

# CRS Report for Congress

## Lebanon

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# Lebanon

## Summary

Recent violence in Lebanon and subsequent negotiations have broken the political deadlock that had paralyzed the Lebanese government for months. During the past two years, the Lebanese government has experienced cabinet resignations, assassinations of its politicians, labor strikes, a 2006 war with Israel, and an insurrection by foreign and Palestinian militants. A protracted political struggle over the presidency and cabinet between the majority March 14 coalition and the militia and terrorist group Hezbollah and its allies created a political stalemate from late 2006 through May 2008. After months of relative calm, a dispute between the government and Hezbollah over two security-related issues in early May 2008 sparked gun battles between Hezbollah and government supporters in Beirut, its mountainous suburbs, and other areas. Dozens of Lebanese citizens were killed and hundreds were wounded. During the fighting, Hezbollah fighters demonstrated their ability to overrun other militia forces associated with government supporters but ceded seized territory to the Lebanese army. The Lebanese army did not confront Hezbollah or otherwise forcefully intervene to halt the fighting.

An Arab League delegation announced an agreement to end the fighting on May 15 and political negotiations in Doha, Qatar produced a compromise political settlement. In accordance with the agreement, Army commander Michel Suleiman was elected as a consensus president on May 25; he subsequently chose Prime Minister Fouad Siniora of the March 14 coalition to continue as the head of government. Prime Minister Siniora and the various majority and opposition blocs in the 128-member parliament are now negotiating to select cabinet members on the basis of the Doha agreement. A new round of parliamentary elections is scheduled to be held in 2009 and will be administered according to a compromise electoral law.

The outcome of the May 2008 fighting and the terms of the Doha agreement have been widely viewed as favorable to Hezbollah and its supporters insofar as the opposition secured the ability to veto government decisions. Government supporters argue that by maintaining their resistance to the political demands of Hezbollah and its allies through May 2008, they prevented the opposition from vetoing the Lebanese government's support for the establishment of an international tribunal to prosecute suspects in the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. The tribunal will not begin its work until mid-2009 at the earliest.

Throughout this turbulent period, the governments of the United States and Lebanon have continued to enjoy good relations. The Bush Administration requested and Congress appropriated a large increase in U.S. assistance in H.R. 2206 (P.L. 110-28) to expand the capabilities of the Lebanese armed forces and to strengthen the government vis-a-vis Hezbollah and its allies. Prominent current bilateral issues include ongoing U.S. assistance to Lebanon, the Lebanese government's capacity to disarm Hezbollah and prevent further attacks on Israel, and the continuing investigation into the Hariri assassination. The United States supports Lebanon's independence and favored the end of Israeli and Syrian occupation of parts of Lebanon. This report will be updated to reflect significant events.

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# Lebanon

## Recent Developments

Following violence in mid-May 2008 that killed dozens of Lebanese and wounded hundreds, Arab League- and Qatari government-assisted negotiations produced a political agreement to resolve the deadlock that had paralyzed Lebanon's government since late 2006. Under the terms of the agreement (see Appendix C), referred to as the Doha Agreement, Lebanon's political factions committed to resolving their differences without resorting to further violence and reached the following understandings on key outstanding issues:

- Presidency - General Michel Suleiman to be nominated as a compromise candidate for president, to fill the position that had been vacant since the expiration of former president's Emile Lahoud's term in November 2007.
- Cabinet Seats - Cabinet seats to be distributed in a manner that will give opposition parties — Hezbollah, Amal, and the Free Patriotic Movement — the ability to veto government decisions.<sup>1</sup>
- Electoral Legislation - Parliamentary elections scheduled for 2009 to be administered according to the terms of an amended 1960 electoral law, with specific provisions made for voting districts in Beirut and the eastern Bekaa valley. Some analysts have argued that the amended law is unlikely to change the make-up of the Lebanese political establishment and that sectarian deadlock could persist.<sup>2</sup>

In accordance with the agreement, Army commander Michel Suleiman was elected as a consensus president on May 25, 2008; he subsequently chose Prime Minister Fouad Siniora of the March 14 coalition to continue as the head of government. Prime Minister Siniora and the various majority and opposition blocs in the 128-member parliament are now negotiating to select cabinet members on the basis of the Doha agreement. However, continuing disagreements over the composition of the cabinet have delayed the formation of a government. At issue is

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<sup>1</sup> Hezbollah had long demanded that the opposition receive control of eleven (one-third plus one) of the cabinet seats, which would allow it to veto certain policies. In particular, Hezbollah has sought to block any attempt by the government to disarm its militia, as called for by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 and subsequent Security Council statements.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Pierre Katrib, "Ending (or Deepening) the Crisis in Lebanon: The Role of Electoral Reform," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, PolicyWatch #1378, June 6, 2008.

the allocation of the so called ‘sovereign ministries’ — the ministries of defense, interior, finance, and foreign affairs. Press reports citing Lebanese politicians suggest that President Suleiman will name ministers of defense and interior, while one of the ministries of finance and foreign affairs will be granted to the March 14 coalition and the other to the opposition.<sup>3</sup> Retired General Michel Aoun, leader of the Christian opposition Free Patriotic Movement, has stated his desire for the opposition to control the Ministry of Finance in the new government.

In spite of the Doha agreement, disagreement and animosity among some leading Lebanese political groups may persist, and political delays could continue until after the parliamentary elections scheduled for 2009, when Lebanese factions will seek new popular mandates to advance their various platforms. This interpretation was echoed recently by General Aoun, who argued “the [Doha] agreement is a prelude to the solution. Our problems on the national level are much bigger than the issue of election law or the formation of a national unity government.” Awn further stated his view that the Doha agreement “will pave the road for a calm period that will allow us to prepare for the parliamentary elections.”<sup>4</sup>

## Civil Conflict

The Lebanese people have suffered the negative effects of civil unrest and conflict in their country several times since 2006. The 2006 summer war between Hezbollah and Israel, extended fighting between the Lebanese armed forces and Sunni extremist groups in Palestinian refugee camps, and periodic clashes between sectarian groups have dampened the hopes of some Lebanese and many outside observers that Lebanon’s decade of recovery from its long civil war could be consolidated into a lasting success. In late 2007, disagreement over the election of a successor to then-president Emile Lahoud and the allocation of cabinet seats in a new government paralyzed Lebanese politics.

For months, there was no consensus over whether the continuing political stalemate would lead to a resumption in sectarian violence. The assassination of two important figures in the leadership of the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces, attacks on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and a bombing attack against a U.S. Embassy vehicle heightened tensions in December 2007 and January 2008. In January 2008, the Lebanese army killed seven Lebanese Shiite men during a protest by Shiites over power cuts.<sup>5</sup> The army, still led by General Suleiman, pledged to investigate the incident and no further violence

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<sup>3</sup> “Lebanese Cabinet Tussle May Come Down To Finance, Foreign Affairs,” *Daily Star* (Beirut), June 11, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. government Open Source Center (OSC) Document - GMP20080610054013, “Lebanon’s Awn Interviewed on Problems Hindering Implementation of Doha Agreement,” June 10, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> “Beirut Shootings Hit Shi’ite Trust in Army,” *Reuters*, January 31, 2008.

ensued. Nevertheless, observers had warned that the rearmament of Lebanese factions and a potential return to civil war remained a distinct possibility.<sup>6</sup>

Through early 2008, rising tensions between political groups cast a shadow over the country's immediate future, and fears of a return to outright civil conflict spread. These fears appeared warranted when, after months of relative calm and political deadlock, the situation in Lebanon turned more violent in early May 2008. On May 3, 2008, anti-Syria leader Walid Jumblatt accused Hezbollah of putting surveillance cameras around Rafik Hariri International Airport in southern Beirut to monitor the movements of anti-Syria politicians. He suggested that Hezbollah was planning to assassinate senior leaders by bombing aircraft. Jumblatt also accused Hezbollah of maintaining a private telephone network throughout Lebanon, which reportedly was used to facilitate communications amongst Hezbollah's militia during the group's 2006 war against Israel.

On Monday May 5, the cabinet convened to discuss Jumblatt's accusations. After nearly 11 hours of deliberations, it voted on Tuesday May 6 to remove the head of Beirut airport security. It also declared that Hezbollah's telephone network was illegal and a danger to state security and called for a judicial probe into Hezbollah's operations. Lebanon's Minister of Telecommunications Marwan Hamadeh stated that "We will not negotiate, and we will not make a bargain.... We will not withdraw any of those decisions." Hamadeh also suggested that the Iranian Committee to Rebuild Southern Lebanon was supervising the expansion of Hezbollah's telephone network.<sup>7</sup>

Hezbollah responded by warning the government not to escalate the current political stalemate. Hezbollah deputy leader Naim Kassem also claimed that the militia's telecommunications network was a necessity for the group's deterrence capabilities in the fight against Israel and "complemented" Hezbollah's arsenal of weapons.<sup>8</sup>

On May 7, 2008, just one day after the cabinet's decision, Hezbollah and Amal, the other main Lebanese Shiite faction, launched a series of labor strikes in a demonstration of strength to the central government. Shiite demonstrators burned tires and shut down the main roadways leading to the airport. In response, the government deployed its security forces to restore order, as several civilians and two soldiers were wounded in clashes.

