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# al-janoub

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**UNIFIL**  
magazine



**3** Years  
on ...



# Understanding UNIFIL three years on

At the launch of *'Al-Janoub'* in 2007 we hoped to have it serve as a platform for exchange of information between UNIFIL and the people of south Lebanon. We believed, and still do, that human relationships are best founded on a well informed appreciation of mutual concerns and sensibilities.

Now, more than three years since the UN Security Council resolution 1701, the need remains more than ever for UNIFIL to explain to the people what the mission is about and to in turn better understand the needs and expectations of the people. One would think that after more than three decades of UNIFIL's existence [since 1978], the Lebanese would know all there is to know about it. However, the situation over these years has evolved and so has UNIFIL.

Perceptions carried forward from the long years of presence, multiple UN involvement on issues related to, but often outside, UNIFIL's remit and the plethora of UN documents representing the many international attempts to address developments in this part of the world, all underline the need for UNIFIL to constantly clarify its mandate to the people.

We therefore thought it appropriate to turn the lens once again on UNIFIL, what it does and why. The lead articles in this issue look at UNIFIL's mission in simple practical terms, both with respect to the activities of UNIFIL on the ground and the role the mission plays in fostering a long-term solution to the conflict.

Before proceeding to see what UNIFIL is, let us begin here with 'what UNIFIL is not':

First, NOT every provision of resolution 1701 is UNIFIL's responsibility: True, one part of 1701 defines UNIFIL's mandate, but the resolution also addresses other concerns, most notably for a permanent ceasefire and long-term solution to the conflict that must be achieved through a political process, which is outside the remit of UNIFIL. UNIFIL does many things to maintain the cessation of hostilities, de-escalate tensions and support the Lebanese Army in ensuring a secure environment – things that foster a long-term settlement; but the settlement itself must be reached by the parties. In other words, UNIFIL facilitates a political solution, but cannot substitute for it.

Second, UNIFIL is NOT a party to the conflict: UNIFIL is an impartial presence that is here at the request of the Lebanese government and that more broadly draws from the consent of the parties in the context of the cessation of hostilities that the parties have agreed on.

UNIFIL must therefore blow the whistle every time there is any side violating any element of their agreement on the cessation of hostilities. UNIFIL does this in an impartial and factual manner, making its observations with full transparency and ultimately deferring the judgment to the UN Security Council.

Third, UNIFIL is NOT the agency that has primary responsibility for security in south Lebanon: the Lebanese Army is. Having facilitated the deployment of the Lebanese Army in south Lebanon, UNIFIL now supports the Lebanese Army in ensuring security in the area. The primary responsibility for security, a sovereign right as much as a responsibility, legitimately belongs to the Lebanese state. UNIFIL only assists in this.

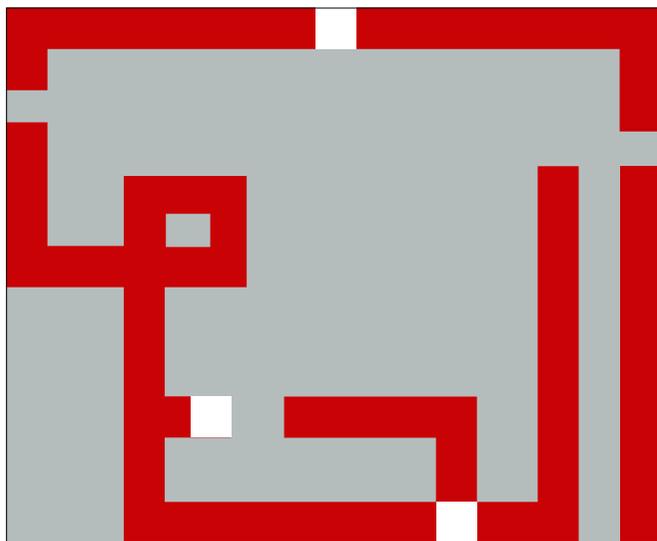
Fourth, UNIFIL is NOT here to provide a military solution to the conflict. On the contrary, the very essence of UNIFIL and of UN peacekeeping is to achieve a peaceful resolution to a conflict. True, UNIFIL has the mandate and the ability to use force, but that is not the defining intent of its robust military capability. For UNIFIL, force is a measure of last resort to be used, besides in self-defence, to resist attempts by forceful means to prevent UNIFIL from discharging its duties; to protect UN personnel, facilities, installations and equipment; to ensure the security and freedom of movement of UN personnel and humanitarian workers; to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence; and to ensure that UNIFIL's area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities. The essence of having 'weapons of peace' is in negating the need for their use.

Fifth, UNIFIL is NOT a development or humanitarian agency: the UN has other agencies mandated for such tasks, while UNIFIL has a specific peacekeeping mandate. The small scale projects that UNIFIL undertakes or the services it extends to the local communities are all done in the context of the relationship the peacekeepers share with the people, whereby it is imperative to address the consequences of wars and destruction that our hosts in south Lebanon are faced with.

So let us find out what UNIFIL is about; read on...

**Neeraj Singh**  
Editor-in-Chief

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### **Disclaimer**

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# 1701 **Renewal of UNIFIL mandate a testament to confidence**

The UN Security Council, at the request of the Lebanese government, extended in August the mandate of UNIFIL for another year. The extension came with no changes to the mandate, rules of engagement or the mission of UNIFIL.

Resolution 1884 (2009), which renewed the mandate until 31 August 2010, commends the positive role of UNIFIL and states that the deployment of UNIFIL together with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) has helped to establish a new strategic environment in southern Lebanon.

The decision, three years since the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), demonstrates that the international community highly values the performance of UNIFIL and believes that the force is adequately empowered to play its mandated role.

Four elements of resolution 1884 (2009) are noteworthy: the need to reach a permanent ceasefire; the significance of the cooperation between UNIFIL and LAF; the decision to review UNIFIL's operational capacity; and the importance of allowing UNIFIL to operate freely and with security.

Resolution 1884 (2009) urges all parties to cooperate fully with the Security Council and the Secretary-General to achieve a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution. There is clearly a need for greater progress in this regard that the resolution emphasizes.

Conditions on the ground have significantly improved and UNIFIL has provided a strong deterrent to the resumption of hostilities. But until such time that the cessation of hostilities is solidified by a permanent ceasefire, the present calm in southern Lebanon will remain precarious.

The international community clearly sees the combined efforts and the cooperation between UNIFIL and LAF as key elements for the implementation of the mandated tasks. Welcoming the expansion of coordinated activities between the two forces, the Security Council encouraged further enhancement of this cooperation.

The long-term objective of UNIFIL is to gradually transfer responsibilities to



Joint UNIFIL and Lebanese Army team check map coordinates during Blue Line marking

the Lebanese Armed Forces so that it assumes full and effective security control over UNIFIL's Area of Operations and the Lebanese territorial waters, in line with resolution 1701.

