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

(for the period from 22 January 1996 to 20 July 1996)

Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in pursuance of Security Council resolution 1039 (1996) of 29 January 1996, by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for a further period of six months, until 31 July 1996. It covers developments since my last report of 22 January 1996 (S/1996/45).

Situation in the area of operation

2. The reporting period was marked by an escalation of hostilities between the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) and its local Lebanese auxiliary, the de facto forces (DFF), on the one hand, and armed elements who have proclaimed their determination to resist the Israeli occupation on the other. The hostilities intensified in February and March 1996, and culminated in April in more than two weeks of heavy Israeli bombardments. The Security Council considered the situation and, on 18 April, adopted resolution 1052 (1996), calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities by all parties. On 10 May, the General Assembly also debated the matter and adopted resolution 50/22 C.

3. In their attacks against IDF/DFF, the armed elements employed small arms, mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and anti-tank missiles, as well as road-side bombs and rockets. Most of the attacks were carried out by the Islamic Resistance, the military wing of the Shiite Muslim Hizbullah organization. Others were carried out by the Shiite movement Amal and some by Palestinian factions. In responding to attacks or initiating operations, IDF/DFF employed automatic weapons, tanks, artillery, helicopter gunships, fixed-wing aircraft and naval vessels.

4. After a relatively calm period in January, hostilities in February and March were again at the level of previous reporting periods. UNIFIL recorded 24 operations by armed elements in February, 18 in March, and 6 in the first 10

days of April. On more than one occasion, notably on 16 February and 13 March, the Islamic Resistance conducted simultaneous attacks against a large number of IDF/DFP positions in the Israeli-controlled area (ICA). There were also numerous reports of operations north of the Litani river, bringing the total to more than 200 in the first three months of the mandate period. There was a significant development in March when the Islamic Resistance penetrated deep into the ICA to attack IDF and inflicted significant casualties. Thus, on 4 March, four Israeli soldiers were killed and nine others wounded by road-side bombs, when they were pursuing armed elements who had opened fire on a border patrol near Houle. On 10 March, one Israeli soldier was killed and four were wounded in a road-side bomb explosion near the village of Kafer Kela, across the border from Metulla. On 20 March, a suicide-bomber hurled himself at an Israeli convoy south of Taibe, killing an officer. IDF/DFP also suffered casualties in attacks north of the Litani river: on 14 March, eight Israeli soldiers were wounded on the road between Aichiyeh and Rihane in an ambush that involved road-side bombs, mortars and small arms fire.

5. The ability of the Islamic Resistance to penetrate deep inside the ICA and to inflict casualties on IDF triggered a public debate in Israel, the thrust of which was that IDF must respond forcefully and should no longer be bound by constraints imposed on it. Those constraints were connected with an agreement reportedly arranged by the United States of America in the summer of 1993. The United Nations has not been informed of this agreement, although it has been publicly mentioned by Israeli and Hizbullah officials. Based on such public statements it would appear that the Islamic Resistance agreed to refrain from targeting villages and towns in northern Israel, while IDF agreed to refrain from doing the same in Lebanon; there has been no mention of limitations concerning attacks on military targets. Indications in Israel that the agreed restrictions were no longer acceptable and that a large-scale operation against the Islamic Resistance was being contemplated heightened tension in the area. On 15 March, the Force Commander of UNIFIL conveyed his concern to the Israeli authorities.

6. Tension remained high and rose again when, on 30 March, two men working on a water tower in Yatar were killed and one was injured by a missile fired by IDF. In response, the Islamic Resistance fired more than 20 rockets to Israel, causing minor damage. The Israeli Government declared that the firing of the missile at Yatar had been a mistake. On 8 April, a boy was killed and three others were wounded in an explosion near Brashit. Hizbullah claimed to have collected evidence that IDF had planted the explosives. The Israeli authorities, for their part, denied any involvement and suggested that the explosions had been caused by old mines. UNIFIL investigated the explosion and found that it had been caused by four serially connected and booby-trapped road-side bombs; UNIFIL could not determine who had placed them. The day following the explosion, the Islamic Resistance fired almost 30 rockets towards northern Israel. Some of these impacted at Qiryat Shemona, injuring a number of civilians and causing damage. In retaliation, Israeli aircraft dropped nine bombs on the Majdal Silm-Sultaniyeh area, and Israeli artillery fired some 250 rounds artillery towards the same area.