On Thursday, May 8, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said at a press conference that the cabinet's decision was "a declaration of war and the launching of war by the government... against the resistance and its weapons for the benefit of

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<sup>6</sup> International Research Center, "The Formation and Rearming of Militias Threatens Lebanon's Security," *Transnational Security Issues Reports*, March 21, 2008, accessed on U.S. government Open Source Center (OSC).

<sup>7</sup> "Violence Flares in Beirut Amid Opposition Protests," *Washington Post*, May 8, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> "Lebanon Airport Official Removed over Alleged Hezbollah Ties," *Associated Press*, May 6, 2008.

America and Israel.” After his speech, Hezbollah and Amal militiamen clashed with militias backed by Lebanese Sunnis in parts of Beirut. According to the *Associated Press*, gun fights initially broke out in Muslim West Beirut along Corniche Mazraa, a major thoroughfare that has become a demarcation line between the two sides. Other reports confirmed that fighting between militias took place in mixed Sunni-Shiite neighborhoods.

From May 9 through May 12, fighting reportedly came to a close in Beirut, as Hezbollah established control of key areas and transferred territory seized from rival militias to the control of the Lebanese Armed Forces. Fighting reportedly continued in mountainous areas east of the capital and in the northern city of Tripoli until May 13. On May 12, Lebanese officials estimated that 81 people had been killed and over 250 injured in the violence.<sup>9</sup> The Lebanese military announced that from May 13 onward, the army would act to “halt violations... in accordance with the law, even if that leads to the use of force.”<sup>10</sup>

On May 14, Sunni militia groups reportedly continued to blockade key roads linking Lebanon with Syria, and reports suggested that some Sunni Islamic leaders in northern Lebanon were contemplating a coordinated effort to resist future threats from Hezbollah.<sup>11</sup> The Lebanese army and internal security forces appeared unwilling or unable to separate fighting factions in many cases, raising questions about its capabilities and leadership. Saad al Hariri reportedly commented that the army “was not capable of defending citizens” and called the unity of the army “a central problem”. The fighting appears to have hardened sectarian suspicions and tensions in many areas, and has heightened fears that further violence could reignite a broad civil war, similar to one that paralyzed Lebanon from 1975 through 1990.

The government, backed by the United States, France, and Saudi Arabia, had insisted that Hezbollah abide by its ruling and put a halt to its street demonstrations. However, the Siniora government has allowed the airport security chief to be reinstated, and the Lebanese army has announced that it will “look into” the issue of Hezbollah’s telecommunications network “in a manner that is not harmful to the public interest or the security of the resistance [against Israel].”<sup>12</sup> Hezbollah had claimed that it would stop its strike if the government reversed its decision to dismantle the telephone network. Lebanon’s cabinet met May 14 to resolve the disputes over the government’s rulings that fueled the violence. The government officially confirmed the reversal of its decisions. The reversal has been seen widely as severe political setback for the Siniora government, in addition to the military setbacks its supporters suffered at the hands of Hezbollah.

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<sup>9</sup> Nada Bakri, “Fierce Fighting Breaks Out East of Beirut,” *New York Times*, May 12, 2008; *Reuters*, “Mountain Clashes Bring Lebanon Death Toll to 81,” May 12, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Nadim Ladki, “Lebanese army says will intervene from Tuesday,” *Reuters*, May 12, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Lebanon: Northern Islamic Sunni Groups Start Military Bloc To Confront Hizballah, U.S. Open Source Center Document GMP20080514825008, *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (London), May 14, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Ezra HaLev, “Hizbullah Celebrates Victory in Lebanon as Gov’t Bows to Demands,” *Arutz Sheva* (Israel), May 11, 2008.



In response to the recent violence, U.S. National Security Council Spokesman Gordon Johndroe stated that “Hezbollah needs to make a choice: Be a terrorist organization or be a political party, but quit trying to be both.” U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Zalmay Khalilzad added, “we believe that Hezbollah must operate within the law, stop challenging the legitimate government of Lebanon, should support the election of a president without preconditions, that Syria must delineate its borders, establish diplomatic relations.”<sup>13</sup> President Bush met with Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora on May 18, in Egypt. The U.S.S. Cole reportedly was dispatched to the waters off the coast of Lebanon during the crisis along with other support ships assisting in supplying the United States Embassy.<sup>14</sup> On May 14, State Department spokesman Tom Casey stated that the Administration planned to ask Congress to move “a number of things in the [assistance] pipeline” for Lebanon “in an expedited fashion.”<sup>15</sup>

Regional governments responded with concern, while supporting various solutions. Arab League foreign ministers met over the weekend of May 10-11, in an emergency session. Reportedly, several Arab governments differed over proposals to condemn specific parties in Lebanon for their actions or to call for the deployment of Arab forces to Lebanon.<sup>16</sup> In their closing statement, the participants stated that they “reject the principle of resorting to armed violence to achieve political goals.” Following the session, Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jasim Bin Jabr Al Thani led an Arab League mediation mission to Lebanon alongside Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa aimed at ending the immediate conflict and resolving Lebanon’s political stalemate.<sup>17</sup> On May 15, the Arab League delegation announced that the government and Hezbollah had reached an agreement on refraining from the use of weapons and violence to settle their disputes. Opposition roadblocks reportedly were dismantled.

Negotiations between the government and the opposition continued in Doha, Qatar, regarding the political dispute over Lebanon’s vacant presidency and the allocation of cabinet seats.<sup>18</sup> The Bush Administration welcomed the resulting Doha agreement, the election of President Suleiman, and the naming of Prime Minister Siniora as the head of a new government.

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<sup>13</sup> Remarks by Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. Permanent Representative, on Lebanon and Burma, at the Security Council stakeout, May 8, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> *Agence France Presse*, “US Warship Heads Back to Mediterranean,” May 12, 2008; and, Anne Gearan, “U.S. to request quick military aid for Lebanon,” *Associated Press*, May 14, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Anne Gearan, “U.S. to request quick military aid for Lebanon,” *Associated Press*, May 14, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> OSC Document - GMP20080512627001, “Syrian Paper Reports ‘Heated’ Syrian-Saudi Argument in Arab Meeting on Lebanon,” May 12, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Salah Nasrawi, “Arab League tries to broker Lebanon settlement,” *Associated Press*, May 12, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Dominic Evans, “Arab mediators announce deal to end Lebanon violence,” *Reuters*, May 15, 2008.

## Current Issues for Congress

For nearly five years, the Administration has simultaneously pushed for Lebanese political independence from Syria and Hezbollah's disarmament. In order to achieve these objectives, it has requested and the Congress has appropriated higher levels of U.S. foreign aid to strengthen the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and internal security units. The Administration has sanctioned Syria and leading members of the Asad regime and successfully pushed for several United Nations Security Council Resolutions calling for the disarmament of all Lebanese militias. In addition, the international tribunal charged with trying the killers of former Prime Minister Hariri has slowly moved ahead, under the new leadership of a Canadian, Daniel Bellemare. On September 25, 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives passed Resolution 548 which, among other things, pledged continued support for the government of Lebanon and the Lebanese people (passed by 415 to 2, Roll no. 899). On May 22, 2008, the House adopted H.Res. 1194 (passed by 401 to 10, 2 Present, Roll no. 354), condemning Hezbollah "for its unprovoked attacks against Lebanese leaders, citizens, and against Lebanese public and private institution and for its illegal occupation of territory under the sovereignty of the Government of Lebanon."

Many observers believe that U.S. policy toward Lebanon has succeeded diplomatically in bringing France, Saudi Arabia, and other Sunni Arab states together in order to thwart Iranian and Syrian influence through their proxy, Hezbollah. However, critics charge that the U.S. policy has inflamed sectarian passions in Lebanon and strengthened the resolve of Iran and Syria to maintain their influence there. Under the former government, Hezbollah increasingly attempted to portray the Siniora government as a tool of outside powers, including Israel and the United States. Many observers have argued that after the Siniora-led government backed down from its security demands in May and the army failed to forcefully confront Hezbollah, U.S. policy in Lebanon suffered a setback. Some observers have argued that Lebanon could continue to drift politically until new parliamentary elections, currently scheduled for mid-2009. Renewed violence could preclude that possibility at any time.

**Recent U.S. Assistance.** In order to support the Lebanese government, the United States has pledged to devote more financial resources to reconstruction and military assistance. The summer 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel heightened the need for additional economic aid, as the Lebanese government and its international and Arab partners vied with Iran and Hezbollah to win the "hearts and minds" of many Lebanese citizens who lost homes and businesses as a result of the conflict. From a military standpoint, the war also highlighted the urgent need for a more robust Lebanese military to adequately patrol Lebanon's porous borders with Syria and to prevent Hezbollah's re-armament. P.L. 110-28, the FY2007 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act (entitled the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007), provided \$770 million in supplemental assistance for Lebanon, a noticeable increase. See **Table 1** below.

