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al-janoub

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UNIFIL
magazine

A GREENER FUTURE



UNIFIL Civil Affairs donated sound and light equipment to Tyros for Arts association. Around one hundred youth from eleven schools participated in theatre, cinema, poetry and arts workshops. The students displayed their artwork on 15 June at Istanbuli theatre in al-Hamra Cinema, in Tyre.



I would like to welcome you to the Environment edition of “*Al-Janoub*” magazine.

This issue specifically shines the spotlight on the significant strides being made by the Lebanese Government and UNIFIL to ensure the adoption of improved environmental practices, particularly in the UNIFIL area of Operations. We hope the content will draw attention to several important initiatives.

The focus on the environment has a poignant meaning for us. It comes at a time when the international community is calling for action to boost environmental management and protection. UNIFIL commits itself to avoiding, reducing or mitigating any negative impact on humans and the environment, which might result from the mission’s operations.

The mission is keen to improve environmental compliance and give due consideration throughout its life cycle to the development of new sites, positions and projects, as well as the implementation of measures related to withdrawals, closure of facilities and liquidations. In order to create a positive reflection of UNIFIL’s image among South Lebanon’s population, we are increasing the environmental sustainability of our operations.

The visit of the Lebanese Minister of Environment to the mission has been instrumental to highlight priorities of the Ministry of Environment for the coming year. With the Minister we also discussed the importance of taking into account the role of the various actors in ensuring good environmental governance. We

discussed coordination with the UN agencies in Lebanon, and UNIFIL, in particular, and the challenges facing the ministry in implementing its mandate.

With increased emphasis on good environmental practices, this issue of “*Al-Janoub*” emphasizes the ‘Greening the South’ initiative. The ambitious project spearheaded by the Environment ministry and UNIFIL was launched this year by myself and the Environment Minister in South Lebanon, and will continue into next year, until 300,000 trees are planted in the mission area of operations.

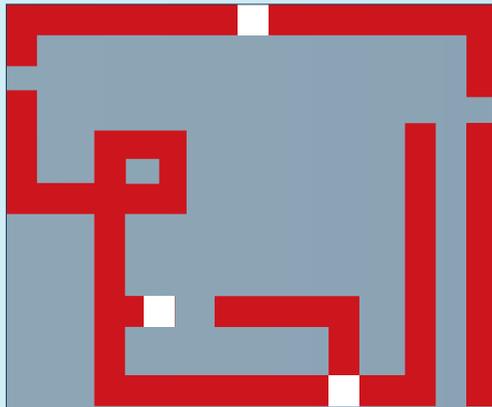
At UNIFIL, the Environmental Management System continues to be a very effective tool for enhancing its environmental status. This year, UNIFIL has set itself the goal of saving resources, focusing specifically on water.

I would like to emphasise that each one of us in the mission has a role to play and can contribute to the overall success by being a role model and setting an example for the local community to respect and value the environment, by not only reducing our environmental footprint, but also assisting the Lebanese to follow suit.

Lastly, managing environmental threats will require new global, regional, national and local responses incorporating a wide range of stakeholders. I am convinced that our partnership with the Ministry of Environment is a step in the right direction.

Enjoy reading

UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander
Major-General Luciano Portolano



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Colour correction and printing



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Disclaimer

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UNIFIL marks International Day of UN Peacekeepers



A ceremony held at UNIFIL Naqoura HQ was organised to observe the International Day of UN Peacekeepers on 29 May. Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major-General Luciano Portolano, reviewed an honour guard and, together with Brigadier-General

Mohamed Janbay, representing the Lebanese Armed Forces Commander, laid wreaths at the cenotaph in memory of the 308 UNIFIL peacekeepers who have lost their lives in the line of duty in South Lebanon. Major-General Luciano Portolano expressed deep

appreciation to the Lebanese Armed Forces and security organisations, "Their strategic partnership is key to UNIFIL's success in the implementation of resolution 1701. I remain firmly committed to coordinating our operational activities on the ground and at sea with them."

First Aid course for women



A course on First Aid for Domestic Accidents targeting women was held in Marjayoun early this year.

The course which is part of a Gender Training initiative was organized by UNIFIL's regional Civilian Military cooperation unit led by the Spanish contingent, in collaboration with the Office of the Ministry of Social Affairs of Marjayoun, chaired by Mrs. Maya Hasbani.

Around 20 women from Marjayoun and nearby towns attended the course, which was presented by Dr. Boris Lauzel, a medical officer from El Salvador, who responded to their questions on health and first aid matters. Participants also received a first-aid kit to practice and demonstrate the skills learnt during the course.

The course was well received by the local community and showed potential for implementation in other towns in UNIFIL's area of operations.

Lt. Col. Jose Manuel Gonzalez-Spinola San Gil - Sector East Military PIO

UNIFIL and LAF run for Nepal



On 9 June, UNIFIL German contingent, led by Lieutenant Colonel Johann Schenk, organised a sports event at UNIFIL Headquarters to express support and contribute to the recovery of Nepal from the recent devastating earthquake on 24 April. A number of UNIFIL Nepalese troops suffered personal losses. Civilian and military participants were joined by representatives of the Lebanese Army in different sports activities including an 8-kilometer run.

