

## Middle East

Following the Israel-Hezbollah war in July and August 2006, and despite the creation of a new political framework in the subregion with UN Security Council Resolution 1701, the Middle East as a whole continued to slide deeper into crisis in 2007. In Lebanon, a prolonged political crisis, repeated assassinations of prominent political figures, and several months of fighting between the Lebanese Armed Forces and an Al-Qaida-inspired Islamist faction (Fatah al-Islam) in a Palestinian refugee camp, combined with reports of illegal arms traffic across the Syrian-Lebanese border, contributed to creating a sense of instability and insecurity. Violence among Palestinian factions in the occupied Palestinian territory increased, which culminated in a week of clashes and the military takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas in June. Against this background, and also combined with heightening tension over Iran's nuclear program, as well as fears of a Syrian-Israeli confrontation in the summer of 2007, international peace operations remained caught up in the deepening regional turmoil. On the other hand, in the later part of 2007, levels of violence in Iraq began to decline, though this was not matched with a positive political process. At the same time, the renewal of contacts between Israel and the moderate Palestinian leadership in the West Bank and a victorious end to the fighting between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon gave some hope for stabilization and a renewal of the peace process in the Middle East.

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### UNIFIL: Background and Mandate

First established in 1978 by Security Council Resolutions 425 and 426, the UN Interim Force

in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was initially tasked with confirming the withdrawal of Israeli forces, restoring international peace and security, and assisting the government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority to the south of the country. In May 2000, UNIFIL assisted in confirming Israel's withdrawal of its forces in accordance with Resolution 425 behind a "Blue Line" identified by the UN.

Conditions remained unstable, however, as the Lebanese government was unable to deploy forces in the south. In 2004, Security Council Resolution 1559 reiterated the demand for an extension of the Lebanese government's authority throughout all of Lebanon, also calling for a withdrawal of Syrian troops (accomplished in the spring of 2005) and "the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias." In the context of the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri, the UN was further mandated to conduct an investigation; in May 2007, amid the continuing Lebanese political crisis, the Security Council decided to establish an international tribunal to try those involved in the Hariri assassination.

War erupted in the south of Lebanon in July 2006 when Hezbollah launched an attack against an Israeli patrol and abducted two soldiers. A major military campaign ensued, ending after five weeks of intense bombing and rocket fire targeting civilians on both sides with the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1701. That resolution established a new and expanded mandate for UNIFIL, adding to its original responsibilities the tasks of monitoring the cessation of hostilities, ensuring that no foreign forces would be present in

Lebanon without government consent, assisting the Lebanese Armed Forces in preserving an area free of armed personnel (other than UNIFIL and Lebanese government troops) between the Blue Line and the Litani River, and fully implementing the Taif Accords, which require the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon. The resolution also added a number of political tasks that the UN was charged with, including facilitating negotiations over the contested Sheb'a Farms and the release of the two abducted Israeli soldiers and Lebanese prisoners in Israel.

### UNIFIL: Key Developments and Challenges

In the year since the cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, conditions in south Lebanon have been relatively stable, and the arrangements established with Security Council Resolution 1701 have largely held. Hezbollah has frequently reiterated its commitment to the resolution's implementation, and has focused on building political strength—though it has also replenished its military arsenal, albeit not within UNIFIL's area of operation in south Lebanon. At the same time, a permanent cease-fire is yet to be achieved, and many of the key elements called for in Resolution 1701 remain to be implemented. In addition, the prolonged political crisis in Lebanon, mounting tension and fears of renewed civil strife, and what may have been only a first manifestation of an Al-Qaida-inspired Islamist challenge, have significantly impacted UNIFIL. The mission was targeted by a roadside bomb attack in June 2007, which killed six soldiers from a Spanish battalion. A second major incident highlighting the continued precarious security of the mission occurred on 16 July, when a UNIFIL military police vehicle of the Tanzanian contingent was attacked, though no casualties resulted. Another attempt to attack UNIFIL peacekeepers was thwarted successfully by the Lebanese authorities in Tyre in October.



### UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)

• Authorization and Start Date	19 March 1978 (UNSC Res. 425/426)
• Force Commander	Major-General Claudio Graziano (Italy)
• Budget	\$713.6 million (1 July 2007–30 June 2008)
• Strength as of 31 October 2007	Troops: 13,264 International Civilian Staff: 304 Local Civilian Staff: 583

*For detailed mission information see p. 263.*

UNIFIL's troop complement grew through a phased deployment. In February 2007, Italian general Claudio Graziano replaced Alain Pellegrini of France as force commander, and by mid-2007 UNIFIL had enlarged to roughly 13,500 military personnel from thirty countries, out of an authorized 15,000. This in-

cluded 1,600 serving in its Maritime Task Force. Troop contributors (eight of which were represented on the Security Council in 2007, an unusually large number) generally remained committed to the mission's mandate and configuration, despite questions by some actors as to whether UNIFIL's mandate would evolve into an open-ended one, and as concerned the costs of, in particular, the Maritime Task Force.

UNIFIL's most notable characteristic remained the extensive European participation, a relative exception for UN operations. One manifestation, the Strategic Military Cell (a management mechanism at headquarters created to meet the insistence of European troop contributors on a separate command structure), made important contributions to supporting planning needs, according to two Secretariat reviews—though those reviews also emphasized its “mission-specific” and “temporary” character, as well as the need to establish interoperability between it and existing Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) structures, where coordination difficulties had surfaced.

In the months after the war, much emphasis was placed on consolidating the new status quo into a more permanent arrangement and on attaining greater stability in the area. By and large, the area remained quiet, and UNIFIL established effective cooperation with the newly deployed Lebanese Armed Forces. That cooperation enabled the establishment of an arms-free zone in south Lebanon, as provided for in Resolution 1701, and without any visible presence of Hezbollah in UNIFIL's area of operation. In February 2007, UNIFIL successfully contained the situation when Israeli troops crossed the technical fence along the Blue Line and a skirmish with the Lebanese Armed Forces almost ensued. UNIFIL's force commander also convened regular meetings between Lebanese and Israeli military officials designed to lead to an Israeli withdrawal from the northern part of Ghajar village (situated astride the Blue Line), where Israel maintained a military presence after the cessation of hostilities. In addition, UNIFIL officials undertook efforts to mark the Blue

Line on the ground in order to prevent unintended border violations by either side.

UNIFIL officials also worked hard to establish good relations with the civilian population in south Lebanon. In the first few months after its expansion, UNIFIL patrols faced occasional stone-throwing by local youths, and there were reports of Hezbollah activists denying peacekeepers freedom of movement. These incidents led to an increased engagement to foster dialogue with the local authorities—as well as, on occasion, the deliberate use of a firm posture vis-à-vis efforts to deny freedom of movement. As UNIFIL reached full troop strength and recruitment of civilian staff progressed, its political and civil affairs office, civil affairs teams, civilian-military cooperation unit, public information offices, and military community outreach unit all began working to improve relations with local communities and to implement confidence-building measures. Emphasizing its role as supporting the Lebanese Armed Forces enabled the mission to clarify its mandate and dispel tension. This was consistent with a consensus within the mission, albeit one not always shared by every member of the Security Council, that Hezbollah's eventual disarmament would take place only through a domestic political process. UNIFIL and national contingent quick-impact projects further helped to foster the support of local communities.

An equally important measure enhancing UNIFIL's security in its immediate environment has been the mission's contribution to the clearing of landmines and of the estimated 1 million unexploded cluster munitions used by Israel during the 2006 war. By June 2007, twenty-two UNIFIL teams were active alongside the Lebanese Armed Forces and seventy-five UN-contracted clearance teams operating under the UN Mine Action Coordination Centre, though their work was hampered by the fact that Israel continued to withhold targeting data, which would have facilitated the clearing effort.

Despite these efforts, implementation of important aspects of Resolution 1701 ran into difficulties. By October 2007, Israel had still not withdrawn from the northern half of Gha-

jar. Disagreements between Israeli and Lebanese officials had delayed UNIFIL's work to demarcate the Blue Line until the fall. Israel also continued its daily violations of Lebanese sovereignty in the form of frequent overflights. And although a UN cartographer was expected by June to provide a geographical definition of the Sheb'a Farms, claimed by Lebanon but considered by the Security Council to be Israeli-occupied Syrian territory, it was only in October that the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of Resolution 1701 spelled out the territorial boundaries of the area. A political process to change the status of the area, however, did not appear to be imminent amid reports that Israel rejected any revisions to the UN's standing definition of the Sheb'a Farms as occupied Syrian territory.

