



UNIFIL

Press Kit



Background

Following an invasion by Israeli forces into Lebanon, the Security Council, in March 1978, established the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) mandating it to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon, restore international peace and security, and assist the Lebanese Government to restore its effective authority in the area. In June 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon for the second time and subsequently established a security zone inside the country, which remained until its withdrawal in 2000.

In 1985, Israel partially withdrew its forces from Lebanon, but retained control of an area in southern Lebanon controlled by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and Lebanese De Facto Forces (DFF), the so called "South Lebanon Army" (SLA).

On 17 April 2000, the Government of Israel notified the Secretary-General that it would withdraw its forces from Lebanon by July 2000. Starting on 16 May, much sooner than anticipated, IDF/De Facto Forces began vacating their positions amid exchange of fire. On 25 May, the Government of Israel notified the Secretary-General that Israel had redeployed its forces.

In preparation of the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) from Lebanon, the UN identified the "Line of Withdrawal", or so-called "Blue Line", largely conforming to the internationally recognized boundaries of Lebanon. The United Nations established this Line in June 2000 for the sole purpose of confirming the full withdrawal of the IDF from Lebanese territory. The Blue Line does not in any way represent an international border and is without prejudice to future border arrangements between Lebanon and Israel. Following the withdrawal of the Israeli forces, UNIFIL's main focus was on "restoring international peace and security".

On 16 June, the Secretary-General reported to the Security Council that Israel had withdrawn its forces from Lebanon in conformity with the line identified by the United Nations. Following the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon, the Security Council adopted resolution 1310 (on 27

July) where it "endorsed the understanding, mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General of 20 July 2000, that the Force [UNIFIL] will deploy and function fully throughout its area of operations and that the Government of Lebanon will strengthen its presence in this area, by deploying additional troops and internal security forces."

An approximately 1,000-strong joint Lebanese security force, composed of army and internal security personnel, deployed to the UNIFIL area of operations (AO); however, it did not operate in areas close to the Line of Withdrawal.

Until July 2006, despite numerous violations of the Line of Withdrawal, as well as sea and air violations, and occasional breaches of the ceasefire, the situation in the area remained relatively calm. The focus of UNIFIL operations remained on the Blue Line and the adjacent areas, where UNIFIL sought to maintain the ceasefire through patrols, observation from fixed positions and close contact with the parties. The Mission continued to provide humanitarian assistance to local population within its available means.

On 12 July 2006, war broke out between Israel and Lebanon after Hizbullah had carried out an attack on an IDF patrol kidnapping two IDF soldiers and killing three others. On 11 August 2006, the Security Council adopted resolution 1701 (2006), which ended the war and in which the Council inter alia decided to enlarge UNIFIL (to a maximum of 15,000 troops) and enhance its mandate. The Government of Lebanon on its part decided to deploy 15,000 Lebanese troops in southern Lebanon, an area including but extending beyond UNIFIL's area of operation (AO).

UNIFIL is supported by a Maritime Task Force (MTF), a first in UN peacekeeping. The MTF supports the Lebanese Navy in monitoring Lebanese territorial waters, securing the Lebanese coastline and preventing the entry into the area of operations of unauthorized arms and related materiel.

UNIFIL Mandate



The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was established by United Nations Security Council Resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978) of 19 March 1978 and mandated to:

- Confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon;
- Restore international peace and security;
- Assist the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area.

Over the years, the mandate of UNIFIL was adjusted twice as a result of developments. In the wake of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the so-called "Operation Peace for Galilee", the Security Council recognised that UNIFIL was not in a position to fulfill its mandate under resolutions 425/426 (1978) and, on 18 June 1982, it adopted

resolution 511 authorizing the Force to carry out interim tasks outlined in the report of the Secretary-General. In addition to manning their positions, the troops would to the extent possible, "extend their protection and humanitarian assistance to the population of the area." For three years, UNIFIL remained behind the Israeli lines, with its role limited to providing protection and humanitarian assistance to the local population.