Deputy Head of Mission Imran Riza flagged off the race.

UNIFIL conducts police training



A six-day police training, the first of its kind, was conducted by UNIFIL Military Police for seventeen municipal policemen from Tyre. The training covered different topics including communication techniques, coordination, discipline, different types of patrols, proximity policing, crime scene recognition methods, searching

cars, and dealing with suspects and traffic accidents.

Deputy Mayor of Tyre Municipality, Haj Salah Sebrawi said, "This training demonstrated the professionalism of the Carabinieri team, which in turn will be reflected on the performance of our policemen. It will contribute to greater overall satisfaction for the people in Tyre."



Together

in the face of challenges

The following pages reflect the existing cooperation and coordination between the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL. The material is taken from letters by the Lebanese Army Commander, General Jean Kahwaji, and UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander Major-General Luciano Portolano to their respective troops.

General Jean Kahwaji

A salute to the Army's heroes

Commenting on the ongoing war between the Army and terrorism, General Kahwaji said that the danger still exists, noting that terrorists are waiting for any opportunity to deal a blow, but the Army stands on the lookout for them.

"We are confident that we will win thanks to the strength of the Army and the overwhelming support of the people. The terrorists' main goal was to infiltrate the people and incite sectarian and confessional strife, but they have failed," said General Kahwaji.

The Army Commander said the issue of the kidnapped soldiers is always present in his mind and the suffering of their families hurts him. He also stressed that the Command will not neglect any method that could lead to repatriating them, noting however that the swap decision is in the hands of the political authority.

"Coordination and cooperation between the Army and UNIFIL is ongoing at a very high level."

UNIFIL is a Lebanese and regional need

"Lebanon adheres to the presence of these forces because it is a Lebanese and regional need; it is also a stability and tranquillity factor. Coordination and cooperation between the Army and UNIFIL is ongoing at a very high level. And, in the framework of the implementation of resolution 1701, maintaining the border security and preventing the violations is being done," he said.

He pointed out that the presence of a joint operations area requires coordination and cooperation on tasks, patrols and movement of units, where the command is for the Lebanese Army at the level of maintaining security. Furthermore, the civilians have also built special friendships with the international forces, and this positively affects our work together as well as the mutual trust.

You are the real feast

Finally, the Army Commander greeted the Army's military and civilian personnel, particularly the troops deployed on the borders from the South to Aarsal through Ras Baalbek and all the way to the North, saying, "You are our heroes. You are Lebanon's real feast. Had it not been for you, there would be no feast or homeland,"

General Kahwaji also saluted the officers and personnel of the Army Command who are carefully following up on the security developments on the ground, moment by moment. He also saluted all the Lebanese Army's military personnel deployed throughout the Lebanese territory and their families, as well as the families of martyrs and all the Lebanese people.

Major-General Luciano Portolano

Excellent cooperation

"The close cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Army is excellent on different levels – from the soldier and young officer to the highest ranks. Both forces are committed to maintaining stability and calm in Southern Lebanon and supporting the local communities," said Major-General Portolano.

"Together, we have encountered and successfully dealt with various security challenges in the South. And as the result of our coordinated efforts with the Lebanese Army – in collaboration with the local security organisations, religious, municipal and political authorities and the people of southern Lebanon – this part of the country has been enjoying an unprecedented period of stability since 2006."

Images of past VS images of present

According to Major-General Portolano, the mere presence of thousands of the international peacekeepers and the Lebanese soldiers deployed in southern Lebanon under resolution 1701 has itself enhanced security in the area and changed the local people's way of life, giving them an opportunity to live a normal life. "Students can attend school and farmers can tend their crops without fear. Sounds of bombing and convoys of displaced people have become a thing of the past. Sounds of construction of houses, roads and touristic resorts can be heard instead," said Major-General Portolano.

"We understand that there are some serious security challenges that remain in other areas of Lebanon, and applaud the Lebanese Army for the breakthrough achieved in their efforts to tackle security in different parts of the country during the last year," he said.

"Unfortunately, it has lost some of its bravest officers and soldiers. Our thoughts go to the bereaved families who have lost loved ones and we hope for the speedy recovery of the wounded.

I hope that the coming year brings more peace and stability on the Lebanese territories, more joy and prosperity to every home and every family," he added.

Strategic Dialogue going forward

About enhancing the Army's capabilities, Major-General Portolano said, "As an example of positive changes, I would like to refer to remarkable progress that has been made in the Strategic Dialogue process, aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Lebanese Army and supporting efforts to move towards a permanent ceasefire," he said.

"Let me assure you that UNIFIL will do everything possible to maintain the calm in the area and strengthen our cooperation with the Lebanese Army," he added.

These letters were first published in the Lebanese Armed Forces magazine.

"There are some serious security challenges that remain in other areas of Lebanon, and applaud the LAF for the breakthrough achieved in their efforts to tackle security in different parts of the country."



Lebanese Environment Minister outlines priorities

“Al-Janoub” interviews the Minister of Environment Mohammad al-Mashnouk



Q: What are the priorities and initiatives of the Ministry of Environment this year?

I will be more than glad to give you our 22 wishes for 2015. We call them wishes because these are things we would like to do.

