

Full Text - Middle East
Approved For Release

Interview with
King Hussein of
Jordan (via satellite);
Studio Guests: Abu
Sharif of the PLO
and Ariel Sharon,
Israeli Defense
Minister. Comments
by George Will,
Sam Donaldson
and Tom Wecker.

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PROGRAM This Week with David Brinkley STATION WJLA-TV
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SUBJECT Full Text: Middle East

DAVID BRINKLEY: Here in Washington, in Amman, Jordan, in Beirut, Damascus, Tunis. We're all here. We're ready. Glad to have you with us. We'll have today's news, what has happened since the Sunday morning papers, an interview with King Hussein of Jordan live by satellite. He is now the host, so to speak, for some of the PLO guerrillas pushed out of Beirut. What will he do with him? An interview with Hassan Abu Sharif (?) of the PLO. Now that they are scattered over half the Middle East, what will the PLO do now? Anything? A background report on what this is all about. And our free-for-all discussion with George Will, Sam Donaldson, and Tom Wicker. All here on our Sunday program.

One name to add to that list, General Ariel Sharon, the Israeli Defense Minister. We expect to come in later in the program. Stay with us and see what happens.

In the Middle East, a remarkable series of events now coming to an end. The guerrilla fighters of the Palestine Liberation Organization, about 8000 of them, driven out of Beirut by the Israeli Army. And now, today, leaving reasonably peacefully and being scattered through eight countries of the Middle East. While the PLO is not destroyed, not dead, it will have great difficulty now in organizing any kind of attack on Israel because its members and its leaders will be scattered over an area of a thousand miles or more. Communication and coordination will be somewhere between difficult and impossible.

Yasser Arafat, the PLO's leader, says he himself will leave Beirut soon and publicly, but does not say when and doesn't say where he will go. We have a report that he will go to Athens, Greece, at least for a few days.

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The PLOs have left by ship, airplane, military truck, under instructions to wear clean uniforms and to conduct themselves before the world with dignity.

A report now from Beirut and ABC News correspondent Jim Hickey.

JIM HICKEY: Amid continuing speculation as to exactly when PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat will leave Lebanon, another 1200 Palestinian fighters loaded trucks at dawn this morning and pulled out of West Beirut. Many high-ranking PLO leaders have already been evacuated. And Lebanese radio reports Arafat is expected to leave within the next 24 hours. And PLO sources indicate his departure will be highly public, to suggest he and his Palestinians are victorious and not defeated.

Today's group of evacuees, which left with the usual hail of gunfire and salutes, are members of the Palestinian Liberation Army under Syrian control. They are headed overland to Syria, which means they must pass through Israeli and Lebanese Christian-held territory. An unusual number of Israeli flags fluttered in the morning breeze as the Palestinian convoy rolled through the eastern side of the Gallery Saman (?) checkpoint. And in suburban East Beirut, Christian Lebanese spat at the PLA soldiers and made rude gestures as the convoy went by.

This is the second overland evacuation of PLO out of Beirut. The first convoy, last Friday, took nine hours to reach its destination in Syria, but experienced only minor problems.

Meanwhile, 600 more Palestinians loaded a Greek ship at the port of Beirut this morning. They too are headed for Syria by the way of Tartus. And at the Beirut airport, heavily damaged in the Israeli bombing, Lebanese workers have begun making repairs. The airport, now used by the Israeli Air Force for military transport, is expected to reopen for commercial traffic, perhaps within the week.

BRINKLEY: About a thousand of the PLOs have arrived in Bizerte, Tunisia and have been welcomed with flags, shouting, friendly signs, banners. And they've been sent to reception centers or recreation areas, which they have already found unsatisfactory, and several are already trying to get out.

A report from ABC News correspondent Greg Dobbs in Tunisia.

GREG DOBBS: After the beating they took in Beirut and after a week's journey in a crowded boat, their heroes' welcome made them, some said, happy to be here. But when the cheering was behind them, this is what they learned lies ahead: a dusty,

deserted [unintelligible] camp an hour-and-a-half's drive from the capital.

For the past week and a half, Tunisian workers have been putting in ping-pong and basketball and soccer. But after enjoying relatively free rein in the cosmopolitan city of Beirut, this place wasn't much for the men from the PLO.

Their leaders had something better awaiting them in the form of this requisitioned beachfront hotel. And Yasser Arafat, if he comes, is expected to occupy a nearby seaside villa. But the rank and file are in the camp, disarmed, womanless, and bored. Which is why it's no surprise that while we were at the camp this morning, two of the new arrivals were brought in by local police, having been picked up on the road trying to hitchhike to Algeria. Another one told us, through a translator, "I'll crawl on my hands and knees, if I have to, to the nearest town," which is almost 15 miles away.

