

Central Intelligence Agency

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Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

29 January 1986

LEBANON-ISRAEL: Impact of UNIFIL Withdrawal

Summary

Violence in southern Lebanon--especially by radical Shia Hizballah elements--is likely to increase over the next few months regardless of whether or not UNIFIL withdraws. The presence of UNIFIL has only a marginal effect on the Lebanese and Palestinian groups that are determined to escalate their attacks against the Army of South Lebanon (ASL) and Israeli forces. Although the UNIFIL presence may have reduced ASL reprisals against civilians, it has not deterred Israeli or ASL operations in the security zone. A UNIFIL withdrawal may coincide with, but would not be the cause of, a breakdown of security in the Israel-Lebanon border area.

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If UNIFIL leaves, the Israelis probably will extend their patrols into areas vacated by UNIFIL but will not formally expand the boundaries of the security zone. An Israeli attempt to control the entire area vacated by UNIFIL's nearly 6,000 troops probably would require a minimum commitment of the equivalent of a full-strength mechanized infantry brigade--about 2,800 men.

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] the Arab-Israeli Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. At the request of Lt. Col. Fred Hof, International Security Affairs, Office of the Secretary of Defense. Information as of 29 January 1986 was used in its preparation. Questions and comments should be directed at Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, [redacted]

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UNIFIL has never succeeded in inhibiting armed Lebanese or Palestinian factions from carrying out ambushes, bombings, or rocket attacks against Israeli or pro-Israeli targets in southern Lebanon. UNIFIL rarely interdicts guerrilla units or their supplies as they transit UNIFIL zones, and most of these groups operate with impunity throughout the areas patrolled by the various UNIFIL battalions. The guerrilla groups view UNIFIL with contempt and do not significantly curtail their operations because of UNIFIL. [redacted]

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Virtually all of the armed Lebanese and Palestinian groups active in the south--Amal, Hizballah, SSNP, LCP, CAO, Lebanese Ba'th Party, and the full spectrum of Palestinian factions--are committed to increasing their attacks against the ASL and Israeli patrols in the security zone. Their common objective remains to obliterate the ASL and eliminate the residual Israeli presence in southern Lebanon. A UNIFIL withdrawal may give them some extra impetus to go through with their planned operations, but it is unlikely to be a significant factor in their planning. [redacted]

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We believe that some of the guerrilla forces in southern Lebanon are determined to extend their campaign of violence into northern Israel. "Carrying the struggle on to Jerusalem" is a key slogan of the radical Shia Hizballah organization, [redacted]

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[redacted] The  
Hizballah network in southern Lebanon is growing in size and capabilities, and UNIFIL has had practically no effect on the growth or activities of the radical Shia organization. [redacted]

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Although most leaders of the more moderate Amal militia oppose cross-border attacks that would provoke retaliation, even the Israelis admit that some Amal elements are beginning to consider operations against northern Israel. Certain Amal leaders believe that the militia must engage in cross-border violence to strengthen Amal's ideological credentials and compete with the Hizballah for the hearts and minds of Lebanese Shias. Extremist Palestinian factions such as the DFLP and the PFLP-GC remain committed to cross-border attacks. Neither Amal nor the Palestinians view UNIFIL as a serious obstacle to their operations. [redacted]

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We believe that all these factors point to an increase in cross-border attacks, such as Katyusha rocket firings, in the next few months. This growing threat to the security of northern

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Israel is unlikely to be affected by the presence or absence of UNIFIL, although it could coincide with a UNIFIL withdrawal. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

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The Israeli Perspective

Israel would like UNIFIL to leave southern Lebanon because it believes the UN force has been ineffective in preventing terrorist attacks and has impeded efforts by Israeli troops and those of General Lahad's ASL to police the security zone. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

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Israel will not agree to a UNIFIL deployment south of its current area of responsibility. [Redacted]

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Israel contends that UNIFIL is more of a hindrance than a help. The Israelis admit that UNIFIL has aided them in certain ways. UNIFIL monitoring has probably served to reduce reprisals against civilians by Lahad's troops, and UNIFIL has intercepted at least one shipment of arms destined for radical Shia guerrillas. In the Israeli view, however, UNIFIL has been ineffective in preventing cross-border attacks and provides a safe haven for Shia and Palestinian fighters. Israel believes that UNIFIL has increasingly assumed a partisan role in southern Lebanon by recognizing Shia militias but refusing to work with ASL troops.

[Redacted]

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Moreover, Tel Aviv faults UNIFIL for constantly pressing for permission to deploy south to the international border but never seeking to deploy north into Syrian-controlled areas. The Israelis also maintain that friction between UNIFIL on the one hand and the Israelis and their auxiliaries on the other leads to tension between Tel Aviv and countries that contribute troops to UNIFIL. [Redacted]

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If UNIFIL leaves, the Israelis probably will expand their patrols into areas north of the security zone that have been vacated by the UN troops. Despite a recent increase in rocket attacks on the northern settlements, Rabin and Prime Minister Peres are opposed to a formal expansion of the security zone to include areas that may be vacated by UNIFIL because this would mean sending more troops back into Lebanon. The Israelis recognize that General Lahad's force has its hands full with its current duties and could not take on any additional responsibilities. [Redacted]

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Peres and Rabin remain convinced that Israel's best hope for securing its northern settlements is to press the Shia Amal movement to prevent Palestinian and radical Shia groups from launching attacks on the security zone and across the border. So far, Amal has resisted any such agreement. In lieu of guarantees from Amal, Israel has taken to retaliating against Shia villages in the vicinity of any attacks on Israeli targets, hoping that the villagers will choose to avoid such punishment in the future by refusing to cooperate with guerrillas. [redacted]

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If this strategy is not successful and the northern settlements come under steadily increasing attacks, Peres and Rabin probably will beef up the number of troops operating in the zone. Currently the 91st Territorial Infantry Division and the 36th and 162nd Armored Divisions provide troops for the zone. The bulk of the manpower comes from reservists who belong to the 91st Territorial Infantry Division's 300th and 769th Brigades operating along Israel's northern border. [redacted]

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The Israelis could simply activate larger contingents of these reservists for service in southern Lebanon. If strengthening the forces available to operate in the zone did not stop the rocket attacks and cross-border infiltrations, Peres and Rabin probably would have to yield to pressure--especially from Likud hardliners--to increase the depth of the zone and station more troops there. If the Israelis chose to attempt to control the entire area vacated by UNIFIL's nearly 6,000 troops, it probably would require at a minimum the commitment of the equivalent of a full strength independent mechanized infantry brigade--about 2,800 men. [redacted]

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**SUBJECT: LEBANON-ISRAEL: Impact of UNIFIL Withdrawal**

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