

**UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON
(UNIFIL)**

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PRESS RELEASE

UNIFIL II: how it benefits the Lebanese economy

UNIFIL's presence in South Lebanon continues to positively impact the local economy. By 2007, UNIFIL international civilian staff will more than double, and this will definitely influence for the better the financial market in Lebanon.

UNIFIL staff members purchase commodities, rent apartments, enroll their children in schools, travel, etc. *"In addition, UNIFIL employees have many visitors who will have a significant impact on tourism and this is priceless, it improves the reputation of the country,"* said **UNIFIL Acting Chief Administrative Officer Jean-Pierre Ducharme.**

UNIFIL also provides medical and dental insurance to national staff members, which, accordingly, reduces the burden on the Lebanese social structure. The number of national staff, which already exceeds 300, should double in the next year.

As mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1701, UNIFIL strength is to increase to up to 15,000 international troops before the end of 2006. *"The soldiers spend a lot of money here, they visit local attractions, eat out, travel and this, in the end, helps to stimulate the economy,"* said **Ducharme.**

Over the last three years, UNIFIL spent approximately 60 percent of its budget on procuring from local companies. Only during the past year, approximately 40 million USD went back to the Lebanese economy. *"Obviously, this number will increase, but it gives a good indication on how UNIFIL provides something positive for the Lebanese market,"* said **Ducharme.**