As you know, we have many issues to follow up on, but out of these wishes I can list: Securing compensation for the Government of Lebanon for the 2006 oil spill disaster. The mitigation of the environmental impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon and its resources is another main goal. We are also starting a new chapter in solid waste management, especially with the vote for the national plan, after 17 years of work under a temporary situation.

As you know, we have issues of pollution everywhere, whether in air, water or land. We have the problems of quarries. We will have to initiate the rehabilitation of inactive quarry sites. We have pollution in the rivers, too, and need to clean up our lakes and rivers. One example is the Qaraoun Lake. We are going ahead with the implementation of the roadmap for combatting its pollution.

I would mention also the implementation of the National Reforestation Plan as a main wish for 2015.

I can tell you that we abide by all the ozone agreements, all the protocols we have signed from Basel to Peru.

Q: Do you think the founding of this ministry 22 years ago has helped to create a general awareness of the environment in Lebanon?

We have not reached the stage where we can say, "Well, yes all the people are aware, of this and that." It takes a lot to change ideas and behaviour. People should learn and apply. It's not enough

to preach this; you have to apply it. I think we are not yet at the awareness stage that could make us feel happy.

I will give you the example of the dumping sites. We have 760 sites, almost one near every village. But still people are refusing the implementation of landfills. People are accepting backdoor dumps and refusing what we call "healthy dumps". It's not enough to ask the people by force to do things. It must become innate, from inside.

On the other hand, let me give you two very good examples that are important to us. The number of fires that break out every year has dropped to 40 per cent due to early alerts. And who did this? The children. The educational institutions helped us. We asked the kids to call our hotline during emergencies. They called and we managed to bring down the number of fires.

We had scarcity of water last summer, and we also asked the children to help us through a big campaign, "If you love me, save me some water." The kids started asking their parents to help and this reduced water consumption in their daily life.

So yes, the environment will always need public awareness campaigns. I say "My Environment is My Country", because I want to say to each citizen - it's not only your house, not just your little alley, it's not your little village or town or city, it's the whole country.

Q: What would you say are the major environmental concerns for the south?

The south is dear to us because it has had lots of problems over the years. And I think the villages in the south have benefited from the presence of UNIFIL.

I think UNIFIL staff and soldiers, and maybe administration, as well, portrayed a good image in their behaviour, and good behaviour is contagious. Your awareness campaigns in schools and villages are remarkable.

Q: How is your coordination with UN agencies in Lebanon, and UNIFIL?

We have good relationship with the UN Resident Coordinator and all UN agencies in Lebanon. They work closely with us in different parts of the country. We have a project with UNIFIL for the reforestation of villages in the south. It's going to be a remarkable thing.

I look forward to seeing more cooperation with UNIFIL and hopefully we will win in the coming months.

Q: What is the ministry doing to encourage local authorities to be more proactive in tackling environment issues?

We have good relations with municipalities and we are asking civil society to assist them too. Civil society can do a lot: clubs, in particular, associations and schools.

The municipalities are the branch, the arm and the ear of the central government. There are a lot of environmental activities taking place around municipalities: electricity and water heating using solar panels, waste-water and solid waste treatment plants. There's a lot to be done and definitely, we haven't done much.

Q: Are there any special initiatives to tackle the environment with regard to the sea?

There have been many initiatives at the level of civil society organisations and NGOs to take care of the land by the sea, but not the sea itself. We also have other initiatives to clean up the sea.

There are a lot of activities by civil society. One of them is the scuba diving association (The National Institute for Scuba Diving in Lebanon - NSID), who are professional divers.

There's also the cleaning up of the leftovers of the Israeli attack in 2006 on the Jiyeh factory, where the oil spill happened. The General Assembly renewed its conviction on the responsibility of the Israelis to clean up the oil spill.

Q: Is there a legal framework to support your work? How is your relationship with the other ministries?

Absolutely. We do have enough legislation. We, as a ministry, have never had a problem in our attempt to implement policies because we don't have police. We simply approach the Ministry of Interior and they take the necessary action. We also cooperate closely with the Ministry of Justice.

We are working on establishing environmental police along with the environmental District Attorneys. We even have an environmental legal register for individuals, which will detail any environmental violations.

Q: Is action being taken on the violations?

Absolutely. Action is being taken every day. The issue of the environment is nowadays taken very seriously in Lebanon and the role of this ministry, although a young ministry, is being recognised.

Greta Isac and Dany Ghafary -
Public Information Office

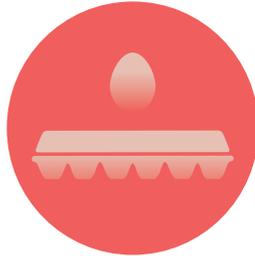
8 THINGS YOU CAN IMMEDIATELY DO TO SAVE OUR PLANET



1

DITCH PLASTIC

Most types of plastic are not biodegradable and can end up accumulating in oceans. Many animals that live on or in the sea ingest marine litter.



2

BUY EGGS IN CARDBOARD CARTONS

More than 260 species are already known to be affected by plastic debris through entanglement or ingestion.



3

RECYCLE GLASS

Glass is 100% recyclable and can be used again and again. Glass that is thrown away and ends up in landfills will never decompose.