The Senate version of H.R. 2642, the FY2008 Supplemental Appropriations bill, would provide \$45 million in supplementary U.S. military assistance to Lebanon for

FY2009. Earlier in the year, the Administration requested a total of \$142.4 million in annual foreign operations appropriations to Lebanon for FY2009.

**Table 1. U.S. Assistance to Lebanon, FY2004-FY2009 Request**  
(regular and supplemental appropriations; current year \$ in millions)

Account	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008 Estimate	FY2009 Request
ESF	\$34.79	\$39.72	\$39.60	\$334.60	\$44.64	\$67.50
FMF	—	—	\$3.71	\$224.80	\$6.94	\$62.20
INCLE	—	—	—	\$60.00	\$0.50	\$6.00
NADR	—	\$2.30	\$2.98	\$8.50	\$4.75	\$4.60
IMET	\$0.70	\$0.70	\$0.75	\$0.91	\$1.43	\$2.13
DA	\$0.40	\$0.50	\$2.00	—	—	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$35.89</b>	<b>\$43.22</b>	<b>\$49.04</b>	<b>\$628.81</b>	<b>\$58.25</b>	<b>\$142.43</b>

**Source:** U.S. State Department, USAID. Includes appropriated funds from the following accounts: Economic Support Funds (ESF), Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Assistance (INCLE), Non-proliferation, Anti-terrorism, De-mining, and Related funding (NADR), International Military and Education Training (IMET) and Development Assistance (DA).

## The United States and Lebanon

### Overview

Some would agree that a friendly and independent Lebanon in a strategic but unstable region is vital to U.S. interests. But others might disagree, pointing to the absence of such tangible interests as military bases, oil fields, international waterways, military or industrial strength, or major trading ties. In a broader sense, a ruinous civil war that created turmoil in Lebanon between 1975 and 1990 and that periodically threatened to spill over into adjacent areas of the Middle East illustrated the dangers to U.S. interests posed by instability in this small country. The Bush Administration made a strong commitment to the Lebanese government under the leadership of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora. That commitment is expected to continue.

Large-scale fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in mid-2006 and accompanying destruction of large parts of Lebanon's newly rebuilt infrastructure complicates U.S. support for Lebanon's reconstruction. Subsequent clashes between radical Palestinian militia and the Lebanese Army exacerbated the situation. In a broader sense, the conflict jeopardized not only the long-term stability of Lebanon but presents the Bush Administration with a basic dilemma. On one hand, the Administration was sympathetic to Israeli military action against a terrorist organization; President Bush has spoken in favor of Israel's right of self-defense. On the other hand, the fighting dealt a setback to Administration efforts to support the

rebuilding of democratic institutions in Lebanon. As one commentator put it, “the two major agendas of his [Bush’s] presidency — anti-terrorism and the promotion of democracy — are in danger of colliding with each other in Lebanon.”<sup>19</sup> Mounting tension between pro- and anti-U.S. factions in Lebanon and an impasse in attempts by Lebanese parties to reestablish a political dialogue threatened the viability of Lebanon’s political system. The Doha Agreement appears to have resolved basic disputes over institutional allocations, but underlying political tensions persist and sectarian animosity has been deepened by recent violence.

If Lebanon disintegrates through a return to communal civil strife or becomes closely aligned with a radicalized Syria or Iran, U.S. goals could be seriously affected. The United States would lose a promising example of a modernizing pluralist state moving toward a resumption of democratic life and economic reform and quite possibly face a return to the chaos that prevailed in Lebanon during the civil war. Such conditions would be likely to foster terrorism, unrest on Israel’s border, and other forms of regional instability. Alternatively, the growth of Syrian or Iranian influence or some combination of the two could strengthen regional voices supporting extremist and likely anti-Western views associated with clerical regimes (Iran), totalitarian models (Syria), or a militant stance toward Israel, quite possibly resulting in some type of costly U.S. regional involvement to protect allies or maintain stability.

## **U.S. Policy Toward Lebanon**

The United States and Lebanon have traditionally enjoyed good relations, rooted in long-standing contacts and interaction beginning well before Lebanon’s emergence as a modern state. Factors contributing to this relationship include a large Lebanese-American community (a majority of Arab-Americans are of Lebanese origin); the pro-Western orientation of many Lebanese, particularly during the Cold War; cultural ties exemplified by the presence of U.S. universities in Lebanon; Lebanon’s position as a partial buffer between Israel and its principal Arab adversary, namely Syria; Lebanon’s democratic and partially Christian antecedents; and Lebanon’s historic role as an interlocutor for the United States within the Arab world.

Two U.S. presidents have described Lebanon as of vital interest to the United States, President Eisenhower in 1958 and President Reagan in 1983. (Public Papers of the Presidents, 1958, pp. 550-551; Public Papers of the Presidents, 1983, vol. II, p. 1501.) Both statements were made in the context of brief U.S. military deployments to Lebanon to help Lebanese authorities counter rebellions supported by Arab states with ties to the former Soviet Union. During the 1975-1990 civil war, the United States expressed concern over the violence and destruction taking place in Lebanon; provided emergency economic aid, military training, and limited amounts of military equipment; and briefly deployed military forces to Lebanon in the early 1980s, as noted above. The United States supported and participated in various efforts to bring about a cease-fire during the civil war and subsequent efforts to quiet unrest in southern Lebanon along the Lebanese-Israeli border. In 1996, the United States helped negotiate an agreement between Hezbollah and Israel to avoid

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Hirsh, “The Legacy On the Line,” *Newsweek*, July 24, 2006, p. 30.

targeting civilians and is a member of a five-party force monitoring this agreement. The United States endorsed the U.N. Secretary General's findings in May 2000 that Israel had completed its withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

The U.S. Administration reacted strongly to the assassination of the late Prime Minister Hariri in February 2005, criticized the Syrian presence in Lebanon, and demanded withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon. The United States welcomed the formation of a new Lebanese government following the withdrawal of Syrian forces. After a meeting with Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora on July 22, 2005, Dr. Rice said, "I think that you cannot find a partner more supportive of Lebanon than the United States."<sup>20</sup> On January 23, 2007, after the Hezbollah strike began, then-U.S. Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns called on Arabs and Europeans to throw their support behind Prime Minister Siniora against those who would try to destabilize his regime. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has met with President Siniora over the last year and has assured him of the United States support for his Administration.<sup>21</sup> As noted above, that support has been reiterated in response to recent violence.

## Role of Congress

Congress has shown considerable interest in Lebanon over the years and has periodically addressed Lebanese issues in legislation. Reasons for this interest include a large expatriate Lebanese community in the United States; the western orientation of many Lebanese, especially among Christians; and Lebanon's key role as a buffer between Syria and Israel. Congress is concerned over radical tendencies on the part of Syria and has frequently criticized Syrian efforts to exert influence in Lebanon, especially when such influence appears to threaten the security of Israel. Like the Administration, Congress widely condemned the assassination of the late Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri. During the 34-day Israel-Hezbollah fighting in mid-2006, both houses voiced support for Israel and for the efforts of the President to bring about an end to hostilities.

The continued efforts of Hezbollah and its allies to increase their influence in Lebanon could affect future congressional attitudes toward Lebanon, especially if a new or modified Lebanese regime appeared to threaten Israel. On the other hand, some Members of Congress seem disposed to support Lebanon's ability to maintain internal and regional stability through additional economic support funds and a resumption of foreign military aid to the Lebanese Armed Forces. On September 25, 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives passed Resolution 548 introduced by Representative Gary Ackerman, which, among other things, pledges continued support for the government of Lebanon and the Lebanese people, by 415 to 2 (Roll no. 899).

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<sup>20</sup> *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, Text of live news conference by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora in Beirut, broadcast by Lebanese LBC TV, July 22, 2007.

<sup>21</sup> See for example, *Voice of America News*, "Rice Meets Siniora in Paris, Stresses U.S. Support for Lebanon," June 26, 2007.

## Recent and Current U.S. Assistance to Lebanon

The United States has long provided foreign assistance to Lebanon in various amounts [See Table 4., U.S. Assistance to Lebanon (1946-2004) below in Appendix A]. In December 1996, the United States organized a Friends of Lebanon conference, which resulted in a U.S. commitment of \$60 million in U.S. aid to Lebanon over a five-year period beginning in FY1997 and ending in FY2001 (i.e., \$12 million per year mainly in Economic Support Funds (ESF)). Congress increased this amount to \$15 million in FY2000 and \$35 million in FY2001, reportedly to help Lebanon adjust to new conditions following Israel's withdrawal and cope with continuing economic strains. U.S. economic aid to Lebanon has hovered around \$35 million in subsequent years, rising to \$42 million in FY2006.

The Bush Administration initially requested \$41.2 million in aid for Lebanon in FY2007, including \$35.5 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF), \$4.8 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF), and \$935 thousand in International Military Education and Training (IMET). Since the Hezbollah-Israel fighting in mid-2006, however, the United States and its allies have been vying with Iran and Hezbollah in an effort to win "hearts and minds" of Lebanese citizens who have suffered from the war's devastation. Both the U.S. Administration and Hezbollah have promised or provided significant relief and reconstruction packages.