It is essential in this regard that the Lebanese Armed Forces gets the technical and material resources it requires to fulfill its vital responsibilities. To this end, the UN urges the international community to continue and intensify its assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces.

After three years of resolution 1701 and the improvements on the ground that have resulted, the Security Council endorsed the Secretary-General's proposal for a comprehensive review of UNIFIL's operational capacity, including the force structure, assets and requirements. The objective is to ensure continued operational effectiveness of UNIFIL by making sure that it is properly structured, resourced, equipped and has all the necessary assets to fulfill its mandate.

This review is in line with peacekeeping good practice. It does not address, and will not result in, any change in the mandate, mission and rules of engagement of UNIFIL.

Over the next several months, the review will be discussed with UN Headquarters in New York and a decision will be taken in close coordination with troop contributing countries.

The resolution stressed that an essential element for UNIFIL to be able to carry out its tasks in southern Lebanon is for the force to operate in a safe and secure environment and with full freedom of movement. The

**The long-term objective of UNIFIL is to gradually transfer responsibilities to the Lebanese Armed Forces**

safety and security of UN personnel, military and civilians, who are operating in south Lebanon is of the highest importance for the international community. In the past two years there have been three terrorist attacks against UNIFIL in which six peacekeepers were killed and two wounded.

The peacekeepers from 30 countries have come to south Lebanon to help the people, keep peace and bring about stability in the area so that people who suffered so much can have a normal, safe life.

The peacekeepers came here at the invitation of the Lebanese government and people; they have shared the good and bad times with the people of south Lebanon. As invited guests, it is imperative that their role in keeping the peace is duly respected and that they enjoy the safety and freedom of movement that they require to properly perform the tasks Lebanon and the international community has entrusted to them.

In this way, the Security Council has once again clarified the way forward towards sustainable peace in south Lebanon. And UNIFIL's presence secures safe progress along this course. Time is at a premium; the opportunity for peace must be grasped.

**Milos Strugar** Director of Political & Civil Affairs/UNIFIL

# Maritime Task Force's role in UNIFIL



The first Naval Force to be part of a UN peacekeeping mission (UNIFIL Maritime Task Force) has been deployed since October 2006 upon request of the Lebanese Government to assist the Lebanese Navy in securing the territorial waters and to help prevent the unauthorized entry of arms or related material by sea into Lebanon. Since then Germany, Italy, France and Belgium have by rotation assumed Maritime Task Force Command. On the 1st of December 2009 I assumed Command of the MTF for the next six months on behalf of Italy.

In order to accomplish the assigned mission, MTF Units operate in the Area of Maritime Operations (AMO) that runs along the entire coastline of Lebanon and stretching westward up to 43 nautical miles into the Mediterranean Sea. The first 12 nautical miles from the Lebanese coastline constitute Lebanese territorial waters, beyond which are international waters. MTF Units conduct continuous surveillance of merchant traffic, particularly along the approach corridors to the three main harbours of Lebanon: Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon.

MTF's main tasks are: One, to establish a naval presence and surveillance over the Area of Maritime Operations, with priority to the Lebanese territorial waters; and two, to conduct Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO), including identification and, within the Lebanese territorial waters, stopping/diverting or referring suspect Merchant Vessels for inspection by Lebanese authorities. If requested by the Lebanese Armed Forces-Navy (LAF-Navy), MTF may also board and inspect a suspect vessel. The long term objective of MTF is to hand over security responsibilities to the LAF-Navy in a gradual manner. This is directly related to the LAF-Navy acquiring the

requisite capabilities to secure its maritime borders and assume effective security control over Lebanese territorial waters. Already in the past three years LAF-Navy's capabilities have increased through bilateral donations of patrol craft, radar assets and other naval equipment, and the regular training provided by MTF to LAF-Navy personnel. The MTF strength during the same period has decreased so that the MTF is currently operating at less than half the capacity of 18 vessels foreseen during its initial deployment in 2006.

In order to maintain a clear Recognized Maritime Picture (RMP) in the whole area, a Maritime Interdiction Operation Commander is continuously on task. This duty is normally assigned to frigates, which are larger ships with the appropriate command and control capabilities. Vigilance and control of ships crossing the Area of Maritime Operations is executed by using the Automatic Identification System, a capstone tool that increases the surveillance area.

The identification process of all traffic is critical: it allows to classify a contact as "suspect" or "clear" (to proceed) upon completion of hailing. All merchant vessels classified "suspect" are monitored and, if inbound to a Lebanese harbour, are referred for inspection to LAF authorities.

In this process the cooperation between MTF and LAF-Navy is fundamental: to assist in his identification tasks, the Maritime Interdiction Operation Commander has on board his ship a Lebanese Liaison Officer who embarks on a weekly basis.

The second pillar of MTF mission is to assist and train the LAF-Navy to gain the ability to fully control their territorial waters. The main training goal is to enable

LAF-Navy to acquire the ability to establish, evaluate and maintain a surface picture. In this process the Naval Operation Centre (NOC), the Coastal Radar Stations and the patrolling naval assets have to be fully involved.

The main activities of the MTF program include tailored theoretical as well as practical studies according to the principles of 'train the trainers' and 'train as you operate' in a mutual support mode during actual operations. This has been implemented through the Combined Maritime Interdiction Operations, which involve the coordinated employment of the two LAF-Navy Components (Patrol Boats and the Coastal Radar Organization) with the UNIFIL MTF operating in the larger Area of Maritime Operations. Furthermore, a Quick Reaction Sea Component has been established by LAF-Navy consisting of four units based in Tripoli, Jounieh, Beirut and Tyre which can be scrambled in a short time to interdict suspect vessels.

Several other sectors of cooperation and integration have been established. During 'stage at sea', for example, up to seven Lebanese sailors routinely embark on board of UNIFIL ships, to increase their naval skills. In this new concept, the LAF-Navy takes a direct part in the UNIFIL Maritime Interdiction Operations.

All these efforts have contributed to the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1701, proved as a strong deterrent against illegal activity in the area and have helped generally enhance the security of maritime shipping, with significant benefits to the economy, trade, welfare and overall stability of Lebanon.

**Rear Admiral Paolo Sandalli** UNIFIL MTF Commander



## UNIFIL ground operations

Every day several hundred patrols, each with two or three white vehicles flying the UN flag, roll down the roads of southern Lebanon. Added to that are a hundred Observation Posts, a number of foot patrols, de-miners and engineering teams working along the Blue Line and other areas on the ground and, in the skies above, white helicopters observing the Blue Line.

But what drives all these activities?

The international community, through the United Nations, committed a military force to restore international peace and security in southern Lebanon. UNIFIL's peacekeeping force, which counts more than 11,000 soldiers on the ground, has been mandated to monitor the cessation of hostilities; accompany and support the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in their deployment throughout the South, including along the Blue Line, as Israel withdrew its armed forces from Lebanon; extend its assistance to help ensure humanitarian access to civilian populations and the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons; and assist the LAF in taking steps towards the establishment between the Blue Line and the Litani river of an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL deployed in this area.