A Tunisian soldier at the camp said, "They're all trying to slip away."

So it's difficult to say how they'll stay put for 24 months, or even 24 weeks, if this is an example of the first 24 hours.

BRINKLEY: ...Coming next, Barry Serafin's report from Jordan.

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BRINKLEY: Israel's Defense Minister, Ariel Sharon, is in Washington this week. And he is, if nothing else, provocative. Israel, he said, will never agree, never agree to any Palestinian state on any territory now controlled by Israel. Beyond that, he said, the Palestinians already have a homeland, and it is called Jordan, King Hussein's Jordan. We will ask King Hussein about that in a few minutes.

In the meantime, with our Sunday regular James Wooten on vacation, here's today's background report from ABC News correspondent Barry Serafin in Amman, Jordan.

BARRY SERAFIN: A couple of days ago, Israel's Defense Minister declared that the Palestinians already have the homeland they seek right here in Jordan. Well, not surprisingly, neither the PLO nor the Jordanian government thinks much of that suggestion, even though they go to great lengths to demonstrate how well they get along.

The most recent and striking example was a week ago

today, when King Hussein personally welcomed and embraced each of 265 Palestinians who had fought in Lebanon, describing them as gallant and courageous. But relations have not always been so warm between Jordan's monarch and Palestinians. Not quite 12 years ago, on what came to be called Black September, a long, bloody series of battles broke out between King Hussein's armed forces and PLO guerrillas who challenged his authority. After months of fighting and thousands of deaths on each side, the guerrillas were crushed. Many of them were expelled to Lebanon. But as he greeted fighters returning from Lebanon last week, the King dismissed all that as history.

KING HUSSEIN: We are one family and one people, and we have been. And whatever may have happened in the past was a family affair that does not concern anyone.

SERAFIN: Indeed, there has been an accommodation between the government and the Palestinians through the years, partly as the result of pressure from other Arab countries and partly because there are so many Palestinians here. They make up more than half of Jordan's 2 1/2 million people. But so far, the few to return left Jordan only when the war in Lebanon broke out.

The King has offered to take in others with Jordanian passports. But privately, some residents of Palestinian camps here say many who left Jordan after the Black September fighting are still afraid to come back. Those who have returned have had a hero's welcome in the camps.

[Man speaking in Arabic]

SERAFIN: Nasser Abu Shawar, a lieutenant in the Palestine Liberation Army, says maybe the PLO was hurt a little bit in Beirut, but the Israelis didn't finish the PLO like they thought. The PLO will fight until the Palestinian people start their own state.

In Washington on Friday, Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon insisted that that problem has already been solved.

ARIEL SHARON: Israel never agreed and will never agree to a second Palestinian state. And I made it very clear again today.

ADNAN ABU ODA: In my opinion, this is quite ridiculous.

SERAFIN: Jordanian Information Minister Adnan Abu Oda (?), a close adviser of King Hussein, claims the Israelis are simply trying to hang on to territory they occupy.

OBA: what Sharon really means is to annex the West Bank and Gaza. But instead of saying that, he says, "Well, they have

a homeland somewhere else."

MAN: This solution is not acceptable. Because what we, as Palestinians, want is to go back to our homeland. And our homeland is there. It's not something which is an abstract thing. Not only our homeland [unintelligible], but even our houses, our real houses, the fences, the yards, the trees, are still there.

SERAFIN: While vowing to continue the struggle, Nasser acknowledges that after Lebanon, PLO tactics will have to change. Without offering specifics, he forecasts major diplomatic efforts.

Palestinians are angry about the lack of Arab support in Lebanon.

Ramik Khoury (?), editor-in-chief of the Jordan Times.

RAMIK KHOURY: There was a tremendous feeling of despair and outrage among Arab people that none of the Arab states were doing anything. And it was a feeling of helplessness, and it showed.

SERAFIN: But the display of Israeli firepower in Lebanon has not been lost on the PLO or the Arab states which stayed on the sidelines. The PLO's fighting ability has been crippled not only by the war, but by the dispersal of the evacuees to various Arab countries which want to avoid becoming staging areas for new PLO operations, thus inviting massive new Israeli reprisals.

Jordan, which shares the longest border with Israel of any Arab nation, and whose cities are just minutes away by air, is a case in point.

At the same time, just across that border is the occupied West Bank that Palestinians in Jordan and elsewhere still see as their rightful homeland.

There are other influences on Jordan, as well, not least of which is the \$1 1/4 billion it receives yearly from Persian Gulf oil states, principally Saudi Arabia, money that helps to finance the boom-town construction underway all over the capital city of Amman.