7. IDF/DFP initiated attacks and carried out retaliatory firing against armed elements. Altogether, UNIFIL recorded some 10,000 artillery, mortar and tank

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rounds fired by IDF/DFP before 11 April. Israeli aircraft continued to overfly Lebanese territory, including Beirut.

8. The Israeli navy patrolled Lebanese territorial waters and imposed restrictions on the local fishermen around Tyre. Occasionally, it fired at or near fishing boats and temporarily detained the fishermen. UNIFIL intervened with the Israeli authorities repeatedly for the release of those detained.

9. As before, UNIFIL continued its efforts to limit the conflict and to protect the inhabitants from the fighting. Through its network of checkpoints and observation posts and an active programme of patrolling, the Force did its best to prevent its area of deployment from being used for hostile activities and to defuse situations that could lead to escalation. It also deployed as necessary to provide a measure of protection to the villages and to farmers working in the fields. As before, Lebanese villagers sought refuge in UNIFIL positions when there was shelling.

10. In the early morning of 11 April, Israeli aircraft and artillery began an intensive bombardment of southern Lebanon as well as targets in the Beirut area and in the Bekaa Valley. The declared objective of these attacks was to put pressure on the Government of Lebanon so that it would curb the activities of the Islamic Resistance.

11. About two hours after the attacks started on 11 April, the Force Commander of UNIFIL, Major General Stanislaw Woźniak, received a telephone call from the chief of IDF liaison, who warned UNIFIL of the attacks. General Woźniak protested the attacks and stated that UNIFIL would: endeavour to prevent any IDF incursion into its area of operation; do all it could to protect civilians and expect IDF to do the same; and insist on complete access to its area of operation through IDF-controlled gates. General Woźniak reiterated his strong protest in a meeting with the Israeli liaison chief the next day.

12. In the first few days of the operation, Israeli air force and artillery attacked selected targets, including the homes of persons suspected to be affiliated with Hizbullah. At the same time, an IDF-controlled radio station in southern Lebanon broadcast threats of further bombardments, set deadlines for the inhabitants to leave and stated that once the deadline had passed IDF would regard all who remained as legitimate targets. By 13 April, some 90 towns and villages, including Tyre and villages north of the Litani river, had thus been placed under threat. As a result of these threats and the Israeli bombardment, about a quarter of the inhabitants, more than 100,000, left UNIFIL's area of operation and Tyre. Around 5,000 persons sought refuge inside UNIFIL positions and at its logistic base in Tyre.

13. Given the large number of inhabitants who remained behind, IDF did not in fact treat the whole area as a free-fire zone. Once it had run out of targets, it conducted, with great fire power, attacks on sources of firing and other targets of opportunity, as well as pre-emptive bombardment of locations from which attacks were known to have been launched in the past.

14. At the same time, IDF carried out limited attacks in the Beirut area, which followed no apparent military rationale but raised fears, heightened by remarks

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attributed to Israeli officials, that Lebanon's overall economic recovery was being threatened. In addition, the Israeli navy blockaded the Lebanese ports and shelled the coastal road north of Saida, seriously disrupting communications between the capital and the south.

15. In the last few days of the operation, the Israeli forces targeted the main roads in southern Lebanon using heavy bombs dropped by aircraft.

16. Altogether, UNIFIL counted in its area of operation more than 600 Israeli air raids, involving both fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, which used over 1,500 bombs or rockets. Israeli artillery fired some 25,000 shells, in particular in the sectors of the Fijian, Nepalese, Irish and Ghanaian battalions as well as to the area north of the Litani river opposite the Finnish battalion sector. IDF also used long-range patrols which moved forward of the ICA and, in two places, which were later notified to UNIFIL, planted mines and booby-traps. The Norwegian battalion sector, which is entirely within the ICA, remained calm.

17. Throughout the Israeli bombardment, the Islamic Resistance fired some 1,100 rockets from the UNIFIL area. Many fell short; an estimated 600 landed in northern Israel. Some of the rockets impacted in villages and towns, causing injuries to civilians as well as damage. In areas within range of the rockets, many of the inhabitants left their homes and others were evacuated. On 14 April, a rocket fell inside the UNIFIL headquarters compound at Naqoura, causing minor damage.

