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SYRIAN TOWN

Channel 2 KATU-TV 4/2/84 5:15

Tracy Barry

Of course our senior political reporter, Lisa Stark has just returned from travelling with the governor in the middle-east.

Tonight in her continuing series of reports, she takes us to the Gohlan Heights and a town that is now just ruins but serves as a reminder of the unrest in the area.

Lisa Stark

The construction was nearly complete. Houses toppled to the ground, and buildings produced to rubble. The Syrian's blame the Israeli's who controlled the town between the wars of '67 and '73.

In 1974 the Israelis were forced to return this part of the Gohlan Heights under a peace settlement. The Syrian's claim that before the Israelis left they drove out the Arab residents living here and dismantled the town.

The Israeli's no doubt, have their own story to tell but for the Syrian's Conatrya has become a symbol.

It's ruins have been left virtually untouched for nearly a decade.

The only signs of life here, an occassional herd of sheep, wild flower and a bird.

Gov. Atiyeh

It is incredible. It seems hard to describe. I also must say that I am emotionally involved. I think of it, I think of what happened, I think of the people.

Lisa Stark

Governor Atiyeh received a well orchestrated tour of Conatrya courtesy of the Syrian government. The town has become a tourist attraction, a weapon in the mid-east propaganda war.

At the same time Atiyeh was here, bus loads of Iranians wondered through the ruins displaying pictures of the Ayatollah Khomeini and Syrian President Hafez Assad.

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SYRIAN TOWN, Channel 2, KATU-TV, 4/2/84

Lisa Stark
(Cont.)

This is a regular stop for Iranian tour groups.

Years ago it was a stop for camel caravans. From here they would travel on to other countries in the middle east.

But today the road to Lebanon is blocked by barbed wire and the road that ran to Palestine now leads to Israel.

It too, is blocked. The town of Conatrya now sits on the Syrian border, separated from Israel by only a narrow buffer zone patrolled by the United Nation's.

Here fly the Syrian and U.N. flags and just down the road, the flag of Israel.

The U.N. helps keeps the peace here with roadside check points and hillside vantage points.

The Israeli's are watching too, from microwave towers high on the Gohlan Heights above the city.

That hilltop was part of Syria before the '67 war and the governor of this region says that the Syrian's wont rest until they get their land back.

Talk like that sounds like war, Governor Atiyeh says that it is time for peace.

Gov. Atiyeh

I think that people should just grit their teeth and say that this can't happen anymore, that this has got to stop.

People must come to their senses and they must, arrive at conclusions. Here in the middle-east between Arabs and Israeli's there has to be a settlement.

I know that there has to be, there is one there some where.

Lisa Stark

The Syrians could easily have rebuilt Conatrya by now, the fact that they have let it lie in ruins for nearly a decade illustrates the deep-seeded mistrust and hatred felt in this region and underscores the difficulty of achieving peace here.

In Conatrya, Syria, Lisa Stark, Channel 2 news.

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