UNIFIL was also affected by the security situation in Lebanon, which began deteriorating significantly toward the end of 2006, thus placing new demands on the Lebanese Armed Forces in arenas other than the south and creating new threat potential for UNIFIL. On 21 November 2006, Pierre Gemayel, the minister of industry and scion of one of Lebanon's most prominent Christian families, was assassinated by gunmen. Two weeks previously, all Shi'ite ministers (as well as one Christian) had resigned from the cabinet. As the government's constitutional legitimacy was increasingly drawn into question, the opposition began staging demonstrations at the prime minister's office in downtown Beirut from 1 December. In February 2007, two buses were bombed near a Christian village; three people died. In June and September 2007, two further prominent anti-Syrian members of parliament, Walid Eido and Antoine Ghanem, were killed in bomb blasts in downtown Beirut.

By early summer 2007, the Security Council had decided to establish an international tribunal to try the perpetrators and organizers of the Hariri assassination. Attention was increasingly focused on the next major issue driving the political crisis: the election of a new president when the term of pro-Syrian president Emile Lahoud would come to an

end. Efforts to hold the election, scheduled for late November, failed when opposition groups boycotted parliament. Despite both local and international mediation efforts, Lebanon remained tense, and amid a looming constitutional crisis there were reports of militias on all sides of the political spectrum rearming. Short of a last-minute compromise, renewed civil strife and the emergence of two competing governments seemed a realistic prospect.

The rise to prominence of extremist Islamist groups in Lebanon was identified at an early stage as a key security challenge to UNIFIL. A March 2007 report by the Secretary-General on the implementation of Resolution 1701 mentioned the "growing threat to the presence of the United Nations in Lebanon" from such groups for the first time. A bare two months later, the Lebanese Armed Forces found themselves embroiled in a confrontation with Fatah al-Islam, a small, Al-Qaida-inspired group led by a Palestinian-Jordanian and alleged by some to have ties to Syrian intelligence, in the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp near Tripoli. The conflict would be hailed as a critical test for Lebanese authorities; and after 163 Lebanese soldiers and 222 militants were killed and thousands of Palestinian refugees fled, the Lebanese authorities managed after just over a hundred days to secure the camp.

On 17 June 2007, the firing of Katyusha rockets from southern Lebanon into northern Israel by unknown elements represented the most serious breach of the cessation of hostilities since the end of the war. This incident, the bombing of the Spanish peacekeepers seven days later, and the attack on a Tanzanian UNIFIL vehicle in July, all highlighted continuous concerns over UNIFIL's security amid the tense political climate in Lebanon.

UNIFIL's contribution to maintaining the cessation of hostilities in south Lebanon led to a request from the Lebanese government for a one-year renewal of its mandate in June 2007. Security Council Resolution 1773 of 24 August 2007 extended the mandate until 31 August 2008.

However, there remained further questions related to the wider implementation of Resolution 1701. There has been little meaningful progress on the issues of the captured Israeli soldiers and the Lebanese prisoners, although Israel and Hezbollah conducted a limited exchange in October. Discussion also persisted in the first half of 2007 over reports of arms trafficking across the Syrian-Lebanese border, with weapons destined for Hezbollah or for Syrian-backed militant Palestinian groups. Although Syria (and most troop-contributing countries) had made it clear that an expansion of UNIFIL's area of operations to the Syrian-Lebanese border was entirely unacceptable, the reports of weapons traffic indicated that the underlying issues leading to the 2006 war remained unresolved, and that renewed confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah or other militant groups continued to be a possibility. In response, the UN Secretary-General dispatched an expert team to assess the situation along the Syrian-Lebanese border, which identified a clear need for enhanced international assistance to improve border monitoring.

Some parties, notably Israel, also advocated greater and more forceful proactivism on the part of UNIFIL to detect and confiscate

weapons. At the same time, under the impact of the enduring political stalemate in Lebanon and a tense yet generally stable situation along the Blue Line, a broad consensus evolved in favor of continuity in UNIFIL's current mandate and engagement. This consensus recognizes the critical role that the Lebanese Armed Forces have to play in consolidating the arrangements in the south of the country, and that greater proactivism on the part of UNIFIL would undermine, rather than strengthen, the government of Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces. Consequently the Security Council adopted a presidential statement in early August 2007 that expressed its concern over the continued flow of weapons across the border, but separated this statement purposely from the adoption of the resolution extending UNIFIL's mandate three weeks later.

