

## Middle East

The year 2006 was a dramatic one in the Middle East. Political tensions continued to surround Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon and the UN's investigation into the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri. Developments in the broader region, especially around the Security Council's consideration of Iran's reported nuclear weapons program, generated further tensions. Renewed fighting between Israel and the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, and between Israel and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, created an international crisis. All UN and non-UN peace operations in the region were affected to some extent, particularly the UN's mission in Lebanon, which was completely transformed—with important implications both for the region and for UN peacekeeping more generally.

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### **UN Interim Force in Lebanon: Background**

Established in 1978 by Security Council Resolutions 425 and 426 to assist in the provision of security in southern Lebanon following Israel's invasion of the area, the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was given a three-part mandate: to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces, to restore international peace and security, and to assist the government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area. The first real opportunity to implement that mandate came in 2000, when Israel withdrew its forces behind a "Blue Line" identified by the UN. Based on an assessment by UNIFIL, the Security Council confirmed that the withdrawal was in accordance with Resolution 425. UNIFIL's mandate was renewed, and the

mission was augmented by an infantry battalion to monitor the line. In the subsequent years, the Lebanese government was not able to deploy forces to the south, as called for in 2000 and reaffirmed in Resolution 1559, of 29 July 2005. That resolution also called for "the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias," as well as withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, which Syria did several months later. Also, the UN's continuing investigation into the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Hariri under authority of resolution 1644 (2005) evolved into an agreement with the Lebanese government to establish a special tribunal to try those responsible. The Security Council welcomed this in late November and requested the Secretary-General to finalize the arrangement. In view of the political crisis in Lebanon at the end of 2006, it was clear that actually establishing the tribunal would be a challenge.

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### **UNIFIL: Mandate and Functions**

For a period of several years, following Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon, UNIFIL's troop strength was gradually reduced in line with its limited mandate to observe developments along the Blue Line. The 2006 *Annual Review* queried UNIFIL's continuing utility, given the mismatch between its mandate and what it would take to fulfill the remaining elements of Resolutions 425 and 426, namely that the government of Lebanon assert its sovereignty throughout the whole of Lebanese territory. In the end, following active conflict during July and August 2006, UNIFIL saw a radical revision of its mandate, troop

strength, troop configuration, reporting structure, and rules of engagement—in effect, an entirely new mission born within the structure of an existing operation.

As set out in Resolution 1701, UNIFIL's mandate—in addition to existing responsibilities under Resolutions 425 and 426—has six new elements:

- Monitoring the cessation of hostilities.
- Accompanying Lebanese troops as they deploy throughout the south.
- Coordinating its activities with the Lebanese and Israeli governments.
- Ensuring humanitarian access to civilians and the safe return of displaced persons.
- Assisting the Lebanese armed forces in undertaking their extensive responsibilities (as set out in operative paragraph 8), which include preserving an area free of armed personnel (other than UNIFIL and Lebanese troops) between the Blue Line and the Litani River; fully implementing the Taif Accords, which require the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon; and ensuring that there are no foreign forces in Lebanon without government consent.
- Assisting the government of Lebanon in securing its borders (as set out in operative paragraph 14).

To implement these functions, UNIFIL's authorized troop strength was raised to 15,000. As of 30 November 2006 strength stood at 10,884, up from the approximately 2,000 troops present before the crisis.

In addition, UNIFIL is authorized to “take all necessary action . . . to ensure that its area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities of any kind, to resist attempts by forceful means to prevent it from discharging its duties under the mandate of the Security Council, and to protect United Nations personnel . . . and to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.”

While not explicitly adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, this language gives UNIFIL the authority to act robustly. Precisely how robustly it could or should act was



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### UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)

• Authorization and start date	19 March 1978 (UNSC Res. 425/426)
• Force commander and head of mission	Major-General Alain Pellegrini (France)
• Budget	\$143.5 million (1 July 2006– 30 June 2007) (note: includes \$50 million in commitment authority for expansion of mission)
• Strength as of 30 September 2006	Troops: 5,147 (10,884 as of 30 November 2006 International civilian staff: 100 Local civilian staff: 305)

*For detailed mission information see p. 275.*

a subject of intense debate as troop contributors were solicited and the concept of operations and rules of engagement were formulated.

