl Waldman

Richmond, Virginia, welcomed JWV members from around the country to our 111th annual national convention. Our members arriving at the Omni Richmond Hotel did not even have to leave the comfort of our meeting place to enjoy the first event of the gathering, a succulent buffet dinner and mystery theater performance right in the hotel.

On Monday, August 7, our members embarked on a full day tour of Richmond, including a visit to the Virginia Holocaust Museum; shopping and lunch in Carytown; a tour of Hollywood Cemetery, burial place of many historic figures; and a tour of the Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives, where they were treated to a view of the sanctuary that included original Tiffany glass windows and a special preview of an exhibit dedicated to Jewish veterans. That evening, the National Museum of American Jewish Military History hosted a reception which included a showing of the film "Paper Clips," a documentary about the special way a Tennessee middle school honored Holocaust victims—one paper clip at a time.

On Tuesday, August 8, JWV honored Jewish soldiers of the Confederacy with wreath-laying ceremonies at both the monument to those who died in the Battle of Richmond at the Jewish Cemetery and at the dedication of a memorial to Jewish soldiers of the Confederacy at Hollywood Cemetery. The work of the convention began on Tuesday afternoon, with the semiannual meeting of the National Executive Committee and an address by Senator George Allen (R-VA), who stressed his strong support for Israel in the conflict against Hezbollah.

Later that evening, the convention delegates heard from long-time Richmond resident Herb Heltzer, who spoke to us about many aspects of the Jewish community in Richmond, including the story of Richmond native, Sir Moses Ezekiel, the first Jewish graduate of the Virginia Military Academy and world-renowned sculptor. Mr. Heltzer's wife, Millie, a fifth-generation Richmonder is the great, great niece of Sir Moses and a direct descendant of the first Rabbi of Temple Beth Ahabah, where our members were welcomed the previous day.

Mr. Heltzer also spoke eloquently of two Chaplains who served in WWII, Rabbi Sidney Lefkowitz, who had been an assistant Rabbi at Temple Beth Ahabah, and Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn, who dedicated the cemetery at Iwo Jima following that bloody battle.

Wednesday, August 9, marked the grand opening of the convention, with the keynote address by Hon. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, who reaffirmed his support for the veterans community. Following the grand opening, our delegates were welcomed to Richmond by Mr. Neil Kessler, President of the Jewish Community Federation of Richmond. The group was next addressed by Vincent Burgess, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, who spoke about state services to veterans in Virginia.

Wednesday night brought the annual gathering of the Century Club, which had the special distinction of being a tribute to Mrs. Bailor, who has served the JWV as its membership coordinator for over 50 years. The members enjoyed a delicious catered dinner at the Virginia Holocaust Museum as they honored "Mrs. B" with a special Longevity Award. Tours of the museum were available after dinner.

Major General Howard Bromberg, Deputy Director, Force Protection/Director, Joint Theater Air and Missile Defense Organization, addressed the convention on Thursday afternoon, August 10. MG Bromberg spoke on the Quadrennial Defense Review and projections for future defense needs. The following day, Friday, August 11, the convention heard from Major General (Ret.) Baruch Levy, formerly of the Israeli Defense Forces, who offered an insider's view of the current situation in Israel and shared with the audience his belief that WWII had already begun and was being fought at that moment in the Middle East.

At the annual meeting of the Board of Directors of the National Museum of American Jewish Military History on Saturday afternoon, PNC Jack Berman was re-elected to a second term as President and thanked for his first year of a job well done.

The convention closed on Saturday evening, August 12, with a banquet honoring outgoing National Commander David Magidson, who has worked tirelessly throughout the past year on behalf of JWV. Highlights of the evening included a special DVD presentation of the "Days of David," compiled by National Aide-de-Camp Gerry Levine, that highlighted the special events during the course of Commander Magidson's term. The Murray L. Rosen member of the year award was given to Dr. Raymond V. Biondo of Little Rock for his tireless work on behalf of the organization, including his contributions to the growth of his post and his efforts to support the Boy Scout program. Dr. Biondo was cited for his ability to always be there to support the JWV in whatever way is needed. Since Dr. Biondo was unable to be at the convention for health reasons, PNC Bob Zweiman accepted the honor in his name.

Following the dinner and tribute to outgoing National Commander Magidson, National Budget Officer Norman Rosenshein, who had previously been elected, was sworn in as National Commander for 2006-07. Everyone wishes him the best as he travels the globe for the JWV in the year to come. The new National Commander then adjourned the 111th Annual National Convention of the JWV.

As suitcases were packed for the journey home, our delegates looked forward to reconvening in Charleston, SC, Aug. 19-26, 2007, for our 112th Annual National Convention. Charleston, with its long tradition of both Jewish and American history, promises to be a wonderful venue for our next gathering.

See you in Charleston!

Excerpts from Remarks by VA Secretary R. James Nicholson to the 111th Annual National Convention of the JWV

By VA Secretary R. James Nicholson

You are our nation's oldest active national veterans' service organization. The Jewish War Veterans organization has always gone above and beyond the call of duty to support a strong national defense, and to support the needs of those who once carried out those defense policies on the ground, on the seas, and in the sky. You minister to the underprivileged, the homeless, and the disabled. Your support of scouting, scholarship, and anti-drug programs also invests in America's future by investing in America's youth. Add to these JWV's hospital, rehab, and veterans service programs, and the counseling that you provide on benefit issues, and it's absolutely clear that the Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America are devoted in word and in deed to mankind's highest calling—service to one's fellow man.