King Hussein is sensitive to the pressures from all quarters. He is a careful man, a survivor, who's been on the throne a remarkable 30 years. And so despite his reputation as a pro-Western moderate, he has resisted coaxing from Washington to join in the Camp David peace process. He's not about to isolate

himself like Egypt's late President Sadat.

ODA: Jordan is potentially a positive partner.
But Jordan would not do the work alone, because Jordan cannot speak for the Palestinians.

SERAFIN: Both in the government and in the streets of Palestinian camps here, you hear the same thing: The war in Lebanon has put new pressure on everyone. If the United States does not now, finally, show its willingness to break with Israel on issues such as recognition of the PLO, Arab moderates may have no role left to play.

Minister Abu Oda says Arabs will be watching to see whether the U.S. becomes more willing to rein in Israel than it was in Lebanon.

ODA: The horrifying thing is the possibility that this episode could be a very bad precedent in the area, that the Israelis feel their sheer force in dictating policies all around.

SERAFIN: But if the problems in the way of a peace settlement seem even bigger than before, the PLO's Nasser remains hopeful.

Do you think it's likely that you and I might be sitting here five years from now or ten years from now having this same conversation, saying someday.

NASSER: Not here. In Jerusalem, maybe. [Laughter]

SERAFIN: Still, it's as hard as ever, especially in the wake of the war in Lebanon, to see reasons for optimism on any side. It's as apparent as ever that because of its geography, its history, and the makeup of its people, Jordan and its cautious King would have to be part of any permanent Middle East peace arrangement. But unless the terms change, it's a part King Hussein refuses to play.

BRINKLEY: Our interview with King Hussein of Jordan will be along in a few minutes. Joining me will be George Will, ABC analyst; and Sam Donaldson, ABC News White House correspondent, with questions.

And coming next, our interview with Hassan Abu Sharif of the PLO.

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BRINKLEY: To Mr. Hassan Abu Sharif in Beirut, of the PLO and of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

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Thank you very much for coming in today, Mr. Abu Sharif. We're glad to have you with us.

Now that the PLO is leaving Beirut, where does that leave you?

HASSAN ABU SHARIF: The PLO will continue its struggle until we achieve our aims in establishing our independent state.

BRINKLEY: Well, with the PLO scattered over several countries of the Middle East, won't that be extremely difficult?

SHARIF: The PLO had always been wherever the Palestinian people live. The Palestinians have been dispersed since 1948. The Israelis, actually, with the help of the British, scattered our people in 1948, and not in 1982. So the PLO will remain wherever the Palestinians are and will remain struggling to get them back into one piece of land, the Palestinian state.

GEORGE WILL: Mr. Abu Sharif, you just described the aim of your movement as establishing your own political independence. Not long ago, you have described the aim of your movement as the destruction of the Zionist entity, the destruction of Israel. Does that mean that you no longer aim to destroy Israel?

SHARIF: We have always given a very generous offer of living peacefully together with the Jews in Palestine. But since the Zionist movement had rejected this offer, we have as a goal, as an aim to get our people into part of Palestine where our independent state would be established.

SAM DONALDSON: Mr. Sharif, as a practical matter, how are you going to do that? You are scattered now to several countries. Your political structure is going to be dispersed. You have no teeth. Your fighters are not going to be available when you need them. So how are you going to make good on any of your aims?

SHARIF: Well, first of all, we have to ask the United States if they still regard the West Bank and Gaza as occupied parts of Palestine. If so, then the occupants should withdraw.

DONALDSON: Well now, the Defense Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon, says Israel will never allow a Palestinian state on those lands. And he says tht Jordan is the Palestinian state. Do you think you can convince King Hussein of that?

SHARIF: Well, as a matter of fact, we want Reagan to tell us whether he considers the West Bank and Gaza as occupied or as part of Israel. If it is a part of Israel, then Sharon is

right. But if the United States regards it as occupied, then Sharon will have to withdraw.

WILL: Mr. Abu Sharif, the basic Israeli position is that whatever else you can say about the West Bank, it does not clearly belong to Jordan. You seem to be saying the same thing. Are you saying that Jordan's claim, which it sought to enforce by annexing about 20-some years ago, that Jordan's claim to the West Bank is illegitimate?

SHARIF: The Palestinian land is always Palestinian. The West Bank and Gaza area part of Palestine that was partly usurped in 1948 by the Zionist movement. And therefore we consider that every meter of Palestine is a legible [sic] land for the Palestinians to live in and to establish their independent state on.

Hussein actually annexed, in one way or the other, the West Bank. Now we want our independence.