In short, although UNIFIL is not explicitly mandated to disarm Hezbollah or secure

Lebanon's borders, it is mandated to help the government of Lebanon fulfill its explicit responsibility to ensure that its territory is free of unlawful armed forces and that its borders are secure. The relationship between UNIFIL's specific tasks and its responsibility to assist the government will doubtless be a source of debate within the mission and among member states. Indeed, before agreeing to deploy forces, leading troop contributors sought rules of engagement that would make clear that the mission itself would not engage directly in the disarmament of Hezbollah.

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### **UNIFIL: Key Developments and Challenges**

Hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah broke out on 12 July 2006, when Hezbollah launched several rockets across the Security Council–delineated Blue Line (which marks the boundary between Israel and Lebanon) and crossed into Israel, killing three soldiers and capturing two others. Israel launched major air strikes in response, and Hezbollah responded with further rocket attacks. The fighting escalated into a full-scale confrontation, ultimately involving Israeli ground troops penetrating southern Lebanon while Israeli air strikes destroyed infrastructure and Hezbollah targets throughout the south and sections of Beirut, with Hezbollah firing an estimated 3,700 rockets into Israel.

In his July report on UNIFIL, Secretary-General Kofi Annan commented that the fighting had “radically changed the context” in which UNIFIL operated. The fighting also injured sixteen UN personnel and killed five, when a UNIFIL observation post was hit by Israeli artillery. A political clash between the UN and Israel ensued when Annan suggested that the post had been deliberately targeted, but he quickly accepted assurances to the contrary from Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert.

The fighting occasioned heated diplomatic activity in the region and internationally, with US, European, and Arab foreign ministers as well as Secretary-General Annan traveling to the region and to an international

meeting in Rome to seek consensus on the principles of a cease-fire. Differences between several member states' positions on whether the fighting should be immediately halted, or allowed to continue long enough to dismantle Hezbollah's armed capacity, impeded early agreement on a cease-fire. However, as civilian casualties mounted, especially on the Lebanese side, international and Arab pressure for a cease-fire mounted.

After thirty-four days of fighting, hostilities were brought to a close when a cease-fire was announced. According to the 12 September 2006 report of the Secretary-General, official Lebanese figures showed 1,187 people killed in the fighting and 4,092 wounded, and Israeli figures showed 160 people killed and a further hundred wounded. On the Lebanese side, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that about 900,000 people had been displaced by the fighting, with 90 percent of those returning to their homes at the end of hostilities; Israel reported 300,000 residents displaced during the period in which 3,970 rockets struck Israel. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated damage of \$3.6 billion to the Lebanese infrastructure and economy; no comparable figures for economic losses in Israel were available.

The cease-fire was forged after intensive diplomacy following, first, the Secretary-General's proposal for a peacekeeping operation to oversee an end to hostilities and, second, the Lebanese government's proposal to deploy its own forces to the south—in implementation of a key provision of Resolutions 425 and 426, which had created the original UNIFIL operation. On 31 July 2006, the Security Council, in Resolution 1697, extended UNIFIL's mandate for one month to allow for exploration of alternatives.

On 11 August 2006, the Council adopted Resolution 1701, which called for a full cessation of hostilities and laid out a set of broader political processes relating to the question of Israeli prisoners as well as unresolved territorial claims, including in the area of the Shebaa farms. The resolution created a

buffer zone between the Blue Line and the Litani River, and set out new parameters (of mandate, troop strength, and posture) for a radically reconfigured UNIFIL. In addressing the Council in advance of it adopting the resolution, Secretary-General Annan noted international disappointment and frustration that the Council had not been able to act earlier.