My being here today reaffirms the fact that the Jewish War Veterans and the VA are bonded by a common mission. That mission is a commitment to take care of our veterans. So I want to spend a little bit of our time together focusing, and giving you a report on your VA.

You have three main legs: you have the health leg, you have the benefits leg, and you have the burial leg. As your national commander said, we have about 230,000 employees. Most of them, about 190,000 are in that health category. We have 154 major hospitals that range from Maine to Manila. We now have over 900 clinics that we've put out into the communities and 200 veterans' centers, so we dispense medical assistance at about 1,400 different points. This is a major transformation of the VA healthcare system, and it's one that hopefully you are noticing if you are being treated in our system, because we're trying to make it more convenient, more accessible for primary care and preventative medicine. Then if you need a referral for more acute care, we'll refer you to one of our medical centers, and that is working wonderfully.

We have over 7.5 million vets enrolled in our healthcare system. We see over 1 million patients a week. We just finished celebrating our 75th Anniversary. It was 1930 when President Hoover signed the legislation creating the Veterans Administration. When he did that in 1930, the VA was seeing 300,000 patients a year. We now see over 1 million a week in our system. That's a quantitative statement, so let me give you a qualitative statement, because that is something that we can be even more proud of. Two issues ago, Business Week magazine on the cover said, "Best Hospital System in America: Veterans Administration." That makes me extremely proud. At about the same time, there was a huge banquet for us at the Washington Hilton hosted by Harvard University. The reason they were hosting this dinner was to honor the VA because they chose us for their annual Innovations in Government Solutions Award. They had over a thousand entities contesting for that award and they chose the VA because of our electronic health records system. Every one of these 7.5 million patients has an electronic medical record which affords tremendous safety and efficiency in our system. No other integrated healthcare system in America, including the Department of Defense, has been able to achieve that system. It is not only safer and more efficient, but it gives veterans great portability. If any one of you decides to become a "snow bird," and you go down to Arizona or Florida, you don't have to drag along a paper medical file. You don't even have to worry about it. All you have to do is remember your last four digits in your Social Security number and the day you were born and they'll bring up your file, including streaming video, radiology, the last X-rays that you had. It is a monumental achievement, and it's monumental that not only Business Week, but NBC Nightly News, The New York Times, Washington Monthly, US News and World Report have all extolled the quality of healthcare now given by your VA.

We're also a first rate organization in administering benefits. We send checks monthly to almost 3.5 million veterans. Through the GI Bill, we have over half a million going to college. We do about 150,000 home loans every year for veterans, 100% no down payment loans. And I'm responsible for the 6th largest life insurance company in the United States.

Unfortunately, more and more veterans are passing away. We are providing shrine-like burials in our cemeteries for them, but we need to expand. We're in the biggest expansion of our cemetery system since the Civil War. We need to be there for veterans and their survivors if they choose to be buried in one of our cemeteries. We take that responsibility very seriously and so does the President and the Congress, and they've been generous in their support of us going out and finding new pieces of ground and developing that for cemeteries. So the state of the VA is very strong.

Now let me mention one of our challenges because I know you've heard about it, and that is data. On a hard drive about the size of a wallet, you can put the whole population of the United States, 300 million people on that. Any employee that wants can put it in his pocket and take it home at night. But he doesn't have to take it home, he can send it home. So what has become painfully clear is that we need much tighter management of this new technology that we have, both at the VA and in the rest of the government and the private sector. Because now everyday we're seeing the information that there's been another breach of data somewhere. And, regrettably, we at the VA had a terrible incident where an employee's home was broken into, and one of these hard drives was taken with millions and millions of pieces of data on our veterans. Fortunately we got that back, and the FBI has analyzed it and said it was not compromised, but these continue. Last week we had a subcontractor doing work for a hospital in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, and a computer on the desk of an employee was stolen. Unfortunately he had left data on there of about 20,000 veterans' files that he was working on, and that is under investigation. This has to stop, and it will, but the key to this, like the key to almost everything else in life is the people. We have to be able to trust the people to whom we give access to this data, and that has not been the case. The man from whom this data was stolen out of his house in Maryland had worked for the VA for 34 years and had not had a background check in 32 years. Now we would never have given him access to a classified document; he wouldn't have had a clearance; it would've expired. We didn't know anything about him really. Well it's the same thing with this data. Those to whom we're going to trust all this data, we have to know more about them. So we're tightening all that up, and we will make the VA into the gold standard on data security and information technology, just like we did on those electronic medical records.

I was the ambassador to the Vatican at the time when the President asked me to come over here and take this job. They would ask me what it was I was going to do if I came home to become a minister, as they call it. When I would tell them that I was going to become the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, they would give me blank stares, because no other country in the world has anything like we have for the care of our veterans, and that's exactly as it should be. That's exactly as George Washington admonished us to do. When he turned over command of the Continental Army victoriously, he gave a speech to the nation and he said, "This new, now independent, nation needs to honor these men. It owes them a debt of honor and a debt of gratitude." Lincoln in 1865 in his 2nd Inaugural Address affirmed that by saying, "We need to honor and care for him who has borne the battle, and his widow, and his orphan." And that is what the VA is. We are the agents of a grateful nation. We have the honor to carry out what a very generous group of American taxpayers provide for us. So I see us as partners with all our VSOs. We share the same goals, the same objectives, the same love of those who have served us, secured our freedom, and have protected it ever since. So on behalf of my department, I want to thank you for all that you've done for America and for America's veterans.