

Tanenbaum Calls Hezbollah Treatment "very good"
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Israeli captive Elhanan Tanenbaum said in an interview aired by Hizbullah's Al Manar TV station just before he boarded a German plane to freedom that he was treated as a prisoner of war, which changed his view of the Party of God as a terrorist group.

Tanenbaum, 64, his hair graying, spoke as he buttoned a blue shirt and folded pairs of shorts and trousers on a bed. The TV presenter said Tanenbaum was preparing to leave for freedom.

"I have to say that the treatment I received was good, almost without exception, even very good," Tanenbaum said in Hebrew. Snippets of the video were broadcast on Israeli television early Thursday.

"The treatment I received really changed my opinion about Hizbullah," Tanenbaum said in reference to the classification of Israel and the United States of the group as a terrorist organization with global reach.

Tanenbaum spoke about why he went to an undisclosed Arab country, reportedly Dubai, where he was kidnapped more than three years ago.

"The purpose was to seek and locate information about the missing Israeli airman Ron Arad," he said. Arad was shot down over Lebanon in 1986 and captured alive.

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Elhanan Tanenbaum, 29 Jan. 04

After Thursday's swap operation, Israel and Hizbullah are due to conduct further negotiations through German mediators to determine Arad's fate.

Israel has said it would release Lebanon's longest-held prisoner Samir Kantar if it receives concrete information about the fate of Arad within three months.

"I also wanted to do something financial for my family," Tanenbaum said in the Al Manar interview. "I spoke to no one on the eve of my trip about its purpose."

According to Al Manar's translation of his remarks, which were broadcast in Arabic subtitles, Tanenbaum said he knows he will have problems when he returns to Israel.

Tanenbaum is an Israeli army reserve colonel.(AP-Naharnet)

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