4

CONSIDER REUSABLE SHOPPING BAGS

50 percent of the plastic we use, we use just once and throw away. Virtually every piece of plastic that was ever made still exists in some shape or form.

A MESSAGE BY BAN KI-MOON

United Nations Secretary General



The theme of this year's World Environment Day is **"Seven Billion Dreams. One Planet. Consume with Care"**.

Humanity continues to consume far more natural resources than the planet

can sustainably provide. Many of the Earth's ecosystems are nearing critical tipping points. It is time for us to change.

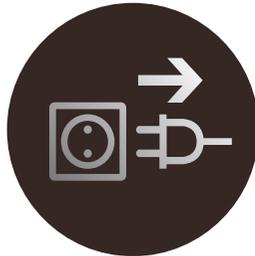
The goal of sustainable development is to increase the quality of life for all



5

TAKE SHORTER SHOWERS

The world may suffer a fresh water deficit by 2030.



6

UNPLUG APPLIANCES AT NIGHT

... it will cut your electricity usage by up to 11 percent.



7

BUY LOCAL

Consider how far your food has flown. Transport contributes 13% of global greenhouse emissions.



8

GIVE STUFF AWAY

Before you throw something away, think of someone else that might benefit from it.

people without increasing environmental degradation, and without compromising the resource needs of future generations.

We can do this by shifting our consumption patterns towards goods that use

less energy, water and other resources, and by wasting less food.

In this year of transformation, when we hope to see great advances on sustainable development and climate change, let us celebrate

World Environment Day by becoming more conscious of our ecological impact. Let us think about the environmental consequences of the choices we make. Let us become better stewards of our planet.



World Environment Day 2015
**Seven Billion Dreams.
One Planet.
Consume with Care.**
June 5



UNIFIL, Lebanese Environment Ministry launch

‘Greening the South’ initiative

Heavy rain, high winds and snow at low altitude did not prevent the Lebanese Minister of Environment Mohammad al-Mashnouq from moving forward on launching ‘Greening the South’ project at UNIFIL headquarters in the southern border town of Naqoura.

Minister al-Mashnouq, accompanied by UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander Major-General Luciano Portolano, planted the first tree alongside dozens of trees in the garden adjacent to the Major-General Portolano’s office.

The ‘Greening the South’ project was initiated a few months ago through discussions on the means of cooperation and coordination in the area south of the Litani River between the Environment Ministry and UNIFIL. The Minister expressed a strong desire to strengthen this cooperation and cited the possibility of UNIFIL’s contribution to the afforestation of its area of operations as an example. To aid this effort, the Ministry offered seedlings for plantation.

UNIFIL expanded the proposal to include the engagement of local authorities in the project, a recommendation that would ensure the success of the greening initiative. The first task was to propose the idea to officials from the unions of municipalities in UNIFIL’s area of operations, namely, Bint Jbeil, Tyre, Jabal Amel, Qalaa and Arqoub – who received the afforestation proposal with great enthusiasm.

The second task was to coordinate with the Association for Forest Development and Conservation (AFDC) – the organization entrusted to take care of and disperse the plant seedlings on behalf of the Environment Ministry. AFDC offered seedlings from its tree nursery in the Shouf town of Mukhtara, one of many such tree nurseries around the country.

Bint Jbeil union of municipalities had the most prominent role in the coordination process through the use of its Agricultural Services Centre in the town of Tiri in order to collect and distribute the seedlings from Mukhtara to municipalities in other unions.

The project was launched through an afforestation campaign where nearly four thousand trees were planted, including more than 1500 trees inside the UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura.

Mr. Mohammad Melhem, head of the Agricultural Services Centre of the Union of Bint Jbeil municipalities thanked UNIFIL for aiding in this major effort. “The project is very important because it compensates the local population in the South for the trees lost during the repeated Israeli aggressions, particularly in 2006,” he said.

“It will also be an outlet for future generations to enjoy the fresh air and have fun in spacious places in nature,” he added.

Mr. Melhem noted that several pine trees were included. Pine nuts harvested from the trees are a staple of local cuisine and a source of income for the community, adding a welcome economic dimension to a greening project.

For his part, Mr. Albagir Adam, Director of UNIFIL’s Civil Affairs said: “We will do everything necessary for the success of this project, as we consider that part of our responsibility is to preserve the environment in our area of deployment.”

“This area is a second home for more than 10,000 international peacekeepers from 39 countries and over 300 international civilian employees from all the five continents,” added Adam.

The implementation of this project requires significant efforts from local authorities and UNIFIL. Launched this year with a hundred thousand trees, the project is expected to continue into the next year, until three hundred thousand trees have been planted in UNIFIL’s area of operations.

Sultan Sleiman - Civil Affairs

New radars expand Lebanese Navy capabilities



Lebanon's picturesque, Mediterranean coast runs 225 kilometers from Naqoura in the south to al-Arida in the north, and off its rugged shores, the Lebanese Naval Forces keep a keen eye on its nautical borders and territorial waters. This massive responsibility cannot be undertaken without the aid of naval radars, and more significantly, the recently updated radar technology received from UNIFIL's Maritime Task Force (MTF).