The passage of Resolution 1701 had been preceded by an international and regional debate over the authorizing body and composition of a potential peacekeeping force. In initial reaction to the Secretary-General's proposal, the Israeli government was cautious and explicitly rejected the possibility of a UN force, as did some senior US government officials. In some capitals, discussion turned to the prospect of a NATO or an EU-led multinational force. Concerns about the notion of a force composed of Western nations led to discussion of a two-stage process, whereby first a multinational force led by European countries and including Turkish and Egyptian contingents would lay the foundation for a

broader force to be deployed later. The Lebanese government pushed for a UN force, arguing that it would be more legitimate and that the inclusion of some non-Western troops was important in terms of local acceptance of the force. In addition, after initial enthusiasm, some of the European potential contributors began to express reservations about having the political lead in a mission that would confront the difficult challenge of Hezbollah's role. As a result, the UN option quickly displaced consideration of other alternatives. Israeli agreement to a UN mission came after it became clear that the mission would not be a regular Blue Helmet, UN-commanded operation: the combination of a substantial European presence and a separate command structure created a perception in Israel that a new UNIFIL could be sufficiently firm to guarantee cross-border security (though UN officials in the region note that difficulties in establishing the command structure, and the debate over rules of engagement, have already dented Israel's confidence).



Secretary-General Kofi Annan and UNIFIL Commander, Major-General Alain Pellegrini visit the UNIFIL base in Naqoura near the port city of Tyre, Lebanon, 29 August 2006.

Debate then shifted to the question of whether the force should be mandated under Chapter VII, which was resisted by the Lebanese. A compromise position saw UNIFIL's new mandate being set out under Chapter VI, but with a far broader and stronger mandate and incorporating very firm language about the ability of UNIFIL to "take all necessary action . . . to ensure that its area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities of any kind," and to protect UN personnel and civilians.

The new UNIFIL's mandate was also the consequence of a compromise over the question of whether the mission should be authorized to disarm Hezbollah. Opposition to an explicit mandate of this type, both from the government of Lebanon and from leading troop contributors, led to there being no explicit language to that effect. However, operative paragraphs 11 and 12 leave ample room for interpretation to allow UNIFIL to exercise force in support of the government of Lebanon's responsibility to exercise its authority throughout the territory and to ensure that the territory is free of unlawful armed forces. To date, the major European troop contributors have expressed hesitancy with respect to active engagement with non-state forces, and the rules of engagement contain no explicit reference to a mission role in directly disarming Hezbollah.

After some initial hesitation, due to concerns about the ambiguity in the mandate, the new UNIFIL saw pledges of several thousand European and other troops. This included 1,000 from China—which (if fully deployed) would make it the largest Chinese deployment to UN peacekeeping to date. Italy pledged 3,000 troops, followed quickly by France, which had initially offered to lead the force, then pledged only 200 troops, raised later to 2,000. It was agreed that Italy would lead the force for several months starting in February 2007, after which France would take over. Germany's parliament voted to send 2,000–3,000 troops to the UN mission, which along with several other European countries would comprise a Maritime Task Force consisting of about 1,750 naval personnel, four

frigates, and ten fast patrol boats, as well as support units. These deployments constituted the first major European participation in a UN-commanded peacekeeping operation since the UN missions in the former Yugoslavia in the early to middle 1990s.

That being said, one of the conditions for participation that the European governments insisted on was a command structure supplementing the normal Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) mechanism. Alongside detailed negotiations over the rules of engagement and over the participation of troops from Muslim countries (to date, pledges have been received from Qatar, Turkey, Malaysia, and Indonesia), France and Italy led negotiations over a strategic military cell (SMC) to be established in New York. The centerpiece of the SMC lies in the deployment of a three-star general as director of the SMC, who liaises directly with the force commander of UNIFIL and reports directly to the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. As of late October 2006, thirteen of an envisaged twenty-seven military staff from participating nations had arrived in New York to staff the cell. The design of the SMC calls for the participation of military officers from troop-contributing countries (TCCs) on a pro rata basis, as well as one officer from each of the five permanent members of the Security Council. In this regard, the SMC offers an interesting variant on proposals discussed in New York earlier in 2006 about a revival of the Security Council's Military Staff Committee and a broadening of participation of that committee to include TCCs.

