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Note to Mr. Nambiar

Re: Briefing to the Security Council on UNIFIL

As per your memo of 24 September on "Matters relating to the Security Council and the Media", please find attached a copy of my briefing to the Security Council on UNIFIL, which I intend to deliver at this afternoon's consultations on the implementation of SCR 1701.

Edmond Mulet
12 December 2007

N/A
JL



Briefing to the Security Council
12 December 2007

Consultations on the Secretary-General's report on the
implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

[Mr. Pedersen will open with a briefing on the political aspects of the report and related updates. The DPKO briefing will follow regarding UNIFIL-related aspects.]

Mr. President,

I am pleased to have the opportunity to provide the Council with an update of key UNIFIL-related aspects of resolution 1701 (2006). Further to Mr. Pedersen's briefing, I will focus my remarks on the main operational and security aspects of UNIFIL's mandate as they have developed since the Secretary-General's last report on resolution 1701 (2006), which was issued on 30 October.

The situation in the UNIFIL area of operations—on land and at sea—has been relatively quiet and without any serious incidents since the attacks that took place this summer; namely, the 17 June Katyusha rocket attack on northern Israel and the two attacks on UNIFIL on 24 June and 16 July.

Concerning the investigations into the 24 June attack, which killed six UNIFIL peacekeepers serving with the Spanish contingent, and the 17 June Katyusha rocket attack on northern Israel, the investigations are still ongoing, however there are no new developments to report. Three forensics experts have recently arrived in UNIFIL, thereby enhancing the Mission's own investigative capacity.

At the same time, UNIFIL continues to be the subject of threats against its personnel, facilities and infrastructure, including attempted attacks during August.

I am grateful to the Council for its support both through its Presidential Statement of 3 August and subsequent resolution 1773 (2007), in which it underlined the necessity that UNIFIL have at its disposal all necessary means and equipment to carry out its mandate.

In this regard, DPKO and DFS have sought a number of additional assets as risk mitigating measures to enhance the Mission's Force protection and civilian staff security. While a number of contingents have equipped their troops with electronic counter-measures to detect and jam explosive devices, UNIFIL has also augmented its detection and jamming capabilities with assets that have been placed at the disposal of the Force Commander/Head of Mission for Mission-wide use. I am also pleased to report that UNIFIL expects to soon receive micro-unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). These micro-UAVs would be utilized at the Force Commander's discretion as an additional means to mitigate risk to UNIFIL personnel.

Mr. President,

UNIFIL has continued to carry out its operational activities, and has done so in close coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). As the Council requested in its resolution 1773 (2007) and as the Secretary-General's report notes, UNIFIL has continued to strengthen its coordination and liaison with the LAF.

Building on the strong peacekeeping partnership that has developed over the past 15 months, UNIFIL and LAF have started to implement coordinated patrols and co-located checkpoints. Such operations, where units from UNIFIL and the LAF remain under their respective chains of command, require a high degree of preparation, knowledge of each other's modus operandi, and continuous liaison and coordination. To date, a total of eight coordinated patrols (four in each Sector) and one co-located checkpoint (alternating between Sectors East and West of UNIFIL's area of operations) are being conducted daily. Joint training exercises between UNIFIL and the LAF are also ongoing, with the aim of preparing for coordinated foot patrols starting in mid-December.

Mr. President,

Maintaining the area south of the Litani free of armed elements, unauthorised weapons, and related infrastructure constitutes one of the main tasks of UNIFIL and the LAF under resolution 1701 (2006).

Since mid-October, UNIFIL and the LAF have discovered four bunkers, nine rocket launchers and eight empty rocket containers in the UNIFIL area of operations. However, the Mission has found no evidence that these old bunkers, arms caches and other infrastructure have been used since the cessation of hostilities in August 2006. Further, UNIFIL patrols continue to monitor uncovered infrastructure to ensure that it is not put back into use.

That being said, there has been an increasing number of Israeli reports alleging that Hizbullah is rebuilding its

military capacity, largely outside of UNIFIL's area of operations, but also within it. UNIFIL, in collaboration with the LAF, immediately investigates any claims of alleged violations of resolution 1701 (2006) within its area of operations, if specific information and evidence is received. However, information provided by the IDF has been of a generic nature, with the expectation on the Israeli side that UNIFIL and the LAF will on that basis discover the concrete evidence. To date, UNIFIL has not found evidence of Hizbullah rebuilding its military capacity south of the Litani River.

