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

General situation and withdrawal of Israeli forces

1. According to reports submitted by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the general situation in southern Lebanon has remained quiet during the period under review, and there have been no serious incidents.
2. The Israeli forces withdrew on 11 and 14 April from two areas east and south of the Litani River under the plan submitted to the Chief Co-ordinator of United Nations Peace-keeping Missions in the Middle East, Lieutenant-General Ensio Siilasvuo, by the Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defence Force on 6 April (S/12620/Add.2, para. 19). The withdrawal took place without incidents, and following the withdrawal, the Israeli positions in the two areas were taken over by the troops of the Norwegian battalion.
3. Traffic of returning refugees, which began on 11 April, has continued to be heavy throughout the area of operations, particularly in the vicinity of the city of Tyre.
4. With the consent of the Security Council, I have appointed Major-General E. A. Erskine, Commander of UNIFIL. General Erskine is now operating from the temporary Force headquarters at Naqoura.

Strength and composition of the Force

5. As of 17 April 1978 the strength of the Force was as follows:
 - Canada - 19 (temporarily detached from UNEF)
 - France - 728
 - Iran - 185 (temporarily detached from UNDOF)
 - Nepal - 636
 - Norway - 718
 - Sweden - 216 (temporarily detached from UNEF)

6. In addition, 68 military observers of UNTSO assist UNIFIL in the performance of its tasks.

7. The main body of the Nepalese battalion has now arrived in the mission area. A party of three Senegalese officers arrived in the mission area to meet with the Force Commander and to make the necessary preparations for the arrival of the main body of the Senegalese battalion which is to arrive by the end of April.

8. In response to my approach, the Government of Canada has agreed to increase the temporary Canadian detachment to a communications unit of about 80, all ranks, for a period not to exceed six months. This unit will be operated as an extension of, and co-ordinated with, the existing communications set-up of UNDOF and UNEF for reasons of efficiency and economy.

9. I am continuing consultations concerning possible additional contingents to UNIFIL, bearing in mind the principle of equitable geographical representation, as well as the requirements of the Interim Force.

10. The airlift of the Norwegian battalion and its vehicles and equipment was carried out by airlifts provided by the Governments of the Federal Republic of Germany, the United States of America and Norway itself, free of charge to the United Nations. The United States Government has also provided free of charge the airlift facilities for the Nepalese contingent. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany has provided, also free of charge to the United Nations, a substantial portion of the vehicles and equipment required by the Nepalese contingent. The Secretary-General wishes to express his deep appreciation to the Governments concerned for these generous voluntary contributions.

Deployment and activities of the Force

11. UNIFIL is currently deployed in an area from about 3 to 7 kilometres wide south of the Litani River and stretching from the vicinity of Tyre to the Mount Hermon area. The area of deployment has been slightly widened in its eastern sector as a result of the withdrawal of Israeli forces effected on 11 and 14 April.

12. The main body of the Nepalese battalion has now arrived in the area of operations and has been deployed in the central/eastern sector south of the Litani River. The deployment of UNIFIL as of 17 April, including base camps and sectors, is as follows from west to east:

(a) French battalion: Base camp at Tyre. It is manning seven checkpoints in the vicinity of Tyre and is patrolling in the area.

(b) Swedish company is deployed in the central/western sector. It has established a base camp at Srifa and is manning four observation posts.

(c) Iranian company is deployed in the central/western sector. The company has established its base camp at Ghanduriyah. It is manning three observation posts and is deployed at the Akiya Bridge. One post has been taken over by the Nepalese battalion.

(d) Nepalese battalion: The main body of the Nepalese battalion is deployed in the central/eastern sector between the Iranian company and the Norwegian battalion. The Nepalese battalion is now in the process of consolidating its positions. It relieved one post previously manned by the Iranians and one by the Norwegians and it has established three additional posts. Nepalese troops have also taken over the control of the Khardala Bridge (AMR 2009-3053) 1/ from the Norwegians.

(e) Norwegian battalion is deployed in the eastern sector, with its base camp at Ebel es Saqi. It has established 16 posts.

(f) Canadian logistic unit continues to provide communication facilities for the Force.

(g) UNTSO military observers continue to man the existing five observation posts along the Israel-Lebanon border. Selected observers continue to serve in staff positions at UNIFIL temporary headquarters at Naqoura. Other observers are providing liaison with the various forces in southern Lebanon.

Contacts with the parties

13. The Chief Co-ordinator of United Nations Peace-keeping Missions in the Middle East, Lieutenant-General Ensio Siilasvuo, has continued his contacts with all the parties concerned on the steps to be taken on the speedy implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), especially with regard to the cease-fire and the withdrawal of Israeli forces. The Force Commander, Major-General E. A. Erskine, has been in constant contact with the parties on matters concerning the deployment and functioning of the Force.

14. General Siilasvuo met with the Israeli Defence Minister on 11 April and discussed with him the question of further withdrawal of Israeli forces.

15. As the Security Council has been informed, I shall be visiting the area from 17 to 19 April 1978. On that occasion, I shall be meeting with the parties concerned at the highest level, as well as with Generals Siilasvuo and Erskine. I shall also visit the contingents of UNIFIL in the area of operations. I shall, of course, report to the Security Council on the results of my visit as soon as possible.

1/ AMR - approximate map reference.