Following the withdrawal of the Israeli forces in May 2000, the Secretary-General, in his report on UNIFIL issued on 22 January 2001, wrote: "Of the three parts of its mandate, UNIFIL has essentially completed two. It has confirmed the withdrawal of Israeli forces and assisted, to the extent it could, the Lebanese authorities as they returned to the area vacated by Israel." Consequently, UNIFIL's main focus from

then on was on “restoring international peace and security” with the functions of an observer and monitoring mission.

Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), adopted on 11 August 2006, significantly enhanced UNIFIL’s strength and expanded its original mandate. In addition to carrying out its mandate under resolutions 425 and 426, UNIFIL under resolution 1701 shall:

- Monitor the cessation of hostilities;
- Accompany and support the Lebanese Armed Forces as they deploy throughout the south of Lebanon, including along the Blue Line, as Israel withdraws its military from Lebanon;
- Coordinate its activities referred to in the preceding paragraph (above) with the Governments of Lebanon and Israel;
- Extend its assistance to ensure humanitarian access to civilian populations and the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons;
- Assist the Lebanese Armed Forces in the establishment between the Blue Line and the Litani River of an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons except those of the Government of Lebanon and UNIFIL.

- Assist the Government of Lebanon, at its request, in securing its borders and other entry points to prevent the illegal entry of arms or related materials into Lebanon.

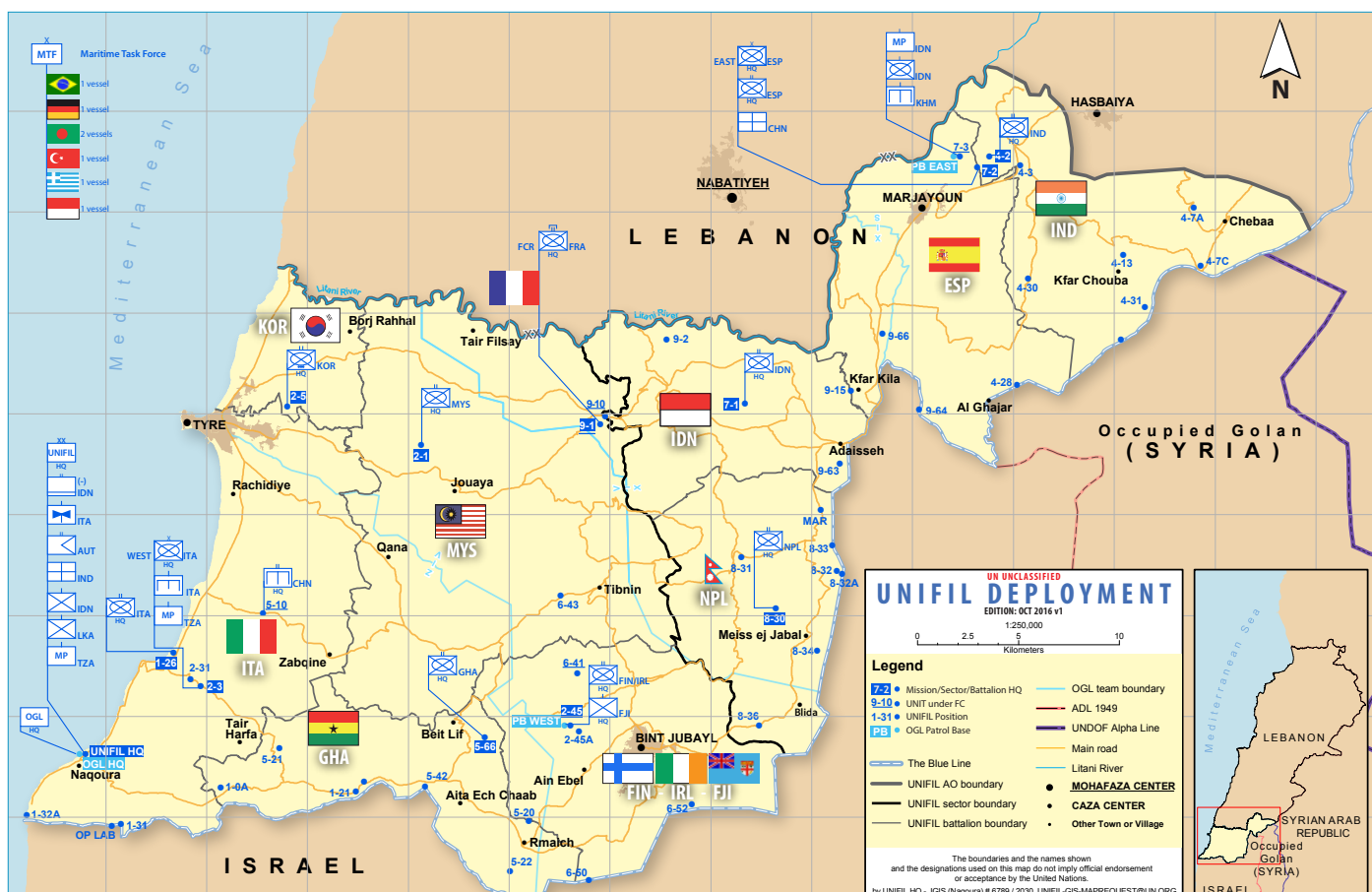
By resolution 1701, the Council also authorized UNIFIL to take all necessary action in areas of deployment of its forces and as it deems within its capabilities, to ensure that its area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities of any kind. It should also resist attempts by forceful means to prevent it from discharging its duties under the mandate of the Security Council. And it should protect United Nations personnel, facilities, installations and equipment, ensure the security and freedom of movement of UN personnel, humanitarian workers and, without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon, protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.

