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Interview with Gen. Kahwagi



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magazine



Building on the peace



“The MTF is playing a critical preventive role, warding off attempts at illegal arms trafficking and incidents on the line of buoy. The Lebanese Navy, despite constraints, has demonstrated, time and again, its professionalism and outstanding commitment towards securing Lebanese waters, in close partnership with the MTF” - UNIFIL Force Commander Major-General Alberto Asarta Cuevas (right), at a handover ceremony of the Maritime Task Force (MTF) aboard the Frigate Yildirim (Turkey) on 24 February 2011.

“The Brazilian Navy is very proud to join the MTF and we hope we can help on the successful work that has been done” – Rear Admiral Luiz Henrique Caroli of Brazil (left), assuming command of MTF, the naval component of UNIFIL.

Visuals of peace

If I see it, it exists. So driven is our perception by visuals, amply abundant in today's media age, that there is little room for imagination. Excessive reliance on multi-media images blunts awareness even of our surroundings, things we see every day but fail to notice. That is until it makes it to the media.

With all its visual impact, war is easy to perceive, peace less so. Where do we get the visuals that would interest the media and the public?

In real terms, in our daily existence, peace is much more than just the absence of war. It is about building your life in security. It is about education: so your child attends school to return safe at the end of the day. It is about vocation that enriches as much as sustains you, your loved ones and society at large. It is about investing in life-capital with the knowledge that it will not be forcibly taken away or destroyed. At the end of the day it is about surviving and thriving in community.

But then these are all normal mundane things that we should be doing any way. So where is the news there?

The challenge then is how to sensationalise peace so it gets noticed. Just needs readjusting our frame of reference and we can see it as clearly as 7-year old Rayan Ayoub did: "peace... is silent, no smoke, no fire..." [*Al-Janoub*, February 2009]. Indeed, for the people of south Lebanon the visual contrast would be stark, from the devastation all around in 2006 to the all round development achieved during the unprecedented calm that has prevailed since.

It is in this context that *Al-Janoub* presents in this issue an exclusive interview with the Lebanese Armed Forces Commander General Jean Kahwagi. His tribute to UNIFIL peacekeepers for the security and stability achieved on the ground equally reflects the accomplishments of the Lebanese army as the primary agency responsible for security in the area.

Recognising the considerable progress in implementation of UNIFIL's mandated tasks the UN Security Council approved forward-looking

adjustments to UNIFIL's Force structure to adapt its operational capacity to changing circumstances on the ground, particularly with the deployment of the Lebanese army in the south. The newly established 'Force Commander Reserve' is one of the more visible manifestations of this change as explained in the following article. And then we have an example of the expanding cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese army to include earthquake response preparedness.

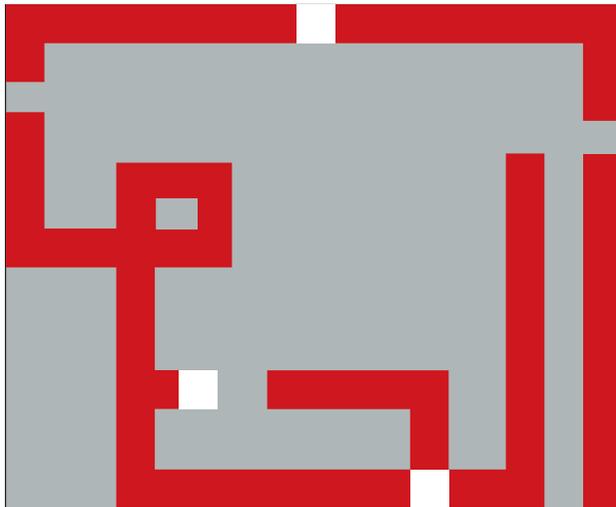
The visible marking of the Blue Line, in all its complexity, stands forth as a concrete example of UNIFIL's liaison and coordination arrangements with the parties that have been effective in maintaining the cessation of hostilities. The article brings out the enormity of the task and its significance in preventing violations that could otherwise be potentially escalatory.

Above all, it is the people of south Lebanon who have given for peace. Their voice this time is in the words of the Mayor of Kfar Shouba, as usual accompanied by a feature on the town that defies much more than just the adverse terrain of Jabal Al-Sheikh. Complementing this is a write-up on UNIFIL's efforts to promote skills for sustainable development among female farmers of Khyam.

And we picked the upcoming Wazzani tourist resort as a vivid example of what the dividends of peace entail. A curious blend of Lebanese and African architecture sprawling right along the Blue Line, this enterprise symbolises as much a hope for sustainable peace as the reason it must be achieved.

These are some of the visuals of peace *Al-Janoub* presents: mundane yet sensational, and certainly newsworthy.

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Publisher
Milos Strugar

Editor-in-Chief
Neeraj Singh

Senior editors
Samir F. Ghattas
Joumana Sayegh

Editorial Advisor
Hassan Siklawi

Design/Graphics
Zeina Ezzeddine

Editorial support
Adib Al Moussa

Photographers
Pasqual Gorritz Marcos
Eric Acquaye

Al-Janoub contact

Tel. +961 1 827 020
+961 1 926 291

Email unifil-pio@un.org
Fax +961 1 827 016

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Looking for “Pharmacist Ali” a trip down memory lane for senior UN general

As captain when he was sent to south Lebanon to serve in UNIFIL three decades ago, Babacar Gaye learned to love this country and appreciate its people. One in particular, “Pharmacist Ali.”

Now as the senior Military Advisor to the Department of Peace Keeping Operations at UN Headquarters, when Lieutenant-General Gaye of Senegal visited south Lebanon recently, he did not miss the first opportunity to look for his old friend and his old command post.

