

# Dan Rather Reports

**Episode Number:** 606

**Episode Title:** A Precarious Peace

**Description:** While demonstrations spread across the Middle East, there is calm in what has long been one of the region's flashpoints, the West Bank. Credit is being given to a previously little-known U.S. program that has fostered unprecedented cooperation between Israel and the Palestinians.

**TEASE:**

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TONIGHT. UNREST AND REVOLUTION ROCK THE MIDDLE EAST. A STATUS QUO SHATTERED. BUT ONE VOLATILE PLACE HASN'T APPEARED IN THE HEADLINES. THE WEST BANK... ONCE AN EPICENTER OF INSTABILITY AND VIOLENCE... TODAY IS CALM... THANKS IN LARGE PART TO A LITTLE-KNOWN U.S. MILITARY PROGRAM. CAN THIS FRAGILE STABILITY HOLD? THAT REMARKABLE STORY, TONIGHT ON DAN RATHER REPORTS.

**A PRECARIOUS PEACE:**

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

GOOD EVENING, WE COME TO YOU TONIGHT FROM THE LINE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK, A PLACE THAT HAS LONG KNOWN VIOLENCE, BUT WHERE NOW THERE IS CALM - BUSTLING BUSINESS... NEW SECURITY... BUT THERE REMAINS CONCERN THAT THIS CAN'T LAST AND THAT THERE COULD BE A RETURN TO BLOODSHED.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT'S A BLOODSHED THAT MANY OF US REMEMBER ALL TOO WELL... UNTIL RECENTLY THESE WERE THE PICTURES THAT CAME TO OUR TELEVISION SETS FROM THE WEST BANK... ISRAELI DEFENSE FORCES, KNOWN AS THE IDF, SQUARING OFF WITH YOUNG PALESTINIAN STONE THROWERS... TEAR GAS... BULLET S...THE SCREAM OF SIRENS.

AND THEN THERE WERE THESE GRUESOME IMAGES FROM ISRAEL - THE DEADLY AFTERMATH OF PALESTINIAN SUICIDE BOMBERS - ONE AFTER ANOTHER...STREAMING IN FROM THE WEST BANK.

ON THE DIPLOMATIC FRONT, PEACE TALKS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND

PALESTINIANS SEEKING STATEHOOD PERPETUALLY STALLED AT THE STARTING LINE. ALL THIS LEAVES AN IMPRESSION OF A REGION IN CONSTANT CONFLICT...BUT BEHIND THE SCENES, IN RECENT YEARS, SOMETHING REMARKABLE HAS HAPPENED...

TONIGHT WE ARE TAKING YOU TO A WEST BANK AS YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER SEEN IT. EVEN AS MUCH OF THE ARAB WORLD ERUPTS IN PROTEST, THE STREETS IN THIS PLACE KNOWN FOR UNREST REMAIN SURPRISINGLY CALM... SAFE...EVEN VIBRANT -- A BIG CHANGE FROM THE FLYING BULLETS OF JUST A FEW YEARS AGO.

PART OF THE NEW REALITY IS A PALESTINIAN SECURITY FORCE THAT IS NOW A VISIBLE PRESENCE ON WEST BANK STREETS. ITS TROOPS ARE DISCIPLINED, PROFESSIONAL, ARMED AND UNIFORMED... BUT BEHIND THESE FRESH FORCES IS A HIDDEN PRESENCE -- ONE THAT MANY ARE UNCOMFORTABLE DISCUSSING.

UNDER THE RADAR, THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN FUNDING AND TRAINING THESE TROOPS TO HELP THE PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT BRING STABILITY TO THE WEST BANK. YES, YOU HEARD THAT RIGHT. PALESTINIAN SOLDIERS, ONCE THE SWORN ENEMY OF ISRAEL, NOW BEING TRAINED BY THE UNITED STATES.

AND THIS LITTLE-KNOWN PROGRAM THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN AT ONE TIME UNTHINKABLE HAS NOW HELPED USHER IN A NEW ERA OF SECURITY. BUT TO UNDERSTAND HOW WE GOT HERE, WE HAVE TO START OUR STORY IN A MUCH DIFFERENT TIME.

COLONEL PHILIP J. DERMER, RETIRED U.S. ARMY

Where you're walking right now, when I was an attaché here before, was nothing but a battleground.

RATHER

And a lethal battleground?

DERMER

A lethal battleground. The Palestinians were mainly on these two streets right here. The IDF was nominally over here at the time because it was protecting their flank which was where the Israeli settlers live over there.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

RETIRED U-S ARMY COLONEL PHILIP J. DERMER HAS WITNESSED THE

SECURITY IMPROVEMENTS HERE FIRST HAND. HE WAS ONE OF THE FEW PEOPLE WHO WAS AROUND FOR THE LAUNCH OF THE U.S. MILITARY PROGRAM THAT TRAINED THESE TROOPS WHO HAVE HELPED TRANSFORM THE WEST BANK.

DERMER

This is a central market so this is where all life exists in any one of the cities of Palestine. They come in from the villages, buy their goods -- very simple, as you and I have seen many times.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

COLONEL DERMER CAME TO THE MIDDLE EAST FIRST AS A YOUNG BACKPACKER AND WENT ON TO SPEND MUCH OF HIS 30-YEAR MILITARY CAREER IN THE REGION...WE BROUGHT HIM BACK HERE BECAUSE HE'S ONE OF THE FEW AMERICAN OFFICIALS WHO HAS SPENT A LOT OF TIME SERVING IN THE WEST BANK. HE PAINTED A PICTURE OF WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO WITNESS THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CLASHES FROM THE FRONT LINE.

DERMER

So if the Israelis are shooting right here, which they would be doing, the Palestinians are here with rocks, okay, and we'd be in a safe position. This shop would be shut, but this guy would have the lights on and the shutter open just hoping that someone would duck in the middle and buy something and then run home.

RATHER

It's not funny, but—

DERMER

It's not funny, but it's very human that even in the middle of this conflict, these guys are trying to make a living.

RATHER

Right.

DERMER

So now, that's all out and about again, mashallah, Arabic for great, okay, now they can go about their business. And they're loving it, you see what's happening here, it's booming. There's securities out here.

RATHER

It is booming.