For FY2007, President Bush requested \$770 million in supplemental aid from Congress for Lebanon. H.R. 1591, the House-passed FY2007 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill, would have fully funded the Administration's request for aid to Lebanon; however, it would have required the Administration to certify to Congress that before the aid is disbursed, the Lebanese government and the Administration had fulfilled certain conditions placed on assistance. A Senate-approved supplemental bill, S. 965, would also have fully funded the President's request but would have required the Secretary of State to certify that U.S. military assistance to Lebanon is not provided to U.S.-designated foreign terrorist groups.

Conference report H.Rept. 110-107 was filed on April 24, 2007, and agreed to by the House by 218-208, 2 voting present, Roll. no. 265 on April 25. The conference report in Section 1803(c) retained the provision in the Senate bill to ensure that no military assistance goes to terrorist groups. The Senate accepted the conference report on April 26, 2007, by 51 to 46 with three not voting (Record Vote No. 147). However, President Bush vetoed the bill on May 1, because it contained a time table for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, and the House failed to override the veto by 222 to 203 (Roll no. 276).

Subsequently, the President did sign a new supplemental appropriations bill, H.R. 2206, on May 25, 2007 as P.L. 110-28. Like H.R. 1591, H.R. 2206 fully funded the President's requested supplemental aid to Lebanon but did not include a time table for U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. Section 3802(d) of H.R. 2206 required the Secretary of State to submit to the congressional appropriations committees within 45 days a report on Lebanese actions to implement Section 14 of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701. (See above.) Section 14 of the resolution calls upon the Government of Lebanon to secure its borders and prevent the entry of unauthorized arms or related material.

Based on the terms of the FY2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act (H.R. 2764/P.L. 110-116), the Administration estimates that it will provide \$58.2 million in assistance for Lebanon for FY2008, including \$44.6 million in ESF, \$6.9 million in FMF, \$1.4 million in IMET, \$496 thousand in International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) assistance, and \$4.7 million in Non-proliferation, Anti-terrorism, De-mining and Related (NADR) funding.

The Administration has requested \$142.4 million in assistance for Lebanon for FY2009, including \$67.5 million in ESF, \$62.2 million in FMF, \$2.1 million in IMET, \$6 million in INCLE assistance, and \$4.6 million in Non-proliferation, Anti-terrorism, De-mining and Related (NADR) funding.

**U.S. Reconstruction and Economic Assistance.** The battle for political primacy in Lebanon waged by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora's March 14 government coalition and its U.S., European, and Saudi supporters against Hezbollah, their sympathizers, and their foreign patrons in Syria and Iran has been fought on a number of different fronts, including in the economic arena. The summer 2006 war and the opposition's campaign to obstruct the government placed enormous financial strains on the Lebanese economy, and Prime Minister Siniora called on the international community to provide financial backing to his fragile government.

The United States has committed several hundred million dollars to Lebanon's rebuilding efforts. President Bush announced on August 21, 2006, that the United States would provide an immediate \$230 million to Lebanon (an additional \$175 million on top of an earlier pledge of \$55 million) during a conference in Stockholm designed to raise funds for Lebanese reconstruction. At a January 2007 donors' conference in France, dubbed "Paris III," Secretary of State Rice pledged an additional \$250 million in cash transfers directly to the Lebanese government. This U.S. economic aid was requested in the FY2007 supplemental request under ESF assistance and may be tied to certain benchmarks that the Lebanese government would be required to meet.

To assuage donors' fears that foreign assistance would be mismanaged, Prime Minister Siniora developed an economic reform plan designed to lower Lebanon's crippling \$41 billion public debt (which costs nearly \$3 billion a year in interest payments or nearly 40% of the national budget), decrease public subsidies, privatize the electricity and telecommunications sectors, and increase the Value Added Tax (VAT) from 10% to 12%. The opposition countered with a populist campaign to thwart these reforms, accusing Siniora of adopting Western-backed liberalization schemes that hurt Lebanese workers. One opposition slogan found in Beirut read "No to the government of VAT" and "No to the government of seafront properties."<sup>22</sup> In January 2008 Lebanese Economy Minister Sami Haddad said that less than \$5 billion of the funds pledged at the Paris III conference had been committed and \$2 billion had been disbursed. He stated further that "Lebanon's foreign debt has basically remained unchanged in 2007."<sup>23</sup> It is unclear what policies

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<sup>22</sup> "People's Revolt in Lebanon," *The Nation*, January 8, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Yara Bayoumy, "Political Crisis Stops Funds Pledged to Lebanon," *Reuters*, January 24, (continued...)

a new Lebanese cabinet will adopt relative to the issues of public debt and economic reform.

**U.S. Military Assistance.** For the first time since 1984, the Administration requested Foreign Military Financing (FMF) grants to Lebanon in the FY2006 foreign affairs budget. Originally, it sought approximately \$1.0 million in FMF for FY2006 and \$4.8 million for FY2007 to help modernize the small and poorly equipped Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) following Syria's withdrawal of its 15,000-person occupation force in 2005. However, the summer 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war spurred Western donors to increase their assistance to the LAF. Drawing from multiple budget accounts, the Administration ultimately reprogrammed an estimated \$42 million to provide spare parts, technical training, and new equipment to the LAF, including 25 five-ton trucks and 285 Humvees to enhance the LAF's border patrol operations.<sup>24</sup>

The Administration's FY2007 emergency supplemental request included \$220 million in FMF for Lebanon, a significant increase from previous levels. U.S. military assistance may be used for expanded personnel training by private U.S. contractors or the provision of spare parts and ammunition for Lebanese forces. According to the U.S. State Department, U.S. security assistance was requested to:

“promote Lebanese control over southern Lebanon and Palestinian refugee camps to prevent them from being used as bases to attack Israel. The U.S. government's active military-to-military programs enhance the professionalism of the Lebanese Armed Forces, reinforcing the concept of Lebanese civilian control. To foster peace and security, the United States intends to build upon welcome and unprecedented Lebanese calls to control the influx of weapons.”<sup>25</sup>

The Administration also requested \$60 million in Non-proliferation, Anti-terrorism, De-mining, and Related Programs (NADR) funds primarily to train and equip Lebanon's Internal Security Forces (ISF).<sup>26</sup> Military assistance in FY2008 and

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<sup>23</sup> (...continued)  
2008.

<sup>24</sup> According to the U.S. State Department, the \$42 million in FY2006 military assistance to Lebanon was re-programmed from several accounts, including \$10 million from Department of Defense Section 1206 funds, \$2.7 million from FMF, \$28 million from the Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) account, and \$1.2 million from ESF and INCLE.

<sup>25</sup> See, FY2008 International Affairs (Function 150) Congressional Budget Justification, U.S. Department of State, February 16, 2007.

<sup>26</sup> According to H.R. 1591, the House Appropriations Committee's FY2007 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill, the \$60 million in NADR funds is to be used for “non-lethal assistance” for Lebanon, of which \$36,500,000 is for training of the Internal Security Forces; \$19,500,000 is for equipment including individual supplies for 9,000 new recruits, 300 unarmored SUVs, computers, and radio gear; and \$4,000,000 is to refurbish 35 police stations, 4 police academies, and a command and control center.



the FY2009 request is set to focus on these objectives. The Administration has requested \$62 million in FMF for Lebanon for FY2009.<sup>27</sup>

## Lebanon: Demography and Politics

### Political Profile

**Sectarianism.** Lebanon, with a population of 3.8 million, has the most religiously diverse society in the Middle East, comprising 17 recognized religious sects. “Confessionalism,” or the distribution of governmental posts by religious sect, is a long-standing feature of Lebanese political life, despite frequent calls to abolish it. Because of political sensitivities related to power sharing among the various communities, no census has been taken in Lebanon since 1932, when Lebanon was under a French mandate. According to current estimates by the Central Intelligence Agency as of 2005, Muslim groups comprise 59.7% of the population while Christian groups comprise 39.0%, with another 1.3% of assorted religious affiliations. A more detailed but less recent estimate by an expert on the geography and demography of the Middle East gives the breakdown shown in **Table 2**.<sup>28</sup>

**Table 2. Estimated Lebanon Population and Religious Sects**

Sect	Number	Percent
Shiite Muslim	1,192,000	34%
Sunni Muslim	701,000	20%
Maronite Christian <sup>a</sup>	666,000	19%
Druze <sup>b</sup>	280,000	8%
Greek Orthodox (Christian)	210,000	6%
Armenian (Christian) <sup>c</sup>	210,000	6%
Greek Catholic (Christian) <sup>a</sup>	175,000	5%
Other	70,000	2%
Total (not exact, due to rounding)	3,506,000	100%

a. Affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church but retain their own rituals.

b. Grouped with Muslims; regarded by some as derived from Shiite Islam.

c. Armenians are the only sizeable ethnic minority in Lebanon; other Lebanese groups are all ethnic Arab.