In its resolution 1773 (2007), that extended UNIFIL’s mandate in 2007, the Security Council acknowledged the role played by UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces in helping to establish a new strategic environment in southern Lebanon and looked forward to increased cooperation between the two forces in the discharge of UNIFIL’s mandate. The UNIFIL mandate is renewed annually by the Security Council.

Area of Operation

UNIFIL DEPLOYMENT

UNIFIL Headquarters is located in Naqoura. The area of operations extends from the Blue Line in the south to the Litani River in the north and is divided into two sectors, east and west. Five battalions are deployed in Sector West, with a Sector HQ in Shamaa, while four are deployed in Sector East, with a Sector HQ in Marjayoun. The Force Commander Reserve is centrally located in Burj Qallawiyah to support both sectors as needed. UNIFIL also has a presence at Beirut airport and seaport, to facilitate military rotations and shipments, in addition to UNIFIL House – Beirut, which mainly supports the Mission’s administrative and logistics requirements.



UNIFIL Contingents and Strength

UNIFIL is composed of more than 10,500 military personnel from 40 troop contributing countries (TCCs), supported by approximately 820 international and national civilian staff. UNIFIL is also supported by about 56 military observers from the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), organized in the Observer Group Lebanon (OGL).

The major UNIFIL TCCs are: Indonesia; Italy; India; Ghana; Nepal; Malaysia; France; Spain; China; Republic of Korea. Brazil provides MTF flagship with onboard helicopter.

Complete list of UNIFIL TCCs: Armenia, Austria, Bangladesh (MTF), Belarus, Belgium, Brazil (MTF-flagship), Brunei, Cambodia, China, Croatia, Cyprus, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, Fiji, France, FYR Macedonia, Germany (MTF), Ghana, Greece (MTF), Guatemala, Hungary, India, Indonesia (MTF), Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Korea, Malaysia, Colombia, Nepal, Nigeria, Qatar, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Turkey (MTF).