DERMER

It's booming. It's packed. There's no Israelis now, there's no IDF. Once upon a time, you'd see towers around here, okay, but they're out of sight now.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE WEST BANK IS A PIECE OF LAND SMALLER THAN THE STATE OF DELAWARE, PERCHED BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JORDAN. IT'S HOME TO 2 AND A HALF MILLION PALESTINIANS AND SOME 300-THOUSAND JEWS.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER

A six day Middle East war echoes along a second front - the diplomatic struggle at the United Nation's Security Council.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FOR DECADES, THE WEST BANK HAS BEEN AT THE CENTER OF ONE OF HISTORY'S MOST INTRACTABLE CONFLICTS.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER

Israel reports close to 700 of their troops killed, over 2,500 wounded...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN 1967, ISRAEL'S ARAB NEIGHBORS ATTACKED THE JEWISH STATE IN AN EFFORT TO WIPE IT OFF THE MAP. IT WAS THE THIRD FULL-SCALE ASSAULT ON THE YOUNG JEWISH STATE -- A DEFINING REMINDER THAT TINY ISRAEL WAS SURROUNDED BY ENEMIES.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER

The battle for Bethlehem is brief, bloody and decisive.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT ISRAEL FOUGHT BACK, AND IN A STUNNING SERIES OF BATTLES SEIZED CONTROL OF ITS ENEMIES' LAND, INCLUDING THE WEST BANK FROM JORDAN AND THE GAZA STRIP FROM EGYPT.

FOR MORE THAN 40 YEARS NOW, ISRAEL HAS KEPT THESE TERRITORIES AS A SECURITY BUFFER. IT'S A STATE OF UNEASY OCCUPATION MADE MORE EXPLOSIVE BY THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT'S CONTROVERSIAL DECISION TO OPEN UP THE LAND TO JEWISH SETTLEMENTS, NOW A MAJOR STICKING POINT IN THE PEACE PROCESS.

BUT THROUGHOUT THE WEST BANK, THERE'S A NEW OPTIMISM. BUSINESS IS BOOMING, NEW CONSTRUCTION IS EVERYWHERE; THERE'S EVEN A FIVE-STAR HOTEL THAT JUST OPENED.

ON THE SURFACE, AT LEAST, THERE'S A SENSE OF NORMALCY. COLONEL DERMER AND I WENT TO A POPULAR RESTAURANT IN THE CITY OF RAMALLAH, WHERE FAMILIES WERE OUT FOR A SUNDAY-NIGHT DINNER.

DERMER

And when you sit down and you talk with the people you begin to wonder, "So, what's the beef? What's the-- what's the big deal going on here?"

RATHER

Well, what is the big deal over?

DERMER

Well, as you well known this is-- this conflict has-- been goin' on for a long time. And it's been one of the-- I would argue one of the focuses or the darlings of American strategic policy for many, many years. I've been in it personally for over 30 now -- traveling and living here as a private citizen, going to school here, from being an attaché here, from being a soldier here, from being part of the peace team-- one or two of peace teams that came out here, from being an advisor. And what's going on, I would argue, could go all the way back to the Bible if you wanted to, but at the end of the day, when you get here, when you work here, you find out that these problems aren't so super-scientific they're not so out of the ordinary. They're basic human problems. What's going on behind that though, however, is way more complicated and way more -- there's a lot more context to it than I think that we get in the newspapers.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DERMER CITED AS AN EXAMPLE THE DROP IN SUICIDE BOMBINGS IN ISRAEL. THERE HASN'T BEEN A STRIKE FOR NEARLY THREE YEARS...A GREAT DEAL OF CREDIT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO A MORE THAN 200 MILE-LONG BARRIER BUILT BY ISRAEL TO CORDON OFF THE WEST BANK...

BEFORE THE BARRIER WENT UP, THERE HAD BEEN DOZENS OF SUICIDE

BOMBINGS EACH YEAR BY PALESTINIANS TRYING TO BREAK THE WILL OF THEIR ISRAELI OCCUPIERS.

WHAT HAS GOTTEN MUCH LESS ATTENTION IS WHAT THE PALESTINIANS HAVE BEEN DOING. THE WEST BANK MAY NOT YET BE A PALESTINIAN STATE, BUT IT'S STARTING TO ACT LIKE ONE.

SALAM FAYYAD, PRIME MINISTER OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

One reason why the whole world is looking at this issue with greater sense of urgency is precisely because they're looking at what we are doing on this other track of getting ready for statehood. I'm still betting on it.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SALAAM FAYYAD IS THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY, WHICH HAS GOVERNED MOST OF THE WEST BANK SINCE SERIOUS TALKS OF STATEHOOD BEGAN IN 1993... FAYYAD'S A US EDUCATED ECONOMIST. HE WAS A MEMBER OF YASSER ARAFAT'S GOVERNMENT, BUT UNLIKE HIS LATE BOSS, IS MUCH MORE EGGHEAD THAN REVOLUTIONARY...AS PRIME MINISTER, HIS LEADERSHIP HAS FOCUSED ON THE BANALITIES OF GOOD GOVERNMENT: BUILDING INSTITUTIONS, ROADS, OPENING SCHOOLS, PROMOTING SEPARATION OF POWERS...AND DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL NATIONAL SECURITY FORCES -- ALL THIS TO SHOW THE ISRAELIS THAT PALESTINIANS ARE READY FOR STATEHOOD. FAYYAD SAYS THE RESULTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.

FAYYAD

Let me tell you the one statistic that as a matter of fact tells it all. Tells it all. I mean, I can tell you-- give you a list of projects. Number of schools we built. Roads-- we paved over the past two and a half years. But then for the first time, in many, many years, the year 2009 appears to have been the first year in which the number of people coming back to Palestine crossed over with the curve that represents the number of people leaving Palestine.

RATHER

I see.

FAYYAD

People are voting with their feet. So, therefore, people are more optimistic.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

COUNT WESTERN POWERS LIKE THE UNITED STATES, EUROPE, AND EVEN ISRAEL AMONG THOSE WHO ARE AT LEAST CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT FAYYAD'S GOVERNMENT AND THE STABILITY HE'S HELPED BRING TO THE WEST BANK. IT'S A FAR CRY FROM WHEN FAYYAD TOOK OFFICE IN 2007. AT THAT TIME, A NEAR CIVIL WAR WAS RAGING IN THE WEST BANK. THE ISLAMIST GROUP HAMAS AND THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY FOUGHT BLOODY STREET FIGHTS FOR CONTROL OF THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES.

FAYYAD

The challenges that we faced in the 2007 were absolutely enormous. Not many people gave us much of a chance.

RATHER

That's true.