As the new UNIFIL is being brought up to strength, three broad challenges face the mission. First, it will undoubtedly encounter differing interpretations of its mandate to assist the government of Lebanon in restoring sovereignty throughout the south. Whether narrow or broad, interpretations of that mandate will likely shape the operational challenges and political perception of the mission among the local population.

Second, both operational and political realities for the mission will likely be affected

by progress on other elements of Resolution 1701, which call for the Secretary-General to secure agreement in principle from Israel and Lebanon on a long-term solution, including by dealing with the continuing question of the Shebaa farms (see below). As a measure of progress made by 12 December, the Security Council issued a statement welcoming the “imminent” withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon and the deployment of Lebanese armed forces to the south for the first time in three decades. The Council also expressed deep concern at Israeli incursions into Lebanese airspace, as well as unverified reports of the illegal movement of arms into Lebanon from Syria.

Third, the management of the mission will be shaped by an untried and untested but potentially dynamic structure, the strategic mission cell. The relative success or failure of that cell as a reporting mechanism may in turn have broader implications for, first, European militaries’ perception of the DPKO and, second, the broader memberships’ perception of the merits and demerits of special management structures being established for specific missions. It has not gone unnoticed that it was a robust operation in the Middle East, not Africa, that saw large-scale European participation under the UN and the adoption of a special management arrangement. On the other hand, if the SMC, as planned, gains participation from all the major troop contributors, it may provide part of an answer to the long-standing demand from troop contributors for more active engagement in UN command and control structures.

### Other Missions

The events of July–August 2006, as well as the passage of Resolution 1701, had implications for other missions in the area as well.

#### TIPH

The Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) was established by agreement of the parties in 1994 after a political crisis that arose when an Israeli opened fire on

#### 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	Arne Huuse (Norway)
• Budget	\$2.5 million (October 2005–September 2006)
• Strength as of 30 September 2006	Military observers: 9 Civilian police: 7 International civilian staff: 23

Palestinians at the Mosque of Ibrahim. The function of TIPH—which was withdrawn in August 1994, then reestablished in 1996—is to provide security for the residents of Hebron and to promote stability in the city through monitoring and reporting as well as various assistance activities. Despite its broad mandate, TIPH is a very small mission with nine military observers, armed only with pistols for self-defense.

TIPH has had a difficult history in Hebron since the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000. In 2002, two TIPH observers were killed by a Palestinian gunman, who was eventually arrested by Israeli police. Relationships with settlers have often been troubled, with frequent incidents of stone-throwing, causing minor injuries to TIPH staff.

Tensions between Palestinians and TIPH arose in February 2006 when caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed appeared in the Danish press. The protests that followed elicited the immediate evacuation of the eleven Danish observers from Hebron, and in the following week, during an attack on TIPH headquarters by a band of some 300 stone-throwing Palestinian protesters, the remainder of the mission similarly evacuated to Tel Aviv. By the end of April, and once the situation had cooled sufficiently, the TIPH staff began returning to Hebron, to resume their normal monitoring activities, albeit in circumstances

### UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)

- Authorization and start date 29 May 1948 (UNSC Res. 50)
- Chief of staff and head of mission Major-General Ian Campbell Gordon (Australia)
- Budget \$30 million (1 January–31 December 2006)
- Strength as of 30 September 2006 Military observers: 151  
International civilian staff: 106  
Local civilian staff: 121

*For detailed mission information see p. 363.*

### UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF)

- Authorization and start date 31 May 1974 (UNSC Res. 350)
- Force commander and head of mission Lieutenant-General Bala Nanda Sharma (Nepal)
- Budget \$39.9 million (1 July 2006–30 June 2007)
- Strength as of 30 September 2006 Troops: 1,047  
International civilian staff: 36  
Local civilian staff: 107

*For detailed mission information see p. 257.*

still characterized by the elevated tensions that sometimes disrupt TIPH's activities.

