



U.N.'s Human Shields

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As part of international efforts to end the conflict in southern Lebanon, there has emerged the scheme of a United Nations peacekeeping force to separate the opposing forces. NPR reports that U.N. Secretary General Annan is, predictably, pushing for a robust international force there. But even the White House seems to be considering the idea. “Somehow you're going to have to provide stability in southern Lebanon,” White House spokesman Tony Snow said last week. “Whether it's an international stabilization force, whether it is the Lebanese armed forces, all those things are under discussion.”

What many seem to forget is that there already is a U.N. military presence in Lebanon - and one armed, at least on paper, with a robust mandate. Alas, the blue-helmeted “peacekeepers” are part of the problem, not the solution.

Established in 1978 pursuant to Security Council resolutions 425 and 426, and renewed in January 2006 by resolution 1655, the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has the mission of “confirming the withdrawal of Israeli forces, restoring international peace and security and assisting the Government of Lebanon in ensuring its effective authority in the area.” The UNIFIL operation has an annual operating budget of \$99.3 million, approximately one quarter of which (as with all U.N. operations) is paid by the American taxpayer. The force comprises 2,000 troops from China, France, Ghana, India, Ireland, Italy, Poland, and Ukraine, along with 400 international and local civilians, and is commanded by French major-general Alain Pellegrini, who has a pro-Lebanon record in the Middle East.

There's something very familiar about Kofi Annan's 2006 call for U.N. troops - just take a look at the 1978 documents pertaining to UNIFIL for the reason why. As the U.N.'s own website concedes, an invasion on northern Israel on March 11, 1978, by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) caused “many dead and wounded among the Israeli population.” When Israel responded in self-defense by targeting the then *de facto* PLO state in southern Lebanon, the Lebanese government denied responsibility for the Palestinian terror and appealed to the U.N. The Security Council - where the Carter administration was represented by neophyte diplomat Andrew Young - agreed to a resolution demanding Israeli withdrawal and creating UNIFIL with its three objectives. Twenty-nine years later, the only goal that UNIFIL has achieved is the first, the verification of Israel's complete withdrawal from Lebanon.

When Israeli forces completed their pullout from Lebanon in early 2000, Foreign Minister David Levy reminded Annan that it was now up to Lebanon, in collaboration with UNIFIL, to live up to their obligations to deploy the Lebanese army in the south and to secure its border. That the present conflict is occurring is proof positive of the failure of the Lebanese government and of UNIFIL to even attempt to fulfill these obligations. The arsenal and forces that Hezbollah has amassed on Israel's northern frontier were assembled under the eyes of UNIFIL. In fact, accusing the U.N. troops of “failure” would be inaccurate; “enabler” might be a more apt description.

One incident we encountered during our visit to Israel last year illustrates this sad fact. In January 2005, Hezbollah planted five camouflaged “improvised explosive devices” (IEDs), inches on the Israeli side of the border near Zarit, 15 mountainous miles inland from the Mediterranean coast. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) detected these IEDs and, following procedure, notified UNIFIL. A French UNIFIL engineer duly certified that the devices were indeed IEDs, then “requested” that Hezbollah remove them. Hezbollah, not

denying it had planted them, flatly refused, stating that since the mines were (just barely) inside the “Zionist” border, it was up to the “Zionists” to remove them. So the IDF sent in a large armored bulldozer to carry the mines off for disposal. This task required making a sharp 90-degree right turn from an Israeli road onto the narrow border trail where the IEDs were located. Making this sharp right turn, the left front corner of the bulldozer inevitably occupied, for a couple of seconds, about a meter of land on the Lebanese side. During those seconds a Hezbollah fighter directed an anti-tank missile at the narrow, unguarded windshield of the bulldozer. The pinpoint strike, which our Israeli sources have admitted required extraordinary training and skill, killed the bulldozer's driver, Sgt. Maj. Jan Rotzanski, a 21-year-old Russian immigrant from Herzliya. The cynical cruelty of this murder, which Hezbollah proceeded to widely celebrate across Lebanon, speaks volumes not only about Hezbollah, but also about UNIFIL.

Nor has the situation changed much now that the conflict is “hot.” UNIFIL's only apparent action this past week has been to voice concerns that its troops might get hit in the crossfire. This is indeed a risk - because UNIFIL has long permitted Hezbollah to locate its forces, including its missile batteries, in the very shadow of installations belonging to the “peacekeepers.” UNIFIL has thus turned into a very convenient and high-profile human shield for terrorists.

The U.N. force commander in Rwanda, Canadian Lieutenant-General Romeo Dallaire, remains haunted by the refusal of U.N. bureaucrats to let him intervene to prevent the 1994 genocide by seizing the arms that Hutu killers were stockpiling. Gen. Dallaire's boss in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the time was one Kofi A. Annan of Ghana, who argued that any such action would exceed the peacekeepers' mandate. There is no evidence that the Dallaire's UNIFIL counterparts have even attempted to fulfill their duty in South Lebanon. If we are friends of peace, we must prevent the U.N. from foiling it again.

- Michael I. Krauss is professor of law at George Mason University School of Law. J. Peter Pham is director of the Nelson Institute for International and Public Affairs at James Madison University. Both are adjunct fellows of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies.

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