



Security Council

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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

(for the period from 17 January 2002 to 12 July 2002)

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1391 (2002) of 28 January 2002, by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for a further period of six months, until 31 July 2002. It covers developments since my previous report, dated 16 January 2002 (S/2002/55).

II. Situation in the area of operation

2. Tension in the UNIFIL area of operation increased during the reporting period, with an outbreak of violent incidents across the Blue Line in the first two weeks of April, surpassing any activity seen since Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000. These events coincided with the substantial escalation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory of the same period. Militant activities were carried out by Hizbollah, by Palestinian and by unidentified elements both inside and outside the Shab'a farms area. The situation stabilized in May and has since remained relatively quiet but tense.

3. Hizbollah conducted a campaign of attacks on Israel Defence Forces (IDF) positions in the Shab'a farms area from 30 March through 13 April, with UNIFIL recording the firing by Hizbollah of a total of 152 anti-tank missiles, 1,246 mortars, 28 katyushas, 11 surface-to-air missiles and hundreds of rounds of small arms fire. IDF retaliation was confined to targets in the areas from which Hizbollah fire had emanated,

primarily in the vicinity of Shab'a and Kafr Shuba. UNIFIL counted IDF fire amounting to 1,108 rounds of artillery and mortars, 118 tank rounds, 142 aerial bombs, 17 missiles and hundreds of rounds of small arms fire. Neither side reported casualties from these incidents. On 10 April, several IDF tank rounds impacted within 50 metres of UNIFIL position 4-31, causing structural damage. Hizbollah expressly dedicated its action of 10 April to the Palestinian people.

4. Hizbollah also launched attacks against IDF positions in the Shab'a farms area on 23 January and 26 April. These attacks comprised mortars, rockets and small arms, and generated IDF return missile, artillery and small arms fire. IDF reported four of its soldiers lightly wounded in the 26 April incident. Outside the Shab'a farms, on 7 May, there was a brief exchange of fire between Hizbollah and IDF positions north of Adamit, sparked by three shots from an unidentified source on the Lebanese side.

5. The first incidents involving attacks across the Blue Line by Palestinian or other unidentified armed elements occurred on 11 and 12 March. On 11 March, there was a brief exchange of fire between an unknown shooter and IDF soldiers in the vicinity of the IDF position south of Ghajar. On 12 March, infiltrators attacked civilian vehicles near the Israeli village of Shelomi, killing five civilians and one IDF soldier. Following an Israeli protest that the perpetrators originated from Lebanon, UNIFIL carried out an investigation but the findings were inconclusive. IDF

reportedly shot and killed two of the assailants but have been unable to identify them or any accomplices.

6. The pace of militant activities accelerated in the first week of April. On 31 March, four Palestinian gunmen exchanged fire with an IDF patrol across the Blue Line near Aytash Shab. Two of the Palestinians were wounded and all four were later taken into custody by the Lebanese Army. On the same day, up to three katyushas were fired nearby. On 2 April, at least one katyusha fired across the line by unknown elements landed north-east of Qiryat Shemona. On 6 April, suspected Palestinian shooters fired small arms rounds and two rockets across the line at an IDF position near Alma ash Shab and four rockets into the Israeli side of Ghajar village, where they wounded five civilians. On 7 April, suspected Palestinian elements fired rockets and small arms rounds across the line to Avivim, injuring four IDF soldiers.

7. During this period, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Terje Roed-Larsen, and my Personal Representative for southern Lebanon, Staffan de Mistura, engaged in concerted diplomatic activity to de-escalate the violence. UNIFIL increased its patrols and its Force Commander intervened personally with the parties on the ground to contain incidents. Key members of the international community were active in urging the parties to exercise restraint. On 10 April, the Quartet, meeting in Madrid, expressed its grave concern about the attacks across the Blue Line and called on all parties to respect the line, halt all attacks and show the utmost restraint. At the same time, I called on the Government of Lebanon and all relevant parties to condemn and prevent such violations.