Monitoring, deterrence and support are the three main functions of UNIFIL's peacekeeping efforts on the ground.

Monitoring is achieved by a mix of dynamic and static operations. On the dynamic side, regular ground patrolling, both on vehicles and on foot, including coordinated patrols with LAF as well as what are called Area Domination Patrols that combine ground and helicopter patrolling, enables UNIFIL to maintain a presence across the area. Major roads, small paths and wadis are randomly patrolled. Particular focus is on ensuring

respect for the Blue Line, the UN drawn 'Line of Withdrawal' of the Israel Defence Forces from Lebanon in 2000.

Specific operational considerations also draw from concern for protection of civilians and any potential escalatory action that could jeopardize the cessation of hostilities. With regard to static operations, UNIFIL and LAF operate co-located road checkpoints. UNIFIL troops apply the "blue ring" concept, deploying a layer of forces outside the checkpoint manned by LAF personnel who stop and search any suspicious vehicles.

Observation posts are the most typical static operational activity. These are located at vantage points allowing valuable area surveillance with particular focus on the Blue Line, including during the night by employing night vision devices.

Deterrence of any hostile activities is ensured through the combined presence and operations of UNIFIL and LAF troops. UNIFIL's Quick Reaction Force plays an important role in this regard. This Force is composed of conventional main battle tanks, self-propelled howitzers, radar-assisted anti-aircraft artillery and anti-tank missiles. Obviously this robust deterrence force needs to be trained and to understand the terrain and its characteristics very well. For this reason, periodic training exercises are planned across UNIFIL's area of operations, especially along the Blue Line. Special counter-rocket-launching operations are conducted by UNIFIL

together with LAF, during which troops jointly patrol a selected area by vehicle and on foot and establish temporary observation posts and checkpoints to stop and check vehicles and persons moving in the area, besides conducting searches of specific areas assessed as potential sites for launching rockets.

Supporting the Lebanese Armed Forces is an important element of UNIFIL's mandate. This is aimed at gradually transferring responsibilities to the LAF so that it assumes full and effective security control over UNIFIL's area of operations in line with the UN Security Council resolution 1701. To this end, UNIFIL has been conducting regular joint training and exercises with LAF, such as joint exercises in artillery live firing, medical evacuation, natural disaster response and so on. At the same time, UNIFIL continues to urge the international community to further intensify its material and technical assistance to the LAF.

Coordinated operations with LAF have a dual purpose: first the tactical goal of ensuring security; and second to support the LAF in performing more and more complex tasks and to assume tactical ownership of the Lebanese territory.

UNIFIL's ground operations conducted in cooperation with the LAF have helped create what the UN Secretary-General and the Security Council have called a "new strategic environment in southern Lebanon".

**Col. Sergio Filippi** Chief Joint Operations Centre/UNIFIL

# Why UNIFIL works?

It's a question that many people in Lebanon and abroad keep asking.

Peacekeepers have been deployed in southern Lebanon since 1978, and only remembered whenever there is trouble. But for just a few seconds, imagine there were no UN peacekeepers in southern Lebanon, along the Line of Withdrawal (Blue Line) with Israel, to monitor, liaise, put a lid on tensions and try to mediate disputes, and you will have the answer.

A lot has been said about the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon over the years. Some have poked fun at the name for being probably the longest "interim" peacekeeping force in the world. Others have simply dismissed it as just a watchman counting and reporting the violations of determined enemies - at first Israel and Palestinian guerrillas, now Israel and Hezbollah. Some have gone to the extreme, even accusing the peacekeepers of disturbing the tranquility of life in south Lebanon villages, damaging roads and inconveniencing residents.

But despite the occasional praise, suspicion and criticism, UNIFIL has proven that it works. This fact is not lost on the leaders in both Lebanon and Israel and diplomats at the United Nations and capitals around the world. This was confirmed again in late August when the UN Security Council renewed the mandate of UNIFIL without amendments for one year, until 31 August 2010.

Why UNIFIL works? And how does it work? For an outsider, southern Lebanon and particularly the region south of the Litani River and the Blue Line that is UNIFIL's area of operations is very much a wasteland of unexploded mines, former battleground and constantly in the line of fire in the regional power play.

But that is far from the truth. South Lebanon is bustling with activity, villages this summer were bursting with visitors, farmers are routinely tending their crops and a once impoverished region has fast caught up with the revival witnessed elsewhere in the country. Credit goes to UN Security Council resolution 1701 of 2006 and the deployment of the Lebanese army and UNIFIL, which

has led to the longest period of tranquility in southern Lebanon in years.

The Lebanese government has deployed the Lebanese Armed Forces since 2006 for the first time in decades. The Lebanese army has primary responsibility for security in the area and UNIFIL assists. Yet, Lebanese would still be uneasy, for example, about living along the fence Israel put up on its side of the Blue Line if it wasn't for that strong presence by both the army and UNIFIL, a deployment providing that sense of security and stability.

What would have happened after Israeli cows crossed to drink water on the Lebanese side as was the case recently at a pond in the eastern border region near Kfar Shouba if it wasn't for UNIFIL's intervention? What would the result be if a Lebanese shepherd strayed into Israeli territory or a mentally unstable Israeli man made his way to Lebanon? Imagine the calamity that would have been the consequence of water disputes or construction work along the frontier.

All these events were recipe for trouble. But with the presence of UNIFIL, it was liaison, troubleshooting and stabilization - all UNIFIL-instituted mechanisms to deal with such simple, but potentially explosive issues.

UNIFIL's coordination with the Lebanese army and its liaison between the parties allowed it to turn the situation around. A Lebanese shepherd who is detained by Israel for crossing the Blue Line is sent back, a deranged Israeli man who crossed into Lebanon in late August was sent back, fences were fixed and water drains repaired. Always there is some kind of solution found, UNIFIL working with the parties.

Even regarding the village of Ghajar that the Blue Line cuts through, UNIFIL proposals dominated the discussions recently.

The cessation of hostilities arranged under resolution 1701 is holding, thanks to UNIFIL's liaison efforts and particularly the tripartite talks' mechanism. Despite minor incidents, no one was killed in combat since the 2006 deployment of UNIFIL and this is quite an

achievement for a region buffeted by conflict for decades. To accuse UNIFIL of doing nothing, as some would like to say, is an injustice inflicted on the 12,500 troops, the mission and the 30 contributing countries. Here there are soldiers from faraway Indonesia, the world's most populous Islamic country, mountainous Nepal and nearby Turkey and tiny Qatar to Italy, France and Spain. At one point, UNIFIL had troops from remote Fiji islands in the South Pacific. All have come here for the sake of helping the Lebanese rebuild their lives.

