



Security Council

Distr.
GENERALS/15956
5 September 1983

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE SITUATION IN THE BEIRUT AREA

1. The present report is based on information received from the Observer Group Beirut (OGB) and contains a summary of developments relating to the withdrawal of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) from the Beirut area. It may be recalled that on 1 August 1982, following intensification of military activities in and around Beirut, the Security Council adopted resolution 516 (1982) by which it authorized the Secretary-General to deploy immediately, on the request of the Government of Lebanon, United Nations observers to monitor the situation in and around Beirut. OGB has 50 observers headed by Lieutenant-Colonel Jean-Jacques Fourrière, under the overall command of Lieutenant-General Emmanuel A. Erskine, the Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).
2. Preparations for a withdrawal of IDF from the Beirut area had been observed by OGB from the last week of July 1983. An increasing number of convoys was noted on the Beirut-Damascus highway, consisting largely of trucks carrying such items as accommodation and heavy equipment, water tanks and stores.
3. During the daylight hours on 3 September, OGB observed heavy IDF traffic moving west on the Beirut-Damascus highway and south towards Khalde and Damur. All vehicles displayed orange-coloured air recognition panels. In the evening of 3 September, Israeli forces with tanks and armoured personnel carriers closed off and secured various road junctions in eastern and southern Beirut. No IDF traffic was observed on the Damascus highway after dawn on 4 September.
4. OGB reported hearing jet aircraft overhead in the early morning of 4 September, but no visual observation was made. It has been reported that IDF had also used other routes to the south but these could not be observed by OGB.
5. After movement of IDF ceased, OGB patrols sought to verify the situation. Although their task was made extremely difficult by the hostilities which immediately developed, OGB was able to confirm that IDF checkpoints on the main roads around Beirut had been removed.
6. In the early hours of 4 September, intensive mortar, artillery and automatic weapons fire began in the areas to the east, north and south of Beirut, and in particular on and around the Beirut-Damascus highway. OGB teams observed armed groups operating in some of those areas, especially on the Ridge Line between Alayh

and Suq Al Gharb, in the Shouf mountains. During the daylight hours on 4 September, the north-western edge of the Shouf overlooking Beirut was engulfed by smoke and artillery fire. Similarly, the town of Khalde, to the south of Beirut, was also largely obscured by smoke and fire. Artillery fire from the north and north-east of Beirut continued throughout the night of 4 to 5 September. Its intensity decreased during the evening from approximately 100 rounds per hour to approximately 30 to 50 rounds per hour until 2300 hours GMT on 4 September. From 2300 until 0330 hours GMT on 5 September the intensity was approximately 25 rounds per hour. After 0330 hours GMT it increased once again. Principal targets during the evening and night of 4 to 5 September were Beit Meri, Broummana, Dazi, the western area of Beirut International Airport, Babdun, Aynas and Aley. On the morning of 5 September, United Nations observers noted heavy shelling around the headquarters of the Lebanese Army at Yarze.

7. OGB has kept the situation in the Palestine refugee camps in the Sabra and Shatila areas under close observation. During the last several days, the atmosphere in those camps remained calm, although they were hit by some shells on 5 September.

8. Throughout the period, OGB has maintained close liaison with the Lebanese Army, which had last week deployed throughout Beirut. On 4 September, OGB observed the movement of Lebanese Army units, under fire from armed groups, towards Khalde. That evening OGB was informed that the Lebanese Army had entered Khalde, sustaining light casualties. The Lebanese Army has also moved troops and equipment east on the Beirut-Damascus highway.

9. OGB has not observed any change in the deployment of the Multinational Force, which came under occasional fire in the course of the shelling reported in paragraph 6 above.

10. Throughout the last several days, shells have, on a number of occasions, impacted close to OGB headquarters. So far it has not been necessary to evacuate the headquarters and it has continued to function on a 24-hour basis. At the same time, OGB teams have been compelled to limit their patrols for periods of time because of the firing. General Erskine has, nevertheless, instructed OGB to maintain, to the extent possible, its patrolling activity at an intensified level. OGB will also continue to maintain a presence in the Palestine refugee camps and to maintain close contact with the Lebanese military authorities. General Erskine is keeping the Secretary-General concurrently informed of the situation in and around Beirut as observed and reported by OGB.

11. The Secretary-General takes this opportunity to put on record his appreciation of the courage, dedication and professionalism of the military observers and the civilian supporting personnel of OGB. In dangerous and very difficult circumstances, they have maintained their observation and patrolling activities, particularly during the recent heavy fighting in and around Beirut. Although their numbers are small and they are unarmed, the observers are an important independent source of information in a most sensitive area. The presence of OGB in and around the city also represents the concern of the international community and its desire to be of assistance to the heavily afflicted people in the area.
