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Sharon Blames Arafat for Violence

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By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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JERUSALEM (AP) -- Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's office blamed Yasser Arafat for Middle East violence Thursday, saying the Palestinian leader has given a "green light" for attacks against Israel in seven months of fighting.

The statement appeared to be at odds with recent remarks by Israel's Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who met President Bush in Washington on Thursday. Peres said Tuesday that "some dissident groups and some forces under Arafat participated in the killings (of Israelis) without the knowledge of Arafat."

But Peres said Thursday that he, too, held Arafat responsible for the violence against Israeli targets.

"I said that at first perhaps Arafat did not know about the terror attacks in advance," Peres was quoted as saying by Israeli television. "Israel demands that he assume responsibility and come out publicly against terrorism."

After meeting Bush, Peres said he has no disagreement with Sharon on the issue. "I don't see where we use different language," he told reporters.

The hawkish Sharon and the dovish Peres have for decades taken sharply different approaches to dealing with the Palestinians, but have been working together in Israel's unity government the past two months.

While Peres often speaks of the need to resume peace talks, Sharon insists there will be no negotiations until violence ends.

Sharon has repeatedly said that members of Arafat's security forces have taken part in attacks, and that the Palestinian Authority, which Arafat leads, has failed to rein in militants from other organizations during the fighting.

A statement issued Thursday by Sharon's office said "the present attacks are the result of a strategic decision of Arafat."

"The organizations subject to Arafat, including Fatah, and also other organizations such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah understand that they have a 'green light' for continuation of the attacks against Israel," the statement added.

Arafat leads the Fatah movement, while the other three groups are radical Islamic organizations that are not under his control and have consistently opposed Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

Arafat's Palestinian Authority released dozens of militants from prison after the Palestinian uprising began last fall. Israel has said that former inmates, including members Hamas and Islamic Jihad, are taking part in attacks.

Peres and Bush discussed the truce plan proposed by Egypt and Jordan, though no agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians appeared imminent.

In Pretoria, South Africa, on Thursday, Arafat said in a speech to Non-Aligned Movement nations that he is fully committed to the Egyptian-Jordanian plan.

Israel has said that several proposals are one-sided. The plan calls for Israel to withdraw its forces from the edge of Palestinian towns and remove travel restrictions, but it does not explicitly call for the Palestinians to stop attacks.

A senior Palestinian leader said the Palestinians support the plan, but the Israelis were continuing to raise objections.

Ahmed Qureia, the speaker of the Palestinian parliament and a leading negotiator, said the Palestinians were frustrated with Israeli attempts to amend the proposals.

"The only solution is the acceptance of the Egyptian-Jordanian initiative by the Israeli side," Qureia said. "If we try to divide it, I believe we will not achieve anything."

Since fighting began last September, 431 people have been killed on the Palestinian side and 72 on the Israeli side.

Escalation-oriented		De-escalation-oriented
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