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

(for the period 26 July 1988-24 January 1989)

Introduction

1. In its resolution 617 (1988) of 29 July 1988, the Security Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for a further interim period of six months, until 31 January 1989. The Council also reiterated its strong support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries; re-emphasized the terms of reference and general guidelines of the Force as stated in the report of the Secretary-General of 19 March 1978, approved by resolution 426 (1978), and called upon all parties concerned to co-operate fully with the Force for the full implementation of its mandate; and reiterated that UNIFIL should fully implement its mandate as defined in resolutions 425 (1978), 426 (1978) and all other relevant resolutions. The Council requested the Secretary-General to continue consultations with the Government of Lebanon and other parties directly concerned on the implementation of the resolution and to report to the Council thereon.

2. On the same day the Security Council adopted resolution 618 (1988), in which it condemned the abduction of Lieutenant-Colonel William Richard Higgins, an officer of the United States of America and military observer of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) serving with UNIFIL, who had been kidnapped on 17 February 1988; demanded his immediate release; and called upon Member States to use their influence in any way possible to promote the implementation of the resolution.

Organization of the Force

3. As of January 1989, the composition of UNIFIL was as follows:

Military personnel

Fiji	HQ UNIFIL	11	
	Infantry battalion	670	
	Force Mobile Reserve	36	
	Military police	<u>8</u>	725
Finland	HQ UNIFIL	13	
	Infantry battalion	508	
	Force Mobile Reserve	18	
	Military police	<u>9</u>	548
France	HQ UNIFIL	22	
	Composite battalion (maintenance company, defence company, armoured escort company)	474	
	Military police	<u>8</u>	504
Ghana	HQ UNIFIL	52	
	Infantry battalion	761	
	Engineer company	46	
	Force Mobile Reserve	33	
	Military police	<u>7</u>	899
Ireland	HQ UNIFIL	33	
	Infantry battalion	601	
	HQ Camp Command	81	
	Force Mobile Reserve	17	
	Military police	<u>12</u>	744
Italy	HQ UNIFIL	4	
	Helicopter unit	44	
	Military police	<u>4</u>	52
Nepal	HQ UNIFIL	19	
	Infantry battalion	800	
	Force Mobile Reserve	32	
	Military police	<u>5</u>	856
Norway	HQ UNIFIL	27	
	Infantry battalion	678	
	Maintenance company	158	
	Force Mobile Reserve	30	
	Military police	<u>17</u>	910
Sweden	HQ UNIFIL	23	
	Logistic battalion	611	
	Force Mobile Reserve	9	
	Military police	<u>8</u>	651
	Total UNIFIL		<u>5 889</u> a/

a/ The total UNIFIL strength includes 16 officers from the Force (4 Fijians, 6 Ghanaians and 6 Nepalese) who have been temporarily redeployed to serve with the United Nations Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP).

The deployment of UNIFIL as of January 1989 is shown on the map set out in the addendum to the present report (S/20416/Add.1).

4. The command of UNIFIL continues to be exercised by Lieutenant-General Lars-Eric Wahlgren of Sweden.

5. In the period under review, 64 military observers of UNTSO assisted UNIFIL in the performance of its tasks. These unarmed officers are organized as Observer Group Lebanon (OGL) and are under the operational control of the Commander of UNIFIL. They manned the five observation posts along the Lebanese side of the Israel-Lebanon armistice demarcation line. They also operated three mobile teams, which were increased to four from mid-December 1988, in parts of the area of operation including those under Israeli control, the so-called "security zone". At the request of the Government of the United States of America, all United States officers assigned to OGL have been withdrawn from service in Lebanon, as of November 1988.

6. Logistic support for UNIFIL was provided by the Swedish logistic battalion, elements of the French composite battalion, the Norwegian maintenance company and the Italian helicopter unit, as well as by certain civilian sections (notably those responsible for communications and vehicle maintenance).