A total of 281 peacekeepers have lost their lives since UNIFIL first deployed to southern Lebanon in 1978.

UNIFIL and its mission have evolved with the same principle, protecting the local population and ensuring security and stability in its area of operations.

UNIFIL was there for the people of south Lebanon when the country plunged into civil war and the central government in Beirut collapsed during the 1975-90 conflict. During the 2006 war, UNIFIL ran convoys of aid to needy villagers and helped evacuate people.

Today, UNIFIL is engaged in joint exercises with the Lebanese army to improve coordination and efficiency. UNIFIL also has embarked on an effort to clearly mark the Blue Line in order to minimize the violations of the Line of Withdrawal.

The force is also the biggest employer in southern Lebanon after the Lebanese government, with about 700 national civilian employees. Seldom there is a border village that does not have some kind of economic relationship with the peacekeepers or benefit from their presence.

As efforts for a permanent ceasefire continue through the diplomatic channels, UNIFIL's presence in south Lebanon helps prevent the resumption of hostilities. Under the current conditions, if there was no UNIFIL we'd have to create one.

**Samir F. Ghattas** UNIFIL Public Information



# Blue Line blues

## Peacekeepers face challenges on the line of withdrawal between Lebanon and Israel

### Sheikh Abbad Hill, Lebanon -

The UNIFIL officer opened a small gate on the edge of his base, pulled a blue UN flag, lifted it up and started climbing the steps toward a tomb that marked the frontier between Lebanon and Israel in that area of southern Lebanon.

A fence laid above the tomb stretched around the adjacent fortified Israeli army position. It's so close that soldiers could be heard talking.

The Indonesian peacekeeper pointed to the midday shadow of the fence right in the middle of the tomb and said: "This is the Blue Line."

On this part of the frontier between Israel and Lebanon, The Blue Line, or the Line of Withdrawal, is a shadow. Elsewhere, it is not even that - most likely an invisible line, a bird's fly between two rocks painted blue by cartographers, defined by markings on an open field or by the skyline of a mountain top and the median line of a river bed.

So the likelihood of inadvertent violations of the Blue Line by civilians, particularly shepherds, is possible given the difficulty in identifying it. Just like with Sheikh Abbad Hill, the proximity and potential for friction is a daily risk that UN peacekeepers have to watch for and deal with.

At Sheikh Abbad Hill, Muslim worshippers come to pray,

protected by the UN flag and escorted by peacekeepers. It is said that a holy man is buried there, revered by both Muslims and Jews.

Here, the move is organized. But elsewhere along the Blue Line, the lines are not clearly drawn.

So UNIFIL, in coordination with the parties, has commenced marking the Blue Line.

Peacekeepers maintain many positions and observation posts along the Blue Line and run regular land and helicopter patrols to ensure that it is respected and stability prevails and that disputes do not develop into conflict. They have been largely successful. Despite sporadic incidents, it's the longest period of peace in southern Lebanon in a long time.

The Blue Line - the Line of Withdrawal identified by UN cartographers to confirm the Israeli army's withdrawal in 2000 - is 121 kilometers long. It stretches from the Mediterranean coast at Naqoura in the west to Mount El-Sheikh (Haramon) in the east. It is not the border between the two countries.

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, slices right through it. Israel has built a fence south of the Blue Line. In places the two are adjacent and in

other places the Israeli high-security "technical fence" runs a few hundred meters south of the Blue Line.

At Fatima Gate at the inland village of Kafer Kila, the Blue Line and the technical fence run next to each other. In other places, the Blue Line cannot be reached because of the many land mines and bushes or the steep drops of valleys.

At Shebaa Farms in the southeast, Lebanon has reservations about the Blue Line but is committed to respect it as identified. Lebanon says Shebaa Farms, a mountainous terrain on the foothills of Mount Hermon, is Lebanese territory that Israel continues to occupy. Israel captured that area from Syria in the 1967 Mideast war.

Another Blue Line flashpoint is at the village of Ghajar, which Israel also seized from Syria in 1967. When the Blue Line was identified by UN cartographers it cut through the village. Under UN Security Council resolution 1701 of 2006, Israel is obliged to withdraw from the northern part of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line.

Israeli planes frequently fly over Lebanon in violation of the Blue Line and Lebanese sovereignty.

Incidents that peacekeepers have to deal with include stone throwing from the Lebanese side, shepherds straying across the Blue Line and sometimes detained by Israeli troops before being released through UNIFIL to Lebanon and drug dealers on both sides exchanging goods and money in bags tossed over the fence. In one recent case, a mentally disturbed Israeli man was arrested by Lebanese authorities after crossing into Lebanon and was released and repatriated through UNIFIL.

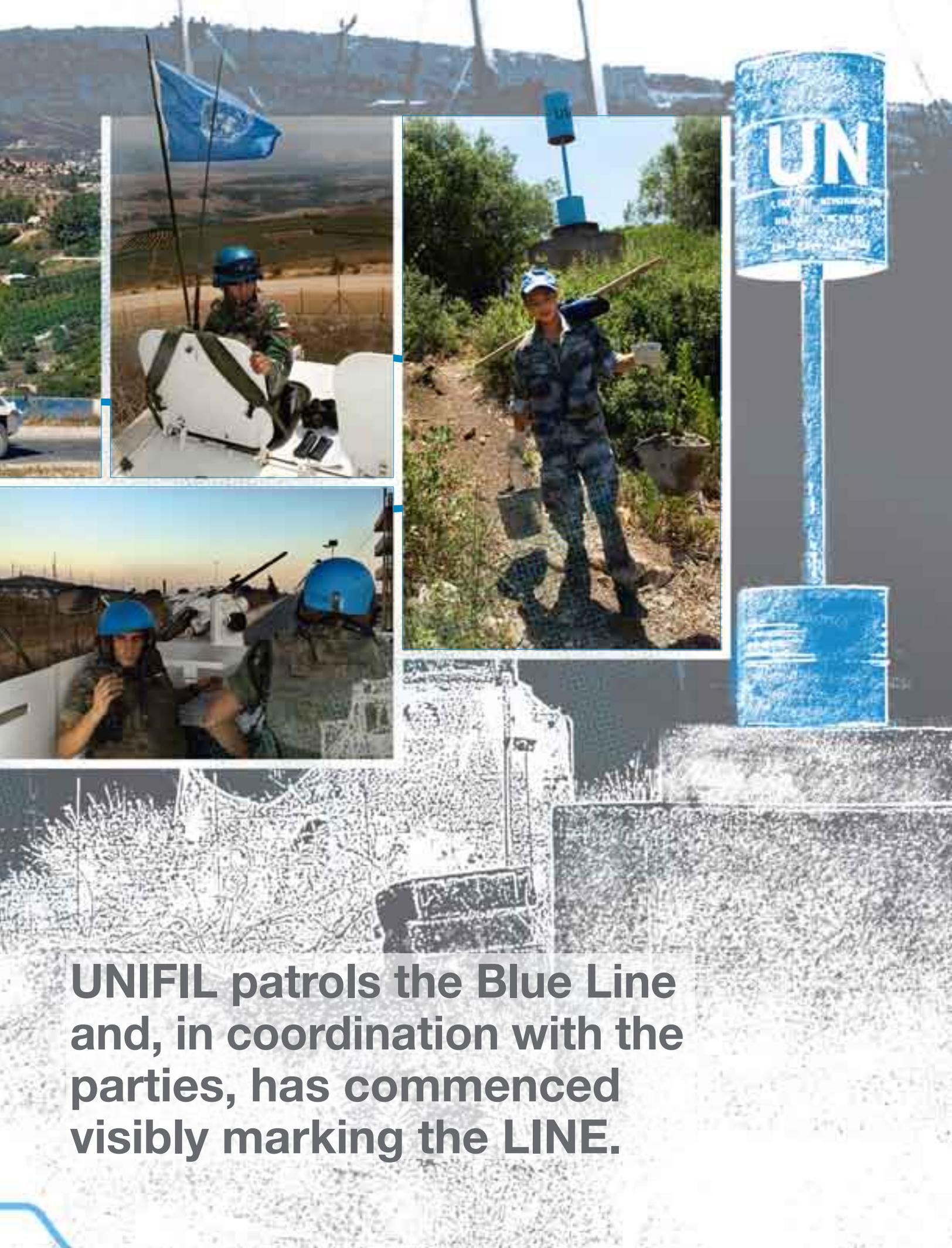
Drainage water pumped across the Blue Line recently caused an incident between Lebanon and Israel at Kafer Kila. To resolve a dispute over the Israeli pumping of rain water over the fence onto a Lebanese road, UNIFIL designed and built a canal to collect water and manage drainage without having to cause difficulties to both sides.

