

Special Report on the Middle East Crisis:

In 2001, the United States was attacked within our sovereign borders by a terrorist organization based in a foreign land. Our response was to confront and destroy this organization wherever we could find it. We have also helped initiate regime change in two countries (Iraq and Afghanistan) which were destabilizing forces in the region.

Israel was recently attacked within its sovereign borders by two terrorist organizations based in and supported by foreign lands. Don't the Israelis have the right to defend themselves? I think they do.

The attacks on Israel and on Israeli soldiers came from Gaza and Southern Lebanon. These were both areas which Israel had occupied for decades as a result of previous wars and which they voluntarily gave to Palestinian Authority/Lebanese control. This decision came with the understanding and hope that they would live side-by-side in peace and harmony if these homelands were returned. Some thanks Israel is getting. Furthermore, their proximity to the enemy makes Israel more vulnerable should the weapons or organization of the terrorists improve.

But, as we have experienced in Iraq and Afghanistan, the vast majority of the Palestinian and Lebanese people are not the ones who are blowing things up. In the case of Lebanon, it is not even their government. The perpetrators are two terrorist organizations, Hamas and Hezbollah. They are both just like Al Qaeda. They are independent networks with a goal to eliminate Israel and eventually the United States.

Iran and Syria are supporting these terrorists. But notice how quiet the rest of the Arab world has been. You haven't seen Egypt or Saudi Arabia or Jordan or the United Arab Emirates rush to condemn Israel for their response. That's because Hamas and Hezbollah are threats to their governments too. All four of those countries have experienced terrorist bombings in recent years. This conflict is not simply between Islamic terrorists and Jews. It is a struggle between the civilized world and the barbarians. And civilization must win.

As President Bush has said repeatedly, our war against terror is a worldwide, multi-year fight. What's going on in the Middle East now has serious implications for that struggle. The Israelis are fighting for themselves. But they are also fighting an enemy of ours. Terrorists will keep killing and killing until they are destroyed or changed. If they kill all the Israelis (which they want to do), they will come for us next.

It is right to stand beside Israel because they are an ally fighting a common enemy in a common war. It is right to stand beside Israel because their response is certainly no less than we would do in the same circumstances. It is right to stand beside Israel so we help to prevent a second holocaust.

But even if all that didn't matter, it is right to stand beside Israel in this conflict because it is in our national interest to see these terrorists weakened or destroyed, before they come for us.

I will have more on the long term implications of all this in later communications.

Until next week, I remain respectfully,

Congressman John Campbell