7. In January 1988, I informed the Council (see S/19445, para. 6) of my efforts to obtain a replacement for the explosive ordnance detachment, which had formed part of the French composite battalion but had been withdrawn in the second half of 1987 following a decision by the Government of France. These efforts have not, so far, been successful. I am, therefore, again asking the troop-contributing Governments to ensure that their contingents have an improved capacity for dealing with explosive ordnance, particularly unexploded ammunition and mines.

8. The Force Mobile Reserve, a composite mechanized company consisting of elements from seven contingents (Fiji, Finland, Ghana, Ireland, Nepal, Norway and Sweden) has again proved its usefulness as an integrated unit, especially at times of tension in different parts of the UNIFIL area of operation when it is used to reinforce battalions and seal off critical areas.

9. The Lebanese army unit serving with UNIFIL maintained a strength of 128, all ranks. The bulk of the unit was stationed at Tyre, while small elements were at Arzun, Al Yatun and Qana.

10. I regret to report that, during the period under review, three members of the Force, an Irish, a Norwegian and a Swedish soldier, lost their lives in accidents. Seventeen soldiers suffered injuries, 5 as a result of hostile fire, 5 from mine explosions and the others in accidents. Since the establishment of UNIFIL, 156 members of the Force have died, 60 of them as a result of firing and mine or bomb explosions, 68 in accidents and 28 from other causes. Some 230 have been wounded by firing and mine or bomb explosions.

11. On 12 December 1988, a statement was issued in Beirut in the name of a group calling itself the Organization of the Oppressed of the World threatening to

execute Lieutenant-Colonel Higgins for alleged espionage and in retaliation for Israeli attacks against Lebanese and Palestinian targets. On the same day, I expressed grave concern about this statement, rejected the charges against Colonel Higgins as baseless and urgently called for his immediate release.

12. Efforts to improve the security of UNIFIL personnel and facilities continued during the mandate period that is about to end. It is hoped that further improvements, including the relocation of the headquarters of the Norwegian battalion to a secure compound near Ebel es Sagi, will be achieved during the next mandate period.

13. The problems faced by UNIFIL in obtaining land and buildings remain acute, because of arrears, since 1984, in the payment of rents by the Lebanese Government to existing landlords. A partial payment of rents was made by the Lebanese authorities in September 1988. However, the landlords concerned have strongly protested about the amounts received, which they say took no account of inflation and the devaluation of the Lebanese currency since 1984 and covered only a small fraction of outstanding rents. I have drawn the attention of the Lebanese authorities to the urgent need for payment of the full amounts due and to the difficulties which the Force will otherwise continue to encounter in obtaining the land and buildings it needs.

#### Situation in the UNIFIL area

14. UNIFIL remained unable to extend its area of operation up to the Israel-Lebanon armistice demarcation line, as envisaged in Security Council resolution 425 (1978). Israel continued to control in southern Lebanon an area manned by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) and the so-called "South Lebanon Army" (SLA). The boundaries of that area have not been clearly defined but are determined de facto by the forward positions of IDF and SLA. It includes the area adjacent to the international border, part of the Nepalese, Irish and Finnish battalion sectors, the entire Norwegian battalion sector and sizeable areas to the north of the UNIFIL area of operation. Its approximate extent within the UNIFIL area of operation is indicated on the map (see S/20416/Add.1). (It should be noted that areas under Israeli control north of the UNIFIL area are not shown.) Within the UNIFIL area of operation, IDF and SLA maintained 54 positions (see map). IDF personnel were observed in SLA positions on numerous occasions, especially at night.

15. In the period under review, UNIFIL recorded a total of 114 operations by resistance groups against IDF and SLA targets (12 in August, 18 in September, 21 in October, 26 in November, 27 in December, and 10 in January). These operations usually took the form of attacks with small arms, rocket-propelled grenades, rockets and mortars; mines and roadside bombs were also often used. There was a marked intensification of activities in some of the northern parts of the UNIFIL area of operation, especially in the Finnish battalion sector.