The Line of Withdrawal (“Blue Line”)



The United Nations identified the Line of Withdrawal (Blue Line) in June 2000 for the sole purpose of confirming the full withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) from Lebanese territory. The Line is described as the best approximation of the 1923 Boundary Line and the 1949 Armistice Demarcation Line. It does not in any way represent an international border and is without prejudice to any future border arrangements between Lebanon and Israel. The Line is 120 km long.

United Nations cartographers verified the withdrawal of the IDF against the Blue Line. On 6 June 2000, UNIFIL Force Commander formally transmitted to the parties a map of the Line of Withdrawal/“Blue Line”, with the ratio 1:50,000. A list of 198 selected coordinates delineating the Blue Line in its entire length was sent to the parties separately

on 23 June. The two documents remain the only official source for the Line of Withdrawal. However, while Lebanon has accepted the map and the list of coordinates, Israel has only accepted the map as the only official source.

Both parties, Israel and Lebanon, have committed to respecting the Line of Withdrawal in its entirety, as identified by the United Nations, notwithstanding their respective reservations. Both parties informed the UN that they have certain reservations about the Line in some areas. Lebanon has reservations in 13 areas, whereas Israel to date did not specify the number and exact location of its reservations. Both sides have also accepted UNIFIL as the sole custodian of the Blue Line and the final arbitrator on violations of the Line.

Marking of the Blue Line

In the spring of 2007, UNIFIL together with the parties started a project of visibly marking the Line of Withdrawal on the ground. The rationale was to provide clarity of the location of the - otherwise invisible - Line to the population and the troops on the ground, as a means to help avoid violations and inadvertent crossings, and thus help reduce tension between the parties.

UNIFIL estimated that, in order to have the entire Line of Withdrawal

visibly marked, more than 500 markers would need to be placed on the ground. This number (based on a need of approximately four markers per 1 km) would ensure inter-visibility from one point to the other and thus make the Line of Withdrawal continuously visible to persons on the ground.

Each point being marked is mutually agreed with the parties before a marker is built on the location.

UNIFIL Operations

In addition to being responsible for monitoring the cessation of hostilities, in the early stages of the implementation of resolution 1701, UNIFIL also accompanied and supported the LAF, as they deployed throughout southern Lebanon, for the first time in three decades. UNIFIL provides ongoing support to the LAF, whose primary responsibility is ensuring security in the area.

To implement its mandate as defined in UN Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), UNIFIL carries out a range of operations. The operational activities include day and night vehicle and foot patrols, establishing observation posts and checkpoints, conducting counter-rocket launching operations (CRLOs), monitoring activities, in particular

along the Blue Line and adjacent areas, and carrying out clearance of unexploded ordnance and cluster munitions.

At present, UNIFIL operational activities number on average around 14,000 per month, of which some 1000 are conducted in close cooperation with LAF. In addition, UNIFIL and LAF conduct numerous joint exercises and trainings in order to further strengthen the tactical and operational co-ordination and the effectiveness of their joint activities. Although the security challenges in Lebanon since the onset of the Syrian conflict have required LAF to decrease its presence in the UNIFIL AO, UNIFIL continues to work closely with LAF.

UNIFIL Maritime Task Force



The Maritime Task Force (MTF) was deployed on the request of the Lebanese Government within the mandate of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) following the 2006 war. The MTF deployment was a landmark move that prompted Israel to lift its naval blockade on Lebanon.

Deployed since October 2006 as the first such maritime entity in a United Nations peacekeeping mission, the MTF supports the Lebanese Navy in monitoring the Lebanese territorial waters, securing the Lebanese coastline and preventing the unauthorized entry of arms or related materiel by sea into Lebanon. It also assists the Lebanese Navy in enhancing its capabilities by carrying out a range of different trainings and

joint exercises with a view for the Lebanese Navy to assume all duties required for maritime security. Operational control of the MTF has been delegated from the UNIFIL Force Commander to the MTF Commander.