Taking time off from his busy official schedule as a visiting dignitary to UNIFIL, he returned to the very same place where he was stationed back in 1980. Such personal loyalty and nostalgic lure led Gaye to the town of Jouwaya east of Tyr.

“One of my best friends in the locality was the Pharmacist, Mr. Ali, and I wanted to meet him,” the general said in an interview with *Al-Janoub*.

To his disappointment, Ali had left Lebanon and the general was told his old friend had settled in Guinea-Conakry in West Africa. But Gaye had better luck with his old command post which was at a landmark that was not difficult to locate - or to miss.

“The location of my company command post was a very specific one,” he said. “Everybody knew this villa... It was a house and on top of the house the owner built a jet fighter, a Phantom - he was probably impressed by a jet fighter - so on top of the house there was a jet fighter that had been built in concrete,” he added.

There, too, Gaye did not find the owner, who had long passed away.

It was a trip down memory lane for Gaye. “I was very, very moved to see the place where I was a young captain serving the United Nations, without imagining one day I will be... military advisor,” he said. “From time to time life is a little bit strange,” he said in retrospect.

But why the Pharmacist?

Gaye beamed about his old friend, whom he described as a very open-minded and well-educated person. The pharmacy’s location in the middle of the town made it a place he frequented to buy lozenges that comforted sore throat. It was then that he struck a friendship with Ali. “We used to talk. We became friends, he invited me home,” the general recalled.

After he was rotated along with his contingent out of Lebanon, Gaye explained that he kept in touch with his friend through rotation of Senegalese troops before losing contact for the lack of proper or advanced telecommunications those days.

“I used to send hello to him and he would send hello to me through the Senegalese contingent,” he said.

During his visit to Lebanon, Lieutenant-General Gaye met with UNIFIL officials and had the chance to tour parts of south Lebanon. The changes he saw were impressive, with improved roads and a construction boom that turned rural areas to urban regions.

“I can tell you the transformation is a huge one,” he said, adding that UNIFIL played an important part in that, being part of the history of the area since 1978.

For that, he said, UNIFIL serves as an important tool for the international community to show its commitment to peaceful development in the Middle East and Lebanon in particular and a demonstration that Lebanon is not alone.

For the people of Lebanon, the general conveyed the message from the Secretary-



General and DPKO head Alain Le Roy that Lebanon is high on the international community’s agenda – the Lebanese people have suffered and their (the UN’s) top priority is for them to live in the peace and security they deserve. He assured them “we will do our utmost to contribute to this peace and security.”

As for Gaye, old friend Ali remains on his mind.

“Maybe he will see *Al-Janoub* and he will respond. You never know.”

Samir F. Ghattas UNIFIL Public Information



General Kahwagi:

UNIFIL is a necessity for Lebanon

Army Commander praises UNIFIL and pledges closer cooperation

UNIFIL is a necessity for Lebanon, it provides an international cover and helps bring stability, Lebanese Armed Forces Commander General Jean Kahwagi says in resounding praise of peacekeepers deployed in south Lebanon.

Due to the presence of LAF and UNIFIL in south Lebanon, the area has seen one of the calmest periods in Lebanon's history and a boom in development, he said, adding that cooperation and coordination between the two Forces has created an atmosphere of stability and tranquility.

"The situation is so calm, so secure and so stable," General Kahwagi said in an interview with *Al-Janoub* magazine about conditions in south Lebanon where around 12,000 UNIFIL peacekeepers from 35 countries work hand in hand with thousands of LAF soldiers to secure the area between the Litani River and the Blue Line.

"The only factor disturbing the atmosphere of stability is represented by the Israeli violations which constitute a clear infringement on Lebanese sovereignty," he said. "However, UNIFIL's swift intervention in cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces to deal with these violations, particularly on the ground has eased the tension and prevented the escalation of the situation", he added.

Speaking at his office at the Defense Ministry in Yarze east of Beirut, General Kahwagi said relations between LAF and UNIFIL as well as between UNIFIL and the local population in the south are "more than excellent" and expects it to further expand in the coming days. He attributed this development in relations to the mutual desire to enhance cooperation and coordination in all aspects, stressing that the better the relationship is between the two Forces the more it reflects positively on UNIFIL's relations with the people of the south and consequently this will also reflect

positively on the atmosphere of peace and stability in the region. This is what we are witnessing nowadays and hoping to develop in the future, he added.

Concerning the great number of troops deployed in the south and how the locals look at these troops, General Kahwagi said "It is not a matter of how many troops are deployed but rather how they behave and act on daily basis with the citizens as well as their perception of the nature of the things taking place in their surrounding".

"The incidents which took place in the past between UNIFIL and the local population resulted mainly from the lack of interaction and understanding between them in addition to mutual misunderstanding. However, these incidents have been greatly diminished especially since UNIFIL troops have had a better understanding of the people's traditions and customs. Furthermore, the local population has also become more convinced with the importance of these troops' presence in the south", General Kahwagi said.

With respect to coordination and cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Army in terms of the implementation of Resolution 1701, General Kahwagi stressed the importance of this issue particularly in the field of dispatching patrols, setting up check points and conducting joint exercises and maneuvers which play a strategically important role in reinforcing the capabilities of the two Forces in addition to keeping them ready to confront unexpected incidents and surprises.

When he was asked about his opinion concerning the appointed time of the UNIFIL mission in the south, General Kahwagi stated that, "originally, the presence of this force in Lebanon came as a result of a decision taken by the Lebanese Government and the United Nations Security Council with the

aim of bringing stability to the border region and implementing the terms of Resolution 1701 and when discussing the appointed time of this mission we should be taking into consideration the fact that the reasons behind the Israeli - Lebanese conflict remain and therefore we should consider the presence of the International Force as a necessity to strengthen the chances of stability".