## Other Missions

### UNDOF

As tensions increased between Israel and Syria in the early summer, the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), established under the 1974 disengagement of forces agreement between Israel and Syria to provide a buffer between their forces in the Golan Heights, attracted greater-than-usual attention. In August, faced with military exercises and a buildup of forces on both sides, UNDOF contributed to calming the situation by clarifying that the increase in Israeli military activities in the Golan area was for training purposes, increased patrolling of the cease-fire line by the Israeli Defense Forces, and renovation of existing positions by both sides, and did not constitute preparation for a military confrontation. In early September, tension mounted with reports that Syrian anti-aircraft batteries had fired on Israeli aircraft intruding into Syrian airspace and dropping ammunitions, even though Israel had just stated publicly, a few days earlier, that it no longer feared a military conflict. Subsequent reports appeared to confirm that Israeli aircraft had targeted a facility inside Syria, though both



A French member of UNIFIL on patrol in the village of Al Tiry, southern Lebanon, 29 August 2007.

sides maintained a stony silence on the episode, as did, revealingly, their neighbors.

As has been routine for the past thirty years, the mandate of UNDOF, comprising 1,048 troops, was extended twice over 2007, without any alteration.

### UNTSO

The UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), established in 1948 to monitor observance of cease-fires negotiated between Israel and its neighbors, remains as the UN's longest-serving observer mission worldwide. Its current and main task is the provision of observers and of logistical and financial support to UNIFIL and UNDOF, as well as the provision of a small observer group in Egypt at the request of its government. While UNTSO observers operating under UNIFIL were affected during the war in Lebanon in 2006, UNTSO did not undergo any formal changes to its mandate or its authorized strength.

### EUBAM Rafah and EUPOL COPPS

While Lebanon remained the clear focus of the UN's efforts in the region in 2007, events elsewhere in the Middle East also captured much of the international community's attention. Against the background of factional strife and the failure of a power-sharing deal between Fatah and Hamas, by mid-2007 the Palestinian territory was split between Gaza, which remained under the control of Hamas, and the West Bank, where Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas appointed a new government.

Humanitarian conditions, particularly in Gaza, worsened, as border crossings remained closed for sustained periods. In this context, the continuation of the EU Border Assistance Mission at Rafah (EUBAM Rafah), comprising forty-four civilian police and deployed at the Egypt-Gaza crossing in Rafah, was drawn into question. The mission was extended for one year in May 2007, but suspended its operations under the impact of the intensified inter-cine violence and the closure of the Rafah crossing from 9 June onward. On 7 July, in an indication that it did not expect a

#### UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF)

- Authorization and Start Date 31 May 1974 (UNSC Res. 350)
- Force Commander Major-General Wolfgang Jilke (Austria)
- Budget \$39.5 million (1 July 2007–30 June 2008)
- Strength as of 31 October 2007 Troops: 1,043  
International Civilian Staff: 40  
Local Civilian Staff: 105

*For detailed mission information see p. 246.*

#### UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)

- Authorization and Start Date 29 May 1948 (UNSC Res. 50)
- Chief of Staff Major-General Ian Campbell Gordon (Australia)
- Budget \$30 million (1 January–31 December 2007)
- Strength as of 31 October 2007 Military Observers: 150  
International Civilian Staff: 105  
Local Civilian Staff: 120

*For detailed mission information see p. 351.*

#### EU Border Assistance Mission at Rafah (EUBAM Rafah)

- Authorization Date 5 November 2005 (Agreement on Movement and Access), 12 December 2005 (Joint Action 2005/889/CFSP)
- Start Date October 2005
- Head of Mission Major-General Pietro Pistolese (Italy)
- Budget \$14 million (October 2006–September 2007)
- Strength as of 30 September 2007 Civilian Police: 44  
International Civilian Staff: 10

#### EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS)

- Authorization Date 14 November 2005 (Joint Action 2005/797/CFSP)
- Start Date January 2006
- Head of Mission Colin Smith (United Kingdom)
- Budget \$4.8 million (October 2006–September 2007)
- Strength as of 30 September 2007 Civilian Police: 11

## Who Is Dying for Peace? An Analysis of UN Peacekeeping Fatalities

Walter Dorn\*

Since 1948, over 2,400 peacekeepers have made the “supreme sacrifice” while serving in UN operations. Thus the UN has suffered a historical average of forty fatalities of uniformed and civilian peacekeepers per year. A more precise analysis reveals significant variations and trends that may help identify the causes and, hopefully, help prevent future losses.