BRINKLEY: Well, do I understand you to say that if you were to have the West Bank and Gaza as a Palestinian state, that would be satisfactory to you? Would that satisfy you?

SHARIF: The program of the PLO is very clear on that. It is satisfactory for the Palestinians to establish their own independent state on any part of Palestine.

DONALDSON: Well now, the United States is not for an independent Palestinian state in that area. That has been our policy so far. What makes you think that U.S. policy would change?

SHARIF: The American people will definitely, now that they realize how just is the Palestinian struggle and how unjust the aggression of the Israelis is, will help us to achieve that.

DONALDSON: Well, Mr. Sharif, public opinion polls in the United States show that support for the State of Israel, if not its entire policy range, is at an all-time high in this country. What do you know that they don't know?

SHARIF: Well, at a certain level, the public opinion in the United States will definitely exert pressure. Because I don't think that the American people will accept this holocaust done to the Palestinians, this massacre committed against our people. And definitely, they realize now that without giving the Palestinians an independent state, there would be no peace in the Middle East.

WILL: Mr. Sharif, in answer to the last question from

Mr. Brinkley, you seemed to say, or I guess you did explicitly say that the Palestinians would be content with their own state on the West Bank and Gaza. Does that mean that the Palestinians, in your view, the PLO, in your view, can accept the simultaneous existence of Israel as a Jewish state?

SHARIF: This is the PLO program. It was very clear. And although many people decided not to read it carefully, because they don't want to read it carefully, we now read it to you carefully. The PLO had an aim. It is to establish a Palestine independent state on any part of Palestine.

BRINKLEY: And if that happened, would that be the end of your hostility to Israel?

SHARIF: This would be probably a start for simultaneous cooperation between Palestinians and Jews.

WILL: Isn't, then, Mr. Sharif, your argument as much with Jordan as it is with Israel? Because even if you could get Israel to cede its claims, whatever they are, to the West Bank, you still have to deal with the King of Jordan, who, as you know, unlike Begin, has tried to annex the West Bank.

SHARIF: Well, who told you that we differentiate greatly between Begin and Hussein? We like very much to cooperate with the Jews in Palestine. And we are ready to go as long and as far as they are ready to go. We are really planning to build this part of the world together.

BRINKLEY: Mr. Abu Sharif, thank you very much for coming in and for your interesting remarks to us this morning.

SHARIF: Thank you very much.

BRINKLEY: Coming next will be our interview by satellite from Amman, Jordan with King Hussein.

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BRINKLEY: Your Majesty, King Hussein of Jordan, we thank you very much for coming in and being with us today -- by satellite, that is, from Amman. Very glad to have you.

Ariel Sharon, the Defense Minister of Israel, is in Washington for the last couple of days, and he has been telling us that the Palestinians, who demand a homeland, already have one, and it is called Jordan.

What do you have to say about that?

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KING HUSSEIN: I believe that Jordan has, to its credit, always associated itself with the Palestinian hopes and aspirations and with the Arab cause, and has given Palestinians awaiting a resolution of their problem on their legitimate soil the chance to feel at home here in Jordan as members of the Jordanian family. But this does not mean, in any way, that the issue is resolved. The issue has been, will be until a resolution is reached, that of legitimate Palestinian and Arab rights on Palestinian soil, under occupation by Israel, in the West Bank, Arab Jerusalem, and Gaza.

DONALDSON: King Hussein, the last time you made the Palestinians feel at home in Jordan they almost seized your throne. In 1970 they had to be expelled in a very bloody war. Is there any danger that that will happen again? Or do you have just a few of them there, not enough to pose a threat?

KING HUSSEIN: Not many left Jordan in 1970. A very few did so. And once again I would like to say that the struggle at that time was between law and order and chaos and anarchy. Jordanians and Palestinians were on both sides. This was an experience that was a very sad one for all concerned. I believe we have learned from it. And I hope and trust that it will never reoccur again.

WILL: Your Majesty, we've just heard Mr. Sharif of the PLO say, speaking with regard to the territorial claim that the PLO makes to the West Bank, that the PLO does not differentiate much between Begin and Hussein.

Given that that's the case and given that Mr. Begin says that whatever else may be true of the West Bank, it doesn't clearly belong to Jordan, who is the PLO arguing with at this point? Are they arguing with Mr. Begin, or do they have an equal argument with King Hussein?

KING HUSSEIN: There is no argument with me. But I take very strong exception to being likened to Prime Minister Begin by anyone. Mr. Sharif of the PFLP, or anybody else, at that moment or at any time.