FAYYAD

I did not give us much of a chance, to be honest with you myself. But somehow-- we managed to move the country away from the brink of complete collapse. So conditions were extremely difficult.

RATHER

Would you say improvement and security is the number one thing?

FAYYAD

Absolutely. You cannot expect people to stick around-- if they do not have a sense of personal security.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TODAY, THE CALM OF THE WEST BANK SEEMS ALMOST UNREMARKABLE. BUT GETTING TO THIS POINT WAS NEVER GUARANTEED.

CONSIDER THE OTHER PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, THE GAZA STRIP. ITS ECONOMY IS A MESS, IT'S ISOLATED AND IT'S RULED BY HAMAS, A GROUP BENT ON THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL. THE UNITED STATES CONSIDERS HAMAS A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION AND WAS DETERMINED TO KEEP THE WEST BANK FROM FALLING INTO ITS HANDS. IN 2005, THAT MISSION WAS GIVEN TO US ARMY GENERAL KEITH DAYTON, WHO WAS POSTED TO THE REGION WITH LITTLE SPECIFIC DIRECTION FROM WASHINGTON.

DERMER

He was told to come into Palestine and see what he can do to facilitate the developments with the Palestinian security forces; you know, get on the ground and see what can be done boots on the ground. Very simply put, I mean, there wasn't any written mandate or written instructions really.

RATHER

In a way, was he left on his own?

DERMER

He was, very much left on his own. He was not given any money. He wasn't given a whole lot of adult guidance from Washington. And he came out and he set to work.

RATHER

Fair or unfair to say that in very large measure we and everybody else have him to thank for this improved security that we see now?

DERMER

We do. I-- we do, we're very-- as a part of it. He-- he played a key part. His efforts are not the reason that we have improved security now or that Israel and Palestine do, but very much a key part of it, very much. Without his effort of s-- in a sense stumbling, breaking walls, breaking phalanxes, battling even US government elements and not just Palestinian and Israeli elements, we wouldn't be where we are today. And that-- and that's my thesis.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

COLONEL DERMER WORKED ALONGSIDE GENERAL DAYTON AND MARVELS AT DAYTON'S LEGACY: A PROGRAM THAT HAS TRAINED SOME 3,500 NEW PALESTINIAN SECURITY OFFICERS - NOW BUSY KEEPING WATCH OVER THE WEST BANK DAY AND NIGHT.

OFFICER (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

You will ride in the trucks the way we learned.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE RODE ALONG WITH THEM ON ONE OF THEIR NIGHTLY PATROLS. THE AMERICAN TRAINING PROGRAM BEHIND THESE TROOPS IS KNOWN AS



THE UNITED STATES SECURITY COORDINATORS OFFICE -- THE USSC -- AND HAS COST A RELATIVELY MODEST 400 MILLION DOLLARS OVER FIVE YEARS.

RATHER

I just want to know - we're kind of getting a profile of the checkpoint - when you stop a car, what are you looking for?

NATIONAL SECURITY FORCE OFFICER (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

We are looking for wanted criminals. We're checking IDs to see if we can find them.

RATHER

And when you look at a car, what makes you decide to stop a car?

NATIONAL SECURITY FORCE OFFICER (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

We stop every car when we have intelligence that a wanted criminal is passing through.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

GENERAL DAYTON'S INFLUENCE HERE IS SO GREAT THAT THESE TROOPS ARE KNOWN LOCALLY AS "DAYTON FORCES." GENERAL DAYTON MAY NOT BE WELL KNOWN IN HIS NATIVE UNITED STATES, BUT HERE IN THE WEST BANK EVERYBODY SEEMS TO KNOW HIS NAME.

WE TRAVELED TO THE BIBLICAL OASIS OF JERICHO, IN THE LOW AND DUSTY JORDAN VALLEY... IT'S AN AREA POPULAR WITH AMERICAN TOURISTS WHO COME TO SEE THE ANCIENT SIGHTS, BUT LITTLE DO THEY KNOW THAT THEIR TAX DOLLARS HAVE BUILT A MODERN MILITARY TRAINING FACILITY ON A NEAR-BY MOUNTAIN TOP.

WE WERE THE FIRST AMERICAN NEWS CREW INVITED TO FILM AT THE TRAINING CENTER IN JERICHO. IT'S CLEAR THAT THE FORCES HERE WERE TAKING THEIR MISSION SERIOUSLY. THEY GAVE US A DEMONSTRATION THAT HIGHLIGHTED THEIR LETHAL TRAINING AND IT'S PRETTY EASY TO SEE WHAT THEY ARE PREPARING FOR:

TERRORIST ATTACKS... HOSTAGE SITUATIONS... GUN BATTLES IN THE STREETS... EVEN HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT.

SOME MIGHT SEE THIS TRAINING AND THINK BACK TO WHEN THE US AND ISRAEL CONSIDERED THE PALESTINIAN LIBERATION ORGANIZATION, THE PREDECESSOR TO TODAY'S PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT, TO BE A

TERRORIST ORGANIZATION. BUT THESE SECURITY FORCES, AND THE AMERICANS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED THEM, SAY THEY ARE A FORCE FOR PEACE.

YOU WON'T SEE ANY AMERICAN INSTRUCTORS AT THIS FACILITY -- THEY'RE AT A BASE IN JORDAN, WHERE THESE SOLDIERS RECEIVED THEIR INITIAL TRAINING...THE US SECURITY COORDINATOR'S OFFICE FORBID US FROM FILMING THERE.

BUT THE TROOPS HERE IN JERICHO WERE EAGER TO SHOW US THE RETURN ON THE US INVESTMENT... WE GOT A TOUR OF THE BASE AND SAT DOWN WITH MAJOR ATEF NASSER WHO WAS IN CHARGE.

RATHER

To someone in the United States who is watching and listening and says, "Well, we're spending this money helping the Palestinians build these security forces. Why should we do that?"

MAJOR ATEF NASSER, NATIONAL SECURITY FORCES (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

First of all, I would like to thank the American government and the American people for supporting us and for building this institution. I am sure that the American people are looking forward to having peace and stability in the region. So our children can live peacefully, Palestinian and Israelis.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN A PREVIOUSLY UNTHINKABLE ARRANGEMENT, PALESTINIAN SECURITY FORCES ARE EVEN WORKING SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH THE ISRAELI MILITARY IN THE WEST BANK. THE REASON FOR THIS UNEASY ALLIANCE IS TO ROOT OUT THEIR COMMON ENEMY: HAMAS. BUT THE ISRAELIS WOULDN'T ALLOW US TO SEE THIS IN ACTION BECAUSE THAT PART OF THE STORY IS SO SENSITIVE.