The area of maritime operations (AMO) stretches along the whole length of the Lebanese coast (110 nautical miles) and with a width of 48 nautical miles reaching into the international waters. The AMO is without prejudice to maritime boundaries to be established between the countries in the area. Currently, the MTF is comprised of seven vessels and one helicopter, and a total of 900 naval personnel. MTF vessels use the ports of Beirut, Limassol (Cyprus) and Mersin (Turkey).

Maritime boundary and the line of buoys

Subsequent to its withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, Israel unilaterally installed a line of buoys in the area of Ra's Naqoura intended as a boundary line at sea between Israel and Lebanon. While Israel treats the line of buoys as a de facto maritime boundary, there is no agreement between Israel and Lebanon on the delineation of their maritime boundaries and Lebanon never recognized the line of buoys. The UN does not recognize the line of buoys and UNIFIL does not have a mandate to monitor it. UNIFIL's focus, in accordance with its mandate, is to prevent hostile activities of any kind, and to keep the stability and calm between the two sides.

The Liaison and Coordination Arrangements agreed between UNIFIL and the parties provide that UNIFIL is to address with the parties "security and military provisions of resolution 1701, including security arrangements to prevent the resumption of hostilities". Of concern to UNIFIL in the maritime context are activities by either side along or in areas close to the line of buoys that could trigger security incidents with the potential to escalate tension between the parties.

UNIFIL engagement with the parties

UNIFIL engages with both parties bilaterally on various levels as well as through the Tripartite forum (see below), which lies at the centre of the Mission's engagement with the parties. Communication with both parties takes place in the framework of the agreed Liaison and Coordination Arrangements. At the most senior, strategic level, the Head of Mission / Force Commander has direct communication (including a hotline) with designated LAF and IDF generals. This is complemented, at working level, with regular meetings and contacts carried out by members of the Liaison Branch as well as Political staff on an as-needed basis.

UNIFIL engages LAF and IDF bilaterally on all matters relating to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), including practical localized arrangements that aim to reduce tensions in areas close to the Blue Line and recurring violations, such as arrangements to enable Lebanese farmers to harvest safely in the fields located close to or south of the Blue Line. Other such arrangements cover the clearance of vegetation or drainage channels in sensitive areas along the Blue Line.

On the Lebanese side, additionally, a variety of contacts take place between UNIFIL and the LAF to coordinate operational matters between the two forces.

Tripartite Forum

On 14 August 2006, the day the cessation of hostilities came into effect, UNIFIL called both parties together in order to coordinate the process of the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon and to facilitate deployment of the LAF in south Lebanon, up to the Blue Line. Initially, the parties met with UNIFIL on a weekly basis to coordinate the withdrawal/deployment effort. The arrangement became known as the "Tripartite Forum."

Over time, the Forum evolved and expanded to deal with violations of resolution 1701 (2006) as well as to identify and address key security and military operational issues. It became an essential conflict management and confidence-building mechanism between the parties. The on average six-weekly Tripartite meetings with senior representatives of the LAF and IDF, chaired by UNIFIL Head of Mission/Force Commander, serve as an essential mechanism for communication with the parties as well as to de-escalate tension and strengthen the cessation of hostilities.

In April 2007, the Tripartite mechanism agreed Liaison and Coordination Arrangements between UNIFIL, LAF and IDF. The parties committed themselves to providing information on positions and deployment

along the Blue Line, and, as a sign of goodwill, changes in strength, composition or disposition of forces, forging closer liaison ties including the establishment of a hotline between the Force Commander and the designated generals of LAF and IDF.

The parties also committed to marking the Blue Line on the ground, with the aim to reduce the number of inadvertent violations and build confidence between them. UNIFIL carries out the project jointly with LAF and IDF. [For further details, see above section "Line of Withdrawal/Blue Line"]

Discussions in the Tripartite focus on violations of the Blue Line, the presence of unauthorized weapons in the UNIFIL AO, the continued occupation and requirement of the IDF to withdraw from northern Ghajar and the adjacent area, IDF air violations, and the findings of UNIFIL investigations into violations.