#### *UNTSO and UNDOF*

The UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) was established in 1948 to observe cease-fire lines, and today provides observers and logistical support to UNIFIL and the UN Disengagement Force (UNDOF). UNDOF was established under the 1974 disengagement agreements between Israel and Syria, to provide a buffer between their forces in the Golan Heights. There were no major developments for UNTSO and UNDOF themselves during 2006, but the major revision of UNIFIL's mandate and operational structure, and the passage of Resolution 1701, will likely

have knock-on effects for these two missions. The expansion of UNIFIL's observer and other functions will undoubtedly require amplified efforts by UNTSO, although no formal changes to its mandate or authorized strength are expected. As for UNDOF, the fact that Resolution 1701 calls for proposals to delineate the international borders of Lebanon, "especially in those areas where the border is disputed or uncertain, including by dealing with the Shebaa farms area," may well have longer-term implications for UNDOF. Whatever else is claimed about the Shebaa farms, they fall largely within UNDOF's area of operations. This was among the reasons supporting the Security Council's certification of Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000, although the Shebaa farms had not been vacated. Delineation of the borders between Israel, Lebanon, and Syria could have implications for UNDOF's area of operations, and for the 1974 disengagement agreement on which the mission was established.

#### *MFO Sinai, EUBAM Rafah, and EUPOL COPPS*

The Multinational Force and Observers in Sinai (MFO Sinai) was established in 1980 in the context of Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai, and has since operated as a US-led multinational force, created by agreement of the parties. Until 2005 it was mandated to observe developments in three designated areas of the Sinai. In 2005 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.

During the same period, the European Union created a seventy-person civilian monitoring mission, the EU Border Assistance Mission at Rafah (EUBAM Rafah), to observe from the Palestinian side developments along the Rafah boundary. The Rafah crossing point was opened on 25 November 2005, and by early February 2006, 100,000 people had used the crossing. However, Israel demanded that it

be closed in late June following the outbreak of hostilities sparked by a Palestinian attack on an Israeli army outpost that killed two Israeli soldiers and resulted in the kidnapping of a third. Israel launched a large offensive into the Gaza Strip three days later. During July and August, the crossing was open only sporadically, and was the subject of armed attacks. By early September, Italian foreign minister Massimo D'Alema was hinting that the EU could be forced to withdraw its monitors should the crossing remain closed. Also during 2006, the EU Policy Mission for the Palestinian Territories deployed and began assisting the Palestinian Authority in establishing effective police arrangements.

### Conclusion

Following the revision of UNIFIL's mandate and the reconfiguration of its presence, peacekeeping in the Middle East entered a new phase. Remarkably, there are now international peace operations on all of Israel's borders, except that of Jordan. The re-establishment of a robust, European-led UN presence in southern Lebanon saw political commentators in Israel for the first time talking about the possibility of a UN peacekeeping solution for the West Bank and Gaza. However, early difficulties surrounding UNIFIL's rules of engagement, and hesitancy about confronting Hezbollah, led to a quick resumption of skepticism. Nevertheless, between the quasi-hybrid operation in Lebanon (a European-led multinational force in UN clothing), and the separate but intersecting presences maintained along the Rafah boundary, the Middle East has emerged as an important laboratory for global peace operations. Given the elevated political significance of the Middle East, it has the potential to impact—through success, or through failure—both Arab and Western perceptions of the UN, the EU, and more broadly, the effectiveness of peace operations as a credible tool for managing international peace and security.

#### 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	James A. Larocco (United States)
• Budget as of 30 September 2006	\$59 million
• Strength as of 30 September 2006	Military observers: 1,687 Civilian staff: 15

#### EU Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point (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	\$13.2 million
• Strength as of 30 September 2006	Civilian police: 72 International civilian staff: 6 Local civilian staff: 8

#### 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	Jonathan McIvor (United Kingdom)
• Budget	\$5.8 million
• Strength as of 30 September 2006	Civilian police: 9 International civilian staff: 3 Local civilian staff: 4