The MTF is unique to Lebanon and UNIFIL – it is the only naval task force deployed for peace operations. Since arriving in Lebanon in October 2006, the UNIFIL-MTF have displayed an eager interest in assisting the Lebanese Navy in bolstering their capabilities – particularly in providing them more powerful ships, electronic surveillance equipment and the skills to use them.

Germany was one of several nations to lead the MTF, and they started what is now a longstanding relationship of cooperation with the Lebanese Navy.

Rear-Admiral Nazih Jbaily, Commander-in-Chief of the Lebanese Navy recalls the first time his crew worked with the German navy. "They gave us two ships," he said, "then another one, then they told us "we want to do more, what you need?", so we told them that our main concern is to be able to monitor the coast..."

The Lebanese Navy's radar systems had been damaged during the 2006 conflict, although it retained some functionality.

"Our role is to be able to have control over the water surface within 12 nautical miles from south to north," said Master Chief Petty

Officer Rabih Younis of the Lebanese Navy, "and to prevent any target from entering illegally or getting out from here without our control, and in coordination with the other radar centers that we've got in the Navy."

"This is done by verifying data about ships detected by radar with information registered with their Operations Centre. We talk with the ships at sea and we take the information from it and then we do a kind of comparison", says Master Chief Petty Officer Younis.

"If a particular ship at sea is suspect, the patrol immediately moves to start inspecting the ship".

The old radar system had its limitations – it could only track ships in the local area, and this information could not be shared easily between other ships and monitoring stations.

With the newly updated radar technology, this procedure for checking vessels has received a badly needed boost in capacity. The effort, led by Commander Achim Held of the German Navy, involved both new equipment as well as training on its use.

"The goal behind it is to cover the whole

Lebanese coast; the Lebanese Navy will not be blind; it will have the ability to see the whole territorial waters in front of it," said Commander Held.

The training provided covered not only how to use the equipment but also ran the gamut of operational issues such as patrolling, daily operational activities onboard a naval ship and how to deal with problems at sea.

"On top of mastering new electronic equipment, our trainees get a lot of opportunities to practice and improve their skills," said Commander Held. "They are being trained how to talk to the ships, how to use proper English terminology, how to identify a merchant that is coming to Lebanon bringing goods and how to identify an intruder."

While the Lebanese Navy relies on their partnership with the MTF to monitor the seas, the new radar technology is ultimately intended to equip the Lebanese Navy to reclaim sovereignty over its portion of the Mediterranean Sea, and reduce its reliance on UNIFIL.

To this end, Rear-Admiral Jbaily is looking forward to one more element that will help the Lebanese Navy – the receipt of bigger and more powerful ships.

"...We have prepared a five- year plan and given it to the Lebanese Army command and thank God they approved it," he said.

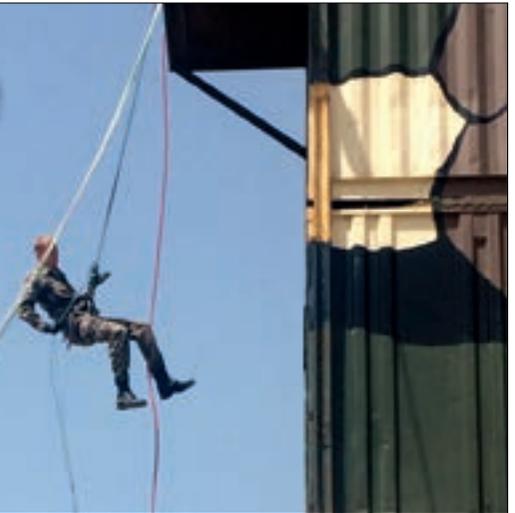
"This plan states that the Lebanese Navy gets bigger ships which are 30, 40, 50, 60 meters long. When we get such ships especially the 50 or 60 meters long ones, which can stay at sea for a longer time, then we can perform the duties that UNIFIL is carrying out nowadays."

"After five years, we will get bigger ships and gradually we can start taking over the sea instead of them."

Yury Kushko - Public Information Office

A day in the life of a LAF officer

“Al-Janoub” spends a day in the company of a LAF officer in south Lebanon



The alarm in his room goes off at 6 a.m. For 1st Lieutenant Houssam Mhanna, the day starts with a round of strenuous physical exercise with his troops. Lt. Mhanna is the commander of the 1st company in the 4th battalion of the 5th brigade in the Lebanese Armed Forces. The troops are based in Ras Al Ein, south Lebanon.

After a 40-minute workout, the men have breakfast, shower, shave and put on their uniforms. This is usually followed by a meeting to discuss the plan for the rest of the day. However, today all companies and battalions of the 5th brigade will gather at the brigade's headquarters, to pay their respect to the Lebanese flag.

Officers and soldiers salute the flag while it is raised to the beats of military march music. “I decided to join the army after 2006 war, when I saw the courageous soldiers and officers of the Lebanese Armed Forces defending the cedar tree of the flag and what it represents,” said Lt. Mhanna, at the end of the flag-raising ceremony.

The first operational task for Lt. Mhanna and his soldiers on this day is a joint patrol with UNIFIL's Italian peacekeepers. The vehicles move for two hours on a pre-planned route. This is one of many patrols performed daily within UNIFIL and LAF's area of operations.

