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> Subject: Novosti general on Lebanon

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> MOSCOW. (RIA Novosti defense commentator Viktor Litovkin) - I asked General Makhmut Gareyev, president of the Military Sciences Academy, for an interview to hear his view on the tactics and operational skills of the two sides in the recent Israeli-Lebanese conflict.

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> But at the very beginning of our conversation, he said that he would prefer to start with the political aspects of the recent war.

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> "War cannot be separated from politics," he said. "That would not be a serious discussion. Tactics and operational skills come second to the political tasks facing the troops."

> "True, Israel's situation is understandable. Being next to unruly Hizbollah, which is ready to fire missiles at its territory and kill its people, creates a problem, and Israel's concern is well grounded. But I think that Israel should fight Hizbollah with precision strikes, proper intelligence and troop landings. Nobody will ever be able to justify massive bombings and the deaths of old people, children and civilians in general.

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> "On the other hand, if we accept Israeli logic and try to justify its actions (which cannot be fully justified), it means that we should have bombed Iraq when our diplomats were seized in Baghdad. This would have been the easiest thing to do - bomb Baghdad, destroy oil fields and bridges... Or take London, which gives shelter to Zakayev and other Chechen militants. Should London be bombed because of that? If this logic were followed, the world would turn upside down. Decision-making should be more appropriate to the situation.

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> "The almost 100 million-strong Arab world is not at all homogeneous. Islamic countries have not acted from common positions. They have not even denounced Israel or supported Hizbollah, although there were demonstrations against the war in Lebanon in some countries. But any normal person will protest against civilian deaths. The absence of unanimous Arab support for Lebanon shows that there is no Arab conspiracy against Christians or Jews. This is all crap.

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> "The Americans backed Albanian Muslims in Kosovo. The Saudis have always been on the U.S.'s side. They have long been with the West, and not just ideologically. Like other Gulf countries, they have financial links with the West. All major world banks hold Arab oil money. They will be left with nothing if they mess with the Arabs."

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> "This is probably why we witnessed a totally unprecedented phenomenon during the Israeli-Lebanese war," the general went on to say. "This was the first time that the army of an independent, UN-recognized state, which has diplomatic relations with a hundred countries, did not defend

> its territory and people from an outside aggression. I mean the Lebanese
> army. Lebanon was attacked, but its army was not even ordered to defend
> it. This is unbelievable. Who needs such an army? Why do the Lebanese
> taxpayers maintain it? This is a very dangerous precedent and an
> alarming signal for other states.”

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> “The Israeli-Lebanese conflict reveals a most unpleasant trend,” Gareyev
> went on. “During World War I civilian casualties accounted for five
> percent of the total losses; in World War II, the figure rose to almost
> half. True, out of the 27 million lost by the Soviet Union, more than 18
> million were civilians who never had weapons in their hands. In Vietnam,
> civilian losses accounted for 95% of the total casualties. There are
> people who praise contact-free warfare, where all strikes are dealt with
> air- or sea-based missiles without contact with the enemy army, to the
> skies. In other words, these strikes are dealt at civilians, cities,
> industrial facilities, energy systems, bridges, roads, schools and
> hospitals. They think that when all this is destroyed, the enemy will
> surrender. This logic is inhuman. International conventions against
> gases and toxic agents were adopted in The Hague and Vienna. It is
> necessary to oppose such warfare. The UN should prohibit the bombing of
> cities and civilians. It is important to denounce such warfare as a
> crime against humanity in order to limit the use of weapons against
> civilians, at least to some extent.”

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> “Moreover, in Lebanon the killing of civilians and the destruction of
> bridges and roads has not brought the Israeli army victory. Supported by
> the population, guerrillas are invincible. But they don’t use roads or
> bridges. They don’t hide in cities, either. They have their own covert
> mountain passes, fixed positions, caves and bases,” the general
> explained. “This is what makes them strong. The failure of the Israeli
> army to uncover them is a serious mistake by its top brass.”

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> “The recent operation of the Israeli army against Hizbollah and Lebanon
> was the worst in its history,” Gareyev emphasized. “Israel is trying to
> blame Hizbollah’s ‘Russian weapons’, notably RPG-29 Vampirs. That is
> indeed a good anti-tank weapon. But there are plenty more fish in the
> sea. Why do they think that Russia supplied them? I don’t believe it
> did. In recent years, Ukraine and even Belarus have supplied them
> covertly. Poland, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary are selling Soviet arms.
> They are getting rid of them because they want to replace them with
> NATO’s hardware.

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> The Israeli army is fighting with American weapons, but nobody blames
> the U.S. for this. Weapons may land in anyone’s hands. It all boils down
> to politics. Hizbollah guerrillas are running the whole show in Lebanon.
> They are hiding, maneuvering and ambushing. They are good at
> reconnaissance. The main thing is that they enjoy the support of the
> local population.

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> “I would like to add that no matter how much we may praise
> target-acquisition and fire-control systems, or high-precision weapons,

> they do not always produce the desired effect. This was the case in Iraq
> in 2003. Non-isolated targets make everything more complicated.
> Militarily, Hizbollah has passed the test with flying colors. Meanwhile,
> this has always been a problem for Arab armies. This means that there
> are Arab forces which are gaining more power and experience. Even the
> most advanced countries and armies will have to take this into
> consideration.”
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> “The problems of the Middle East will have to be resolved at the
> negotiating table sooner or later,” General Gareyev summed up. “The
> sooner we understand this, the better for Israel, its neighbors, and
> even those who stand behind them.”