16. Activities from IDF/SLA positions or patrols, whether in retaliation or unprovoked, often involved the use of heavy artillery, tank and mortar shelling and Israeli helicopter gunships. Fire from IDF/SLA positions or patrols resulted in

many firings close to, and sometimes hit, UNIFIL positions and vehicles, in one case an ambulance of the Finnish battalion. In the current reporting period, there were 108 unprovoked firings close, all of which were protested by UNIFIL to IDF. Following the increase in firings close to Irish battalion positions from IDF/SLA compounds in July 1988, which were protested to the Israeli authorities at a high level, there was a lessening of such activities in that sector from August until the autumn, but they later increased.

17. UNIFIL was subjected to other harassments, e.g. interference with the movement of its troops, mainly by SLA personnel, but also by IDF, all of which were protested to the Israeli military authorities.

18. Firings close to UNIFIL positions resulted also from action by resistance groups; in most cases, such firings stopped after warning shots by UNIFIL personnel. Several other incidents between UNIFIL and armed elements occurred, mainly due to denial to armed individuals of passage through UNIFIL checkpoints, and these resulted in threats against UNIFIL personnel.

19. In a particularly serious incident in the Finnish battalion sector on the evening of 12 November 1988, five armed elements succeeded in entering an isolated UNIFIL position in the gorge of the Litani river. The position is maintained primarily in order to protect a pump station of the Lebanese water authority, which ensures water supply to more than 50 villages in the area. The armed intruders held five Finnish soldiers and two Lebanese civilian water authority workers at gunpoint and demanded that UNIFIL personnel accompany them to Sidon. Negotiations throughout the night resulted in four of the intruders surrendering to Finnish troops which had surrounded the position. The fifth refused to surrender, but was eventually overpowered and disarmed by the Finnish soldiers, though I regret to have to report that in the struggle one of the two Lebanese civilians was killed by the intruder. All five intruders were handed over to Lebanese authorities.

20. On the morning of 15 December 1988, four Lebanese civilians working in a field near Tibnin were abducted and transported to the prison maintained by SLA at Khiam in the Israeli-controlled area. The vehicles which are believed to have been used for the operation passed through an Irish battalion checkpoint without their purpose being detected. The incident led to an extremely tense situation at Tibnin and the headquarters there of the Irish battalion was fired at by armed elements. As a result, the Irish battalion was put on full alert and was reinforced by a unit of the Force Mobile Reserve. In the afternoon of the same day, the tension spread to other parts of the Irish battalion sector. A serious incident developed near the village of Jumayjimah, where about 20 armed elements fired at and stopped an Irish armoured personnel carrier. This situation was quickly defused through negotiations. There were, however, further threats to Irish positions and to members of the battalion elsewhere in the Irish battalion sector. In an apparently related incident on the following day, five armed elements fired at and overran an Irish battalion checkpoint near Tibnin and kidnapped three Irish soldiers. UNIFIL immediately blocked all roads in its area of operation and mounted an intensive search on the ground and by helicopter. The Amal Movement provided valuable assistance in the search operations and, on 17 December, Amal personnel intercepted the armed elements and secured the release of the Irish soldiers. On the same day, two of the Lebanese civilians abducted near Tibnin were released from Khiam prison.

21. UNIFIL continued to provide protection and security to the civilian population. In recent weeks, the SLA campaign of forced recruitment of local men sharply intensified in the Israeli controlled area, especially in the Norwegian battalion sector and part of the Finnish battalion sector. Coercion and arrests of those refusing to join the SLA ranks were reported, as well as threats to their relatives. These activities were protested by UNIFIL to the Israeli military and political authorities.