18. In UNIFIL's area of deployment more than 120 civilians were killed by Israeli fire and an estimated 500 were wounded. Most of these casualties occurred on 18 April as a result of the shelling of a United Nations compound at Qana, in which more than 100 Lebanese were killed and many more wounded. This incident has been the subject of an investigation by my Military Adviser, whose report I conveyed to the Security Council on 7 May (S/1996/337). In the whole of the UNIFIL area at least 450 houses were damaged or destroyed and many roads were made impassable by bombs. The supply of water and electricity was disrupted.

19. By a letter, dated 23 May 1996, from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the Government of Lebanon provided a detailed account of Israeli attacks on Lebanon that took place during April 1996 (A/50/561-S/1996/380).

20. UNIFIL continued to do its best to protect the civilian population from the violence and to provide humanitarian assistance. Because of the mounting tension, UNIFIL had already reinforced its positions close to the line of confrontation, and increased patrolling. When the bombardment began, the Force strengthened these measures and cancelled all leave. Isolated Lebanese army positions inside the UNIFIL area were taken under protection. Despite the Israeli bombardment and harassment by both sides, UNIFIL continued to patrol its area actively. The Force provided shelter, food, medical assistance and other services to the civilians who had sought protection at its positions and camps. The Force also organized convoys for those villagers who wished to leave their homes and brought supplies to those who chose to remain but had run out of food

and water. UNIFIL teams visited the villages and distributed food and other relief supplies, and searched for persons trapped in damaged buildings.

21. UNIFIL's efforts were severely hindered by the sustained bombardment. UNIFIL trucks and armoured personnel carriers, which were engaged in delivering humanitarian aid to the population, were often delayed or stopped altogether as a result of firing by Israeli artillery and aircraft, despite assurances from IDF that all UNIFIL humanitarian missions would be facilitated. In the later stages of the Israeli operation, the damage to roads impeded UNIFIL movements.

22. In addition, the positions and vehicles of the Force came frequently under fire. There were some 270 instances of firings at or close to UNIFIL positions, of which about 15 were caused by the Islamic Resistance and the remainder by IDF/DFP. A Fijian officer and two Nepalese soldiers were injured by Islamic Resistance elements in response to the Force's attempts to prevent the latter from launching rockets from the vicinity of UNIFIL positions. Direct hits from Israeli artillery caused serious injuries to four Fijian soldiers, as well as considerable damage to UNIFIL positions and vehicles. All firings were protested to the authorities concerned.

23. In the aftermath of the Qana incident, UNIFIL has sought and received a commitment from IDF that it will respect a safety zone around UNIFIL positions. UNIFIL has also received assurances from the Islamic Resistance, through the Lebanese Army, that they will not conduct operations in the vicinity of UNIFIL positions.

24. The hostilities ended on 27 April, when a partial cease-fire went into effect, following diplomatic efforts by France and the United States of America. The partial cease-fire is in the form of an understanding, which was announced simultaneously in Beirut and Jerusalem. According to the published text of the understanding, armed groups in Lebanon will not carry out attacks by any kind of weapon into Israel, and Israel and those cooperating with it will not fire any kind of weapon at civilians or civilian targets in Lebanon. Furthermore, the two parties will ensure that under no circumstances will civilians be the target of attack and that civilian populated areas and industrial and electrical installations will not be used as launching grounds for attacks. It is stated that, without violating the understanding, nothing therein shall preclude any party from exercising the right of self-defence. The understanding provides for the establishment of a monitoring group consisting of the United States, France, the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon and Israel and of a consultative group, to consist of France, the European Union, the Russian Federation and other interested parties for the purpose of assisting in the reconstruction of Lebanon.

25. On 16 July, the Secretariat was briefed about the monitoring group by representatives of France and the United States. The Secretariat was informed that the chair of the group would be based in Cyprus while its military experts would meet in Naqoura. The two representatives requested that UNIFIL provide facilities for the latter meetings.

26. After the partial cease-fire went into effect, there was a brief lull in activities with only five operations observed by UNIFIL in May. There were 11

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operations in June and 5 in the first half of July. Nearly all were carried out by the Islamic Resistance. There were also reports of over 40 operations north of the Litani river. Again, some of these attacks were well inside the ICA and there was a high number of Israeli casualties (8 killed and more than 20 wounded). This contributed to a continuing high level of tension. On 30 May, two staggered road-side bombs killed four Israeli soldiers and injured several others at Marjayoun, where IDF/DFP have their headquarters in southern Lebanon. On 10 June, all 13 members of an Israeli patrol north of the Litani river were killed or wounded in an ambush by the Islamic Resistance. In retaliatory fire after the 10 June incident, Israeli artillery killed one Lebanese Army soldier and wounded one civilian. On 14 June, a roadside bomb exploded in Houle, killing three children. In sum, while the number of operations has gone down, the number of casualties has remained high.