Samir F. Ghattas UNIFIL Public Information





# The Blue Line



**UNIFIL patrols the Blue Line and, in coordination with the parties, has commenced visibly marking the LINE.**

# The cows, the pond and the Blue Line...

## Kfar Shouba, Lebanon -

Cattle fetching water may not sound so exciting an event, or even being an issue, but when the cows are Israeli, the water source is Lebanese and a flashpoint frontier guarded by UN peacekeepers in between it's a big, international deal.

Never mind the land disputes, the more than 60-year-old Arab-Israeli conflict and its intricacies, a recent dispute between Lebanon and Israel centered over a small, man-made pond for cattle to drink from near the village of Kfar Shouba in the mountains of southeast Lebanon.

### Lebanese complain of cows crossing Blue Line for water

Lebanese have complained that Israeli cows were crossing into Lebanon to drink from the pond, a source of fresh water that is crucial for shepherds in the dry summer season.

The Lebanese shepherds complained to Lebanese authorities, the Lebanese army complained to UNIFIL and UNIFIL discussed it with the Israeli authorities who said they were looking for the owner of the herd to rein it in.

Crossing the Blue Line, the Line of Withdrawal between Lebanon and Israel, is a violation of UN Security Council resolution 1701, the implementation of whose military aspects UNIFIL is mandated to ensure.

But the cows, numbering a few dozen, are unaccompanied by any Israeli

shepherd. They come on their own and leave on their own, lured to the location by fresh water. So as far as the Lebanese are concerned, Lebanese water is for Lebanese cattle.

The UN Interim Force in Lebanon, as part of its efforts to liaise and to try to mediate between the parties, intervened.

While it was not practicable for UNIFIL to forcefully send back the cattle coming from Israel, the peacekeepers worked with local authorities on a plan that would reduce the potential for friction between a hilltop Israeli military outpost, a Lebanese army position facing it across the Blue Line, and Lebanese shepherds, Israeli cattle and the pond in between.

On Lebanese request, UNIFIL agreed to build a 200-meter fence around the pond, restricting access to the water to three gates. Troops from a Spanish combat engineering unit toiled in the midday sun in late August and early September, pouring cement on the base of the fence to strengthen it. Armoured carriers guarded the construction site.

Work on the fence was completed around mid-September in what can be described as an achievement for mediation and peacekeeping because the arrangement helped defuse a potentially explosive situation.



### UNIFIL builds fence to control access to Lebanese pond

A Kfar Shouba shepherd said he was satisfied the project would help the Lebanese. "It is a good idea," said the man in his 50s as he herded some 50 goats a couple of hills down from the pond.

A Spanish UNIFIL soldier, however, was concerned about whether the fence can stop the cows.

"I don't know what will happen tomorrow," said the peacekeeper at the site. "Maybe they will crash the fence," she said of the cattle.

So it remains to be seen whether the UNIFIL fence can withstand the pressure of thirsty Israeli cattle and the deadly winds of Middle East politics.

**Yury Kushko** UNIFIL Public Information

# Ramadan at UNIFIL

## UNIFIL soldiers observe Ramadan while performing duties

**At Tiry, Lebanon -** The French and Malaysian soldiers have a common duty of peacekeeping as part of UNIFIL in southern Lebanon. But some soldiers also had something else to share in August and September this year - the Ramadan fasting and the Iftar meals.

Many UNIFIL soldiers who are from the Muslim faith have observed Ramadan like most Lebanese Muslims, particularly in southern Lebanon where the majority of the population is Muslim.

But the dawn-to-dusk fasting did not affect the peacekeepers' duties or performance, officers say.

The holy month has even brought some closer together, such as the sharing of prayers and meals between French and Malaysian peacekeepers at this south Lebanon village.

In At Tiry, a village west of the town of Bint Jbail, French and Malaysian soldiers of UNIFIL work a few hundred meters apart, but Ramadan has provided an opportunity for them to discover their respective cultures and their underlying similarities.

During the month of Ramadan on the Islamic calendar, Muslims take a break from worldly matters and focus on spiritual cleansing. Muslims abstain from eating, drinking water, smoking, and any excessive indulgences from dawn to dusk every day.

They break the fast at sunset, which is the time to pray and reflect. Families usually gather around lavish meals of soup, salad and main dishes, watch television or participate in call-in shows specially produced for Ramadan, and stay awake until predawn hours for prayer and a last meal before fasting for the rest of the day. The month is closed

with the Eid el-Fitr holiday, a three-day event that sees families joining for meals, exchanging gifts and gathering in public parks where children play on swings and Ferris wheels. This is also the time to remember the dead by visiting the graves of loved ones on the first day of Eid.

For UNIFIL peacekeepers, Ramadan is different because the peacekeeping force still has to perform its duties, including assisting Lebanese army troops in maintaining security in the area of operations between the Litani River and the Blue Line.

French Lieutenant Olivier says the operational activity of soldiers did not change during Ramadan and the soldiers of the French battalion continued their regular patrols. She also asserts that every Muslim in the French battalion could fast during the Ramadan period and this did not interfere in their daily work.