Mr. President,

At the beginning of November, Hizbullah claimed to have held 'military manoeuvres' in southern Lebanon, including inside UNIFIL's area of operations, which it said was in response to Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) exercises in northern Israel. The Prime Minister of Lebanon swiftly denied that such manoeuvres had taken place, rather referring to them as a tabletop 'simulation exercise', which involved Hizbullah civilian supporters monitoring the IDF exercises from the Lebanese side of the border. On the ground; UNIFIL and the LAF monitored no activity in contravention of resolution 1701 (2006) during the period that the 'manoeuvres' allegedly occurred. However, the Mission did note an upsurge of radio communications during this period.

Mr. President,

The regular monthly tripartite meetings remain an important mechanism for the parties to address key security and

operational issues and to continue the confidence-building process. I am pleased to report further progress on the visible marking of the Blue Line, with two Blue Line Barrels now in place. As the area along the Blue Line is heavily mined, mine clearance activities continue to facilitate this work.

In recent weeks, there have been no major ground violations of the Blue Line. Regrettably, however, the number of air violations by Israeli aircraft and drones over Lebanese airspace continue unabated. The high number of Israeli air violations, which frequently occur at low altitudes, breaking the sound barrier and causing considerable stress among the local population is of concern. The damage they do to the credibility of both the LAF and UNIFIL should not be underestimated. In addition to the incident on 25 October, on which the Secretary-General has already reported, the LAF opened fire on Israeli aircraft flying over Lebanon on two more occasions, on 1 and 15 November. While Israel maintains that it will continue its overflights for reconnaissance purposes, the overflights constitute a violation of resolution 1701 (2006).

Mr. President,

Regarding security arrangements for the northern part of the village of Ghajar, I regret that no progress has been made. The Force Commander continues to consult both sides on how best to move the issue forward. The status quo, whereby the IDF remains in control of the northern part of the village and a small surrounding area north of the Blue Line is a continuous violation of resolution 1701 (2006).

On the issue of cluster munitions, I regret that Israel has not yet handed over technical strike data, which consistently has been requested by the United Nations. The United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre (UNMACC) continues to discover new cluster bomb strike locations more than one year after the cessation of hostilities.

Mr. President,

Let me now briefly turn to the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force (MTF), which has continued its interdiction operations off the Lebanese coast in support of resolution 1701 (2006) without any major incident. Some 11,450 ships have been hailed since the inception of the MTF in October 2006; 49 of them have been inspected by the Lebanese authorities in the ports. No illegal activity with regard to resolution 1701 (2006) has been found.

The MTF training programme with the Lebanese Navy is proceeding well. In mid-November, the MTF and Lebanese Navy carried out a complex tactical exercise that involved, for the first time, all operational and tactical levels of the LAF Navy, including parts of the newly reconstructed Coastal Radar Organization. For the first time, Lebanese naval assets and command and control facilities on shore successfully worked together during an exercise. The exercise will be repeated in January 2008.

Mr. President,

Improving the capabilities of the LAF, both its land and naval forces, is critical to the effective implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). I reiterate the Secretary-

General's call on Member States to strengthen LAF capacities and increase its capabilities through bilateral support and assistance.

Mr. President,

As the Council is aware, security and political processes in Lebanon are inextricably linked. The presence of UNIFIL and the LAF in southern Lebanon has helped to stabilize the situation on the ground. However, the need for progress on the political aspects of resolution 1701(2006) and the importance of viable Lebanese political institutions to the work of UNIFIL cannot be overstated. While UNIFIL's continued success remains dependent on the viability of the Government of Lebanon and the LAF, the Mission will continue to do its utmost to maintain stability within its area of operations.

In this regard, it remains critical that UNIFIL maintains its full capacity and is provided with all necessary means and equipment—on land and at sea—in order to enable it to efficiently and effectively perform its mandated activities and contribute to the preservation of stability in its area of operations.

I am grateful to the troop contributing countries for their contribution to UNIFIL and pay tribute to those who have died in its service.

Thank you, Mr. President.