We have striven to support the Palestinians, to carry out our national duty within the Arab world and the Arab movement since the beginning of this century, for the recovery of Palestinian rights and Palestinian soil. We have no territorial ambitions, nor do we wish to impose ourselves on Palestinians. All we hope for them and all we will seek to achieve in supporting them is the recovery of those rights on their legitimate soil.

BRINKLEY: Your Majesty, now that the PLO is leaving

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Beirut -- a good many have already left -- what happens next in the Middle East? What is your judgment? What is your assessment of these events of the last week or so?

KING HUSSEIN: My feeling is that, unfortunately, following the very, very tragic events, the ugly, almost unbelievable nightmare that we all lived through in Lebanon, the focus of attention will be the Palestinian issue. I'm sure that the Lebanese problem will be dealt with adequately. And that needs to be resolved, as well. But I hope that the world will, and the United States in particular, concentrate on the Palestinian issue, with all those desirous of seeing progress towards the establishment of a just and durable peace, for that to come about.

DONALDSON: Well, King Hussein, let's...

KING HUSSEIN: I believe...

DONALDSON: Excuse me, sir.

KING HUSSEIN: ...that we will probably see more of an emphasis and a real desire for genuine progress on the political level to find a solution. If we don't succeed in the very immediate future, I believe that the results are a disaster that will overtake all of us in this entire area, and maybe the world.

DONALDSON: I'm sorry I started to interrupt you.

But let's go back to the idea of a Palestinian homeland. What about the West Bank? Judea and Samaria, as Mr. Begin refers to that area. Do you expect to get it back, number one? Would you be content to see a Palestinian state established in that territory, number two?

KING HUSSEIN: I'm not in possession of a mandate, either from the Palestinians or from the Arab world, following the Rabat summit conference, to handle the problems of the West Bank directly. And I would not do so until I was offered such a mandate, if it came about.

But I will be supportive of all efforts to recover both the West Bank and Gaza for the people of Palestine, for them to decide their future. I believe that their links with Jordan are strong. And maybe there will come a time before too long when we can, even in anticipation of developments of a major nature in terms of a solution to the problem, look together at what our future relations will...

DONALDSON: But you do not seem to be ruling out the idea that the West Bank may eventually become the homeland for

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the Palestinians. Would you rule out the idea that it might become a separate state, apart from Jordan?

KING HUSSEIN: I'm not ruling anything out.

WILL: Your Majesty, if you're not ruling anything out, does that mean you're not ruling out a return on Israel's part, unlikely though it now seems, to something like the Alon plan, which was the traditional formula advocated by many Israelis, swapping territory for peace -- that is, adjusting outward the 1967 borders to be more defensible, in Israel's point of view, leaving some Israeli forces on the West Bank, but returning a good bit of the West Bank to what it was before 67 -- that is, Jordanian sovereignty?

KING HUSSEIN: I believe, with the distances involved, a state of peace is a state of mind. It's a feeling on both sides that peace has been achieved and that it's worth maintaining and keeping.

I believe that all the territories occupied in June of '67 should return to Arab sovereignty.

And, on the other hand, in regard to security and the demands in that regard, they should be taken in a manner that is reciprocal. Also, the Arabs demand security for themselves from Israel. So if peace is achieved, I believe that security arrangements should be looked at as to give both sides the feeling of security they need for the future.

BRINKLEY: Your Majesty, with the PLO being scattered, as it is, throughout a great deal of the Middle East, do you see it as being finished as a fighting force?

KING HUSSEIN: I don't believe it is finished. I believe that it's very much alive. The Palestinian issue, the Palestinian cause, the Palestinian just demands regarding to their rights on their legitimate soil. And I believe that Palestine is the focus of attention of the world at this moment, and will be.

WILL: Your Majesty, would you welcome at least a partial repeal of what was done at the Rabat conference in '74? That is, would you welcome having restored to you and to Jordan more of a role as the legitimate spokesman of the Palestinian people?

KING HUSSEIN: This is not for me to suggest. I would go along with anything that the Palestinians and the Arabs wished, or wish in the future. I'm committed to the decision.

And, incidentally, regarding the past, the question of annexation of the West Bank is inaccurate. It was an Arab effort to save what could be saved of Palestine following the partition plan and the war of '48. There was a unity of Palestine and Jordan under the Hashemite Kingdom for the period up to '67. People were elected to the Jordanian Parliament in equal numbers from the West and East Bank, and to the Senate, and in the government. And at the same time, a part of that constitution read that that attachment of the West Bank to the East Bank in no way interfered with the rights of any Palestinians regarding an eventual solution to their problem.

DONALDSON: King Hussein, I want to ask...

KING HUSSEIN: And we sought up to 1974, up to the Rabat summit, to recover their territory. We did not see to return it to Jordan or Jordan's control, but to leave it under international auspices, for people to decide their fate and their future. And we then accepted that. And we still have the same view.

