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**PRESS RELEASE**

**UNIFIL FORCE COMMANDER MEETS SENIOR LEBANESE OFFICIALS**

Naqoura, Lebanon – UNIFIL Force Commander, Major-General Claudio Graziano, held introductory meetings today with Lebanese political and military figures, providing them with a review of UNIFIL's operations and current status.

Maj.-Gen. Graziano, who took command of the 12,000-strong peacekeeping force earlier this month, met with President Emile Lahoud, House Speaker Nabih Berri and Prime Minister Fouad Seniora, as well as Lebanese Army Commander, General Michele Suleiman.

*“This was my first round of talks in Beirut and I am pleased by the constructive nature of meetings. I'm especially encouraged by the strong support to UNIFIL and it's mission and operations on the ground expressed by the Lebanese leaders, as well as their keen interest in maintaining good relations between UNIFIL troops and the local population,”* said Maj.-Gen. Graziano.

UNIFIL was greatly enhanced last August by Security Council resolution 1701 that tasked the force with monitoring the cessation of hostilities and supporting the Lebanese armed forces in the restoration and maintenance of stability in south Lebanon.

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