With the end of the Cold War and the advent of modern multidimensional peacekeeping, the number of deployed peacekeepers jumped from the traditional level of about 10,000 to a peak almost eight times that number. Unfortunately, the number of fatalities experienced an even greater jump. The year 1993 was the worst for peacekeeping fatalities in UN history. In the dangerous operations in Somalia, Bosnia, Cambodia, and other UN locations, 225 personnel lost their lives, about half from malicious acts. Fortunately, the situation in peacekeeping has improved tremendously since 1993. In 2006, there were 107 deaths, even though the number of peacekeepers in the field was 10 percent greater than in 1993.

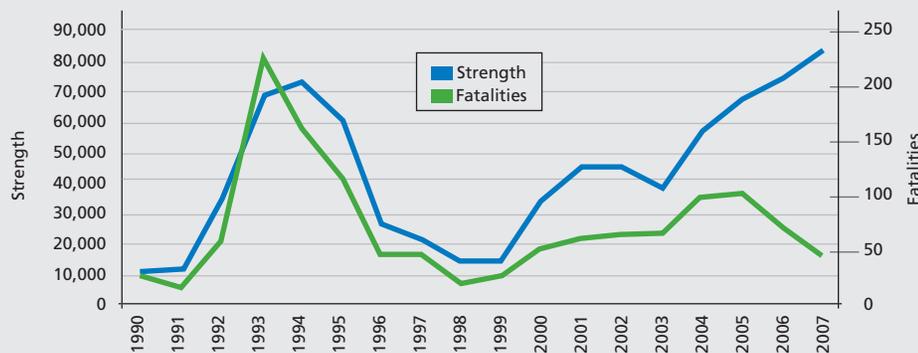
Malicious acts accounted for only 16 percent, while illness had become the prime killer, at 57 percent, for both military and civilian personnel. Accidents accounted for most of the remaining 27 percent.

The annual fatality rate for uniformed personnel has declined steadily since 1993, from 3.30 deaths per 1,000 serving, to 0.97 in 2006; a further decrease in the fatality rate, to 0.47, was projected for 2007. This encouraging trend is particularly pronounced in the new century: though the number of uniformed peacekeepers increased fivefold from 2000 to 2007, the number of fatalities did not rise accordingly, and even declined in recent years (see figure below).

For civilians working in UN operations, unfortunately, the same trend has not been observed. The fatality rate for international civilians increased from 1.0 per 1,000 in 2000, to 2.2 in 2006. The fatality rate for UN personnel hired locally was even higher, at 2.6 in 2006. Thus it is more risky to be a civilian in the field than to be a soldier. In 2006 the

fatality rate for civilians was more than double that of uniformed personnel.

Throughout the history of the UN, fatalities have been significant for both the developed and the developing world. India and Canada have suffered the most military fatalities (122 and 114, respectively, to the end of 2006). The United States and Argentina have experienced the greatest number of UN police fatalities (12 each). For international civilians, US and Indian fatalities top the list (12 and 7, respectively). The 2006 overall fatality rate for the developing world, however, was 77 percent higher than that for the developed world. This is especially significant because almost 90 percent of troops in the field are from the developing world. In recent years, illness has become the main cause of death. The UN would do well to directly address this issue of rising illness. A more thorough analysis of fatality statistics might be an important first step.



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Note: Figures for 2007 have been extrapolated from DPKO Situation Centre data available as of 30 September 2007.

return to previous conditions anytime soon, the EU decided to downscale EUBAM Rafah, whose members remained at their base in Ashkelon, Israel.

The EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS), the EU's second major civilian peace operation, was equally affected. EUPOL COPPS had been established in November 2005 and began operating in January 2006. The mission's efforts in the area of long-term reform and the provision of enhanced support to the Palestinian Authority in establishing sustainable and effective policing arrangements suffered following the Hamas electoral victory in January 2006. After the Hamas-Fatah split and the establishment of a new Palestinian government in the West Bank, however, EUPOL COPPS resumed its full operations within that area and thus contributed to the renewed momentum and hope for an Israeli-Palestinian breakthrough in the latter half of 2007.