8. In the second week of April, the Lebanese authorities pledged to take measures to control the “unidentified elements” but continued to maintain the legitimacy of “resistance” activities in the Shab’a farms area. In a letter to me dated 19 April 2002 (A/56/928-S/2002/473), the Chargé d’affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations reiterated the Lebanese position that, “while affirming the right and duty of the Lebanese Government, the resistance and the people to liberate the Shab’a farmlands using all legitimate means”, the Lebanese Government was “committed to keeping the situation along the Blue Line from Naqurah to the Shab’a farmlands under control”. From 7 April, the Lebanese Joint Security Forces augmented their ground

patrols and instituted new checkpoints, and the Lebanese Army enhanced its presence. Incidents thereafter were largely confined to the Shab’a farms area. The Government of Lebanon is to be commended for taking these measures and demonstrating its ability to effectively assert its authority. Nevertheless, the United Nations position is clear, that attacks anywhere across the Blue Line, whether into Israel or the Shab’a farms area, constitute violations of Security Council resolutions.

9. Unjustified Israeli air incursions into sovereign Lebanese airspace continued on an almost daily basis throughout most of the reporting period, often penetrating deep into Lebanon and frequently generating sonic booms. In the latter half of April, a pattern emerged whereby the aircraft would fly out to sea and enter Lebanese airspace north of the UNIFIL area of operation, thus avoiding direct observation and verification by UNIFIL.

10. In January Hizbollah began responding to the overflights with anti-aircraft fire. This activity has continued through the present. On a number of occasions, most recently on 23 June, shells crossed the Blue Line and exploded in the air over Kefar Yuval, near Qiryat Shemona, and Shelomi, causing minor damage to civilian structures and lightly wounding two civilians. Calls on Israel to cease the overflights and to fully respect the Blue Line have continued to be issued by myself, other senior United Nations officials — most notably my Personal Representative — and a number of interested Governments. We have stressed that Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace and Hizbollah anti-aircraft fire have the potential to aggravate tensions and that one violation cannot justify another. We have continued to urge the parties to cease activities that can provoke incidents.

11. There were comparatively few minor ground violations of the line, all originating from the Lebanese side and primarily attributable to crossings by shepherds. However, demonstrators on the Lebanese side gathered regularly at the points of friction identified in my previous reports, Sheikh Abbad Hill east of Hula and Fatima gate west of Metulla, to throw stones at Israeli personnel across the line. The number of incidents and size of the crowds increased, particularly in the latter part of the reporting period. Several hundred Lebanese gathered at the sites in the days marking the second anniversary of Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon. On 23 June, a Lebanese

civilian was injured when an IDF soldier fired at a group of boys who had refused to stop shooting paint guns at the IDF position at Sheikh Abbad Hill.

12. Local administration in the south was somewhat strengthened during the reporting period. Communications, health and welfare systems, and postal services continued to make slow progress towards integration with the rest of the country. The Lebanese Joint Security Forces, comprised of army and internal security forces, and the Lebanese Army continued to operate in the areas vacated by Israel, and increased their activity near the Blue Line, intervening on several occasions to avert potential threats to peace and security (see para. 8 above).

13. The Government of Lebanon continued to maintain the position that, so long as there is no comprehensive peace with Israel, the Lebanese armed forces will not be deployed along the Blue Line. In this vacuum, Hizbollah maintained its visible presence near the line through its network of mobile and fixed positions. Hizbollah continued to extend social, medical and educational services to the local population in areas near the Blue Line.

14. On several occasions, Hizbollah personnel interfered with the freedom of movement of UNIFIL. In the most serious incident, on 4 April about 15 Hizbollah personnel forced an Observer Group Lebanon patrol south-west of Kafr Shuba to stop at gunpoint and assaulted the observers with rifle butts, injuring three, one seriously. When a UNIFIL patrol intervened, one soldier was also injured. Hizbollah retreated shortly after the UNIFIL Force Commander contacted Lebanese officials. This incident was protested strongly to the Lebanese authorities by UNIFIL and by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. Senior Lebanese officials gave their assurances that the perpetrators would be arrested and brought to trial but, regrettably, this has yet to occur.