Lt. Mhanna explained the significance of this joint activity. “In general, the goal behind coordinating with UNIFIL falls under the Security Council resolution 1701, and that is basically to keep the peace and security in the South Litani sector” said Lt. Mhanna.

“During patrolling, our main mission is to prevent any security breach or to reinforce it (security), through reconnaissance and monitoring of the patrol route and specific areas to prevent any armed manifestations and to detect any suspicious object,” he added.

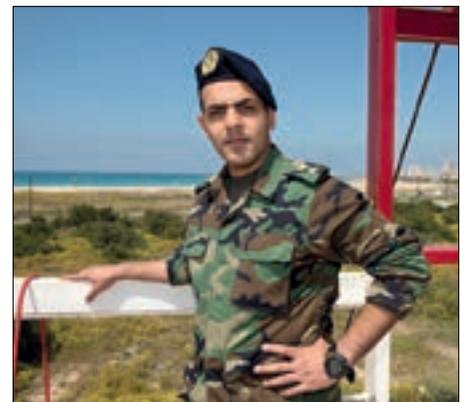


At noon, after the completion of the joint patrol, the Italians went back to their base and the Lebanese officer went to his battalion's position in Tyre to have lunch and rest for one hour. Lunch on that day was special because the 1st lieutenant and his fellow officers had three French officers, from UNIFIL's force commander reserve, as guests. These French officers came with their soldiers that day to perform a joint training with LAF officers and soldiers at the military training facility at the LAF base in Tyre.

The training exercise, held after lunch, started with rappelling from a 12-meter high wall, followed by a few rounds in a fighter circuit – an arena full of obstacles. Joint trainings like these cover subjects like leading of patrols and the use of weapons. Some of these trainings are conducted at LAF bases while others are held in various UNIFIL bases.

“Our relation with UNIFIL in joint trainings is very good, we gain experience from them, and we share with them our experience that we got from the fights and trainings that we had,” said Lt. Mhanna.

“For example in today's rappelling exercise, we benefitted from their way of weaving rope knots, and rappelling maneuvers,



and also from their security measures. And they took from us our skills of going down and raiding a house. We are evolving together, hand-in-hand,” he said.

The day ends with some well-deserved rest and time to reconnect with family and friends. As he relaxed in the evening with his fellow officers, Lt. Mhanna pointed out that the varying schedule in the day of a LAF soldier reflects the nature of the work.

“During some periods, the number of operational missions increases, which means that the free time is used only to sleep,” said Lt. Mhanna, “while during other periods, we invest our free time in sitting and talking with fellow servicemen, watching TV, reading, calling family and friends, or playing sports like handball and football.”

The day of a military officer doesn't follow a strict routine. The missions and operations of each day vary, and the working day can stretch between 12 and 18 hours in a 24-hour period.

In these hours, LAF officers and soldiers join UNIFIL peacekeepers hand in hand to keep the peace, security, and stability.

Ghifar Charafeddine - Public Information Office



Afif Zorkota is a farmer from the southern town of el-Mari, where nearly 80 per cent of the population is involved in agriculture. Yet not long ago, farmers like Mr. Zorkota were faced with a dire water problem that threatened their livelihood.

El-Mari, a small town with a population of around 3,000, is located along the southern Lebanese borders, in the area of Al-Arqoub. It has 10 hectares of agricultural land, with olive trees and a variety of other crops like tomatoes, onions, aubergine, cucumber, watermelons, lettuce, potatoes, among others. Yet not long ago, the people of el-Mari faced an uncertain future due to water problems.

Lebanese vegetable markets receive a good portion of their produce from el-Mari, thanks to the town's fertile soil, warm weather, and early seasons.

Over the last few years, the river passing through the town started to dry up in April which was unusually early. This meant planting could not be completed, resulting in fewer crops. Moreover, poultry and cattle farms did not have sufficient water for their stocks.

Apart from scarcity, the water was also polluted, dealing another blow to its quantity and quality. One of the recommended solutions was to bring water from Hasbani River, said Afif Zorkota, an el-Mari farmer.

"We needed diesel generators, trucks, and jars to obtain the required quantities of water to the orchards and houses," said Mr. Zorkota. "But with the water tank that UNIFIL constructed, we saved time, effort, consumption of fuel, and cost."

The water tower was inaugurated in the summer of 2014. The municipality dug a water well in the area of Jesr Sfeir, and UNIFIL completed the project initiated by el-Mari and al Arqoub union of municipalities by funding the construction of a water tank with a capacity of 90 m3.

Now the towns of Halta, Kfar Hammam, Kfar Shouba, Rashaya al Fokhar, Ain Arab, Majidiyeh, Rihanet Berri, Abbasiyeh and Dharjat also benefit from this project, according to Youssef Fayyad, the mayor of el-Mari. He added that the water is at the disposal of el-Mari residents, Lebanese Army, UNIFIL, and firefighting squads.

The cost of bringing water from Hasbani River used to be LL 50,000 for a two-barrel water container. This has dropped to LL 10,000 which only covers the cost of fuel to transport water from the water

tank to the houses or farms.

In addition, the farmers of el-Mari are able to have three seasons of produce instead of one, explained Mr. Fayyad. "This means more productivity and gains for the farmers, and lower prices for the consumers," said Fayyad.

