

**UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON
(UNIFIL)**

Naqoura,
26 July 2006

PRESS RELEASE

Yesterday evening at 19:30, at least one aerial bomb impacted directly on the building inside the patrol base of the Observer Group Lebanon (OGL) in the area of Khiyam in the eastern sector. The three-story building and the position were entirely destroyed. At the time, there were 4 unarmed military observers in the position from different nationalities. A UNIFIL rescue team was immediately dispatched to the location, and is still trying to clear the rubble. They retrieved the bodies of three observers, and are searching for the fourth, who is also feared dead. The Secretary General of the United Nations gave a statement last night in Rome concerning this incident.

Prior to this incident, very intensive aerial bombardment and shelling from the Israeli side was reported in the area of Khiyam, and there were 14 prior incidents of firing close to this position by aerial bombs and artillery shells. At 18:30, four artillery shells fired from the Israeli side directly impacted inside the position, causing extensive damage on the building and the shelter. UNIFIL Force Commander was in repeated contact with Israeli Army officers throughout the afternoon, pressing the need to protect that particular UN position from firing.

Another UN position of the Ghanaian battalion in the area of Marwahin in the western sector was also directly hit by one mortar round from the Hezbollah side last night. The round did not explode, and there were no casualties or material damage. Another 5 incidents of firing close to UN positions from the Israeli side were reported yesterday. It was also reported that Hezbollah fired from the vicinity of four UN positions at Alma ash Shab, Tibnin, Brashit, and At Tiri. All UNIFIL positions remain occupied and maintained by the troops.

This morning, the UNIFIL Engineering Contingent finally managed to retrieve the bodies of a UNIFIL international civilian staff member and his wife. They were buried under the rubble of the building which was completely destroyed during the air bombardment of the area of Hosh in Tyre on 17 July.

(Since the outbreak of hostilities, four military observers from OGL, one UNIFIL international staff member and his wife were killed, and four Ghanaian soldiers, one Indian soldier, and one OGL military observer were wounded as a result of firing.)

Heavy exchanges of fire continued along the length of the Blue Line in the last 24 hours, with a major concentration in Khiyam, Bint Jubayl, At Tiri and Ayn Ibil areas. Hezbollah fired rockets from various locations and the IDF continued the shelling and aerial bombardment. The IDF has maintained their

presence in the area of Marun Al Ras, Bint Jubayl and Yarun in the central sector, inside Lebanese territory. Sporadic fighting was reported in Bint Jubayl, Marun Al Ras, and Yarun yesterday afternoon. There are reports of intensive fighting on the ground in the area of Aytarun, north east of Marun Al Ras, this morning. There are a number of civilians who are still stranded in these three towns and caught in the cross fire. UNIFIL also received reports that a convoy of vehicles was attempting to leave Bint Jubayl northwards in the direction of Tibnin.

A French ship, which arrived to the waters of Naqoura yesterday morning, continued to deliver a critical supply of water, fuel and food to UNIFIL. The ship is also to evacuate a number of UN dependants and foreign nationals who were extricated from the border areas by UNIFIL. Sixty eight UN dependents and foreign nationals boarded the ship for evacuation yesterday. Today, UNIFIL provided escorts for another 120 UN dependents and foreign nationals from Rmaich and the neighboring villages to Naqoura for evacuation with the ship.

UNIFIL conducted one medevac, four humanitarian, and three re-supply convoys yesterday. One Lebanese Army soldier was medically evacuated from a UN position in Ras Naqoura to the UNIFIL Naqoura hospital. One wounded soldier of the Lebanese Joint Security Forces was medically evacuated by UNIFIL from Ramyah to the hospital in Tibnin.

Yesterday, the IDF handed over to UNIFIL two Lebanese civilians who were caught in the cross fire in the border area. This move was coordinated with the Lebanese authorities. UNIFIL handed them over to the Lebanese authorities today.