Lebanese political parties have developed along religious, geographical, ethnic, and ideological lines and are often associated with prestigious families. Christian

<sup>27</sup> FY2009 International Affairs (Function 150) Congressional Budget Justification. Available at [<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/101442.pdf>]

<sup>28</sup> Colbert C. Held, *Middle East Patterns*, Westview Press, 2000, p. 262. Reflecting 1999 figures, Held uses an estimated total Lebanese population of 3.506 million, to which he applies the percentages in Table 1.

groups, especially Maronites, tend to be strong advocates of Lebanese independence and opposed to Syrian and other external influences. Christian parties include the Phalange led by the Gemayel family, and smaller parties led by the Chamoun, Frangieh, and Iddi families. Sunni Muslim parties, historically more Arab nationalist in orientation, include the Independent Nasirite group and a new group, the Futures Party, that has coalesced around anti-Syrian supporters of assassinated former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Shiite parties include the more moderate Amal under Nabih Berri and the more radical Hezbollah (see below), former rivals but now at least temporarily allied; Druze are largely associated with the Progressive Socialist Party led by the leftist yet feudally-based Jumblatt family, now somewhat tenuously aligned with the Futures Party. A religiously mixed group, the Syrian National Social Party (SNSP), favors a union of Syria, Lebanon, and possibly other nearby states.

Several of these parties and groupings formerly maintained militias, notably the Lebanese Forces, which were affiliated with the Christian Phalange Party, and the Shiite Muslim Hezbollah, which has both a political and a military wing. Most of the militias were disbanded after the civil war, but Hezbollah's militia continues to function. According to the 2007 State Department Country Reports on Terrorism, Hezbollah's ranks boast "thousands of supporters, several thousand members, and a few hundred terrorist operatives."<sup>29</sup>

**Political Structure and Power Sharing.** Post-civil war Lebanon retains the country's unique political system, based on power sharing among the diverse religious sectarian communities and political factions that comprise the modern Lebanese state. Under the constitution of 1926, Lebanon is a republic with a president elected by parliament for a non-renewable six-year term, a prime minister and cabinet appointed by the president, and a parliament, elected by universal adult suffrage for a four-year term. Composition of parliament varies in accordance with electoral laws that are promulgated before each election; current membership is 128. Unlike the President, the prime minister and cabinet must receive a vote of confidence from parliament.

In 1943, when Lebanon became fully independent from France, leaders of the principal religious communities adopted an unwritten agreement known as the National Covenant, which provided that the President be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of Parliament a Shiite Muslim; parliamentary seats were divided on the basis of six Christians to five Muslims. Cabinet posts are generally distributed among the principal sectarian communities, notably Maronites, Greek Orthodox, smaller Christian sects, Druze (a small sect associated with Islam), Sunni Muslims, and Shiite Muslims.<sup>30</sup> As time passed, the 1943 ratios, which had been based on the country's sole census conducted in 1932,

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<sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of State Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Country Reports on Terrorism, 2007, Chapter 6, Terrorist Organizations, "Hizballah", April 30, 2008. - Available at [<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2007/103714.htm>].

<sup>30</sup> The National Covenant (sometimes translated National Pact) addressed various foreign policy issues as well. For discussion of this unwritten document, see Fahim Qubain, *Crisis in Lebanon*, Washington, The Middle East Institute, 1961, pp. 17-18; Kamal S. Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965, pp. 186-188.

became less reflective of Lebanese society as Muslims gradually came to outnumber Christians, while within the Muslim community, Shiite Muslims came to outnumber Sunni Muslims. Discontent over power sharing imbalances was a major factor in inter-communal tensions and civil strife culminating in the 1975-1990 civil war.

**Syrian and Israeli Incursions.** Thirty-five thousand Syrian troops entered Lebanon in March 1976, in response to then-President Suleiman Frangieh's appeal to protect the Christians from Muslim and Palestinian militias; later, Syria switched its support away from the main Christian factions. Between May 1988 and June 2001, Syrian forces occupied most of west Beirut and much of eastern and northern Lebanon.

In March 1978, Israel invaded and occupied Lebanese territory south of the Litani River, to destroy Palestinian bases that Israel believed were the source of attacks against Israelis. Israeli forces withdrew in June 1978, after the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was placed south of the Litani to serve as a buffer between Israel and the Palestinians (U.N. Security Council Resolution 425, March 19, 1978). In June 1982, Israel mounted a more extensive invasion designed to root out armed Palestinian guerrillas from southern Lebanon, defeated Syrian forces in central Lebanon, and advanced as far north as Beirut. As many as 20,000 Palestinians and Lebanese may have perished in the fighting. Israeli forces completed a phased withdrawal in 1985, but maintained a 9-mile wide security zone in southern Lebanon from 1985 to 2000. About 1,000 members of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) patrolled the zone, backed by a 2,000-3,000 Lebanese militia called the South Lebanon Army (SLA), which was trained and equipped by Israel. On its part, Israel continued its air and artillery retaliation against Palestinian and Lebanese Shiite militia and Lebanese armed forces units that attacked IDF and SLA positions.

In May 2000, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak fulfilled a 1999 campaign promise to withdraw Israeli forces from the security zone in southern Lebanon. Barak had hoped to do this in conjunction with a Syrian withdrawal, but the continued stalemate in Syrian-Israeli talks led Barak to decide to move unilaterally. Some 500 Hezbollah militia moved into portions of the southern security zone vacated by the IDF and SLA.<sup>31</sup> Through 2000, Syrian forces did not venture south of a "red line" running east and west across Lebanon near Rashayah, inasmuch as territory south of the line was considered to fall within the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) operating area.

**The Shib'a Farms.** Syria and the then pro-Syrian Lebanese government asserted that the Israeli withdrawal was incomplete because it did not include a 10-square-mile enclave known as the Shib'a Farms near the Israeli-Lebanese-Syrian tri-border area. Most third parties maintain that the Shib'a Farms is part of the Israeli-

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<sup>31</sup> Israel gave asylum to approximately 6,700 SLA fighters and their families, while another 1,500 SLA were captured by Hezbollah and turned over to the Lebanese Government to stand trial. Of the 6,700 exiles, many emigrated to Australia, Canada, and Latin America; approximately 2,000 remained in Israel as of mid-2005, where they were later granted the right to Israeli citizenship but few applied.

occupied Syrian Golan Heights and is not part of the Lebanese territory from which Israeli was required to withdraw under the 1978 U.N. Security Council Resolution 425 (see above). On June 16, 2000, the U.N. Secretary General informed the Security Council that Israel had withdrawn from Lebanon in compliance with Resolution 425.

Hezbollah, on its part, claimed credit for forcing Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, thereby boosting its credentials within the Arab world. Since May 2000, Israeli forces in the Shib'a Farms area have been the main focus of Hezbollah attacks. Some analysts believe that Syria, the Lebanese government, and Hezbollah raised the issue of this obscure enclave as a justification for continuing to put military pressure on Israel to withdraw from the Golan Heights in the aftermath of its withdrawal from Lebanon.<sup>32</sup> Syria denies this. Moreover, Lebanese politicians across the spectrum, including those opposed to Syria, appear to agree that the Farms are Lebanese territory; in his interview with Lally Weymouth, Prime Minister Siniora said the "Sheba (variant spelling) Farms is Lebanese." Commentators have speculated that through its contacts with Hezbollah, Iran may seek to fill the vacuum left by Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon. Others doubt that Iran has the means to fill Syria's former role in Lebanon, noting that unlike Syria, Iran does not have contiguous borders with Lebanon.<sup>33</sup>

**The Civil War and Taif Reforms.** At stake in the civil war was control over the political process in Lebanon, the status of Palestinian refugees and militia, and the respective goals of Syria and Israel. From 1975 to 1990, the civil war killed, wounded, or disabled hundreds of thousands and rendered comparable numbers homeless at one time or another during the fighting. At one point, a terror bombing in October 1983 killed 241 U.S. armed forces personnel, who were part of a short-lived multinational force attempting to keep peace among Palestinian refugees and Lebanese factions. From 1987 until July 1997, the United States banned travel to Lebanon because of the threat of kidnaping and dangers from the ongoing civil war. Lebanon continues to rebuild in the aftermath of the civil war.

The Lebanese parliament elected in 1972 remained in office for 20 years, since it was impossible to elect a new parliament during the civil war. After a prolonged political crisis near the end of the war, Lebanese parliamentary deputies met in 1989 in Taif, Saudi Arabia, under the auspices of the Arab League and adopted a revised power sharing agreement. The so-called Taif Agreement raised the number of seats in parliament from 99 to 108 (later changed to 128), replaced the former 6:5 ratio of Christians to Muslims in parliament with an even ratio, provided for a proportional distribution of seats among the various Christian and Muslim sub-sects, and left appointment of the prime minister to parliament, subject to the president's approval.

In October 1989, as part of the Taif agreements, Syria agreed to begin discussions on possible Syrian troop redeployment from Beirut to the eastern Beqaa

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<sup>32</sup> Michael Slackman, "Shabaa [variant spelling] Farms at Center of Tension for Lebanon, Syria and Israel," *Los Angeles Times*, April 28, 2001.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Slackman, "As Syria's Influence in Lebanon Wanes, Iran Moves In," *New York Times*, March 13, 2006.