Captain Eurieult said French soldiers observed Ramadan and performed their tasks at the same time.

While some Muslim soldiers of the French battalion ended up having their Iftars in a truck, others were able to share a meal with the Malaysian contingent.

Every night during Ramadan, many Muslim soldiers answered the call to prayer and gathered at a mosque to perform the recitation of the Quran by means of special prayers called Tarawih. Then the Malaysian contingent invited the



**The most difficult part of the holy month is for soldiers to be away from family**

French soldiers to a special Malaysian dinner: rice, spicy chicken or fish.

For the French soldiers, sharing their meal with the Malaysians was a good opportunity to get to know the customs of the East. Corporal Benabid used his bare hands to eat a meal, like his Malaysian hosts, in order to feel closer to their tradition and to meld in.

The most difficult part of the holy month, however, is for soldiers to be away from family. For Malaysian Major Rizal, for example, the hardest part was not being with his little boy for the Eid el-Fitr feast.

As for non-Muslim soldiers, many respect the Ramadan tradition by refraining from eating, drinking or smoking in the company of the fasting soldiers. Some also shared the Iftar with the Muslim peacekeepers.

*Nayla Eid, a Lebanese television correspondent, contributed this article while preparing her own report on Ramadan with UNIFIL.*



# The de-miners

Inching their way to a safer south Lebanon

**Chamaa, Lebanon** - The tools are simple - a metal prodding stick, a metal detector and a pair of alert eyes - but the task is monumental: clearing landmines and unexploded ordnance from south Lebanon, a land long buffeted by conflict.

For de-miners of the Italian contingent of UNIFIL, it's a milestone. "It's the first time abroad after the Second World War," as Captain Andrea Cementi of the Italian Engineering unit pointed out about his country's de-mining effort.

UNIFIL's humanitarian de-mining contributions are despite the fact that UNIFIL's mine-clearing resources have been provided only for operational purposes, i.e. to undertake mine clearance activities necessary to facilitate UNIFIL's deployment and operations. However, UNIFIL has been additionally deploying de-mining assets to help protect the civilian population from the danger of unexploded ordnances and to facilitate their safe access to dwellings and fields to the extent possible.

Of the 250-member Italian Engineering contingent based in Chamaa in the hills northeast of the southern Lebanese coastal village of Naqoura, where UNIFIL has its headquarters, only 16 are directly entrusted with the difficult task of de-mining since April.

Among them is Lieutenant Marianna Calo, a mine-clearing supervisor on her first mission abroad. "I like this job. I like the dangerous life," she said, although the young Italian added she misses her family, particularly her twin brother.

Cementi said two operators work on duty in a minefield for 20 minutes at a time. Considerations of stress, loss of concentration and eye fatigue, plus the strain from protective gear weighing 18 kilograms a piece are taken into account. "In a minefield we have to be patient, calm,

and we have to concentrate," he said.

Adding to the difficulties is that mines the de-miners are working to clear can be as small as 13 centimeters long and weighing just under half a kilogram. And minefields can be old, some dating back to the 1980s, and can be affected by weather conditions or shifted by soil erosion over the years.

The work of de-miners is arduous. A de-miner would first carefully remove a crust of the dirt five centimeters deep by 1 meter wide for an initial check. Then a de-miner digs with tools an additional 15 centimeters deep. If a mine is found, it is marked and ordnance disposal teams are called in to blow it up.

One of the tasks of the Italian de-mining unit these days is to cut through a minefield to open a lane for peacekeepers to be able to approach a section of the Blue Line - the withdrawal line between Lebanon and Israel - in order to mark it with visible blue signs to prevent inadvertent violations.

They have already cleared a corridor of 18 metres deep and two metres wide inside a minefield and they need to move another 18 more metres before branching near the Blue Line in two opposite directions to reach the spots where the Blue Line will be marked 300 metres apart.

The mine-clearing team of the Italian contingent has cleared 60,000 square metres of land, including 3,100 unexploded cluster bombs, since November 2006. In all, UNIFIL de-mining teams have to date cleared more than 4.7 million square metres of affected land and destroyed more than

**"I like this job. I like the dangerous life"** Lieutenant Marianna Calo

32,000 unexploded ordnances (UXOs) and mines in southern Lebanon. UNIFIL currently has five de-mining units from five national contingents - China, France, Italy, Spain and Belgium.

But even in UNIFIL's area of operations south of the Litani river in south Lebanon, the UN is no longer the lead agency for de-mining, a role that is now with the Lebanese Mine Action Centre (LMAC).

During 2002-2008, mine clearance in southern Lebanon was coordinated by the UN Mine Action Coordination Centre for South Lebanon (UNMACC-SL) as a partnership between the United Nations and the Lebanese Armed Forces. UNMACC coordinated the clearance of more than 40 million square metres of the contaminated areas through the joint efforts of the Lebanese Armed Forces, UNIFIL and international clearance organizations.

At the beginning of 2009, the mine clearance coordination authority was transitioned to LMAC and UNMACC-SL has since been integrated into UNIFIL.

**Samir F. Ghattas** UNIFIL Public Information



UNIFIL Force Commander presents certificate to Lebanese staff in recognition of long years of service

## Secretary General's Message for UN Day 2009

On this United Nations Day and every day throughout the year, the United Nations is at work - for the planet, for jobs, for "we the peoples".

We deliver more humanitarian aid than anyone - and to the toughest places. We vaccinate 40 per cent of the world's children. We feed more than 100 million people and are helping more than 30 million refugees, most of them women and children fleeing war and persecution. We are deploying more peacekeepers than ever - more than 115,000. In the last year alone, we provided electoral assistance to almost 50 countries. And the entire UN system has mobilized to face global economic turmoil and the social unrest it threatens.

People look to the United Nations to defeat poverty and hunger, to keep the peace, to expand education and stand up for human rights in every corner of the globe. They look to us to stop the spread of deadly weapons and disease, and to protect people and families hit by disasters. In December, they will look to us to seal a comprehensive, equitable and ambitious deal on climate change that will protect us all and pave the way toward a greener, more sustainable economy.

This is a unique moment in world affairs. Multiple crises - food, fuel, financial, flu - are hitting at once. Climate change looms larger every day. Each illustrates a 21st-century truth: we share one planet, one home. As people, as nations, as a species, we sink or swim together.

The United Nations is doing its utmost to respond - to address the big issues, to look at the big picture. We are forging a new multilateralism that can deliver real results for all people, especially those most in need. But I am also painfully aware of the distance to go and the gap between commitment and action.

On this UN Day, let us resolve to redouble our efforts on behalf of the vulnerable, the powerless, the defenceless. Let us stand more united than ever - united in purpose and united in action to make the world a safer, better place.

**Ban Ki-moon**

# UNIFIL honours its own on UN Day

**Naqoura, Lebanon** - Julio Ghafary was 20 when he joined UNIFIL in 1978, so it was befitting for his long service to be recognized on UN Day.

