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## Inglis witnesses aftermath of war in Israel

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On the second night of a 10-day trip he and colleagues have dubbed a "tour of the world's most unstable places," Rep. Bob Inglis said he has been struck by the hospitality and resilience of those who endured a 34-day war between Israeli and Hezbollah forces before the Aug. 13 cease-fire.

"It's remarkable that this country has been able to exist," Inglis said via telephone from Israel after visiting the northern city of Haifa on Friday.

Haifa's deputy mayor gave Inglis, R-S.C., a tour of the city, driving him through an Arab neighborhood where a house had been destroyed by an explosive wrapped with hundreds of ball bearings. Inglis said he could see those ball bearings -- designed to kill people as they are propelled through the air -- embedded in the shutters of neighboring houses.

He said it was a stark example of "indiscriminate" destruction to an otherwise beautiful city, as well as of "the intent of the terrorists to destroy the lives of civilians and inflict as much fear as possible."

Inglis and three representatives from Connecticut, New York and Texas have traveled to the Middle East to educate themselves on the steps America can take to sustain lasting peace. They will leave Israel on Saturday and travel to Jordan, Iraq and the Darfur region of the Sudan in Northern Africa. Also on the itinerary is a stop in Rome to meet with Lebanese leaders and a stop in London for talks with British counter-terrorism experts before returning to America on Aug. 26.

The official trip has been paid for by the U.S. House of Representatives.

The war started July 12 when gunmen from Hezbollah, a Lebanese umbrella organization that bitterly opposes the West, killed three Israeli soldiers and captured two.

Upon arrival in Tel Aviv on Thursday morning, Inglis spent time with a member of the Israeli parliament, discussing the threat of Iran and nuclear weapons. He then had lunch with the Israeli ambassador for North American Affairs at a Lebanese restaurant in an Arab village close to Jerusalem.

"That was intentional," Inglis said of the restaurant that was owned by a Lebanese Muslim. "[The ambassador] wanted to show us the good relations they share with members of the Arab community."

After a lunch of pita bread, falafel, all kinds of hummus and shish kabobs that Inglis said made him feel like he was in back in Greenville at the Pita House, the group descended into the old city of Jerusalem, an experience he described as "just mind-boggling."

He saw Jewish people ranging from ultra-orthodox to secular, Christians, Arabs and Palestinians all mingling together at the Western Wall and the Dome of the Rock, a famous Islamic shrine. He witnessed the end of a bar mitzvah among those of the different religions, which he said made him realize "the complexities of the region."

The next day the deputy mayor of Haifa also took him by a round-about in the middle of the city that Inglis said was surrounded by 50-foot palm trees and beautiful fresh flowers. Yet that same sight, the mayor told him, had been pummeled by explosives just six days earlier.

He said the mayor told him they wanted to fix the structure quickly to make the point that "you can knock us down, but we can get up," Inglis said.

Inglis said that the trip, if anything, has only reinforced his support of hydrogen fuel.

"Our addiction to oil is in part funding the terrorists, so I'm completely affirmed in my focus," he said of his two days in Israel.

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