Valley two years after political reforms were implemented and discuss further withdrawals at that time. Then President Elias Hrawi signed the reforms in September 1990. However, the withdrawal discussions, which according to most interpretations of the Taif Agreement were to have started in September 1992, did not take place, in part because the Lebanese government said it needed more time to establish its authority over the country. Syrian officials maintained that they were waiting for the Lebanese government to complete rebuilding the army and police forces and assume security responsibilities in Lebanon before beginning the withdrawal discussions. In the meantime, Syria and Lebanon signed a treaty of brotherhood, cooperation, and coordination in May 1991, which called for creating several joint committees to coordinate policies. Although Syrian troop strength in Lebanon reportedly declined from 35,000-40,000 in the 1980s to approximately 14,000 by early 2005, Syria continued to exercise controlling influence over Lebanon's domestic politics and regional policies; moreover, its intelligence agents were active in Lebanon.

Parliamentary elections held in 1992, 1996, and 2000 resulted in pro-Syrian majorities, given the presence and influence of Syrian forces in Lebanon ostensibly as part of a peacekeeping force. Though supported by some Lebanese, including many Shiite Muslims, the Syrian presence was increasingly resented by other elements of the Lebanese population.

## **Political Upheaval: 2004-2007**

**Assassination of Former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.** By 2004, tensions had increased between the pro-Syrian Lebanese President Emile Lahoud and the independent Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, a self-made billionaire who had spearheaded the reconstruction of Lebanon after the civil war. On September 2, 2004, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1559 calling among other things upon "all remaining foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon." Matters came to a head the next day when the Lebanese parliament, apparently under Syrian pressure, adopted a Syrian-backed constitutional amendment extending President Lahoud's tenure by an additional three years. Hariri, who disagreed with the move, resigned in October 2004, and subsequently aligned himself with an anti-Syrian opposition coalition. Hariri's assassination in a car bombing on February 14, 2005, blamed by many on Syrian agents, led to widespread protests by an anti-Syrian coalition comprising many members of the Christian, Druze, and Sunni Muslim communities and counter-demonstrations by pro-Syrian groups including Shiites who rallied behind the Hezbollah and Amal parties. Outside Lebanon, the United States and France were particularly vocal in their denunciation of the assassination and a possible Syrian role in it.

**UN Security Council Resolution 1595 and the United Nations International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIC).** A statement by the President of the U.N. Security Council on February 25, 2005, although it did not mention Syria by name, condemned the assassination and requested the Secretary General "to report urgently on the circumstances, causes and consequences of this terrorist act." In accordance with this request, a U.N. fact-finding team visited Lebanon and concluded that "the Lebanese investigation process

suffers from serious flaws and has neither the capacity nor the commitment to reach a satisfactory and credible conclusion.”

On April 7, as domestic and international outrage mounted, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1595, under which the council decided to establish an International Independent Investigation Commission (‘the Commission’ or UNIIC) based in Lebanon “to assist the Lebanese authorities in their investigation of all aspects of this terrorist act, including to help identify its perpetrators, sponsors, organizers and accomplices.” The first leader of the Commission was Detlev Mehlis, described as “a 25-year veteran of the Berlin prosecutor’s office with a record of solving high profile terror cases.”<sup>34</sup> The resolution requested the Commission to complete its work within three months from the date it commences operations, authorized the Secretary for another period of up to three months, and requested an oral update every two months while the Commission is functioning. The U.N. Secretary General informed members of the Security Council that the Commission was fully operational as of June 16, 2005.

Since September 2005, the Commission has requested multiple extensions for its work. Current efforts focus on the transition from the UNIIC to a Special Tribunal to try suspects identified by the Commission investigation (see below).

- On October 31, 2005, the U.N. Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1636, which requires Syria to cooperate “fully and unconditionally” with the UNIIC investigation or face unspecified “further action.”
- On December 15, 2005, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1644, which extended the mandate of the Independent Commission for six months until June 15, 2006, as recommended by the Commission, and requested the Commission to report on its progress at three-month intervals. The Council acknowledged a Lebanese request that suspects be tried by “a tribunal of an international character” and asked the Secretary General to help the Lebanese government identify the nature of such a tribunal (Paragraph 6). The Council also requested the Secretary General to present recommendations to expand the Commission’s mandate to include investigations of other attacks on Lebanese figures (Paragraph 7).
- On March 29, 2006, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1664, which requested that the Secretary General negotiate an agreement with the government of Lebanon aimed at establishing the requested tribunal.
- On June 15, 2006, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1686, which extended the Commission’s mandate until

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<sup>34</sup> Warren Hoge, “Bush Pushes U.N. to Move Swiftly on Syria Report,” *New York Times*, October 22, 2005.

June 14, 2007 and supported the extension of the Commission's mandate to offer further technical assistance to Lebanese investigation of other possibly related assassinations during the last two years.

- On March 27, 2007, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1748 which extended the Commission's mandate until June 15, 2008, and changed the frequency of the Commission's reports from three to four months.

Two investigators have led the Commission following Mehlis: a Belgian, Serge Brammertz, directed UNIIC activities from February 2006 to November 2007, and a Canadian, Daniel Bellemare, from January 2008 to the present. Bellemare also has been named the Prosecutor for the Special Tribunal.

**UNIIC Reports and Findings.** The UNIIC has released periodic reports on the status of its investigations, the cooperation of various parties, and its findings thus far. Increasing concerns about preserving the validity of evidence and protecting Commission witnesses and staff have led to a reduction in the level of detail put forward in these public reports. On August 30, 2005, a U.N. spokeswoman announced that three former heads of Lebanese intelligence agencies and a former Lebanese member of parliament had been identified as suspects in the assassination of Hariri. A subsequent press report described the suspects as Syrian proxies with close ties to President Lahoud.<sup>35</sup> Two central conclusions reached by the Commission in its first report deal with the question of culpability, although they do not constitute a conclusive finding:

It is the Commission's view that the assassination on 14 February 2005 was carried out by a group with an extensive organization and considerable resources and capabilities.

...[T]here is converging evidence pointing at both Lebanese and Syrian involvement in this terrorist act.... Given the infiltration of Lebanese institutions and society by the Syrian and Lebanese intelligence services working in tandem, it would be difficult to envisage a scenario whereby such a complex assassination plot could have been carried out without their knowledge.

The Commission's first report added that the investigation was not complete and called for further investigation; it stated that Syrian authorities, including the foreign minister, while extending limited cooperation, had provided some false or inaccurate information; and it called on Syria to help clarify unresolved questions. Syrian officials, including President Bashar al-Asad, denied complicity in the Hariri assassination and maintained that the report was biased. Questions have been raised regarding the apparent exclusions in the report of the names of suspects who had been identified in earlier drafts of the report. The principal example appears in Paragraph 96 (page 29) of the report, in which a witness told the Commission that in

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<sup>35</sup> Hassan M. Fatah, "Lebanon's President Facing Growing Pressure to Resign," *New York Times*, September 6, 2005. The press report lists the four as the current head of security, the former head of security, a former military intelligence chief, and a former chief of police.

September 2004 “senior Lebanese and Syrian officials decided to assassinate Rafik Hariri” and held several follow-up meetings in Syria to plan the crime. An earlier version reportedly listed the names of five of the senior officers, including President Asad’s brother Maher al Asad and the President’s brother-in-law Asif Shawkat, chief of military intelligence and widely considered the second most powerful official in the regime.<sup>36</sup> President Asad, temporized for several months over the Commission’s demand for an interview, but agreed to a meeting with Brammertz that reportedly took place in Damascus on April 25, 2006.

Without naming names, reports issued during Brammertz’s tenure at the Commission noted that the investigation had brought to light “significant links” between the Hariri case and over a dozen other cases involving attacks or assassinations that had occurred in Lebanon since October 2004. Both Brammertz and his successor, Daniel Bellemare have characterized Syrian assistance to the Commission’s investigations as “generally satisfactory”,<sup>37</sup> while commenting that responses by interviewees “can be characterized as variable in quality on occasion.” By mid-2007, the Commission reported that it had “identified a number of persons of particular interest who may have been involved in some aspects of the preparation or commission of the crime or could have had prior knowledge that such a plan was under way.”<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, Brammertz did not name any suspects during his tenure and noted in his final report that the Commission is taking an “increasingly cautious approach to the management of information” in order to “protect the integrity both of the investigation and of any future legal process” as well as witnesses and Commission staff.<sup>39</sup>

In his first report as Commissioner, Bellemare reported that the Commission could “confirm, on the basis of available evidence, that a network of individuals acted in concert to carry out the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and that this criminal network or parts thereof are linked to some of the other cases within the Commission’s mandate.” Bellemare also reported that “the deteriorating security environment in Lebanon... continues to have an impact on the Commission’s activities, albeit without affecting its resolve.”<sup>40</sup> Further information on the past work of UNIIC and its findings is included below in Appendix B.