22. Many Lebanese civilians were abducted from their villages by SLA and expelled from the Israeli controlled area. On 5 January 1989, in particular, 26 civilians, including elderly persons, children and infants, were expelled from their homes in the Norwegian battalion sector. Mr. Marrack Goulding, Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, met the persons concerned in Beirut on 12 January and subsequently pressed the Israeli authorities, at a very senior level, to permit their return to their homes. UNIFIL itself consistently protested to IDF about such expulsions. UNIFIL also provided its good offices, at the request of Lebanese authorities, by intervening with the Israeli military and political authorities to seek the release of Lebanese civilians arrested and held by IDF/SLA.

23. UNIFIL troops detonated mines and roadside bombs, as well as unexploded remnants of war, in the area of operation. This is an important activity given the high risk to UNIFIL personnel and to the civilian population, especially unsuspecting children, of casualties from such explosives.

24. UNIFIL pursued its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the maximum extent possible within available resources. This was done by individual battalions, mainly in the medical and health areas and in support to welfare institutions, using funds supplied by the troop-contributing Governments. In addition, UNIFIL medical centres in the area of operation treated a large number of civilians; at the UNIFIL hospital at Naqoura, approximately 6,448 Lebanese patients were treated, 561 of them as in-patients.

25. UNIFIL also continued its close co-operation in the humanitarian field with Lebanese authorities, as well as with United Nations agencies and programmes, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and non-governmental organizations. Consultations between the Force Commander and the Co-ordinator of United Nations Assistance for the Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon are continuing, with a view to promoting, through the office of the Co-ordinator, projects in the humanitarian, welfare and reconstruction areas that would benefit the inhabitants of southern Lebanon.

#### Financial aspects

26. By its resolution 43/229 of 21 December 1988, the General Assembly authorized the Secretary-General to enter into commitments for UNIFIL at a rate not to exceed \$11,903,500 gross (\$11,714,500 net) per month for the 12-month period beginning 1 February 1989, should the Security Council decide to continue the Force beyond the period of six months authorized under its resolution 617 (1988). If the Council decides to extend UNIFIL beyond its current mandate period, the costs to

the United Nations for maintaining the Force would be within the commitment authorized by the Assembly in its resolution 43/229, assuming an average maximum force strength of 5,850 troops and continuance of the Force's existing responsibilities.

27. At the beginning of January 1989, unpaid assessed contributions to the UNIFIL Special Account for the mandate periods ending 31 January 1989 amounted to \$304 million.

#### Observations

28. The mandate period which is about to end was another difficult time for UNIFIL. The Force's ability to carry out the tasks which the Security Council assigned to it in 1978 is still blocked. Many of the assumptions on which the Council's decision to establish the Force was founded remain unfulfilled. Israel continues to refuse to withdraw its forces from Lebanon. Its "security zone" has become a focus of attack, both by those whose aim is to attack Israel itself and by those with the aim of liberating Lebanese territory from foreign occupation. Attempts by armed elements to infiltrate Israel, which increased substantially during 1988, and retaliatory air and commando raids by Israel, often far to the north of the UNIFIL area of operation, mean that international peace and security are a long way from being restored. The failure to elect a new President of the Republic and the subsequent existence of two rival governments in Beirut has prevented UNIFIL from making any progress towards fulfilment of its third task, which is to assist the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in southern Lebanon.

29. Another negative factor has been the continuing harassment of UNIFIL personnel by various armed groups in the area. It is with deep regret that I have to report to the Council that, in spite of the Council's resolution 618 (1988) of 29 July 1988 and strenuous and continuing efforts by myself and my staff, it has not yet been possible to secure the release of Lieutenant-Colonel Higgins, who was kidnapped near Tyre nearly a year ago, on 17 February 1988. I renew my appeal for help to all Governments or individuals who may be in a position to influence those holding Colonel Higgins. Paragraph 20 of the present report describes another very serious incident which, but for the energetic action of the Amal Movement in intercepting the kidnappers, would have led to three UNIFIL soldiers being added to the list of foreign hostages so tragically and unjustifiably held captive in Lebanon. No less inexcusable are the daily firings close to UNIFIL position and vehicles. Most of these are the work of SLA. The Israeli authorities, who arm, pay, train and direct SLA, have repeatedly been urged, at all levels, to ensure that this dangerous practice is brought to an end. Efforts on their part, for which I was grateful, led to a marked improvement in the weeks following my last report to the Council, but I regret to have to inform the Council that the incidence of firings close has since risen close to its former level.