15. The United Nations continued to coordinate international assistance to the Government of Lebanon for mine action in southern Lebanon under the close supervision of my Personal Representative and in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). An exchange of letters in March confirmed the formal involvement of the United Nations in project management and quality assurance for Operation Emirates Solidarity. The official launch

of Phase II of Operation Emirates Solidarity took place on 28 May, marking the beginning of the use of private companies contracted by the United Arab Emirates for mine clearance.

16. The presence of a large number of minefields throughout the UNIFIL area of operation remained a matter of utmost concern. On 30 April, Israel handed over to UNIFIL supplementary data on minefields in south Lebanon. The data were conveyed to the appropriate Lebanese authorities. The IDF also cooperated in matters of technical assistance to UNIFIL.

17. A number of civilian casualties were recorded owing to mine incidents. Since January, one civilian died and five were injured as a result of exploding mines and ordnance, while four commercial demining personnel were injured during mine-clearance operations. UNIFIL continued marking and fencing known minefields and demolished more than 620 mines and rounds of unexploded ordnance.

18. UNIFIL continued to assist the civilian population in the form of medical care, water projects, equipment or services for schools and orphanages and supplies of social services to the needy. This assistance was provided from resources primarily made available by troop-contributing countries. UNIFIL medical centres and mobile teams provided medical care to an average of 700 civilian patients per month. A field dental programme treated approximately 200 cases per month. Veterinary assistance was provided to some villages. UNIFIL cooperated closely on humanitarian matters with the Lebanese authorities, United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other organizations and agencies operating in Lebanon. On 15 June, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and UNIFIL signed a memorandum of understanding under the auspices of the Minister for Social Affairs of Lebanon, intended to ensure that the core competencies of UNIFIL troop contributors will continue to contribute to the development of vocational training centres, promotion of modern agricultural practices and provision of improved health care to the people of the south.

19. My Personal Representative worked in close collaboration with UNDP and the World Bank to facilitate the funding and implementation of development projects in the south by privately and

publicly advocating the needs of the area. UNDP continued to lead the efforts of the United Nations system in working with the Lebanese authorities for the development and rehabilitation of the south.

III. Organizational matters

20. UNIFIL operations were focused on the Blue Line and the adjacent area, where UNIFIL continued its efforts to maintain the ceasefire through increased patrols, observation from fixed positions and close contact with the parties, the latter with a view to correcting violations, resolving incidents and preventing escalation. The United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), through Observer Group Lebanon, supported UNIFIL in the fulfilment of its mandate. Through close liaison with all parties, UNIFIL and its Force Commander, my Personal Representative and the Special Coordinator expended considerable effort to contain incidents and de-escalate the very volatile situation that prevailed in early April.

21. Planning for the reconfiguration of UNIFIL proceeded. The next phase of the reduction and redeployment is commencing at the time of writing of this report, with the repatriation and non-replacement of about 135 Ukrainian troops. Owing to operational exigencies, in accordance with the Security Council's request in resolution 1391 (2002) to implement the reconfiguration in the light of developments on the ground, the first planned reduction of the Fijian contingent scheduled for June was postponed and will take place in August. This technical adjustment to the schedule does not, however, otherwise affect the timetable set forth for the Security Council in my previous report (S/2002/55). The Force will be stabilized at a strength of 2,000 all ranks by the end of 2002. A map showing the current deployment of UNIFIL is attached.

22. As at 30 June 2002, UNIFIL comprised 3,628 troops, from Fiji (587), France (236), Ghana (801), India (825), Ireland (5), Italy (51), Poland (474) and Ukraine (649). UNIFIL was assisted in its tasks by 51 military observers of UNTSO. In addition, UNIFIL employed 470 civilian staff, of whom 131 were recruited internationally and 339 locally.

23. Major General Lalit Mohan Tewari continued as Force Commander. Mr. de Mistura continued to act as my Personal Representative in Beirut.

24. I regret to report the death of a Fijian member of the Force due to an accident while on duty. Since the establishment of UNIFIL, 240 members of the Force have lost their lives: 78 as a result of firings or bomb explosions, 102 as a result of accidents and 60 from other causes. Firing or mine explosions wounded a total of 344.