#### *TIPH*

Much like the EU peace operations, the multinational Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) was affected considerably by the deteriorating conditions in the Palestinian territories. Established by Israeli-Palestinian agreement in 1994, and temporarily withdrawn and reestablished in 1997, TIPH is mandated with providing security for the residents of Hebron and promoting stability in the city through monitoring and reporting as well as various assistance activities. It is a small mission of only fifty-five personnel (reduced from seventy previously) from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Switzerland, and Turkey, armed with light weapons.

In March 2007, a Swedish TIPH observer was hospitalized after being assaulted with a large stone by a Jewish settler. The same month, tensions erupted after TIPH criticized the contested takeover of a building in central Hebron by a settler group; the property was eventually vacated in April 2007.

At the same time, the renewal of the mission's presence in Hebron in 2007 became a

symbol of hope for renewed dialogue. In August, shortly after the establishment of a new Palestinian government in the West Bank and the Israeli decision to reengage with the Palestinian Authority, TIPH's mandate extension became the first official agreement to be signed in a public ceremony by Israeli and Palestinian representatives.

#### *MFO Sinai*

The Multinational Force and Observers in Sinai (MFO Sinai) was established in 1981, pursuant to the withdrawal of the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) II in 1979 and the conclusion of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. A proposal by the parties for a new UN force to oversee implementation of this agreement was rejected by the United Nations. MFO Sinai

#### **Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH)**

• Authorization and Start Date	15 January 1997 (Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron), 21 January 1997 (Agreement on the Temporary International Presence in Hebron)
• Head of Mission	Karl-Henrik Sjørnsen (Norway)
• Budget	\$2.3 million (October 2006–September 2007)
• Strength as of 30 September 2007	Military Observers: 5 Civilian Police: 17 International Civilian Staff: 33

#### **Multinational Force and Observers in Sinai (MFO Sinai)**

• Authorization Date	3 August 1981 (Protocol to the Treaty of Peace)
• Start Date	April 1982
• Head of Mission	Ambassador James A. Larocco (United States)
• Budget	\$65 million (October 2006–September 2007)
• Strength as of 30 September 2007	Military Observers: 1,691 Civilian Staff: 15

began operations as a US-led multinational force in 1982, mandated to observe developments in three designated areas of the Sinai. In 2005, with the negotiation of the Access and Movement Agreement and Israel's "disengagement" from the Gaza Strip, its mission was amended to add a fourth function: observation and oversight of the Egyptian government's new commitments to patrol and prevent penetration of the Israel-Gaza boundary, in the context of Israel's withdrawal from Gaza. Notwithstanding Egypt's commitment and redeployment of forces to the area of the crossing, smuggling into the Gaza Strip continued unabated, and perhaps even accelerated, in 2007.

Although this last dimension of MFO Sinai's mandate is linked to conditions and developments in the Gaza Strip, the mission itself has to date not been affected by the turmoil in that area. The most significant incident for the force in 2007 occurred on 6 May, when a French-operated aircraft crashed on a training mission, killing eight French and one Canadian MFO personnel.

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### **Conclusion**

Persistently occupying a top spot on the international agenda, the Middle East remains an important area of engagement for UN and

non-UN peace operations. The adoption of Security Council Resolution 1701 in 2006 and the deployment of an expanded "new" UNIFIL initially appeared to herald a new era in peacekeeping and was frequently cited in the early months of 2007 as a possible model and precedent for a similar force in the Gaza Strip. Both the deterioration of conditions there and Hamas's takeover in June, and the deep crisis in Lebanon, however, have underlined that while military deployments are important tools to help stabilize arenas in the Middle East, the key challenges confronting the region can only be addressed by political means. Thus, while the perception has strengthened—in Arab, Western, and even Israeli eyes—that peace operations can make an effective and important contribution to international peace and security in the region, this trend has simultaneously been accompanied by the realization that such operations can only fulfill their mandates successfully if embedded in broader political frameworks and processes. Consequently, in the second half of 2007, much of the regional and international focus was on initiatives to help overcome the Lebanese crisis, renewed Israeli-Palestinian talks, and the US-sponsored meeting in Annapolis on 27 November to help restore the tattered peace process.