## **Elections of 2005 and Aftermath**

**Resolution 1559 and Syrian Withdrawal.** The Hariri assassination in February 2005 prompted strong international pressure on the Syrian regime, particularly from the United States and France, to withdraw its forces and intelligence

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<sup>36</sup> Maher al Asad does not appear at all in the official copy of the report and Asif Shawkat appears only once (paragraph 178) when Shawkat allegedly forced an individual 45 days before the assassination to make a tape claiming responsibility for the crime, purportedly in an effort to hide Syrian or Lebanese complicity.

<sup>37</sup> U.N. Document S/2006/962, dated December 12, 2006.

<sup>38</sup> U.N. Document S/2007/424, dated July 12, 2007.

<sup>39</sup> U.N. Document S/2007/684, dated November 28, 2007.

<sup>40</sup> U.N. Document S/2008/210, dated March 28, 2008.



apparatus from Lebanon in accordance with Resolution 1559. On April 26, 2005, the Syrian foreign minister informed U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and the President of the U.N. Security Council that Syrian forces had completed their withdrawal from Lebanon. In his *first* semi-annual report on the implementation of Resolution 1559,<sup>41</sup> the U.N. Secretary General stated that as of April 26, however, he had not been able to verify full Syrian withdrawal; consequently, he dispatched a U.N. team to verify whether there had been a full Syrian withdrawal. On May 23, the U.N. Secretary General forwarded a report by a team he had sent to Lebanon to verify Syrian withdrawal. The team “found no Syrian military forces, assets or intelligence apparatus in Lebanese territory, with the exception of one Syrian battalion” deployed near the disputed village of Deir Al-Ashayr on the Lebanese-Syrian border. The team also concluded that “no Syrian military intelligence personnel remain in Lebanon in known locations or in military uniform” but added that it was “unable to conclude with certainty that all the intelligence apparatus has been withdrawn.”<sup>42</sup>

On June 10, 2005, following reports of Syrian involvement in attacks on anti-Syrian Lebanese officials and journalists, Secretary General Annan sent the verification team back to Lebanon to see if Syrian intelligence agents were still in the country. The team returned on July 11 and subsequently submitted a report to Annan. In his *second* semi-annual report on implementation of Resolution 1559, submitted on October 26, 2005, Annan reported that “[o]verall, the team corroborated its earlier conclusion that there was no remaining visible or significant Syrian intelligence presence or activity in Lebanon, though the distinctly close historical and other ties between the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon also had to be taken into account when assessing a possibly ongoing influence of Syrian intelligence in Lebanon.” He acknowledged that there were some credible reports that Syrian intelligence continued to influence events in Lebanon but said most of these reports were exaggerated.

The *third* semi-annual report on implementation of Resolution 1559, submitted to the Security Council on April 19, 2006, recounted previously reported threats by Syrian officials against Lebanese legislators if they did not vote for extension of President Lahoud’s term. The report said that Syrian forces and intelligence services had effectively left Lebanon. Nevertheless, allegations of Syrian efforts to negatively influence Lebanese politics have persisted. The *fourth* semi-annual report, submitted on October 9, 2006, noted that “[a]llegations have at times been made, including by the Government of Lebanon, that there continues to be Syrian intelligence activity in Lebanon.”<sup>43</sup> The *fifth* semi-annual report quoted an allegation that “forces directly affiliated with Syrian intelligence are bringing in new shipments of weapons” to Lebanon.<sup>44</sup> Both reports cited Syrian denials of these allegations. In an interview with Lally Weymouth published in the May 1, 2006, edition of *Newsweek*, Prime

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<sup>41</sup> U.N. Security Council document S/2005/272, Paragraph 17.

<sup>42</sup> Annex to U.N. Security Council document S/2005/331, Letter dated May 23, 2005, from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

<sup>43</sup> U.N. Security Council document S/2006/832, October 19, 2006.

<sup>44</sup> U.N. Security Council document S/2007/262, May 7, 2007.

Minister Siniora said “Syria has its men and people in the country: supporters, some politicians and quite a number of Syrian intelligence.”

Syria has long regarded Lebanon as part of its sphere of influence. Some international observers have expressed concern that Syrian leaders might try to circumvent the effect of the withdrawal by maintaining their influence through contacts they have acquired over the years in the Lebanese bureaucracy and security services.<sup>45</sup> Attacks on and assassinations of some prominent Lebanese critics of Syria in addition to Hariri have accentuated these fears. A Lebanese study group has prepared a report indicating despite Syria’s formal withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005, Syria continues to occupy as much as 180 square miles of Lebanese territory (approximately 4.5% of the country). The drafters of the report believe Syria maintains camps and smuggling routes through which they infiltrate foreign fighters and weapons into Lebanon.<sup>46</sup>

**Parliamentary Elections.** As Syrian troops departed from Lebanon under U.S. and international pressure, the Lebanese prepared to hold parliamentary elections without Syrian interference for the first time since 1972. Parliamentary elections, held in four phases between May 29 and June 5, 2005, gave a majority (72 out of 128 seats) to a large, anti-Syrian bloc known as the Bristol Gathering or the March 14 Movement, headed by Saad Hariri, a son of the late prime minister. A second, largely Shiite and pro-Syrian bloc grouping Hezbollah and the more moderate Amal organization won 33 seats. A third bloc, the Change and Reform Movement (also known as the Free Patriotic Movement), consisted of largely Christian supporters of former dissident armed forces chief of staff General Michel Aoun,<sup>47</sup> who returned to Lebanon from exile in France in May 2005. Aoun’s bloc, which adopted a somewhat equivocal position regarding Syria, gained 21 seats.

Despite Hariri’s success, the electoral pattern resulted in a mixed government, which complicates its abilities to adopt clear policy lines. Hariri associate Fouad Siniora became prime minister and the 24-member cabinet contained 15 Hariri supporters; however, it also contained five supporters of the Shiite bloc including for the first time in Lebanese history two members of Hezbollah. Other key pro-Syrians remaining in the government were President Lahoud and veteran parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri, who heads the Amal organization (Hezbollah’s junior partner in the Shiite coalition) and has held the speakership since 1992. The assassination of two members of the Hariri bloc in November 2006 and June 2007 reduced the bloc’s majority from 72 to 70 and temporarily reduced total membership in parliament from 128 to 126; by-elections to fill these positions were held on August 5, 2007, but some Lebanese figures do not accept their validity (see below). Another

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<sup>45</sup> Robin Wright, “Syria Moves to Keep Control of Lebanon,” *Washington Post*, March 31, 2005. Syria also has potential built-in assets through the continued presence of President Lahoud and parliamentary speaker Berri.

<sup>46</sup> Barbara Slavin, “Syria lingers in Lebanon, report says,” *USA Today*, July 25, 2007.

<sup>47</sup> General Aoun (variant spelling: Aoun), a controversial former armed forces commander and prime minister, rejected the Taif Agreement and eventually obtained political asylum in France.

assassination of a pro-Hariri member of parliament on September 19, 2007, further altered the political picture.

## **Confronting Hezbollah, 2006-2008**

Following the 2005 election, Prime Minister Fouad Siniora persistently faced difficulties in working with Lebanon's mixed government. One of the most serious stumbling blocks for the government was a U.N. demand contained in Security Council Resolution 1559 that all militias be disbanded, which in effect refers mainly to Hezbollah. This demand proved difficult to implement in view of Hezbollah's strong bloc of supporters in parliament, its paramilitary capabilities, its support from Syria and Iran, and a perception among some Lebanese that Hezbollah has stood up to Israel in various clashes in southern Lebanon. The inclusion of Hezbollah officials in the cabinet raised further problems; for example, the U.S. State Department, while welcoming the Siniora cabinet, said it would not deal with an official of Hezbollah, which the U.S. government has listed as a foreign terrorist organization.

### **War in Lebanon, 2006**

As agreement on basic domestic and regional issues continued to elude the Lebanese, the fragile consensus they had achieved in the year following the Hariri assassination began to unravel. Tensions between Israel and the militant Palestinians in the Gaza territory spread to Lebanon in mid-July 2006 as a cycle of violence began between Israel and militants from the Lebanese Shiite Muslim organization Hezbollah. On July 12, possibly in a gesture of solidarity with the radical Palestinian organization Hamas combating Israel in Gaza, Hezbollah units launched attacks across Israel's northern border, killing eight Israelis and seizing two Israeli soldiers as hostages. Israel launched widespread air and artillery strikes on Hezbollah targets in Lebanon and Lebanese infrastructure including Beirut International Airport, vowing to continue the attacks until the Israeli hostages are returned. Hezbollah launched daily attacks on northern Israel with extended-range rockets, penetrating as far as the northern Israeli port of Haifa, Israel's third largest city, and beyond, to which Israel responded with air strikes. Military commentators said that Hezbollah had more than 12,000 largely unguided Katyusha rockets, with ranges of 20-45 miles, but also some more advanced variants of Iranian or Syrian manufacture. Though with limited accuracy, they can cover a wide range of Israeli territory.