He is one of more than a dozen Lebanese staff members who received the honours for service of 25 or 30 years with UNIFIL during a ceremony marking the 64th United Nations Day held on 23 October 2009 at UNIFIL Headquarters in Naqoura.

Force Commander Major-General Claudio Graziano presented certificates to the long-serving staff members. He also congratulated all the military and civilian personnel who have served in UNIFIL since the establishment of the mission in 1978.

"Their professionalism and unwavering dedication to service has been vital for implementation of UNIFIL's mandate," he said.

Representatives of the Lebanese Armed Forces, Lebanese authorities, NGOs, UN Agencies and the international community attended the ceremony. UN Day marks the founding of the United Nations with the entry into force of the United Nations Charter on 24 October 1945.

During the ceremony, Major-General Graziano inspected an honour guard drawn from UNIFIL's various contingents. A Ghanaian military band played the UN and Lebanese anthems and soldiers raised the flags of contingents at the Cenotaph to the sound of trumpets.

The Force Commander praised the Lebanese Armed Forces for its cooperation and key role in the area.

"All our activities in the service of peace and security in southern Lebanon could not be implemented without the cooperation of the Lebanese Armed Forces," he said.

"Nobody knows better than me the key role they are playing with us, shoulder to shoulder. Their success is our success," Major-General Graziano said.

Ghafary, speaking to Al-Janoub after the ceremony, recalled how he first started working as a contractor in the Procurement Section with a fixed term of a few weeks when UNIFIL itself was four months and 12 days old.

"It's been 31 years, two months and 24 days since and still going," said Ghafary, 51.

"We lived through the good times and bad times, although the sweet ones were rare," he said, referring to the decades of conflict with Israel.

The region of southern Lebanon has been a battleground for more than three decades. Since the 2006 deployment of a reinforced UNIFIL, the situation on the ground has been generally calm, the longest such period in years.

Abdalla Farah, who joined UNIFIL in 1979 in the Receiving Inspection Material Section, credited UNIFIL with contributing to the development and security in southern Lebanon.

"I started with a six-month contract and that has turned into 31 years," he told Al-Janoub. "If it wasn't for UNIFIL, there would be no life in this area," the 52-year-old Lebanese said.

# Bint Jbail

## Bint Jbail Rises

Destroyed south Lebanon town back alive thanks to its people, aid and peace

**Bint Jbail is a name etched in history. The south Lebanon town near the border with Israel has been around for many centuries, a crossroad and a flourishing regional market for Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. In its more recent history, the town has survived decades of fighting, bombardment, Israeli occupation and emigration, always emerging as a symbol of the resilience of the southern Lebanese population.**

The 2006 war between Israel and Hizbullah left the town in ruins. Thirty eight residents were killed and 1,800 housing units completely destroyed, including 600 in the historic part dating back more than three centuries, and 1,200 partially damaged, according to Mayor Afif Bazzi.

A major reconstruction drive has restored some 80 percent of the town three years after the cessation of hostilities, thanks to support from the Gulf Arab state of Qatar, the mayor added.

Located inland on a hill about 850 meters above sea level, Bint Jbail's mild weather and location attracted merchants. "The Thursday market" was the place to do business, said Mustafa Bazzi, a university professor and Bint Jbail native. The market lured the population of nearby villages and towns as well to sell their agricultural and other products.

It is not clear where the name "Bint Jbail" came from or who gave the town that description. The most common story is that long ago a princess from Jbail, a coastal area 45 kilometers north of Beirut known in Western culture as Byblos, settled the area.

Another story says that the town was named Bint Jbail, or "daughter of the mini-mountain", because it is located on the smallest of four hills in the area. There are other accounts, including a biblical one that describes it as "the daughter of the sun".

There were some Byzantine ruins found

here, including remains of a stone engraved with the writing: "This is the Lord's house". There are also two water wells - Hara and Tartella - strange names of unknown origin. There is an old mosque in town with a sign that says the mosque was renovated in 1134 Hijri, about 300 years ago.

Bint Jbail has borne the brunt of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Its role as a market hub declined as borders were shut and Palestinian guerrilla factions bent on fighting Israel moved in.

People switched to planting tobacco for a living. After the Lebanese civil war erupted in 1975, the shoe industry found a foothold in Bint Jbail as factories in the Beirut area closed. Then Israel's 1978 invasion of southern Lebanon forced its people to seek refuge in Beirut or emigrate abroad, an exodus that sharply increased after the Israeli invasion of 1982 and the 18-year occupation that ensued.

The mayor says that about 100 inhabitants were killed and another 100 detained during this time.

Of Bint Jbail's 50,000 residents, only 5,000 live in town. A large number of the 35,000 who left Lebanon reside in Detroit, Michigan, where they established a program of donations to help the town and the needy.

A construction boom since 2000 after the end of the occupation turned to bust with the 2006 war.

Mayor Afif Bazzi said: "With the strengthening



of UNIFIL in 2006, those forces have played a very large role not only in humanitarian aid and reconstruction but also in providing for the people an atmosphere of security and safety."

UNIFIL's humanitarian efforts such as building a fresh water network, equipping a children's playground and establishing a hospital are highly appreciated, he added.

Bazzi said that whereas UNIFIL may not be able to prevent another aggression against Lebanon, "but through their presence we feel they are part of us and what happens to us happens to them."

"We await the day when we will live in peace and security and we won't need UNIFIL forces, but rather welcome them in our houses as guests and tourists," he said.

**Sultan Sleiman** UNIFIL Civil Affairs



## Savouring south Lebanese tradition

**Naqoura, Lebanon** - Naziha Darwish Jomaa was busy explaining to customers surrounding her stand the kinds of fruit jams and pickles that are produced in her native Bint Jbail. Down the hall, pottery craftsman Jihad Esber spun the wheel with his foot to mould a pot from clay while lamenting a waning industry in Rachaya al-Foukhar.

They introduced their goods at the first festival of traditional Lebanese food and handicraft to be held in UNIFIL's Naqoura headquarters. Agricultural and handicraft societies and cooperatives from Bint Jbail, Khiyam, Aitaroun, Aita Shaab, Hallusiyeh, Rachaya al-Foukhar, Deir Qanoun Ras al-Ein, Ein Ebel, Srafa and Qana took part.

The festival was an opportunity for southern villagers to offer their products to UNIFIL peacekeepers and staff stationed at headquarters and to earn money.

Jomaa, 42, patiently answered enquiries about her products, which ranged from pickled hot pepper to dried herbs such as cumin and homemade fruit jams. "We have dried figs, whole figs, fig jam and fig molasses," she said, proudly explaining the diversity of her products that are made from the same ingredients.

Esber, the pottery craftsman from Rachaya al-Foukhar, the village in south eastern Lebanon named for its pottery works (Foukhar in Arabic means pottery), said that in addition to being an opportunity to sell some of the plates, pots and candle holders that he had made, the event also was a chance to air frustration over the fate of pottery moulding and attempts to revive the trade.