"The seasons used to end in May, but now we are planting our land with different crops all over the months of the year," added Fayyad.

UNIFIL also constructed 550m of agricultural roads, which increased agricultural activities in the town by providing access to areas that were previously left untended, but have now become green again.

The water tank project has impacted lives and livelihood of the local population in el-Mari, according to Mr. Fayyad who is grateful for UNIFIL's timely assistance.

For farmers such as Mr. Zorkota, it was a chance to continue a traditional way of life. "It is a highly vital project that gave us reassurances, that we will continue planting our lands and living in our hometown," said Mr. Zorkota.

Hiba Monzer - Public Information Office



Lighting the south

Lebanon enjoys around 270 days of sunshine per year. Conversely, Lebanese citizens are subject to regular power outages and the expensive alternatives to getting power from diesel-burning generators.

Despite years of peace and progress, the country continues to be subjected to electricity rationing – power is cut off for several hours per day, depending on the rationing cycle set for the town or city. In some places, power is mostly unavailable all day.

Due to this shortage, municipalities rely heavily on private generator companies that offer electricity by running diesel-fuelled generators. Apart from ruining a clear day with plumes of smoke, this comes at a cost to Lebanese society, both financially and in terms of health, since burning oil releases harmful chemicals into the air.

Harnessing the sun

Some have started to look into the idea of solar energy for Lebanon as a viable solution for Lebanon's electricity needs.

"The south has been one of the first areas in Lebanon that has remarkably taken the initiative of using solar and renewable energy, thanks to southern municipalities and UNIFIL," said Ziad el-Zein, Head of Public Relations and Finance at the Lebanese Center for Energy Conservation (LCEC). UNIFIL has played the role of facilitator in the field of solar energy in the south.

The mission generates an estimated less than 10 percent of its total energy consumption through solar panels. It has also taken an active role in the use

of this alternate energy source in south Lebanon. The mission has donated solar lamps to several southern towns. The aim is to reduce reliance on conventional, polluting energy sources like generators.

Planning for solar energy development

UNIFIL organised a workshop on solar energy recently in cooperation with the Union of Tyre municipalities, which encompasses 20 municipalities and the Lebanese Center for Energy Conservation (LCEC) which operates under the Lebanese Ministry of Energy and Water.

"Saving energy and protecting the environment are two things that cannot be accomplished through single efforts; they need partnerships and cooperation with parties, along with finding more sources for funding," said Mr. el-Zein.

"Following the workshop, more requests have been raised by municipalities in Tyre to the center to install solar lamps and solar energy devices," said Mr. el-Zein.

"The workshop also opened the channels of consultation between the municipalities and the center which also helped to avoid technical problems."

"This workshop has triggered the solar energy plan which will be followed with surveys and studies to address technical specifications, and with trainings for technicians in the

municipalities to maintain the installed solar lamps and posts along the streets; the plan will be completed by kicking off funding initiatives," said Abdel Muhsen al-Husseini, head of the union of Tyre municipalities,

"The workshop on the solar energy bears environmental, economic, and safety advantages," added Mr. al-Husseini. The experiment with Tyre municipalities could be extended to other districts and unions in south Lebanon, according to Mr. el-Zein

Lighting streets, squares, and sites with solar energy reduces the pollutants fuming from the generators; it also saves money for municipalities which can then be invested in other urgent projects; it enhances safety and security in the community, as noted by Mr. al-Husseini.

"UNIFIL is not [just] a peacekeeping force, but it is a mission for a sustainable human and environmental development," said Mr. al-Husseini, remarking that the mission has always taken the initiative to facilitate communication between municipalities and the concerned sides.

UNIFIL's perspective

"We are here to assist the Lebanese government", according to Mr. Albagir Adam, UNIFIL's Chief of Civil Affairs, who believes that investing in solar energy projects is a win-win solution which will benefit everyone.

Hiba Monzer - Public Information Office

Did You Know?

The Republic of Armenia is the smallest of the former Soviet Republic nations, a landlocked country with a population of approximately three million people, located in the Southern Caucasus and bordered by Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Iran.



Armenia has a rich cultural, historical and religious heritage going back 3,500 years. It was the first nation to adopt Christianity in 300 AD. The St. Etchmiadzin Cathedral which is the main center of worship is also the oldest cathedral in the world.

Christian roots and heritage form an important part of Armenia's identity. The ark in the well-known tale of Noah and the flood is said to have rested on top of Mount Ararat, Armenia's cherished mountain peak, which is depicted on its coat of arms, and is now part of Turkey. Armenian traditions consider Armenians the descendants of Noah, through his son Japheth.

Armenia is known for its world famous architecture, literature and handicrafts. The economy is mainly industrial, and it exports finished goods, foodstuff and tools in exchange for raw materials and energy. Yerevan, the capital city is the center for industry and one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities of the world.

Armenia's flag is composed of horizontal bands of red, blue and orange. The red

symbolizes the Armenian people's continued struggle for survival, maintenance of the Christian faith, Armenia's independence and freedom. The blue symbolizes the will of the people to live under peaceful skies, and the orange symbolizes their creative talent and hardworking nature.