AT FACE VALUE, MOST PALESTINIANS WELCOME THE PRESENCE OF THE NEW SECURITY FORCES ON THEIR ONCE LAWLESS STREETS. BUT WHEN PRESSED, MANY ARE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH PALESTINIAN FORCES WORKING SO CLOSELY WITH THEIR ISRAELI OCCUPIERS.

THE QUESTION THAT OFTEN COMES UP IS WHO ARE THESE FORCES DESIGNED TO PROTECT? ISRAELIS OR PALESTINIANS?

THE ISSUE EXPLODED WHEN, OF ALL PEOPLE, GENERAL DAYTON, SET OFF

A DIPLOMATIC FIRESTORM ADDRESSING A PRO-ISRAEL CROWD AT THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY IN 2009.

GENERAL KEITH DAYTON, FORMER U.S. SECURITY COORDINATOR

Make sure you understand that, we don't provide anything to the Palestinians unless it has been thoroughly coordinated with the State of Israel and they agree to it.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

GENERAL DAYTON MEANT TO PRAISE THE PROGRESS OF THE PALESTINIAN SECURITY FORCES, BUT HE ENDED UP PLAYING INTO THE HANDS OF CRITICS WHO SAY THEY'RE COLLABORATING WITH ISRAEL.

DAYTON

Now, upon the return of these new men of Palestine, they have shown motivation, discipline and professionalism, and they have made such a difference—and I am not making this up—that senior IDF commanders ask me frequently, "How many more of these new Palestinians can you generate, and how quickly, because they are our way to leave the West Bank."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE OFF-HAND REMARK REINFORCED WHAT MANY PALESTINIANS FEARED: THAT THESE NEW FORCES WERE SIMPLY A TOOL OF ISRAEL. ALMOST IMMEDIATELY, HAMAS SEIZED ON THE COMMENTS FOR THEIR OWN PROPAGANDA PURPOSES. AND THE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP WAS PLACED ON THE DEFENSIVE.

RATHER

Mr. Prime Minister-- what was the effect here and on you and your efforts of the United States' General Dayton's statements in Washington about creating "A new Palestine?"

FAYYAD

Unfortunate-- and-- yeah. That caused us to talk about political problems and-- and all--

RATHER

It was hurtful?

FAYYAD

Yeah. Unfortunate and-- those comments -- found a lot of currency and a lot of people

dealt in that currency and still do. And as a matter of fact, you know, the-- the sad part about that whole narrative-- It doesn't really even come close to representing what General Dayton is supposed to help us with-- at all. General Dayton's mandate was to really oversee a program of-- training and rehabilitation of our security services. In the main, that meant, you know, overseeing the training of newly recru-- recruited-- young people-- joining-- the security services. Today, more than three and a half years later, we have managed to-- employ and train about 3,500 new officers.

RATHER

I can see this new generation of officers--

FAYYAD

Yes?

RATHER

--on the street?

FAYYAD

Yes.

RATHER

In Ramallah, Hebron...

FAYYAD

Yes.

RATHER

--all around. It-- it's a new generation.

FAYYAD

Definitely. That's the future.

RATHER

And you're giving him credit for helping to--

FAYYAD

Oh. There's no question, you know? The program-- the substance of the program is something that we very much-- wanted, and we benefited from.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

GENERAL DAYTON LEFT HIS POST HERE AT THE AMERICAN CONSULATE IN JERUSALEM IN OCTOBER 2010 -- AND WAS REPLACED BY LT. GENERAL MICHAEL MOELLER, WHO IS CLEARLY TAKING A MUCH LOWER PROFILE. WE REQUESTED SEVERAL TIMES TO INTERVIEW GENERAL MOELLER, BUT WERE TOLD NOT TO ANTICIPATE THAT HAPPENING. WE THEN ASKED TO TALK TO ANY MEMBER OF HIS STAFF, BUT HIS SPOKESMAN RESPONDED IN A FINAL EMAIL, QUOTE "AT THIS TIME NOBODY FROM OUR OFFICE IS DOING INTERVIEWS. NEITHER IN PRINT OR ELECTRONIC."

RATHER

With the current government on the West Bank, how long can they go by arguing -- strong argument, -- "Listen, folks, we brought you security. It's safe on the streets." We have their version of, kind of, a National Guard. We have a good police force. How long can the current government here in the West Bank go with that argument, with nothing else behind it?

DERMER

Time, we don't know. Clearly, we don't know. But I think it is a fair analysis and assessment that we do know, and the actors do know here in the West Bank, and the Palestine authority, that trouble is on the horizon, if we don't get more than just new young Palestinians in uniform, because it has to be for a purpose. What's the purpose? If it's the purpose-- was to serve Israel, that's a problem for Palestine. On the greater face of things, yes, violence is down, fine. But in the purpose of-- of establishing a two-state, side-by-side, living in peace, democratic or not, we can deal with later, Palestine and Palestinians-- the great families are sitting out here with dinner and says-- "Have to see what it all means. I see the nice uniform. I see the young face. I see the gun. Okay, my neighborhood is better for sure. I can walk the streets again. But what exactly-- are you-- were you built for?"

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WHEN WE RETURN, WE'LL GIVE YOU A LOOK AT WHAT MIGHT UNDERMINE ALL THIS PROGRESS. SO STAY WITH US.

**A PRECARIOUS PEACE ACT 2:**

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE'VE BEEN LOOKING TONIGHT AT THE THOUSANDS OF NEW PALESTINIAN SECURITY PERSONNEL ON WEST BANK STREETS...TRAINED BY AMERICA...WORKING BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THEIR ISRAELI OCCUPIERS TO ROOT OUT HAMAS.

BUT THIS IS THE MIDDLE EAST, WHERE THE LONG TERM MATTERS MOST -- AND WITH PARTS OF THE CONFLICT STRETCHING BACK THOUSANDS OF YEARS, THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS HOW THEY APPEAR.

COLONEL PHILIP DERMER, WHO WORKED HERE FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS, KNOWS THIS BETTER THAN MOST AND HE SAYS THE WEST BANK CITY OF HEBRON IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF HOW THE SHORT TERM STABILITY, PROMOTED BY THE UNITED STATES, COULD EXPLODE AT ANY MOMENT.