30. A further problem, which has worsened during the period under review, is the Force's financial situation. A number of Member States either fail to pay their assessed contributions in full or pay them only after long delay. The deficit of

\$304 million on the UNIFIL Special Account (see para. 27 above) represents money which is owed by the United Nations to the troop-contributing Governments. As I have repeatedly stated, it is both unfair to those Governments and threatening to the prospects for future peace-keeping operations that so large a share of the costs of UNIFIL should be borne by the taxpayers of the troop-contributing countries. I again appeal to all Member States to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time.

31. In recent consultations with the Lebanese authorities, all those consulted, on both sides in Beirut, stressed their hope that the Security Council would again decide to renew the UNIFIL mandate for a period of six months. This was also the view of the Syrian authorities. I have since received a letter dated 19 January 1989 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations (S/20410), which confirms the Lebanese request to the Security Council for renewal of the mandate for a further period of six months.

32. As for the Israeli authorities, they confirmed that their positions remain basically unchanged. They continue to take the position that the Israeli presence in Lebanon is a temporary arrangement, which is necessary for ensuring the security of northern Israel so long as the Lebanese Government is not able to exercise effective authority and prevent its territory from being used to launch attacks against Israel. They do not consider that UNIFIL, as a peace-keeping force, can assume this responsibility.

33. Given the negative developments described in paragraphs 28 to 30 above, and in particular the continuing inability of UNIFIL to carry out its original mandate, it is understandable that questions have been asked about whether the Force should be maintained at its present strength at a time when the international community is having to meet demands for substantial resources to finance several new peace-keeping operations. There are, however, four countervailing considerations which the Security Council will wish to take into account in studying Lebanon's request. They are as follows:

(a) The Council has repeatedly reaffirmed its conviction that the solution to the problems of southern Lebanon lies in the implementation in full of resolution 425 (1978), by which, inter alia, the Council decided to establish UNIFIL;

(b) Although still prevented from carrying out its original mandate, UNIFIL plays a valuable role in controlling, to an important extent, the level of violence in southern Lebanon, especially along the line of confrontation at the edge of the Israeli controlled area, or "security zone". To withdraw the Force would risk an unpredictable conflagration in a volatile region;

(c) UNIFIL provides humanitarian support to the population in its area of operation. Some of these functions are described in paragraphs 21 to 25 above. Moreover, the people of southern Lebanon consider the presence of UNIFIL to be essential for their security and for the return of some degree of normality to their daily lives. Inhabitants of southern Lebanon displaced from their villages during the hostilities in earlier years who have since returned to their homes have mainly done so in those parts of the UNIFIL area of operation which are relatively



free of IDF/SLA interference. This was clearly demonstrated following the IDF/SLA withdrawal from Tallet Hugban in 1987 (see S/19445, para. 26);

(d) The continuing presence of UNIFIL is seen by the people of Lebanon as a whole as a symbol of the international community's commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of their country. Most of the Lebanese leaders recently consulted stated that they were convinced that implementation of resolution 425 (1978) would play a major part in helping to resolve the wider political crisis in Beirut and that the withdrawal of UNIFIL would make it even more difficult to achieve national reconciliation.

34. These are powerful arguments and they cause me to recommend, again, that the Council should take the action requested of it by Lebanon and renew UNIFIL's mandate for a further period of six months.

35. Finally, I wish to pay tribute to Lieutenant-General Lars-Eric Wahlgren, the Force Commander, and to all the men and women under his command, both military and civilian, for the manner in which they have carried out their difficult assignment. Their discipline and bearing have been of a high order, reflecting credit on themselves, on their countries and on the United Nations.

