

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

Naqoura,
18 August 2006

PRESS RELEASE

In accordance with Resolution 1701, the Israeli Army continued yesterday the withdrawal from Lebanese territory, and the Lebanese Army deployed troops further south of the Litani River in the areas vacated by the IDF. These operations are conducted in close coordination and with the support of UNIFIL.

The Israeli Army withdrew today from the areas of Yatar and Haddathah in the central sector. They handed over control to UNIFIL, which established a number of checkpoints and patrolled these areas to verify the withdrawal of the Israeli Army.

The Lebanese Armed Forces completed the process of deployment inside the territory vacated earlier by the IDF, while UNIFIL controls a buffer zone to the south, between the Lebanese Army and the IDF. Significant numbers of troops of the Lebanese Army are deployed in Tyre and south of Tyre to Qulayah and in the general area of Tibnin, and in the area of Marjayoun, where a brigade HQ was established.

The Israeli Army withdrawal and the deployment of the Lebanese Army shall continue in the coming days in accordance with the plan and timeline agreed during a trilateral meeting of the Force Commander UNIFIL and the senior representatives of the Lebanese and Israeli Army.

The cessation of hostilities was generally maintained in the past 24 hours. There were no reports of incidents or breaches of the agreement, the parties have not fired into the territory of or at the other side, and there were no attempts to occupy any additional territory.

On two instances yesterday morning, Israeli aircraft violated Lebanese airspace in the central sector. Also, violation of the Blue Line on the ground in Shebaa area has resumed. Yesterday, two Lebanese shepherds and approx. 100 sheep crossed the Blue Line towards Israel. Such incidents can endanger very fragile and tense situation.

UNIFIL continued intensive ground and air patrolling throughout its area of operation to assess the situation on the ground and to monitor the cessation of hostilities.

UNIFIL de-mining team from the Chinese contingent carried out operations to clear unexploded ordnance (UXO) in the area of Al-Qantarrah.

UNIFIL has been providing water and food to villages of Ayta Achaab and Al Bustan. It is reported that the internally displaced people continue to return in numbers in the villages in the UNIFIL area of operation.