DERMER

But to put it in context, this is all very good, and the USAID and the state department in Washington say, "Hey, business is booming in the West Bank, 7 percent growth by the World Bank, okay, good." But there's a "but."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE WALKED TOWARDS AN ISRAELI MILITARY CHECKPOINT, AND COLONEL DERMER SAID THAT FOR ALL THE TALK ABOUT THE US TRAINED NEW PALESTINIAN SECURITY FORCES, IT'S CLEAR TO EVERYONE IN THE WEST BANK WHO'S REALLY IN CHARGE HERE: THE ISRAELI MILITARY.

DERMER

If they define a threat and they think the Palestinian Authority will not do anything about it, they will act on their interest. And this is one of the downsides of how far we've come with this United States security training.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THIS PART OF HEBRON IS ONE OF THE FEW AREAS IN THE WEST BANK WHERE ISRAELI SETTLERS AND PALESTINIANS LIVE EXTREMELY CLOSE TO ONE ANOTHER...BUT IT WOULD BE MISLEADING TO SAY THAT JEWS AND ARABS ARE LIVING HERE TOGETHER. THE TWO POPULATIONS ARE SEPARATED BY A MAZE OF ISRAELI CHECKPOINTS AND BUFFER ZONES.

COLONEL DERMER SAID THAT WHAT IS TAKING PLACE HERE IN HEBRON IS INDICATIVE OF THE PROBLEMS THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE WEST BANK,

PROBLEMS THAT THREATEN TO UNDERMINE THE FRAGILE GAINS IN SECURITY.

DERMER

The center of Hebron was here, once upon a time.

RATHER

So these were Palestinian places?

DERMER

Yes, all, Palestinian homes and neighborhoods.

RATHER

Were these Palestinians displaced?

DERMER

They're gone. They're gone. They're not here. Their businesses are shuttered - they're gone.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

JUST A FEW YEARS AGO, THIS VERY STREET BUSTLED WITH DOZENS OF PALESTINIAN BUSINESSES, LIKE THE ONES ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CHECKPOINT...BUT THE ISRAELIS RELOCATED THESE BUSINESSES AND CLOSED THE STREET IN THE NAME OF SECURITY, BECAUSE THIS IS ALSO HOME TO SOME 700 JEWISH SETTLERS...THEY ARE PROTECTED BY A ROBUST ISRAELI MILITARY PRESENCE...ALL THIS MAKES THE SETTLERS FEEL SAFER...BUT THE RESENTMENT AMONG THE PALESTINIANS NEARBY IS PALPABLE.

IDF SOLDIER (TRANSLATED FROM HEBREW)

Move along.

CAMERAMAN (TRANSLATED FROM HEBREW)

What do you have against me?

IDF SOLDIER (TRANSLATED FROM HEBREW)

Move it! Go over there.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ISRAELI SOLDIERS EVEN BLOCKED OUR PALESTINIAN CAMERAMAN FROM WALKING THESE STREETS ... BUT LET THE REST OF OUR CREW PASS.

DERMER

If we're now boasting in American and elsewhere that we've got a great new security project within the Palestinian territories, great, what's the real next step? How do we seal the deal? You seal the deal by having life, by letting life become its normal self, take its normal pace. And you're not seeing that here.

RATHER

To the eye and ear just walking through here, there's virtually no life.

DERMER

Nobody. Gone. And it's been slowly, slowly. First one business, then two...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DERMER SAYS IT'S NOT ENOUGH FOR THE US TO SIMPLY TRAIN NEW FORCES...A LASTING STABILITY, HE SAYS, WILL DEPEND ON PALESTINIANS KNOWING THAT THEY'RE THE ONES IN CHARGE.

DERMER

We keep seeing these agreements as end states and they're not, they're markers along the way. We can't stop with the fact that we have great-looking guys in uniform. And they're waiting. The kids out there in uniform will tell you, Dan that you know we've done our part, I'm now in the street protecting Palestinian interests or taking care of Hamas or killing bad guys. Okay, well, what are you guys doing, political, what are you guys doing in Washington? We're waiting. We did our part. And when they see this they're like you're not doing anything.

RATHER

Well what are we doing in Washington?

DERMER

That's a good question -- that's a good question. I'm not so sure we understand the context out here at all.



RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DERMER SAYS THAT PROBLEM IS ROOTED IN A VERY BASIC PREMISE: THE US SECURITY COORDINATOR'S OFFICE IS BASED IN JERUSALEM. AND TRAVEL TO THE WEST BANK BY ITS AMERICAN STAFF IS HIGHLY RESTRICTED FOR SECURITY REASONS. DERMER SAYS THIS FACT ALONE COMPROMISES ANY HOPE OF UNDERSTANDING SUCH A COMPLEX PLACE.

RATHER

Who in the hierarchy of the American government walks the ground here, takes a look, sees what the situation is up close and in person?

DERMER

Nobody, nobody. They don't come down. If it is it's once in a tour, maybe twice. They don't do it. Have not been in here since 2000.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DERMER SAYS THAT MEANS AMERICAN POLICY-MAKERS MISS THE CONTEXT AND SMALL SIGNS OF TENSION YOU CAN ONLY GET FROM WALKING THE STREETS AND SEEING THINGS ON THE GROUND FIRSTHAND.

DERMER

You see the signs here. I would argue as an American policy maker - take that sign down. Just get rid of the signs. Start changing the whole attitude and the face of the things in the populace.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT THAT'S EASIER SAID THAN DONE IN A PLACE WHERE BOTH PEOPLES SAY THEIR CLAIM TO THE LAND STRETCHES BACK TO THE AGE OF ABRAHAM, AN IMPORTANT FIGURE IN BOTH RELIGIONS WHOSE TOMB IS JUST DOWN THE ROAD.

DERMER

Unfortunately, inside now has been walled off. This is the Jewish entrance.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE JEWISH SETTLERS DON'T EVEN CALL THIS AREA THE WEST BANK.

THEY PREFER THE BIBLICAL NAME OF JUDEA AND SAMARIA -- AND THEY SAY THEY HAVE A RELIGIOUS OBLIGATION TO LIVE HERE.

NOAM ARNON, HEBRON SETTLER

This area of Judea and Samaria is the heart and cradle of Jewish history and of Jewish homeland. So there is no any justification for a Palestinian state.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

NOAM ARNON WAS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF ONE OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK...IT'S A LIMESTONE WARREN OF NARROW ALLEYS AND STEEP STAIRWAYS THAT SLICES THROUGH PALESTINIAN HEBRON. ARNON SAYS IT'S THE PALESTINIANS WHO ARE TO BLAME FOR THE CLOSED STREETS AND ISRAELI MILITARY PRESENCE.