IV. Financial aspects

25. By its resolution 56/214 B of 27 June 2002, the General Assembly appropriated the amount of \$117.1 million gross, equivalent to a monthly rate of \$9.8 million gross, for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNIFIL beyond 31 July 2002, as recommended in paragraph 33 below, the cost of its maintenance would be limited to the monthly rate approved by the General Assembly.

26. As at 30 June 2002, unpaid assessments to the special account for UNIFIL for the period since its inception to 31 July 2002 amounted to \$106.5 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to \$1,299.6 million.

V. Observations

27. I was able to report in January (S/2002/55) that the greater restraint shown by both parties with regard to the Shab'a farms was perhaps indicative of a renewed commitment on both sides of the Blue Line to respect the line in its entirety. Regrettably, events over the past few months, particularly the alarming escalation in April, have confirmed that that assessment was premature. These events have underscored the fragility of the situation and demonstrated how readily tensions can escalate.

28. The commitment by Hizbollah to the launching of hostile attacks across the Blue Line, and the Lebanese Government's unwillingness to fulfil its commitment to ensure full respect for the Blue Line, contravene Security Council decisions. That line was drawn by the United Nations and recognized by the Security Council as confirming, for purposes of resolution 425 (1978), the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon. I would note that respect for Security Council

resolutions is the most basic requirement of international legitimacy for any Member State. Violations of the Blue Line, whether they entail a physical crossing of the line or skirting it, cannot be justified. Each violation, whether it be by land, by sea or by air, carries with it the possibility of provoking a deterioration of the situation on the ground.

29. I would take this opportunity to reiterate the findings of my report to the Security Council of 22 May 2000 (S/2000/460), strongly endorsed by the Council in the President's statement of 23 May 2000 (S/PRST/2000/18). The Shab'a farmlands lie in an area occupied by Israel in 1967, and are therefore subject to a negotiated settlement under Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and are part of the area of operation of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). No internationally recognized boundary agreement has been concluded between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. The Blue Line was drawn without prejudice to any determination of territorial questions between the two countries that they may wish to conclude in the future.

30. By its actions to contain the incidents along the Blue Line west of Ghajar, the Government of Lebanon demonstrated its capacity to effectively exercise its authority, to protect the population of southern Lebanon and United Nations peacekeepers, and to ensure stability. The Lebanese authorities should continue to expand these efforts. More steps can be taken to extend the Government's authority to all of southern Lebanon, as called for by the Security Council most recently in its resolution 1391 (2002), including taking full responsibility for the provision of basic services to the population and for the deployment of the Lebanese Army.

31. I remain concerned about the restrictions of movement on UNIFIL personnel, including Observer Group Lebanon. UNIFIL must be able to carry out its mandate and fulfil its tasks of patrolling, observing, reporting and liaising with the parties unhindered by armed elements. Attacks on United Nations personnel or property are unacceptable. The Government of Lebanon should implement its obligation to ensure full freedom of movement of UNIFIL throughout its area of operation.

32. I have frequently expressed my concern regarding developments in southern Lebanon and called for restraint from both sides, most recently in my

statement to the Security Council of 20 June. The critical need in this highly turbulent time is for all parties concerned to respect the Blue Line, as repeatedly called for by the Security Council, to cease all violations of this line and to refrain from any action that could serve to destabilize the situation. Mr. de Mistura and Mr. Roed-Larsen will continue to lend the political and diplomatic support of the United Nations to the parties to establish lasting peace and security.

33. In a letter dated 9 July 2002 (S/2002/739), the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations conveyed to me his Government's request that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNIFIL for a further period of six months. In the light of conditions prevailing in the area, the Security Council may wish to decide to extend the mandate of UNIFIL until 31 January 2003.

34. I must again draw attention to the serious shortfall in the funding of the Force. At present, unpaid assessments amount to \$106.5 million. This represents money owed to the Member States contributing the troops that make up the Force. I appeal to all Member States to pay their assessments promptly and in full and to clear all remaining arrears. I should like to express my gratitude to the Governments contributing troops to the Force for their understanding and patience.

35. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to Mr. de Mistura, my Personal Representative, and to pay tribute to Major General Tewari and the men and women of UNIFIL for the manner in which they have carried out their tasks. Their discipline and bearing have been of a high order, reflecting credit on themselves and the United Nations.