27. In view of the seriousness of the events in southern Lebanon, I asked the Under-Secretary-General for Peace-Keeping Operations, Mr. Kofi Annan, to travel to the region to consult with Governments prior to the expiry of UNIFIL's mandate. Mr. Annan visited the region from 26 June to 4 July 1996 and met with senior officials in Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Israel. He also met with the Force Commander of UNIFIL and his staff and visited the Fijian battalion headquarters at Qana and other locations in the UNIFIL area of deployment.

Humanitarian activities

28. UNIFIL continued to extend humanitarian assistance in the form of harvest escorts, medical care, engineering works and the distribution of educational material and equipment provided by UNICEF. Medical teams treated more than 2,000 patients each month at UNIFIL medical aid posts and mobile clinics. Some humanitarian projects were funded by troop-contributing Governments.

29. In connection with the Israeli bombardment in April, the Government of Lebanon requested the United Nations to issue an international appeal to meet the urgent humanitarian needs resulting from the hostilities. Through the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Beirut, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs assisted the authorities in mobilizing international support and coordinating the response of the United Nations system. A "flash appeal", launched on 20 April, sought to mobilize US\$ 8.6 million to address the needs of 20,000 most affected families. The overall response was positive: some \$14 million was committed by donors.

30. UNIFIL played an important role in handling the relief stores of other organizations. During the April hostilities the major portion of the relief supplies and medical equipment provided to southern Lebanon flowed through the UNIFIL base at Tyre to the units in the field, which distributed them. In addition, during and after the fighting, UNIFIL supported the operations of several United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and provided assistance to local and international non-governmental organizations. In addition, UNIFIL repaired roads destroyed in the bombardment to the extent possible with the modest means at its disposal.

31. UNIFIL continued the disposal of unexploded artillery shells and aerial bombs in its area of operations. Two small mine fields, which IDF had planted in the UNIFIL area of deployment, were cleared in May, on the basis of information provided by IDF. In all, 243 controlled explosions were carried out.

Organizational matters

32. As of July 1996, UNIFIL comprised 4,483 troops, from Fiji (579), Finland (491), France (247), Ghana (644), Ireland (625), Italy (45), Nepal (600), Norway (615) and Poland (637). The replacement of the Norwegian Maintenance Company by a Polish unit was effected in May 1996. UNIFIL was assisted in the performance of its tasks by 57 military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization. In addition, UNIFIL employed 561 civilian staff, of whom 123 were recruited internationally and 438 locally. The deployment of UNIFIL is shown on the annexed map. Major-General Stanislaw F. Woźniak of Poland continued as Force Commander.

33. The streamlining of UNIFIL, mentioned in previous reports, was completed in May 1996. UNIFIL will continue its efforts to achieve further economies in the area of administrative and support services.

34. I regret to report the death of two Ghanaian soldiers from natural causes. Five Fijian and two Nepalese soldiers were wounded as a result of firing. Since the establishment of UNIFIL, 207 members of the Force have died: 76 as a result of firing or bomb explosions, 84 in accidents and 47 from other causes. A total of 324 have been wounded by firing or by mine or bomb explosions.

35. The problem of the rents owed by the Lebanese Government to the owners of the land and premises used by UNIFIL has still not been resolved. Not all owners have received payment and there is continuing controversy over the lists of owners prepared by the Lebanese authorities. Some owners have requested that their properties be vacated. For practical and budgetary reasons, only some of these requests can be met.

36. UNIFIL maintained close contacts with the Lebanese authorities on matters of mutual concern. Those authorities provided valuable assistance in connection with the rotation of troops and logistic activities in Beirut. The Lebanese army was helpful in defusing confrontations with armed elements. It also provided accommodation for some UNIFIL contingents while on leave in Lebanon. The force continued to cooperate with the Lebanese Internal Security Forces on matters pertaining to the maintenance of law and order.

37. It will be recalled that since 18 April 1995, two Palestinians have been accommodated at UNIFIL headquarters, after being deported to Lebanon by the Israeli authorities and denied entry by the Lebanese authorities. On 28 February 1996, one of them was allowed to leave for Jordan. Contacts continue to find a solution for the other.