ARNON

Jews lived here hundreds of years. Why can't they live here again? I think the Arabs have to ask themselves why Jews have been-- have to be protected. It's-- it's in their hands.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE SETTLEMENT IS GROWING. MOST SETTLERS HAVE MORE THAN SIX CHILDREN --ARNON HAS EIGHT --AND AS A RESULT, THIS PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM IS BURSTING WITH ACTIVITY. BUT ARNON SAYS THAT THE SETTLEMENT IS AS MUCH ABOUT THE PAST AS THE FUTURE AND THAT EVERY STONE HAS A STORY.

ARNON

So, all around you see the previous Jewish community. It was a religious community. People lived here, mostly they were not Zionists. They were simple Jews.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

JEWS AND PALESTINIANS LIVED IN HEBRON TOGETHER FOR CENTURIES. BUT IN 1929, DOZENS OF JEWS WERE KILLED IN WHAT IS NOW KNOWN AS THE HEBRON MASSACRE... AFTER ISRAEL TOOK OVER THE WEST BANK IN 1967, ARNON AND HIS FELLOW SETTLERS MOVED HERE AND DEDICATED THEIR LIVES TO RESTORING THE COMMUNITY.

ARNON

Shalom, shalom.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THEY BUILT A MUSEUM TO HEBRON'S JEWISH HISTORY AND THEY INVITE SCHOOL CHILDREN FROM ISRAEL TO COME HERE TO HEAR THE STORY -- WITH THE HOPE OF SHOWING THEM WHY THIS SETTLEMENT IS WORTH PROTECTING.

ARNON

I think the most important thing for people in their life is to do something important, to do something meaningful. And this is what we feel here, that by living here; we are doing something very important. We continue the Jewish eternal chain in Hebron and we say no to terror.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ARNON SAYS HE AND HIS FELLOW SETTLERS FEAR THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL ARE MAKING A DANGEROUS BET BY TRAINING AND WORKING WITH PALESTINIAN SECURITY FORCES... FORCES HE SAYS COULD ONE DAY TURN THEIR GUNS ON NOT ONLY THE SETTLERS, BUT THE JEWISH STATE ITSELF.

ARNON

I think this is a mistake. So, I want to advise to the American administration, General Dayton, and to the k-- to the State of Israel and to the American-- security-- leaders, I mean, they should reconsider it. They want to build-- a force that they can rely on. The question is if they really can rely on that.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ARNON BROUGHT OUR CREW TO A BLUFF WITHIN THE SETTLEMENT OVERLOOKING DOWNTOWN HEBRON. HE DENIED THAT THERE WAS ANY REASON FOR ARAB RESENTMENT OF THE SETTLERS.

ARNON

From here you see the town of Hebron. It's something that the people can -- people in America not understand. But it's fact, it's a law. Jews are limited to one street, to three percent of the town. You see here, these Arab children. No one is hungry. And no one is suffering. And everyone is -- is...

ARNON (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

How are you?

SCHOOL CHILDREN (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

Good.

ARNON (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

Everything good?

SCHOOL CHILDREN (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

Yes.

ARNON (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

Why are you going to school late?

CHILD (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

I'm not.

ARNON (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

Everything good.

CHILD (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

Yeah.

ARNON (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

Everything good? Alright then. (IN ENGLISH) I think it's very clear.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FOR ALL THE TALK OF SECURITY AND PROSPERITY IN THE WEST BANK, ONE STILL FEELS THE TENSION HERE - AND IT'S NOT LIMITED TO THE JEWISH SETTLEMENTS. IT'S TRUE THE PALESTINIAN SECURITY FORCES EARN HIGH MARKS FROM THE AMERICANS, AND MANY ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS.

BUT SOME SAY THIS INTENSE FOCUS ON SHORT-TERM SECURITY HAS LED TO BRUTAL REPRESSION...AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS THAT IN THE LONG RUN COULD BRING CHAOS BACK TO THE WEST BANK -- CHAOS SIMILAR TO THE UNREST NOW SWEEPING ACROSS THE ARAB WORLD.

THAT PART OF THE STORY, WHEN WE RETURN.

**A PRECARIOUS PEACE ACT 3:**

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TONIGHT, WE'VE BEEN LOOKING AT A WEST BANK THAT IS MORE PROSPEROUS AND PEACEFUL THAN IT'S BEEN IN YEARS. BUT THERE REMAINS A TENSION BOILING BENEATH THE SURFACE.

CNN ANCHOR

Four Israelis have been shot dead in the West Bank near Hebron.

ABC ANCHOR

There was an attack in the West Bank yesterday...

ANDREA MITCHELL, NBC CORRESPONDENT

Two Israelis shot and wounded today, four Israeli settlers were killed yesterday...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THIS PAST AUGUST, A FAMILY OF FOUR ISRAELI SETTLERS WAS KILLED OUTSIDE OF HEBRON. THE MILITARY WING OF HAMAS CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY AND THE INCIDENT QUICKLY ESCALATED INTO A MAJOR TEST FOR THE NEW PALESTINIAN SECURITY FORCES. THEY JUMPED INTO ACTION ROUNDING UP OVER 700 KNOWN HAMAS MEMBERS AND SYMPATHIZERS, INCLUDING NIDAL AL QAWASSMI, WHO SAYS HE WAS HELD FOR MONTHS WITHOUT PROPER CHARGES...AND TORTURED.

NIDAL AL QAWASSMI, ALLEGED TORTURE VICTIM (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

They tortured us in different ways. One way is they had the person stand blindfolded, with his hands tied behind his back. Even worse, was when they hung the prisoners by their hands from the ceiling.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AL QAWASSMI HAD SPENT 10 YEARS IN AN ISRAELI PRISON FOR HIS TIES TO HAMAS AND HE SAYS THAT WAS WHY HE WAS SWEEPED UP IN THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY'S DRAGNET. HE TOLD US THE SECURITY FORCES USED THE MURDERS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CRACKDOWN ON THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND THAT WHILE IN CUSTODY, HE WAS

TORTURED 18 HOURS A DAY BY INTERROGATORS INTENT ON SILENCING HIM AND OTHERS.