Conflicts and persecutions have led to the dispersion of the Armenians to all corners of the world, including Lebanon, where they make up about 4 per cent of the population.

Apart from being actively engaged in the Lebanese society as citizens, the Armenians also play their part as peacekeepers in south Lebanon. Armenia is a UN troop-contributing country (TCC) since 2004. The Armenian troops joined UNIFIL in November 2014, and they are responsible for the security and safety of UNIFIL staff at Sector West HQ in Shama, in southern Lebanon.

"We are on duty 24/7, therefore we do not have the chance to go outside and meet with the Lebanese people," said Major Artashes Danielyan. "We hope in the future to have more tasks to assist more the community because it is always a great feeling to help people," he said.

**Suzane Badereddine
and Zeina Ezzeddine -**
Public Information Office

Ensuring water for the future



As each summer season approaches, the thought of water conservation comes to mind. The summer of 2014 saw acute water shortages believed to have been caused by a lack of rainfall.

According to Eng. Ahmad Nizam, Director of the South Lebanon Water and Waste Water Establishment, the availability of water during the summer months is dependant not only on rains, but also on infrastructure and management of resources.

The water distribution system comprises several components - water sources (lakes, underground water or rain), well-maintained distribution infrastructure (pipes, tanks and pumps) and management (skilled personnel).

"First of all we have to be aware, that water that is available in south Lebanon, the surface water can be considered 15%," says Mr. Nizam. "85% of the water that we distribute is from the ground table."

Since the majority of water distributed for consumption comes from underground sources, pumps are needed to extract water for redistribution. However, pumping water requires electricity – a pumping station needs around 320 volts of power.

"One of the major constraints is electricity," says Mr. Nizam, "not only in south Lebanon, but in the whole country. If electricity is not available, we shift to the other problem – generators. If we got generators, how to operate them becomes a challenge. We need diesel, and this is a major issue because we need a lot of money to pay for the diesel to operate."

Additionally, Mr. Nizam explained that the number of people relying on a particular water source also affects how much water is available for consumption. It is a challenge when there is an increase in population, with no increase in water.

In 2014, he pointed out, the water level dropped from 1,650 m³ to 650 m³ in the springs of Nab at Tasi – a reduction to 40% of the normal level. An increase in population in this scenario would constrict

the already reduced capacity for providing water to residents.

Apart from water sources, the infrastructure used to deliver water to households and businesses must also be maintained to high standards. Some places have pipes that are 30 to 40 years old, and are prone to leaks, resulting to lose of water before it reaches its destination.

The government is in the process of replacing the old galvanized (iron) pipes which tend to rust, with high-density polyethylene pipes which are more durable and long-lasting. One such replacement project, Mr. Nizam mentioned, is on-going for pipes running between Taibeh (in MarJayoun-caza), Bint Jbeil and towards Aitah Rmiesh.

In the last few years, the government has been pro-active in improving standards for water and waste water for the country, according to Mr. Nizam who has worked for the Ministry for Energy and Water throughout his career.

"This is the first time since I've been in the ministry for 32 years that a minister issued a strategy on the national level, for water or waste water," he said.

Such a proactive approach means better support for local communities. One major project in the works is a canal to increase water availability in the south.

"The canal will bring water from the dam of Qaroun passing from Marjayoun, to Bint Jbeil to Srifa," said Mr. Nizam. "It's a huge project. Basically, it will take around 110 million cubic meters of water. 90 million are for irrigation, and 20 is for potable water."

"Now, the first phase has started, but it costs a lot - the first phase costs around 380 to 400 million dollars. The second phase is... around 400 to 500 million dollars. And that is the dream in south Lebanon. The dream

now is starting to be a reality," he said.

The canal will reduce reliance on underground water, which is a good practise, as over-reliance on the water table could lead to drought-like conditions, such as in Yemen where, according to Mr. Nizam, the water levels are dropping by 10 meters a year.

In addition to infrastructure and policies, new engineers and skilled staff are being hired by the Ministry to improve the quality and standards of service.

Mr. Nizam added that he was glad for UNIFIL's assistance with various water projects. "I will not forget UNIFIL who are also assisting us in some villages by drilling or equipping wells, as their funds are available, to certain limits," he said.

UNIFIL, on its part, is conscious of its environmental footprint in the south and has been raising awareness through projects like leak detection and water conservation campaigns. To this end, the mission has installed water meters at all its water wells, to measure how much water is being consumed at its positions.

A technical study will also be made of the water table to analyse current use and predict future water levels and plan for shortages. "We are going to study the aquifer in the area, not only our positions," said Ayman Abdelwahab, Chief of UNIFIL's Environment Section. This will provide valuable data that can be used by both UNIFIL and the local communities in the management of water resources.

Through careful and conscientious consumption, improved infrastructure and awareness of water issues, south Lebanon could see a marked change in water availability not only for this summer, but for years to come.

Greta Isac - Public Information Office



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Meet The South

UNIFIL's TV/Web Series

In each episode find out UNIFIL peacekeepers meet with residents from south Lebanon. Twice a month on NBN, OTV, New TV and YouTube.



Every two weeks a new 10-minute radio episode is aired in Arabic on: Al-Risala, Sawt El-Mada, Voice of Lebanon, Voice of People and Radio Delta.



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