As for the assistance that the International community can offer to the Lebanese Army in order to reinforce its capability to conduct its national tasks, the Armed Forces Commander stressed that this can be achieved mainly by pressuring Israel to stop its daily violations of Lebanese sovereignty and to withdraw from Lebanese territories which are still occupied until this day and by equipping the Army with the adequate weapons and gear so that it can possess the main defensive components to defend the country. Furthermore, General Kahwagi also emphasized that the Lebanese Army has no hostile intentions and its only objective is to defend Lebanon.

In addition, the Lebanese Armed Forces Commander was full of praise for UNIFIL's efforts and sacrifices and voiced his feelings of gratitude to its soldiers, NCOs, officers and civilian employees who came from the four corners of the world to bring peace to Lebanon. General Kahwagi also praised the social, cultural and development activities with the aim of facilitating their daily lives and reinforcing their steadfastness.

Finally, the Armed Forces Commander called for UNIFIL to stay in south Lebanon at least for the foreseeable future and considered that its presence provides an international cover to Lebanon and a witness showing the situation in the south in addition to UNIFIL's role in strengthening regional and international stability.

Samir F. Ghattas UNIFIL Public Information



Lighter, wheeled vehicles replace heavy tracked tanks in Force Commander Reserve force

Force Commander Reserve UNIFIL readjusts to improved conditions

Encouraged by more than four years of unprecedented calm and the deployment of Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in southern Lebanon, the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has reconfigured its military structure in order to adapt to the changing environment.



A light vehicle of the mobile Force Commander Reserve on patrol in south Lebanon

The "Force Commander Reserve" of about 1,300 troops was drawn from UNIFIL's existing 12,000 soldiers. The adjustments, carried out in close coordination with LAF, are part of the ongoing restructuring of UNIFIL based on the recommendations of the Joint Technical Review of UNIFIL's operational capacity undertaken in 2009 by UNIFIL and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), in consultation with member states, including Lebanon.

The recommendations recognised the considerable progress achieved in implementation of UNIFIL's mandated tasks and changing circumstances on the ground, particularly with the deployment of LAF in the south, and aimed at re-adjusting the force structure and assets of UNIFIL to more effectively perform the tasks while maintaining the current troop strength.

It is important to emphasize that the mission of UNIFIL remains the same, within the framework of the mandate under UN Security Council resolution 1701 to maintain

and ensure a safe and secure environment to all inhabitants of south Lebanon.

The recommendations of the UNIFIL-DPKO review also established a regular strategic dialogue mechanism between UNIFIL and LAF that is significant for future activity and cooperation. This provides a framework for progressively correlating the respective capacities and operational activities of the two Forces towards gradual transition of responsibility from UNIFIL to the LAF in southern Lebanon and in Lebanese territorial waters in line with resolution 1701.

The Force Commander Reserve is drawn from the French contingent, the third largest in UNIFIL.

Since 2006, France has deployed two different types of units within UNIFIL: the Quick Reaction Force (QRF) that included tanks and artillery guns, and an infantry battalion.

The two have merged into the Force Commander Reserve, which has the ability to operate in all kinds of terrain and

weather conditions and will conduct daily operational activities in support of UNIFIL's military sectors. The Force Commander Reserve is based in two positions, Deir Kifa and Tiri, with some support and rear operation assets at UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura.

The increase of Malaysian and Ghanaian troops last year and the imminent deployment of an Irish battalion this summer, have made it possible for UNIFIL to re-adjust its contingents' area of responsibility.

The restructuring also was beneficial to the local population. The big battle tanks of the QRF have been withdrawn and new lighter wheeled vehicles were brought in. This not only will limit the damage to roads and infrastructure in the south but also will enhance the quick response capacity.

Major Christophe Cuny
UNIFIL Public Information

UNIFIL in natural disaster response exercise and awareness campaign

Tyr - The white UNIFIL helicopter hovered overhead then landed to pick up the injured. Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) troops scaled down a rope from another helicopter of their own onto the ground. Fire engines deployed and troops rushed to evacuate the casualties.



It looked and sounded like a disaster unfolding. But in fact, it was just a drill.

An exercise by hundreds of troops in large-scale disaster response was conducted on 26th and 27th February jointly by LAF and UNIFIL, in cooperation with a number of government and non-government organizations, in the city of Tyr in south Lebanon. The two-day exercise entitled “United Beacon” was based on a fictitious scenario in reaction to a large humanitarian emergency in the aftermath of an earthquake.

The exercise aimed at enhancing the coordinated capability of all the participating agencies to effectively respond to an unforeseen natural disaster within available means and capabilities.

The site of the drill was an open field next to houses damaged during past conflicts in south Lebanon to create a real life environment of a stricken area. UNIFIL Force Commander Major-General Alberto Asarta Cuevas inspected the site on Saturday 26 February. The exercise was reviewed on Sunday 27 February by UNIFIL Deputy Force Commander Brigadier General Santi Bonfanti, UNIFIL Chief of Staff Brigadier-General Xavier De Woillemont and LAF South Litani Sector Commander Brigadier General Sadek Tlais.

“We have to be always prepared to respond to any natural disasters within our available resources and capabilities in order to be ready to mitigate the resulting damage to life and property,” Brigadier-General De Woillemont said. “An effective

and immediate first response is paramount to reducing the number of casualties, to save lives, treat the injured, and to prevent further injury and other forms of loss.”