AL QAWASSMI (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

None of this happened when I was arrested by the Israelis. This type of torture has been forbidden by Israeli law since 1998. When the Israelis questioned me in 2003, they didn't torture or hang me in this way. I can't tell you what it feels like to be tortured this way by your own people it's a horrible feeling. There's no way to explain it.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE SPOKE TO SEVERAL OTHERS, LIKE AHMED AL SALAM SALHAB, WHO SAID THEY WERE DETAINED LAST FALL IN THE SAME ROUNDUP. THEY WERE ALL REFERRED TO US BY THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY'S OWN INDEPENDENT HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE, WHICH INVESTIGATED AND FOUND THEIR ALLEGATIONS CREDIBLE.

SALHAB, AN AUTO PARTS DEALER OUTSIDE HEBRON, NOW NEEDS CRUTCHES TO WALK BECAUSE OF INJURIES HE SAYS WERE SUSTAINED DURING PROLONGED TORTURE IN A PALESTINIAN PRISON.

AHMED AL SALAM SALHAB, ALLEGED TORTURE VICTIM (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

It's an underground prison. It was too hot. We couldn't breathe. There's no life. No one could survive there. When we first arrived they put us in chairs and tied our hands behind our backs. After 6 days of this, I couldn't stand up. The pain in my leg and my back, from the torture, grew too intense. I needed them to help me get to the bathroom. I begged them to transfer me to the hospital but each time they would just give me a shot and send me back to my cell.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BACK IN RAMALLAH, I ASKED PRIME MINISTER FAYYAD TO ADDRESS THE ALLEGATIONS OF TORTURE BY SECURITY FORCES UNDER HIS CONTROL.

RATHER

I wanna come to a subject-- which nobody wants to discuss.

FAYYAD

Yes.

RATHER

But has to be discussed. I've talked to several people in recent months who say they were tortured in recent months by Palestinian Authority Security Forces. Now, you must hear this. You must know about this.

FAYYAD

Yes.

RATHER

What measures have you taken? What specific measures have you taken-- to ensure as best that can be done-- that human rights aren't sacrificed for security?

FAYYAD

It's more than I hear about it. It's a matter of complete preoccupation-- you know? I hold security meetings here in my office for the chiefs of our services. And they will tell you, as would our local commanders, when I visit various districts that the first item on my list to check on -- how prisoners are treated, abuse of any kind. It is definitely inconsistent with the key value and foundation principle on which the state is going to be founded: the respect of human rights.

RATHER

Are you or are you not concerned that you are already, but will be increasingly accused of-- sort of being I'll use the phrase a, quote, "front man" for the United States and for Israel? You know, 'cause there are people who say, yes, yes, he's brought security, he's definitely improved security. But-- this is really a result of Israel and the United States, and they'll spread that word among the people. Are you concerned about that?

FAYYAD

Number one, I'm not really someone who feels they have to defend having a good relationship with the United States. To the contrary. I'm someone's who's proud of that. You know, we are seeking to achieve something that is so enormously important to our people. Using phrases and terms like "front man for," -- I'm front man for only one thing. You know, this project, this enterprise-- that I call, you know, building to a statehood. And so, I'm really looking at the substance. I-- I know what people-- what some are saying -- "front man" -- think again, and look again. This is about helping both Palestinians-- but also-- Israelis.

DAN MERIDOR, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL

This is where we are. On the one hand, everything's nice, the sky is blue, the sea is blue,

the ship is sailing, fun. But we know that if we don't move in time, we'll meet the iceberg.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DAN MERIDOR IS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL. AND HE'S THE FIRST TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE SECURITY SITUATION HAS GOTTEN BETTER IN THE WEST BANK. BUT HE ALSO REALIZES THE ISSUE OF PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI FORCES WORKING TOGETHER IS A SENSITIVE ONE.

RATHER

How are the Palestinian Authority and Israeli Defense Forces working together on the West Bank? How does that work?

MERIDOR

Well, the-- it works in a way that the-- Israeli Army and Security Services helped the Palestinian Authority not to allow Hamas to infiltrate or incite or-- build the terror cells or kill people, which they are trying to do. And the-- there is-- much-- more intensive cooperation. I don't think that-- making public is-- very helpful for them. But I think, in fact, there is a good cooperation.

RATHER

Well clearly they have improved but how would you rate the Palestinian security forces?

MERIDOR

Well, I think that-- they're better now than they were in the past, mainly in-- law and order-- for their own people, which is not-- an easy thing. They are working and acting against Hamas. But I haven't yet seen one person who killed Israelis that was indicted for killing Israelis. They don't do that. They do hold them sometimes in other-- un-- under pretexts. But to say, "You can't kill Israelis"? I haven't heard them doing it yet in indicting people. But I don't want to overlook the improvement that has been made. And I'm not-- saying here they don't do anything. They did something. But the final touch will be when we sit down and-- and try to resolve the outstanding-- differences that we have on major issues that are conditions for which a state can be built.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN MANY WAYS MINISTER MERIDOR WAS ECHOING WHAT WE HEARD ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL IN THE WEST BANK...SURE THE SECURITY IS BETTER BUT FOR ALL THE GOOD TO LAST, THE TWO SIDES NEED TO REACH A PERMANENT AGREEMENT.



MERIDOR

I think there is a-- contradiction between what we see and what we need to do. What we see is a very-- well-going economy, improvement in the economic situation. We see exceptionally-- no terror for practically two years because of-- deep and unprecedented cooperation between our services and their services. We have a common enemy called Hamas and it works quite well. Thirdly, we see-- institutions building by-- the Palestinians, namely-- Salam Fayyad and his people. So things look good. The-- fears in the streets of bombs, of terror attacks is-- not anymore what it used to be. On the other hand, it's very clear that we don't have a steady state. We need to move towards a solution. It can't stay like this forever.

RATHER

But if, for whatever reason, that doesn't happen-- back to the question. Right now things have improved.

MERIDOR

Yup.

RATHER

When you walk the streets of Ramallah and Hebron, Jericho, you can see that things have improved. But how long can they stay that way if there isn't, for whatever reason, some real movement towards statehood?

MERIDOR

Well-- I don't have-- a time answer for that. I don't know. But I don't think there's a reason to postpone the negotiations and the agreement of statehood. I don't say this is going to be easy. Even in our midst, even in our government there are different views about those details-- where the borders should be, how much of the land should be in their hands and how much should be retained in the blocks that Israel wants to retain-- is-- was more or less-- in principle agreed, not-- not in details yet. Which makes it even more important to start it earlier, so we won't have a long time -- we won't need to wait long for statehood to come.