Tripartite meetings are the only forum where Lebanese and Israeli representatives meet at any level; it has proven to be an effective mechanism to manage the conflict, keep tensions down and build confidence between the two sides.

Ghajar



Ghajar is a Syrian Alawite village, which came under Israeli control in the course of the 1967 War. In 1981, Israel passed the Golan Heights Annexation Law, which introduced Israeli jurisdiction, law and administration over the Golan Heights, including Ghajar. The residents of Ghajar largely accepted Israeli citizenship.

When the Line of Withdrawal was established in 2000, it was found to run through the middle of the village, dividing it between Lebanon and Israel. However, it was decided not to mark the line on the ground; nor is there a barrier between the northern and southern part of the village, which has remained one entity. In 2000, the IDF withdrew from all areas north of the Blue Line, including the

section of Ghajar north of the Line, and the parties agreed with the UN Secretary-General that neither the UN, nor the Lebanese authorities, nor Lebanese civilians would enter the village. Most of the approximately 2,200 residents hold dual Syrian and Israeli citizenship. About 1,550 residents live north of the Blue Line while the rest live south of it.

In the course of the 2006 war, the IDF re-entered the northern part of the village. To date, Israel has not withdrawn from northern Ghajar and the adjacent area, known together as "Area 14B", despite several proposals put forward by UNIFIL over the years for security arrangements to facilitate such a withdrawal.

Shab'a Farms

The Shab'a Farms is an area of uninhabited farmlands, for which the geographical definition of the exact boundaries has not been agreed. It generally refers to farms and hamlets on the western slopes of Wadi al Aassal and Mount Hermon/Jabal el-Shaikh in the occupied Golan, and south of the Lebanese village of Chebaa. In the absence of an established boundary between Lebanon and Syria, a dispute has arisen whether the area is part of Lebanon or Syria. In the course of establishing the Line of Withdrawal in 2000, on the basis of information made available, the UN determined the Shab'a Farms to be Syrian not Lebanese territory and hence placed them south of the Line.

The Government of Lebanon expressed reservations but accepted that the Shab'a Farms were Israeli-occupied Syrian territory "until such time as a joint formula ... can be agreed by Lebanon and Syria for submission to the UN." A 2006 Lebanese government Seven-Point plan envisaged the Shab'a Farms to be turned over to the UN as an interim measure, until the true definition and ownership is established.

Syria has declared publicly that it considers the Shab'a Farms Lebanese territory, but has not provided documents in support. It also refused to delineate the border in the area, insisting that this can only be done after Israel withdraws. With the UN having placed the Shab'a Farms area south of the Blue Line at the time the line was established, Israel considers them part of the Golan

rather than Lebanon. Hence, it would only negotiate with Syria, and address the issue in Syrian-Israeli peace talks on the Golan.

Resolution 1701 (2006) called for the development of a proposal for the "delineation of the international borders of Lebanon, especially in those areas where the border is disputed or uncertain, including by dealing with the Shebaa farms area." The Secretary-General, in his October 2007 report on resolution 1701 (S/2000/641) stated that "based on the information available, the senior cartographer has provisionally concluded that the Shab'a Farms area extends north-east from Moughr Shab'a village and north-west from Wadi al-Aasal." This proposal was shared with Lebanon, Israel and Syria.

In April 2008, Lebanon accepted the provisional definition as a "reasonable and practical basis" for removing one of the obstacles standing in the way of the establishment of a permanent ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel. Israel and Syria did not respond.

Violations of the Blue Line occur almost daily in the area of the Shab'a Farms. As a result of Lebanon's political position, the LAF does not agree to mark the Line in the area. Although the issue of the Shab'a Farms is outside the scope of UNIFIL's mandate, UNIFIL works closely with both parties to mitigate the scope for any tension or incidents in the area and to promote full respect for the Blue Line.