According to him, in the 1970's his village had some 80 pottery manufacturers.

"Since then, regretfully there are only two

and very soon Rachaya al-Foukhar will be Rachaya but without the Foukhar," said the 47-year-old man, wearing a traditional thick cap and working his wooden wheel to create a pottery mould.

Scores of customers swarmed around a buffet offering traditional food, including southern specialities like the Freekeh dish, and stopped at around 10 stands, which offered a variety of goods for sale, including the Manousheh (Lebanese bread pie of thyme and olive oil) that was freshly baked on an oval hot metal plate by village women.

Ryszard Morczynski, head of UNIFIL's Civil Affairs section which organized the festival along with the UN Development Program, said Civil Affairs have noticed what southern families are producing and that they needed access to the market.

"It is a sort of small effort to introduce the local culture to the (UNIFIL) force members and it is also a small step towards economic support" for Lebanese families, he said in an interview.

"This kind of food is not available in a restaurant or a supermarket. This is authentic," added Civil Affairs Officer Rola Bzeih.

Colonel Angelo Ristuccia likened what he saw in handicraft and other products to his home region in Italy, which shares with Lebanon the Mediterranean Sea.

"A lot of Italians have some roots in com-

**The event serves to introduce local culture and financially support Lebanese families**

mon with Lebanese ... A lot of the flavour and taste in food is similar to Sicilian," said Ristuccia, Chief of the Special Staff for UNIFIL's Force Commander.

Malak Hijazi, the UNDP field officer in Marjayoun-Hasbaya area, stood at the hall's entrance collecting 10,000 Lebanese Lira (\$6.7) a head for the buffet, money that goes to the participating agricultural cooperatives.

Yusra El-Ghorayeb, the UNDP officer in south Lebanon who organized the event on behalf of the agency, said the aim was to empower women in the south, give them an opportunity to market their products, allow peacekeepers a taste of local cuisine and strengthen relations between the peacekeepers and the local community.

And it was a success.

"I was amazed by the big number of UNIFIL soldiers and civilians who came here, at their own initiative, because they were curious to see, taste and experience it," she said.

**Zeina Ezzeddine** UNIFIL Public Information

# Aiming... for peace

UNIFIL and Lebanese Army in joint south Lebanon exercise



Lebanese soldiers taking part in joint military exercise with UNIFIL in south Lebanon.

**Naqoura, Lebanon** - As the Lebanese army's coastal howitzers thundered away, lobbing their shells toward targets at sea, UNIFIL's mobile 155-mm guns rumbled and took up positions, opening up with flares and live shells. Lebanese Navy and UNIFIL's Maritime Task Force patrolled the territorial waters. A Lebanese armoured personnel carrier fired machine gun bursts; then a UNIFIL Leclerc tank directed machine gun fire at the targets.

The aim of "Neptune Thunder," as the joint exercise involving about 100 soldiers was dubbed, was to maintain the efficiency and mutual knowledge between the Lebanese army and the peacekeepers. It was held on 3 September at Naqoura near the Blue Line, just south of the UNIFIL headquarters.

The coordination of fire support operations to ensure battle readiness is just another example of the Lebanese army's strategic partnership with UNIFIL in the area of operations between the Litani River and the Blue Line. On a more technical level, it is also another opportunity to calibrate the guns, positioning systems and radars.

"We are with UNIFIL certainly in constant progress, and each exercise is more advanced than the other," said Brigadier-General Sadeq Tleiss, commander of the 11th Brigade of the Lebanese army, which is based in the area of operations south of the Litani River. "UNIFIL's mission is to support the Lebanese army in its mission

and we are working on this basis."

Tleiss was among senior Lebanese army and UNIFIL officers who observed the exercise, including Major-General Claudio Graziano, UNIFIL's commander.

Major-General Graziano stressed that the exercise aimed at developing the skills of the Lebanese army and UNIFIL in the interest of peace and stability in the region. The intention, he added, is to strengthen cooperation and coordination with the Lebanese army.

Brigadier-General Tleiss said that cooperation between the Lebanese army and UNIFIL has positive implications for both forces. "And this also reflects on the region in the south and on safeguarding security."

There are practical dimensions to the benefits of the exercise on the training, equipment and execution levels, he said.

The exercise is a small example of the task of a combat formation in which "we take a part of that job and they take a part and together we complement each

**Lebanese Army, UNIFIL stress cooperation and developing skills in joint exercises**

other," the Lebanese officer said.

UNIFIL and the Lebanese army are training for coordinated response in a range of situations including for a potential natural disaster. Another recent joint exercise, "United Beacon," was held in the village of Srifa in south Lebanon in August, testing the combined response in the event of a natural disaster such as an earthquake causing mass casualties. Other local and international organizations were also involved with the aim of enhancing the collective capability of all participating agencies to effectively respond to unforeseen disaster.

**Yury Kushko** UNIFIL Public Information

## UNIFIL launches a new TV series called **DISCOVER UNIFIL**

These 10-minute documentaries provide a special insight into UNIFIL's activities and especially its peacekeepers. 9 episodes are planned, 4 of which have already been broadcast on Lebanese TV stations: NewTV, NBN and Tele Liban. Each new episode is announced through 30-second promotions broadcast days in advance. If you missed an episode, you can watch it on YouTube, Facebook and our new UNIFIL website.



1  
NAQOURA  
CAMP



2  
MARITIME  
TASK FORCE



3  
UNIFIL  
DE-MINERS



4  
THE BLUE  
LINE



## Join us on the Internet

 **YouTube:** [www.youtube.com/UNIFILVIDEOUNIT](http://www.youtube.com/UNIFILVIDEOUNIT)

On our youtube channel you can watch the latest DISCOVER UNIFIL episodes and all of our other video productions, including "Journey Through UNIFIL with Rafic Ali Ahmad". Subscribe to our channel to be notified when we upload new productions.

 **Facebook:** page: **UNIFIL-PIO**

Our facebook page is specifically meant to announce UNIFIL's public information products. DISCOVER UNIFIL's latest episodes are all available in high quality video. Become a "fan" of UNIFIL-PIO (all capital letters) and be alerted the moment we upload a new episode. Tell us what you think by posting a comment and invite your friends to become fans.

 **UNIFIL's new mission website - [unifil.unmissions.org](http://unifil.unmissions.org)**

We also invite you to visit our new mission website in English and Arabic. Here you can read about UNIFIL's history, get all the latest information on the mission and its current activities and check out our photo galleries or any edition of Al-Janoub magazine.

## Also introducing UNIFIL's website in English and Arabic

[www.unifil.unmissions.org](http://www.unifil.unmissions.org)



**UNIFIL**

United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon

اليونيفيل  
قوة الأمم المتحدة المؤقتة في لبنان