RATHER

Well, we went to Hebron and saw, just to take an example, in Hebron business is, if not booming, certainly bustling. Safety on the streets seemed to be quite good. Even-- soccer matches at night from time to time, which would be inconceivable-- not long ago. But all of that-- and yet-- the Israeli settlers living right in the heart of the city-- were basically walled off. Is there an understanding in the Israeli government and with the

Israeli population-- why the local Palestinian population would find that so provocative?  
And what can be done about it?

MERIDOR

Well, as you say, rightly, there was a very dangerous situation. There were attacks on Jews; people were killed in the streets. It was very tough. So, all sorts of walls and fences have been built. And-- places have been-- have been closed for Arabs because of protection that was needed to protect the lives of the people. Very few hundreds of-- Jews live among-- hundred thousands of more Arabs. My-- my feeling in principle-- I don't know the details yet-- is that the better the situation on the ground is the less security restrictions are needed. And I hope that if the situation continues and improves to be a-- really a peaceful situation between the majority of Arabs and minority of Jews living there, then the security-- barriers or regimens could be eased-- for the benefit of both populations. I think it's important. People don't want to live in the situation of a wall-- either those protected by the wall or those that are barred by the wall. It's unnatural. But in order not to have a wall, and having the responsibility of a people's life and the history of the very tough and cruel attacks on the Jewish population there, we take-- the-- these steps cautiously. But we need to go in that direction.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE ISRAELIS HAVE DISMANTLED SEVERAL CHECKPOINTS IN THE WEST BANK THAT HAD IMPEDED THE FLOW OF PEOPLE AND GOODS BETWEEN PALESTINIAN CITIES. IT'S AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT BY THE OCCUPIERS OF THE IMPROVED SECURITY. BUT AT THE BARRIER SEPARATING ISRAEL FROM THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, CHECKPOINTS REMAIN...STIFLING COMMERCE AND INFLAMING PASSIONS. THOUSANDS OF PALESTINIANS PASSING IN AND OUT OF ISRAEL EACH DAY ON THEIR WAY TO WORK ARE HELD UP FOR HOURS AT A TIME. MANY WE SPOKE TO HERE SAY THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST DEHUMANIZING, FRUSTRATING AND INCONVENIENT -- ASPECTS OF ISRAELI OCCUPATION.

RATHER

Now, quite a few Israeli checkpoints have been-- dismantled-- no longer exist. But the ones that remain, when I talked to the Palestinians they say, "Dan Rather, you have no idea how difficult this makes life for us-- just simply to get to work can be extremely frustrating and even humiliating," they use the word. Do you think that the building resentment and anger among the Palestinians against Israelis undercut these short-term security successes that have been on the West Bank?

MERIDOR

It's always a tough question. In the short term, if you know that-- if you lift the barrier, you leave terror activities, and-- and children will-- and men will be killed. They need to

have it. But-- there is always the assessment that you ask for-- "Is it more beneficial or detrimental in the long run?" And I think the fact that we've removed many of them is a sign that we have reconsidered and said, "Things have changed. Let's remove." So we need to remove as much as we can, but, on the other hand, why don't we have any terror at all? It didn't come like this; it came because we built this fence and we built certain checkpoints so that terrorists, who still exist, can't move that easily. So there is always a balance. As long as there's no terror, we should remove more and more obstacles to the point that we feel it's irresponsible to do it for peoples' lives.

#### **A PRECARIOUS PEACE ACT 4:**

DERMER

In one sense the story could start and end right here today because -- the wall. I mean, as you well know, once you put up a wall, this is signatory to "Well, the wall's up, it makes a good neighbor, a good fence, we're done with you."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE MET BACK UP WITH COLONEL DERMER AT THE WALL ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF RAMALLAH. THIS BARRIER IS A VISIBLE SYMBOL OF THE PARADOX WE'VE EXAMINED TONIGHT: FOR THE ISRAELIS IT'S CREATED A SENSE OF SECURITY, IN THE SHORT TERM BUT COLONEL DERMER SAYS THERE ARE LONG-TERM COSTS.

DERMER

Drastically changes the lives of Palestinians because now you can just no longer just drive through a checkpoint. You have to stop, drive through, wait in line. You've got a big transiting station that you might have to walk through. There's Israelis behind armored glass -- Israeli soldiers behind armored glass. There's no human contact whatsoever. And in order to get two peoples to live side by side and to up the ante for the next stage, we have to, this should be toned down. This should be modified a little bit.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DERMER'S CRITIQUE EXTENDS TO AMERICAN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST, SPECIFICALLY THE TRAINING OF PALESTINIAN TROOPS. AS WE'VE SEEN TONIGHT, THIS PROGRAM HAS BROUGHT AN UNLIKELY STABILITY TO THE WEST BANK. BUT DERMER SAYS IT HASN'T EASED THE DEEPER FRICTIONS ON THE GROUND.

DERMER, WHO'S NOW RETIRED, DOCUMENTED HIS CRITIQUES IN A SEARING MEMO HE SENT TO THE US SECURITY COORDINATOR'S OFFICE, AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC STAFF AND MILITARY AND ELECTED OFFICIALS.

THE MEMO CREATED A STIR, AND ITS IMPACT GREW WHEN IT WAS PICKED UP AND PUBLISHED BY AN ACADEMIC JOURNAL. IT IS NOW CITED REGULARLY IN POLICY DISCUSSIONS IN WASHINGTON ABOUT THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN EFFORTS IN THE WEST BANK. BUT DERMER SAYS THE FIRST THING ANY POLICY-MAKER SHOULD DO IS COME EXPERIENCE WHAT LIFE IS REALLY LIKE -- ON BOTH SIDES OF THE FENCE...

DERMER

What has to change is not security in the sense of killing people and capturing terrorists. What has to change is the sense of daily life. Is my life better? Can my kids go to school? Can I go to work? Can I get around? And can I come home? Period. If you have to face this everyday, which you do, this can really take it out of you.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN RECENT WEEKS, WE'VE SEEN IN EGYPT AND ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST THAT WALLS AND TROOPS CAN ONLY CONTAIN PUBLIC DISCONTENT FOR SO LONG...HOW POLICYMAKERS IN RAMALLAH, JERUSALEM AND WASHINGTON RESPOND TO THIS SHIFTING MOMENTUM WILL SET THE COURSE FOR PEACE -- OR FURTHER UNREST -- IN THIS VOLATILE REGION. WE'LL BE WATCHING.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

AND THAT'S OUR REPORT FOR TONIGHT. FOR HDNET, FROM A CHECKPOINT ON THE LINE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE WEST BANK. DAN RATHER REPORTING. GOOD NIGHT.