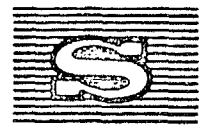


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PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON

Establishment of the Force

1. Upon approval by the Security Council of my report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) of 19 March 1978 (S/12611), I appointed Major-General E. A. Erskine, the Chief of Staff of UNTSO, as Interim Commander of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).
2. A forward headquarters has been set up at Naqoura, in southern Lebanon. Plans are being worked out to establish UNIFIL headquarters at Tyre as soon as possible.
3. The 45 UNTSO observers assigned to the Israel/Lebanon sector are now assisting UNIFIL under the direction of the Interim Commander. In addition, 19 UNTSO observers from Observer Group Sinai have been transferred to the Israel/Lebanon sector for service with UNIFIL.
4. On 19 March, I informed the Security Council of my intention to have certain units of UNEF and UNDOF transferred temporarily to UNIFIL to serve with the Force in the initial stage. Upon receiving the concurrence of the Governments concerned, one reinforced company of the Iranian contingent of UNDOF, and one reinforced company of the Swedish contingent of UNEF, were transferred to UNIFIL, together with movement control and signal detachments of the Canadian logistic unit of UNEF.
5. On 21 March, following consultations with the Security Council, I accepted the offers of the French, Nepalese and Norwegian Governments to provide contingents for the new Force. The French and Nepalese battalions will consist of about 600 all ranks each. The Norwegian contingent, which will include an infantry battalion, a medical and a maintenance unit, will have a total strength of 750. Action was immediately initiated to bring the three contingents to the mission area.
6. I am giving urgent attention to the problem of logistic support for the Force. The United Kingdom has offered to provide in Cyprus a forward mounting base for UNIFIL and facilities including provision of supplies, storage and maintenance. It would be my intention to request the Governments of France and Norway to provide the necessary logistic elements for service with UNIFIL. In this connexion and as a first step, I have requested Norway to provide a workshop

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company, capable of servicing three battalions, and a helicopter unit consisting of one flight of four helicopters.

7. The Government of France has agreed to provide the initial airlift of its contingent free of charge to the United Nations. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany has offered to provide similarly initial airlift facilities for some of UNIFIL contingents and, in particular, for the bulk of the Norwegian contingent. The Government of the United States will provide, also free of charge, initial airlift facilities for UNIFIL contingents, upon request.

Movement of troops and related developments

8. On 22 March, an advance party of the Iranian company, consisting of 73 all ranks, accompanied by 9 UNTSO observers detached from the observer group in Sinai, arrived in southern Lebanon. On the same day, a Canadian movement control detachment of 5 arrived in Beirut and was immediately assigned to the reception area which had been set up at Beirut International Airport for the reception of the arriving units of UNIFIL.

9. On 23 March, an advance party of the French contingent, consisting of 214 all ranks and their vehicles and equipment, landed at Beirut International Airport. This unit will be deployed urgently in southern Lebanon in the Tyre area. The Canadian signal detachment, composed of 12 all ranks, arrived in Naqoura with their vehicles and equipment and took up their assignments at the UNIFIL forward headquarters. The advance party of the Swedish reinforced company arrived in Naqoura. The main body of the Iranian company arrived in southern Lebanon by crossing the border fence near Metulla, and were established in an overnight bivouac area in Ghanduriyah, approximately four kilometres south of the Litani river.

10. Some delay was incurred during the movement of the Iranian and Swedish troops because of the opposition of the Christian de facto forces. This opposition, however, was overcome after negotiations. The movement of the Iranian troops and of some observers was also delayed by mined roads in the areas of the Akiya and Khardala bridges. Action is being taken to have the mines cleared.

11. The Interim Force Commander reports that from available information the cease-fire seems to be holding since 22 March.

Contacts with the parties

12. In accordance with my instructions pursuant to paragraph 9 (a) of my report (S/12611), Lieutenant-General Ensio Siilasvuo, Chief Co-ordinator of the United Nations Peace-keeping Missions in the Middle East, has had contacts with all the parties concerned on the steps to be taken for the speedy implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

13. Discussions have also been held on arrangements to facilitate the return of the displaced persons who had fled southern Lebanon during the recent military operation.

Humanitarian assistance to southern Lebanon

14. It may be recalled that in 1976, at the request of the Lebanese Government, I established a special fund to provide humanitarian assistance in helping the country overcome the ravages of the recent conflict. In the light of the current emergency, I have authorized my special representative for Lebanon, Mr. John Saunders, to reallocate existing funds to meet the most pressing needs. Mr. Saunders will co-ordinate the assistance operation as it affects southern Lebanon in close co-operation with the Interim Force Commander.

* * *

15. In concluding this first progress report, I wish to express my deep appreciation to the Governments which have contributed the contingents, Military Observers and supporting services that have made possible the speedy establishment of UNIFIL.