DONALDSON: King Hussein, I want to switch to one of the lessons people think they learned from the Lebanese war, and that is that American equipment seems to be better than Soviet equipment. American planes destroyed Soviet planes, American tanks Soviet tanks, and Soviet anti-aircraft batteries.

Recently you seemed to have made a decision to purchase Soviet equipment, particularly anti-aircraft batteries. Might you now reconsider it, since it appears to be inferior?

KING HUSSEIN: I do not believe that this is the issue. I believe that Israel owes the United States an awful lot; and at least morally, it should listen to the United States and to the conscience of the American people.

In the 1970s alone, Israel received \$13 billion worth of aid. That represented almost 50 percent of aid from that figure was in grant aid.

DONALDSON: But Your Majesty, that is not my question, sir. I think the United States, at least Defense Secretary Weinberger, suggests we might look favorably upon a request from you for new arms. Why don't you ask for American equipment, since Soviet equipment appears to be no good?

KING HUSSEIN: Well, this is not the issue. The issue is that the lesson of Lebanon has not gone unnoticed by us, either myself, my countrymen, or the armed forces of Jordan. And Jordan will not be weak in the face of any possible threat, in terms of its destiny and its future, be it from Israel or from

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any other quarter. Jordan has been threatened in the past, and we are determined to do our utmost to build our strength to the best of our abilities to defend not only our existence, but what we believe in, the principles, ideas we are for.

And we hope that the United States will not hesitate to give us what we need in the way of arms and weapons. Otherwise we'd have to find them anywhere in the world that we can.

BRINKLEY: Your Majesty, thank you very much for being with us today. We have enjoyed having you.

We'll be back in a moment with some questions for the Defense Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon.

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BRINKLEY: Defense Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel has just arrived in our studio, bringing a map.

What are you going to show us on the map?

Welcome, by the way. We're glad to have you.

What are you going to show us on the map?

ARIEL SHARON: Thank you for being here.

I was just watching King Hussein. And I would say it's ironic situation that, being neighbors, living so close, we have to talk for the television. And I'm not underestimating the importance of the media. But I would have -- we would have preferred to talk directly. And if this question that you just asked King Hussein, if he would like to exchange some words with me, if this question would have been put to me, my answer would have been positive.

So here I have with me...

BRINKLEY: Well, if we can settle it all for you, we'd be more than happy to do it.

SHARON: We -- as you know, we were looking for every way for talking to Arab leaders. And I can just repeat again that I remember that when Prime Minister Begin informed the Cabinet, his first Cabinet, in July '77, in the first Cabinet meeting he addressed the members of the Cabinet, saying that most of his effort will be dedicated to meet with Arab leaders. As a matter of fact, that's what altogether brought in the end to the meeting with the late Sadat and to the desired peace.

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DONALDSON: Well, Mr. Minister, let us get right down to cases, sir. We have very little time. You have a map. Let's get to the West Bank. Now, you have said that Israel would never allow a Palestinian state to be created on the West Bank. My question to you is, does Israel ever intend to do anything but keep Judea and Samaria, your names for the West Bank? Is that your territory now?

SHARON: You asked about the map before. I would like to use the map now.

DONALDSON: No, I would like to ask if you'd answer my question.

SHARON: You'll get an answer. You'll get an answer.

You know, altogether, what are we talking about? You know, we are talking about a country...

DONALDSON: A very small country.

SHARON: A very small country, altogether. And I'm pointing now -- all this area which I'm pointing now at used to be...

BRINKLEY: Could you turn the plastic back so we can get a picture of it? That's too shiny. We won't be able to see it.

SHARON: Yes. But then I'm not being showing the West Bank. And you may have a question -- are we going to annex something? -- something like that.

DONALDSON: My question was, do you consider it your territory now?

SHARON: I would like just to show. All this area -- all this area, that was Palestine, or the land of Israel, until 1922. In 1922 in was the first partition, when what used to be called Trans-Jordan became Jordan later. And that consists of 75 percent of the total area of the land of Israel, of Palestine.

We never wanted to annex this area. We proposed to the Palestinian inhabitants of Smaria and Judea and Gaza district -- that that is not the term that I'm using. These are the old biblical terms, historical terms. You can find them on every old map you...

DONALDSON: Mr. Begin says God gave that territory to the Jewish people.

SHARON: That is the cradle of the Jewish people.

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DONALDSON: Is it yours today? That's my question.