Financial aspects

38. By its resolution 50/89 B of 7 June 1996, the General Assembly appropriated to the Special Account for UNIFIL an amount of \$125,722,800 gross for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997, based on an average strength of 4,513 troops and a continuation of its existing responsibilities. The assessment of the appropriation, which is equivalent to \$10,476,900 gross per month, is subject to the decision of the Security Council to extend the mandate of the Force beyond 31 July 1996.

39. As of 30 June 1996, unpaid assessed contributions to the UNIFIL Special Account amounted to \$201.9 million. The total unpaid assessed contributions for all peace-keeping operations at that date amounted to \$2.7 billion.

Observations

40. The last six months were marked by the serious escalation of hostilities in April, of which the population of southern Lebanon was the primary victim. UNIFIL, too, came under fire. It is a matter of regret that the United Nations once again has cause to call upon the parties concerned to respect the non-combatant status of civilians and United Nations peace-keepers.

41. On 29 January, in extending UNIFIL's mandate, the Security Council inter alia reiterated that the Force should fully implement its mandate as defined in resolution 425 (1978), 426 (1978) and all other relevant resolutions; re-emphasized the terms of reference and general guidelines of the Force contained in the then Secretary-General's report of 19 March 1978 (S/12611); and called upon all parties concerned to cooperate fully with the Force for the full implementation of its mandate. As in the past, such cooperation has not been forthcoming and there has been no active political pressure on the parties to implement resolution 425 (1978). In recent years, the best hope for the implementation of that mandate has been through the negotiating process within the framework established at the Madrid conference in October 1991. That process, however, appears to have made no progress towards the attainment of the Security Council's objectives concerning southern Lebanon.

42. This leaves UNIFIL in the same difficult and dangerous situation in which it has been since the Israeli forces withdrew to their present lines in 1985. At the time, my predecessor wrote: "UNIFIL is now stationed in an area where active resistance against IDF is in progress, and in which the latter is engaged in active countermeasures. UNIFIL, for obvious reasons, has no right to impede Lebanese acts of resistance against the occupying force, nor does it have the mandate or the means to prevent countermeasures" (S/17093, para. 24). In the circumstances, UNIFIL has done its best to limit violence and to protect the civilian population. This has become its de facto mandate. In pursuing it, the Force has in fact impeded both sides from pursuing their military aims in the conflict, but only to the extent that the parties have permitted it to do so, out of a presumed desire to avoid escalation. As a peace-keeping force, it is powerless when either party is bent on confrontation.

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43. In this connection, I note that the understanding announced on 26 April 1996 has the potential of contributing to the protection of civilians and restraining the parties. It is therefore to be hoped that it will soon be put into full effect. I have instructed UNIFIL to assist the monitoring group, which is currently being set up in accordance with the understanding. I believe this is consistent with the Security Council's objectives and would meet with its approval.

44. The Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations has outlined his Government's position on the situation in the area in a letter he addressed to me on 18 July 1996 (S/1996/566). He also informed me of his Government's decision to request the Security Council to extend the mandate of UNIFIL for a further period of six months.

45. In similar circumstances in the past, I have recommended that UNIFIL's mandate be extended in view of the importance of its contribution to stability and the measure of protection it is able to afford to the civilian population. Notwithstanding the events of last April, these considerations are, I believe, still valid, bearing in mind the likely effect in the area if UNIFIL were to be withdrawn in present circumstances. I therefore recommend that the Security Council accept the Lebanese Government's request and extend the mandate of UNIFIL at its present strength for another period of six months, that is, until 31 January 1997. In making this recommendation, I have especially in mind UNIFIL's role in shielding the civilian population from the worst effects of the violence. The Force's work in this regard during the April escalation has underscored the importance of this function.

46. I must again draw attention to the serious shortfall in the funding of the Force. At present, unpaid assessments amount to some \$201.9 million. This represents money owed to Member States that contribute the troops who make up the Force. I appeal to all Member States to pay their assessments promptly and in full and to clear all remaining arrears. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Governments contributing troops to the Force, in particular those of developing countries, for their understanding and patience in these difficult circumstances.

47. In conclusion, I wish to pay tribute to Major-General Stanislaw F. Woźniak, the Force Commander, and to the men and women under his command for the manner in which they have carried out their difficult and often dangerous tasks, in particular during the hostilities in April. Their discipline and bearing have been of a high order, reflecting credit on themselves, on their countries and on the United Nations.

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