Strategic Dialogue between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces



In January 2010, a UNIFIL-DPKO review recommended to formalize a regular strategic dialogue mechanism between UNIFIL and LAF. The mechanism is intended to carry out regular analyses of ground forces and maritime assets and set benchmarks reflecting the correlation between the capacity and responsibilities of UNIFIL vis-à-vis those of LAF, also taking into account the security situation in the area. The mechanism aims to assist LAF in establishing “appropriate” operational capabilities for implementing tasks mandated in resolution 1701 (2006) as well as the LAF Navy in developing a comprehensive assessment of its needs to assume effective control over Lebanese territorial waters and secure maritime borders. Overall, the Strategic Dialogue intends to facilitate LAF’s gradual assumption of security responsibility in the

UNIFIL area of operations and Lebanese territorial waters.

In February 2013, LAF and UNIFIL signed a joint Strategic Dialogue plan. UNIFIL subsequently established a coordination mechanism for donations, comprising LAF, the Government and international donors to ensure a comprehensive approach aimed at assisting, equipping and training LAF to establish appropriate operational capabilities for implementing tasks mandated under resolution 1701 (2006). The same year, LAF developed a Capabilities Development Plan (CDP) for 2013-17. The UNIFIL-LAF Strategic Dialogue is an integral part of CDP. A Strategic Dialogue Permanent Committee steers the process and supports the efforts of the joint LAF-UNIFIL Strategic Dialogue plan.

Mine clearance: operational and humanitarian activities



The threat of unexploded mines and remnants of war still remains a challenge in southern Lebanon. As part of UNIFIL's mandate to restore international peace and security and to assist the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in southern Lebanon as well as to support its own operations, UNIFIL conducts mine clearance activities with the support of the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS).

UNIFIL explosives ordnance experts and de-miners support the mobility of UNIFIL assets by clearing unexploded ordnance and mines that may adversely affect the movement and security of UNIFIL personnel.

They regularly conduct activities aimed at raising public awareness of the dangers of explosive remnants of war.

UNIFIL's combat engineers and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams clear areas that were contaminated by cluster-munitions and other unexploded ordnances like aircraft bombs, rockets and missiles. Cleared land is then handed back to the owners. Combat engineers support the Blue Line marking process by demining access routes and the locations where markers are placed. UNIFIL Demining/EOD experts are from Cambodia, China, France, Italy and Spain.

Civil Interaction



These UNIFIL personnel play a key role in liaising with local authorities and communities as well as undertaking a range of activities in support of the population in the UNIFIL areas of responsibility.

While UNIFIL is not a humanitarian or development agency, from early years of its deployment it has had a strong humanitarian disposition in addressing the consequences of wars and occupation in south Lebanon. UNIFIL battalions deliver a range of basic services to communities using the skills and technical expertise of peacekeepers, as well as through limited employment of UNIFIL's engineering and other operational resources in assistance of the local population. UNIFIL contingents provide medical, dental, veterinary and other assistance to the local population free of charge. In addition, UNIFIL contingents conduct training programmes for the people in fields such as computers, languages, bread making, knitting, yoga, taekwondo. UNIFIL also implements quick-impact projects and civil-military co-operation initiatives to support the extension of state authority in the area of operations and to assist local authorities in addressing some of the most pressing needs of the population.

UNIFIL attaches great importance to relations with the population in the communities in the area of operations, among whom the peacekeepers operate. There are several facets to this relationship: to inform the communities about UNIFIL's mandate and activities; provide or facilitate a limited level of assistance; respect and share in local culture, customs and concerns; participate in community events and ensure minimum disturbance to normal daily life resulting from UNIFIL's operations in the area. To this end, UNIFIL interacts with the communities regularly and at every level.

Civil Affairs (civilian) and Civil-Military Coordination (military) are the main mechanisms UNIFIL uses to interface with the communities in the AO.





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More information and photographs are available on our website.

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