The exercise involved 277 soldiers, 70 vehicles and two helicopters of the Lebanese Army and UNIFIL. Also participating were units of the Internal Security Forces, LAF Intelligence, Civil Defence, Lebanese Red Cross, the Tyr Fire Brigade, Tyr Municipality, concerned Ministries of the Lebanese Government and local NGOs.

A number of coordinated immediate response activities were carried out. These included deployment of emergency response teams by LAF and UNIFIL; aerial and ground reconnaissance of affected area; search, rescue and relief activities including first aid for victims, medical evacuation by ground and air transportation, deployment of fire-fighting and engineering assets for clearing debris and Explosive Ordnance Disposal.

“This exercise is an important step in the continued efforts of UNIFIL and the Lebanese Army to enhance our combined ability,” Brigadier-General De Woillemont said.

A few days before the exercise, UNIFIL Civil Affairs and Civilian Military Coordination (CIMIC) carried out an awareness campaign at Tyr area schools on earthquake preparedness.

More than 1,200 students, girls and boys aged 10 to 18, and about 40 teachers attended the lectures and video presentations about earthquakes at four Tyr area schools.

The idea, Major Tersigni Massimiliano, CIMIC Commanding Officer at Naqoura, said was to also explain to students about earthquakes, coinciding with the “United Beacon” exercise, because students could be the first to be endangered in their schools in case of a tremor.

“I teach them what to do before, how to behave during and also how to behave after an earthquake,” he said. “We give suggestions about how to prevent major damage in case of an earthquake, how to minimize the risks and then how to take cover and be in a safe place.”

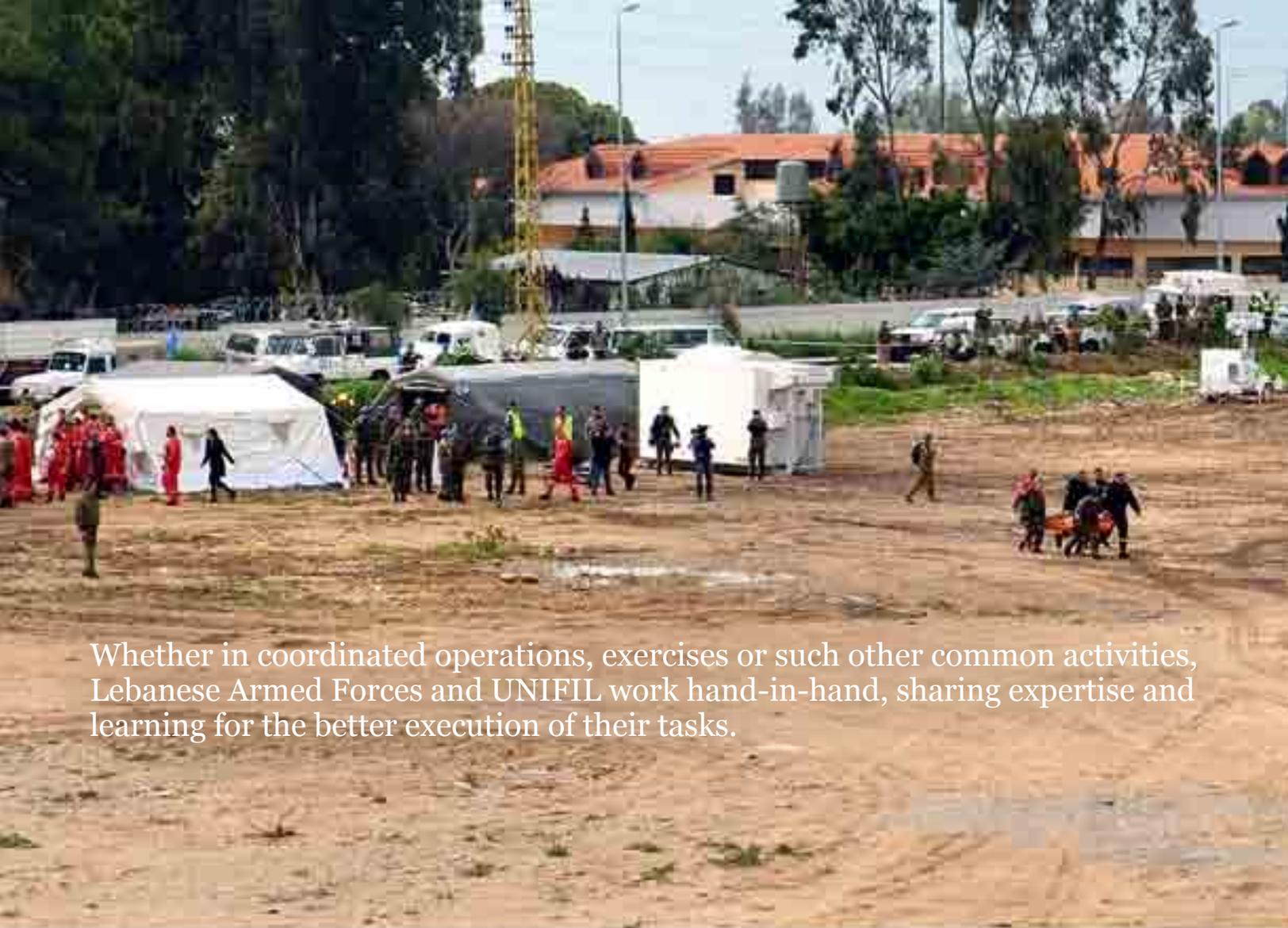
Leila Karam, Principal of Tyr First Public School, said the lecture was very useful and students took their experience home. “The area has witnessed quakes and now students have ideas how to take precautions, how to be in safe places, at home or outside, and how to be out of danger.”