SHARON: But what we are doing now, what we offered, what we offered is we offered to the Palestinian inhabitants an autonomy plan and a plan that gives them a possibility to run their life, almost without any interference. What is crucially important for us and what we are going to keep in our hands -- and that is part of the Camp David Accord -- that is the security. The security is our responsibility. We aren't going to get any guarantees from anyone.

One should understand that Israel is a small, tiny country [unintelligible]. And that is -- for us, it's a question of death or life, and life, who is going to control...

DONALDSON: George Will has some questions, and David Brinkley. I take it the answer to my question is yes, you do intend to keep it. You believe it is Israeli territory.

SHARON: I mean I would like to say what I think about that. I mean you have so many chances, being in television, always to say. I'm coming very seldom here.

DONALDSON: But you get to give the answers, sir.

SHARON: So I would like to give an answer.

When it comes to the security of Israel, the answer is yes. When it comes to, I would say, annexation, my answer is no.

WILL: General Sharon, a large number of Israeli leaders in the past have said that the key to security for Israel and to peace in the region is to exchange territory for peace. And in that formula we have something like the Alon plan, which was to move Israel's '67 borders out a bit, keep Israel defense forces on the high points on the West Bank, but give back much of the physical territory of the West Bank to be under the Jordanian flag. Are you ruling that out?

SHARON: First I would like to say that the Alon plan -- and I admire the man. He was one of our brightest commanders in the war for independence. He was then 30 years, and led maybe the main military operations and moves during the war. But his plan did not talk about keeping our hands on the high terrain, but the belly of Jordan or the Jordan rift at a very low place, completely overruled and controlled -- controlled completely, overlooked and controlled by the mountains of Samaria and Judea.

This situation cannot be accepted. And we believe that, from the security point of view, we have to keep the area, the high terrain and the River Jordan. And that, of course, can be

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done without interfering in internal life of the local population, that can run, according to the autonomy plan that we, ourselves -- it was our plan. Nobody ever forced us to come to this plan. We offered the plan, which enabled them to run their life.

And, you know, Israel is known so much for its military capability. But they could have taken tremendous advantage of Israel being, I would say, one of the most advanced countries from the agricultural point of view, research and science and [unintelligible] and so on. And all that they can share with us without [unintelligible] all our experience.

And I hope, as a matter of fact, that after the expulsion of the terrorists from Beirut now, it's a new era of peace coming to the region. I started, myself, saying negotiations. So I renewed negotiations with Arab leaders just a few days ago. Coming home, I'm going to proceed with that. And I hope that we'll find a way for peaceful coexistence.

WILL: King Hussein seemed just to say, on our show a moment ago, that Jordan really never intended to annex the West Bank, that it is still an unallocated portion of the Palestine mandate.

In the Washington Post this week, where all the Arab leaders seemed to be materializing in print, your Foreign Minister Shamir said, "The crucial point is that it is unthinkable that Jews should be forbidden to live in Bethlehem and Hebron," and other places. That is, to use your phrase, the cradle of the Jewish people.

Given -- if you were given, under some settlement of this unallocated portion of the mandate, the guaranteed right of Jews to live and settle in this area, does it matter to Israel under whose sovereignty, under whose national flag the Jews live?

SHARON: First I would like to say that King Hussein did annex this area. And I think there were two countries in the world -- one of them was Great Britain -- that recognized this annexation. It [unintelligible] what was the other one.

WILL: Pakistan, I think.

SHARON: Pakistan, maybe.

So he did annex. And not only that he did annex, but he called in the constitution that was -- the Jordan constitution. There are exactly the number of inhabitants of Samaria and Judea who can be members of the Jordan Parliament, and so on and so. They did annex. Practically, they did annex. Not only practically, but officially.

We believe that Jews and Arabs have been always living together in the land of Israel, or, as you call it, Palestine. There are 600,000 Palestinian Arabs who live within the pre-'67 boundaries as Israeli citizens, 600,000. We don't see any possibility to draw any line which would say distinct between Jewish population, Arab population. These two people must find a way to live together.

And altogether, I believe that now, after the threat of terrorism from Lebanon, and mostly after the expulsion of the terrorists and their political headquarters from Beirut, we are facing a new era in the area which will enable these two peoples to live together, to cooperate, to live in peaceful coexistence.

BRINKLEY: General, Prime Minister Begin says, in his opinion, you are the greatest general in history. Which, I gather, puts you in the company of Hannibal, Alexander, Robert E. Lee, Dwight Eisenhower, MacArthur, and a number of other famous military leaders. I assume...

SHARON: May I say that though I think Prime Minister Begin is a man of truth, but in this case he did exaggerate.

BRINKLEY: All right. Well, in your capacity as a general -- in his view, the greatest -- how do you see -- what do you see as -- you have scattered your enemies from Beirut. They're going to eight countries, I think. Do you see them as being finished as a fighting force? The PLO, is it finished?