Students Mohammad and Doaa displayed their new found knowledge.

“When there is a quake, we directly go and sit under the table and move everything that is on high shelves,” Mohammad told UNIFIL radio program “Salam from the South.”

Doaa added: “We should shut close the cooking gas capsule and turn off the electricity, take cover under tables or beds, have a radio handy to follow public announcements and memorize emergency phone numbers.”

Hassan Siklawi & Rania Bdeir
UNIFIL Public Information



Whether in coordinated operations, exercises or such other common activities, Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL work hand-in-hand, sharing expertise and learning for the better execution of their tasks.

Glimpses of Blue Line marking; joint artillery and amphibious exercises; earth response drill





Marking the Blue Line: an ambitious UNIFIL effort for peace

After careful GPS measurement of map coordinates, the Lebanese Army soldier delivers two blows from a lump hammer to embed a metal stake in the soil.

Then he sprays the rod in red paint to define it as the marker of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). Next to it, another stake is painted blue of the United Nations and the one of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) painted yellow that had been marked earlier. The point agreed to will be where a blue barrel will be erected defining the Blue Line at that location.

Visibly marking the Blue Line, which separates Lebanon from Israel, is a task undertaken by the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in coordination with the two countries. That effort is ambitious and the work is painstaking, but the rewards for peace may be well worth it.

The process recently overseen by UNIFIL on the Blue Line near the village of Blida in southern Lebanon will have to be repeated hundreds of times on both the Lebanese and Israeli sides before the job is done.

The Blue Line, sometimes confused as an international border, is in fact the Line of Withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon drawn by

the UN in 2000. Following the 2006 hostilities, the UN Security Council, by its resolution 1701, tasked UNIFIL, among other things, to verify the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon.

The sole purpose of the Blue Line is to verify the Israeli withdrawal without any prejudice to future border agreements between all concerned.

Blue Line remains the only reference point for ensuring that there is no violation by any side.

But the Blue Line also is as complex as many other issues in the Middle East, entangled in history and in today's political realities. Both Lebanon and

Israel in the year 2000 confirmed to the UN Secretary-General that identifying the Blue Line was the sole responsibility of the United Nations and undertook to respect the line in its entirety, despite their reservations on some points.

The Blue Line remains the only reference point for ensuring that there is no violation by any side. This is an important element of the cessation of hostilities and the related obligations that both the parties have taken upon themselves.

In 2007, a year after the last conflict, UNIFIL undertook to visibly mark the Blue Line. The purpose is to establish clear, common understanding of the line and to mitigate the scope for possible friction, as happened on 3 August 2010 when exchange of fire between the Lebanese and Israeli armies left three dead in Lebanon and one in Israel.

The effort continues today, with many months expected ahead before the job is done. For UNIFIL, visibly marking the Blue Line is a technical task that must be executed with precision and with the full agreement of both Lebanon and Israel.



The Blue Line was determined on the map by UN cartographers based on 1923 Anglo-French maps when the powers drew borders in the Middle East and the 1949 Armistice between Lebanon and Israel. Over the decades, markers on the ground disappeared due to environmental factors and maps went missing. Then came the modern technology of the Global Positioning System.

On the ground, at many points the Blue Line is invisible, and sometimes complex. For example, at the Sheikh Abbad Hill near the village of Houla, the fence cuts through the tomb of the historic cleric revered by both Muslims and Jews. Elsewhere, it is a crow's fly between two rocks painted blue by cartographers, defined by markings on an open field or by the median line of a river bed.

The likelihood of inadvertent violations of the Blue Line by civilians, particularly shepherds, is high given the difficulty in identifying it. Hence the need for visible marking on the ground.

The Blue Line runs through rough, inhospitable mountain terrain in places, abuts roads and houses in other locations and, in one case at the village of Ghajar in the east, slices right through it. Israel has built a fence south of the Blue Line, referred to as the Technical Fence. In places the two are adjacent and in other places this Israeli high-security fence runs up to a few hundred metres away from the Blue Line.

Minefields and sensitivity of some locations tend to slow down the process of visible marking.

In addition, UNIFIL discusses marking with the parties and makes sure the sides are satisfied. Then UNIFIL goes with teams from each country to do measurements on the ground based on GPS coordinates provided by UNIFIL. This can only be done after UNIFIL demining teams clear pathways for the teams to reach the designated location.

Blue Line runs through inhospitable terrain in places, abuts roads and houses in others

UNIFIL does its own measurements. If the measurements of the Lebanese, UNIFIL and Israeli sides match or are within 50 centimetres of each other, a Blue Barrel point is marked and UNIFIL engineers are called in to build it, with the location later verified

by the parties. If the discrepancy is more than 50 centimetres "then we're back basically to the drawing board," says John Molloy, the UNIFIL Political Affairs Officer in charge of the task.

The next point to place a blue barrel will have to be within the line of sight of another blue barrel.

It is painstaking work by a group of officers from UNIFIL and the LAF on the Lebanese side and UNIFIL and the IDF on the Israeli side. Hundreds of people are involved in the effort: mapping people from UNIFIL, LAF and IDF, as well as demining teams and construction engineers from UNIFIL, according to Molloy.

By the end of April 2011, 90 blue barrels had been built on agreed locations.

The task ahead is monumental. Molloy said there are 198 coordinates along the Blue Line's 118 kilometres.

"There will be many, many more barrels when we finish... approximately 469 is what we feel we need to create an inter-visible line," he added.

According to Molloy, the parties are interested in the visible marking, and that is what matters:

"When there's a will, there's a way."

Samir F. Ghattas UNIFIL Public Information



Wazzani tourist resort, capitalizing on peace, banking on hope

Some people dismissed him as insane, others described him as extraordinarily courageous. But Khalil Abdullah says he is simply a businessman. This 58-year-old Lebanese spent nearly 35 years in the Ivory Coast in western Africa and has returned to his native south Lebanon to build a tourist resort right across from Israeli army lines.

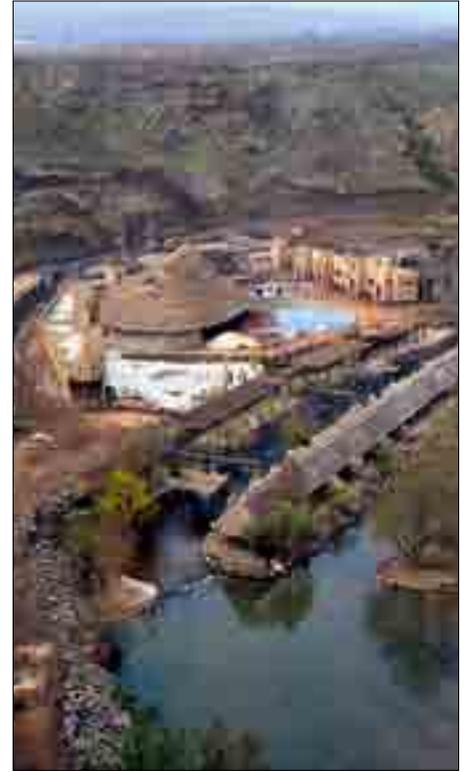
The Khyam native has long dreamt of a “Fort Wazzani Tourist Village” on the bank of the Wazzani River, downstream from the northern part of the town of Ghajar, which is Lebanese territory occupied by Israel in violation of UN Security Council resolution 1701.

The construction of a tourist resort in a country famous for its natural beauty and

mild weather is normal, but building such a resort at an ultimate cost of about six million US dollars in that particular area is seen as an “unusual act” by many people. In this stretch the Blue Line, the Line of Withdrawal of Israeli forces drawn by the United Nations in the year 2000 with the consent of both the Governments of Lebanon and Israel, runs mid-stream of the Wazzani river. Across the river here, a

small hill intersperses the Blue Line and a barbed-wire security fence set up by Israel.

Abdullah plunged into this project backed by political reasoning, an enticing historical background, realities on the ground created by the security and stability the Lebanese Army and UNIFIL have helped establish in the area as well as hope for a brighter future for the region.



He has considered the project carefully before going for it despite all the warnings about the risks from close associates. He found out that the area has not witnessed any shooting for nearly half a century because it has no strategic value and no side would use it as a platform for military action, not to mention that it is territory empty of people.

Speaking to *Al-Janoub*, Abdullah said that despite the 2006 war being the longest between Arabs and Israel “the people have returned to live their lives normally and to rebuild their homes, because the cycle of life goes on no matter what happens.”

“If such a war erupts again, I think people will return to their villages to build it again. And, in case there was an Arab-Israeli settlement, this resort will be the only resort of its kind on the border between three countries, namely Lebanon, Syria and Israel,” added Abdullah.

“Pending such a settlement, the presence of the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL peacekeepers in such strength in the area south of the Litani River has given me an immense reassurance for launching this project,” he said. “It is not reasonable that a war erupts in the area despite the presence of such a large number of soldiers and the participation of more than 30

countries in UNIFIL, in addition to the Lebanese troops that deployed to the area after thirty years of absence,” added Abdullah.

The exchange of fire between the Lebanese and Israeli armies at Adaisseh in the same area of southeastern Lebanon in August 2010 did not make Abdullah change his mind. “From the onset it became known that it was an isolated incident and no one wants it to exacerbate into war,” he added.

According to Abdullah, the project extends over an area of 40,000 square meters and is expected to be completed over two phases with a cost of approximately three million US dollars for each phase. The first phase included the construction of ten chalets, a large tent for parties and weddings, a supermarket, an equestrian club, small amusement park, two swimming pools (one for children), restaurants and cafes by the river, in addition to a small lake for geese and ducks as well as Trout fish that will be served at the resort’s restaurants.

The second phase is expected to be completed in 2013. This phase includes the construction of approximately 50 chalets, reception hall, and two-storey restaurant at the top of the hill overlooking the Wazzani River and with a view of Ghajar.

“This project will offer at least 120 job opportunities to the people of the area, not to mention that it will revive the local economy,” said Abdullah.

The architecture was inspired by the African style, particularly that of the Maghreb region and Mali, based on wood and thatch. He merged it with the mud masonry traditionally used in Lebanese village constructions. Thus, the resort architecturally blends two different civilizations Abdullah has been exposed to.

The project could not have been possible had it not been for Abdullah’s entrepreneurial background, too. He left Lebanon in 1969 when he was 17. He lived with his maternal uncles and worked with them in the wood industry on the outskirts of the city of Abidjan in the Ivory Coast. A few years later, he launched his own timber business and also worked in constructions. The father of four returned to Lebanon in 2004.

Located southeast of the Wazzani village in an area reliant on agriculture and livestock farming, Abdullah believes that the success of the resort will depend on tourists and expatriates who return to their villages every summer.

Sultan Sleiman UNIFIL Civil Affairs

Kfar Shouba



Kfar Shouba conquers adversities

Kfar Shouba is a town in southern Lebanon nestled in rocky terrain at the foothills of Jabal Al-Sheikh (Mount Hermon).