SHARON: I would say that they were defeated, heavily defeated militarily. But more than that, politically.

Militarily, Israel is a strong country. And, of course, Israel could have entered West Beirut. We didn't enter West Beirut because we wanted to avoid it as much as possible. And we did. We believe that by a combination of pressure and negotiation, that might be solved.

So they have been defeated mostly -- or, no doubt, militarily, but also politically, because all their activities -- how could the PLO, altogether, operate? They could operate only due to a pressure and threat of terrorism in the region, and being, I would say, part of, or more than a part -- I would say that was a center of world terrorism.

Losing this capability of acting almost without any interference, I would say like a state within a state, without -- Lebanon was a state without any total control or government for many years -- there they could have operated. But once they were scattered all around the Middle, from North Africa to Yemen, it's a different situation.

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As a matter of fact, King Hussein himself, when the terrorists came to Jordan, I mean he greeted them. But what did happen, he put them immediately in a camp in the desert. They were disarmed in the desert.

BRINKLEY: Are they finished, militarily?

SHARON: No. No, I wouldn't say they are finished. I think that the Free World should show no compromise when it comes to terrorism. And Israel set an example by, being though a small nation, we, I think, the only one who decided not to agree and not to get into any compromises with terrorism. Because we regard terrorism as one of the main threats to human beings, to free countries. And it's not only because of their casualties that were inflicted, heavy casualties, but we saw in the PLO terrorism a threat for the peace that has been achieved already and for the peace that we might achieve in the future, and I hope we will achieve.

DONALDSON: General Sharon, you may be the greatest general in history, but you have a record of...

SHARON: No, I do't think...

BRINKLEY: Well, that's Begin's judgment.

DONALDSON: You have a record of insubordination, as well. And I want to ask you about a specific act.

SHARON: I beg your pardon. I didn't...

DONALDSON: A record of insubordination in your military career. And I want to ask you about a specific act in the Lebanese war, that last 12-hour bombing of Beirut, about which President Reagan expressed his outrage.

After the next Cabinet meeting in Jerusalem, Western reporters, at least, were told by officials present at the meeting that there'd been a showdown between you and Prime Minister Begin, with the Prime Minister saying words to the effect, "I am going to run this government, not you," and that that had not been authorized.

I want to know if that last 12-hour bombing of Beirut, which killed so many people, was authorized by your government, or whether you did it on your own.

SHARON: I would like first to make very clear about several points.

One, your information that you said now, that so many

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people were killed, is incorrect. We were not attacking that day the city of Beirut, West Beirut. We were attacking all the area which is south of Boulevard Masrah (?). We were attacking the terrorist camps and headquarters, artillery and rocket launchers units. That's first.

Second...

DONALDSON: No one was killed?

SHARON: I would not say -- I would not say that no one. And altogether -- altogether -- altogether, I would say we are sorry about every casualty. We are sorry. We, as Jews, are sorry about every casualty that anybody suffered. Even if they were enemies.

DONALDSON: But did you do it with authorization, sir?

SHARON: I'd like to answer. You asked a question. I would like to answer.

Second, I'll be very glad if you will be able -- we can't do it today -- if you will be able to give me even one example of not obeying orders through all my military service, if you will be able -- I can assure you you are going to fail.

Third, every action in the war, from the first day of the war to the last day of bombing of West Beirut, or the terrorist camps in the southern part of West Beirut, were as a result of Cabinet decisions. And that's exactly what has been done. Not more than that.

DONALDSON: So they had authorized that bombing.

SHARON: It was a Cabinet decision. Israel is a democracy. And you know that, that Israel is a democracy.

WILL: Mr. Minister, another...

SHARON: And a real democracy.

WILL: Another war leader of a democracy, Winston Churchill, said, "In victory, magnanimity."

The United States is looking for another Sadat -- that is, someone who will kick over the traces and do something unexpected. Given that you have, as you now say -- rightly, I think -- made substantial gains in weakening the PLO, both militarily and politically, does this not buy Israel a margin for maneuver, and is there not something magnanimous with regard to the West Bank, perhaps a territorial settlement, not as security-conscious as Alon had in mind...

BRINKLEY: We have time only for a very short answer, Mr. Minister. Our time is about up.

SHARON: And the problem's complicated.

BRINKLEY: Yes.

SHARON: But I'll [unintelligible] be short.

We are looking to a solution. And we offered a solution, I think the only realistic one. That is the autonomy plan. We have to start negotiating. And I'm sure that we will find a way for peaceful coexistence.

BRINKLEY: Thank you very much.