Kfar Shouba's location - about 130 kilometres southeast of Beirut with an altitude of 1,300 metres above sea level at its highest point and about 1,000 meters at the lowest point - ringed by huge rock outcrops, have given the town great strategic importance since the Islamic conquest and the Crusades up to the present time, not to mention its frontier location adjoining the Israeli occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

In the seventh century A.D., Muslim leaders recruited soldiers descending from Muslim families that were living in Iraq, Palestine and Syria and made garrisons. Later on, they deployed them in the area to face the Crusaders and the Byzantines. Most prominent families of these garrisons are Al-Qadiri, Qassab, Abdullah, Diab, Shibli, Yahya and Amro.

The oldest archaeological site in Kfar Shouba is the "Qadiriya Corner" (Azzaweya al-Qadiriya). It is a place of worship and a centre for Sufis. According to a stone inscription, the "corner" was built more than 400 years ago.

Kfar Shouba Mayor, university professor Dr. Qasim al-Qadiri, told *Al-Janoub* that the intermittent periods of stability, that the area experienced between successive invasions and conquests prompted these soldiers to become the local residents. And so, they sought to secure their daily bread through livestock and agriculture, especially by cultivation of olives and grain.

The harsh mountainous nature, as well as the bitter cold and heavy snow in winter, compelled the townspeople to build houses in the western and

southern sides of the town in a small farm called Halta, said al-Qadiri.

"They used to head to the farm with their herds to enjoy the warmth and benefit from the farm's agricultural land," the mayor said. Over time, the farm expanded and became a stand-alone village. A total of 90 houses make up the farm that is situated at about 500 metres above sea level, he added.

Since the beginning of the last century, Kfar Shouba witnessed the upheavals of the Middle East region, from the Ottoman to the French, and became a front-line in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In 1978, Israel invaded southern Lebanon and the town fell under occupation until Israeli troops withdrew from the area in 2000.

Norwegian peacekeeping troops were the first to enter Kfar Shouba under UN Security Council resolution 425 in 1978. The Norwegian Battalion of UNIFIL stayed there until 1998 when it was replaced by the Indian Battalion.

As far as Kfar Shouba's name is concerned, al-Qadiri said that no one has accurate explanation about the roots of the name. However, many historians agree that it is a compound name. They argue that "Kfar"

means "monastery", whereas "Shouba" was the name of a goddess in the Hermon area during the Canaanite era and before.

The total population of the town is approximately 10,000 inhabitants, only 1500 of them live year round. Many serve in the Lebanese Army. Some of its people earn their living from livestock and agriculture, especially growing olives, while the rest have moved to Beirut or abroad.

Noting that the town lacks sufficient infrastructure, al-Qadiri said that there is only one dispensary in the town that belongs to the Ministry of Social Affairs, but its services are very limited. There is one elementary public school that hosts 100 students, and a secondary public school with about 80 students. He pointed out that the town lacks a sanitation network.

Al-Qadiri praised UNIFIL's role in maintaining stability in the area after the 2006 war. He also commended the development role played by UNIFIL's various units; however, he called on UNIFIL to address concerns regarding providing civilian jobs in the Mission for the people from the town.

Sultan Sleiman UNIFIL Civil Affairs



Kfar Shouba and UNIFIL... relationship based on friendship, love and brotherhood



To understand well Kfar Shouba's relationship with UNIFIL, one should track the incidents experienced by the town, as it had the largest share of bombing, blasting, destruction and displacement.

UNIFIL came to southern Lebanon as a peacekeeping mission. Although the mission's basic duty was focused on maintaining security, establishing peace and separating between the belligerents, UNIFIL has undertaken other tasks. These included relief and rescue works, in addition to providing humanitarian assistance.

In the wake of the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon in 1978, UNIFIL came for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 425. Initially, UNIFIL's Norwegian Battalion had stationed inside the town of Kfar Shouba. Later on, the Norwegians moved their headquarters to the northern side of the town.

At the time, the tasks of the Norwegian Battalion were carried out in accordance with two trends:

The first trend had a security aspect. It was focused on the protection of townspeople.

Kfar Shouba's people conceived UNIFIL as a safe lap, a loyal friend, and a safe haven to which they ask for refuge in hard times. For townspeople, UNIFIL peacekeepers symbolise hope. Perhaps this is why they have built with them relationships based on love, cooperation, friendship and brotherhood.

As for the second trend, it had a humanitarian aspect. This can be summed up in a package of different services. In this regard, examples on the humanitarian

assistance are countless. We remember how UNIFIL transferred Hassan Yassin Ghanem by helicopter to hospital in critical condition; when they rescued Ali al-Jammal's wife after her nose was cut; when the leg of Ali Hani al-Qadiri was amputated as a result of a landmine explosion and how they sent him to Norway for treatment and when they rescued Hassan al-Hajj and his family from fire.

UNIFIL peacekeepers also used to participate with townspeople in all occasions, be it sad or happy ones. Furthermore, they have built affinity relationships with townspeople after some soldiers married young women from the towns of Kfar Shouba, Kfar Hamam, Shebaa, Rashaya el-Fukhar and Habbariyeh. Peacekeepers have also established friendship and brotherhood relations with young men and assisted many of them to learn languages - English and Norwegian.

On the health aspect, the Norwegian doctor toured the town twice a week, examining patients, providing them with medicine and treatment and giving them the necessary health guidelines.

UNIFIL attention also included the Public School. Peacekeepers provided the school with fuel for heating in winter. They also used to give gifts to students during holiday seasons and events, in addition to equipping the school with computers and fencing its playground.

Several members of the Norwegian Battalion were killed while carrying out humanitarian activities.

With the arrival of the Indian peacekeepers in 1998, replacing the Norwegians, the friendly relationship with townspeople continued at the same warm level.

The Indians equipped the town's dispensary and provided it with the essential drugs. At the same time, they started to receive locals in their clinics.

UNIFIL also set up a fence around Ba'athaeil Pond in order to prevent cows coming from the Israeli side from reaching the pond. They also provided additional computers to the public school.

Furthermore, UNIFIL participated with the people of the town in local festivals, such as an Indian musical show and Bagpipe performance as well as a Malaysian dance.

UNIFIL also provided a generator to the town, an electric network to the farm of Halta as well as health and educational services to its people.

Human relations between the people and UNIFIL became so firmly established, and our different nationalities intermingled with one another to achieve one objective, which is building together the foundations of love, peace and security.

Mayor of Kfar Shouba Dr. Qasim al-Qadiri

UNIFIL promotes skills for sustainable development

Khyam - Agriculture is a major source of livelihood for the people of the South in general and the Marjayoun area and its vicinity in particular. Hence, UNIFIL's Civil Affairs department focused on assisting the local population in the area to acquire a certain level of knowledge in the field of agriculture through organising training courses for farmers.



Having financed a training course in the past year in the town of Qlayaa on organic farming and beekeeping, UNIFIL has funded this year a new course in the town of Khyam on food industry, preservation and marketing.

The course involved 67 female farmers, most of whom were housewives coming from different towns, such as Khyam, Marjayoun, Ibl al-Saqi, Blat, Dayr Mimas, Qlayaa and Debbine. The course was organised by both the "Agricultural Cooperative" in Khyam and the "Cooperative Association for Organic Farming and Beekeeping" in Dayr Mimas and its environs.

The training course was held over six days, and was supervised by three agricultural engineers. Lectures and practical lessons were delivered on ten key subjects related to agricultural production, including lessons on how to make jam, pickles, dried fruit, dairy and herbal distillates.

The course was concluded by a ceremony during which certificates of participation were awarded. Present at the ceremony were the commander of UNIFIL's Spanish Battalion at the time Lieutenant Colonel Miguel Angel Garcia, Mayor of Khyam Abbas Awada, Chairman of Khyam's Agricultural Cooperative Riad Kallout and Chairwoman of the Dayr Mimas Cooperative Association for Organic Farming and Beekeeping Amal Hourani.

Hailing the women who participated in the course, Lieutenant Colonel Garcia stressed UNIFIL's support for human development in its Area of Operation, in addition to its role in maintaining peace and stability, hand-in-hand with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and local authorities.

There was praise for UNIFIL's efforts in the development of the area.

Mr. Awada thanked UNIFIL on the developmental role it is playing through these training courses, as well as through all other forms of aid provided to the area. He called on UNIFIL to organise more training activities that would contribute to the development of productive capacities of the local population.

In turn, Faten Rahim Saad, a coordinator in Khyam's Agricultural Cooperative, expressed hope that local officials would take the cue from UNIFIL and organise similar training courses.

Mrs. Amal Hourani, Chairwoman of Dayr Mimas' Cooperative, also had praise for UNIFIL's contribution to the area through its many services and development projects.

Speaking to *Al-Janoub* at the end of the course trainer Dr. Ali Bassal, a university professor, said the course was much in demand.

"It could be developed and replicated because there is a great need for such courses in this area," he said.

"I wish the duration of the course had been longer to allow more topics to be covered, as participants were very enthusiastic and they had questions about many subjects," he added.

Dr. Bassal also called on UNIFIL, in addition to supporting and assisting the agricultural cooperatives, to also "promote and support such activities by providing equipment as much as possible, at least the basic equipment to help improve production."

Mrs. Zahra Qasim, 40, from the town of Khyam, was one of those who participated in the course.

"It was a great course and we enjoyed it a lot. We wish it had been more comprehensive and included more topics. We have learned many new things," the homemaker and mother of two girls said.

"For my part, I moved to the town of Khyam two and a half years ago, and I am considering the possibility of starting a business in order to help my husband financially. This course encouraged me to consider agricultural production as a possible field of work," she added.

Ms. Sawsan Saeid, 21, from the town of Ibl al-Saqi, also participated in the course with great enthusiasm.

"The course was very good. We have been taught many new things. But I wish there was opportunity for participants to engage in more practical applications of the theories explained to us by trainers," said Saeid.

Saeid, a university graduate seeking employment, said she hoped UNIFIL could carry on providing assistance to this area.

"There are many women in the South who need to work, but they do not have opportunities. Such courses would open new doors in front of them to acquire knowledge and consequently consider the possibility of opening their own business," she added.

Sultan Sleiman UNIFIL Civil Affairs

DISCOVER UNIFIL

TV Series completes its 9th episode

Entitled 'PEACEKEEPERS', episode 9 brings you a rare look at UNIFIL peacekeepers as individuals who share a few personal feelings, thoughts and experiences while on duty in South Lebanon.

Also produced and broadcast since our last Al-Janoub issue was DISCOVER UNIFIL - Episode 8 - LAF & UNIFIL focusing on how LAF and UNIFIL cooperate on joint exercises and coordinated patrols, ranging from foot and vehicle patrols to joint naval training and artillery firing exercises.

The DISCOVER UNIFIL TV series has endeavoured to better explain some key aspects of UNIFIL's mission in South Lebanon and Security Council Resolution 1701. All episodes have been broadcast on Lebanese TV stations NBN, New TV and Tele Liban and further broadcasts will continue for several months to come. You may also watch this series and UNIFIL's other video productions in both English and Arabic on our websites listed below.



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UNIFIL helicopter in the air, Lebanese relief crews on the ground in drill to test emergency response to an earthquake disaster