Initially, the Israelis used primarily airpower and artillery in their strikes against Hezbollah; however, by mid- to late July, they had carried out some small ground operations in southern Lebanon. On July 21, Israel began massing ground forces on the Lebanese border, and the following day, the Israeli Armed Forces Chief of Staff Lt. General Dan Halutz said "[w]e shall carry out limited ground operations as necessary in order to strike at the terrorism which strikes at us."<sup>48</sup> By August 4,

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<sup>48</sup> Greg Myre and Jad Mouawad, "Israeli Buildup at Lebanese Line as Fight Rages," *New York Times*, July 22, 2006. On the other hand, unnamed Israeli officials were quoted as (continued...)

Israeli forces in Lebanon reportedly numbered 10,000 and had positioned themselves in or around more than a dozen villages and towns up to four miles inside Lebanon in some locations. On August 9, the Israeli “inner cabinet” agreed to expand the ground offensive in an effort to drive Hezbollah forces across the Litani River and clear a buffer zone in southern Lebanon before international diplomacy might lead to a cease-fire. According to press reports, the Israeli Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense would decide when the new phase of the offensive was to begin and might defer it briefly depending on further diplomatic developments.<sup>49</sup>

## Diplomatic Endeavors

At the G-8 summit meeting in St. Petersburg, Russia, attendees disagreed over various aspects of the crisis; however, on July 16, they adopted a statement placing blame for the immediate crisis on extremist forces of Hezbollah and the militant Palestinian organization Hamas, but calling on Israel to exercise utmost restraint and avoid casualties among civilians. U.S. officials were reluctant to support a cease-fire resolution without dealing with “root causes,” which they identify as the actions of Hezbollah. On July 23, two veteran officials from Saudi Arabia, Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal and Prince Bandar bin Sultan, former Saudi Ambassador to the United States and presently chief of the Saudi National Security Council, met with President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to propose a cease-fire that would postpone the question of disarming Hezbollah. The U.S. leaders made no public commitment to back this plan; however, the two sides reportedly discussed restoring sovereignty to Lebanon, strengthening the Lebanese Armed Forces, and rebuilding the country.<sup>50</sup>

In late July and early August, diplomatic activity focused on the feasibility of a cease-fire, with U.S. and Israeli officials arguing that conditions must first be in place to assure that a cease-fire would be “sustainable” before formally establishing one. While the issue was under discussion, the Council issued two statements, deploring an Israeli attack on a U.N. observer post and on a building in the Lebanese town of Qana where a number of civilians had sought shelter; also, it adopted Resolution 1697, which extended by one month the mandate of the existing U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon, pending study of options for further arrangements in southern Lebanon. On August 5, 2006, the United States and France proposed that the U.N. Security Council adopt a two-track process consisting of a joint resolution

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<sup>48</sup> (...continued)

saying that a larger invasion may not be needed to achieve Israel goals. Scott Wilson and Anthony Shadid, “Israel Fights To Secure Key Region in Lebanon,” *Washington Post*, July 23, 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Steven Erlanger and Warren Hoge, “Israel Holds Off on Drive to the North,” *New York Times*, August 11, 2006.

<sup>50</sup> “In Battle To Remove Hezbollah, Both Israel, Lebanon Pay Price,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 24, 2006.

aimed at an initial cease-fire in Lebanon, possibly followed by a second resolution aimed at securing a more lasting peace.<sup>51</sup>

**U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701.** After extended discussion and debate, the U.N. Security Council on August 11, 2006, unanimously adopted as Resolution 1701 a revised U.S.-French resolution calling for a “full cessation of hostilities based upon, in particular, the immediate cessation by Hezbollah of all attacks and the immediate cessation by Israel of all offensive military operations.” Among the other terms of the resolution are expansion of the existing U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) from 2,000 to a maximum of 15,000; deployment of UNIFIL plus a 15,000-member Lebanese Army contingent<sup>52</sup> to southern Lebanon to monitor the cease-fire; withdrawal of Israeli forces in southern Lebanon “in parallel” with the deployment of U.N. and Lebanese forces to the south; a ban on delivery of weapons to “any entity or individual” in Lebanon, except the Lebanese Army. The resolution requests the U.N. Secretary General to develop proposals within 30 days for disarmament [of militias] delineation of Lebanon’s international borders including the disputed Shib’a (Shebaa) Farms enclave. In preambular language, the resolution also emphasizes the need to address the issue of prisoners on both sides. The resolution also calls upon the international community to extend financial and humanitarian assistance to the Lebanese people, including facilitating the safe return of displaced persons.

According to the U.N. Secretary-General, the “cessation of hostilities” called for in Resolution 1701 went into effect on August 14, at 5:00 a.m. GMT. In his first report to the Security Council on implementation of Resolution 1701, the Secretary General noted the leaders of Lebanon and Israel had accepted the resolution and that the parties were generally complying with the cessation of hostilities as of the writing of his report,<sup>53</sup> although some of the heaviest fighting in the conflict had taken place during the 48 hours before the cessation of hostilities came into effect. Some other terms of the resolution are being carried out. Lebanese Army contingents are beginning to deploy to some areas of southern Lebanon, and the expanded U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is deploying to southern Lebanon.

As of late September 2006, about 5,000 UNIFIL troops were in Lebanon, representing a moderate increase in UNIFIL’s former strength of 2,000 but significantly short of the maximum target figure of 15,000 cited in the resolution. In an interview in an Italian newspaper in late December, the French commander of UNIFIL, General Alain Pellegrini, said the expanded UNIFIL (sometimes called

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<sup>51</sup> Terms are listed in more detail in *Washington Post*, August 6, 2006. See Colum Lynch and Robin Wright, “U.S., France Agree On Plan to Halt Lebanon Fighting.” (Sidebar, “Main Points of the U.N. Draft Resolution.”)

<sup>52</sup> The Lebanese Prime Minister offered to deploy 15,000 military personnel, and the Lebanese offer is welcomed in the preambular portion of Resolution 1701.

<sup>53</sup> U.N. Document S/2006/670, Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (For the period 11 to 17 August 2006). The Secretary General noted that “[o]n 12 August, the Government of Lebanon announced its acceptance of resolution 1701 (2006). On 13 August, the Government of Israel announced that it would act according to its obligations as outlined in the resolution.”

UNIFIL-2) had reached a strength of 11,000, with 23 countries represented, and is set to reach 12,000.<sup>54</sup> In his parting report to the U.N. Security Council of December 11, 2006, then Secretary General Kofi Annan pointed out two other positive aspects of the U.N. deployment: a “crucial role” by UNIFIL in helping the Lebanese army ensure that southern Lebanon is “free of armed personnel, assets and weapons”; and the establishment of a UNIFIL Maritime Task Force to assist the small Lebanese navy in securing its territorial waters.<sup>55</sup>

In a subsequent report on implementation of Resolution 1701 submitted on March 14, 2007, the new U.N. Secretary-General Mr. Ban Yi-moon noted that the second phase of UNIFIL deployment had been completed as of February 20, 2007, bringing UNIFIL forces in southern Lebanon to the following numbers: 12,431 total military personnel from 29 contributing countries, including 10,479 ground troops operating in an eastern and a western sector; in addition, UNIFIL naval personnel had reached a total of 1,772. He added that the mission has continued to recruit civilian staff, reaching a total of 473 by February 8, with an authorized strength of 1,078. On February 2, 2007, the former UNIFIL commander Major General Pellegrini, a French officer, was succeeded by Major General Claudio Graziano, from Italy.<sup>56</sup> Further increases as of June 19, 2007 brought UNIFIL to 11,113 ground troops and 2,000 serving in the maritime force, plus smaller headquarters and support elements.<sup>57</sup> As of February 25, 2008, UNIFIL had 12,707 military personnel in Lebanon.<sup>58</sup>

## After-Effects of the Fighting

According to the U.N. Secretary General, the Israeli bombardments and ground invasion into Lebanon killed an estimated 1,200 Lebanese, injured over 4,000, killed four U.N. military observers, and created nearly a million internally displaced people. Over 140 Israelis, including 43 civilians, were killed and over 100 injured, many by Hezbollah attacks using rockets. The Secretary General notes continued violations of the cessation of hostilities resolution on both sides, including reports of weapons supply to Hezbollah and Israeli overflights of Lebanon.<sup>59</sup>

The 34-day military confrontation between Hezbollah and the Israeli Defense Force in July and August 2006 enhanced the prestige of Hezbollah at the expense of the Lebanese government. Hezbollah’s leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah acquired a folk-hero status as his organization was widely hailed both for its military prowess in the conflict with Israel and for its perceived ability to initiate disaster relief projects far more quickly and efficiently than the regular governmental organizations.

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<sup>54</sup> “Al-Qa’ida Is Threatening the Blue Helmets,” *La Repubblica* (Rome), December 17, 2006, p. 17.

<sup>55</sup> U.N. Document S/2006/956, December 11, 2006, p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> U.N. Document S/2007/147, Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), March 14, 2007, p. 11.

<sup>57</sup> U.N. Document S/2007/392, June 28, 2007, pp. 11-12.

<sup>58</sup> U.N. Document S/2008/135, February 28, 2008, p. 14.

<sup>59</sup> U.N. Document S/2006/956, December 11, 2006, pp. 8-9.

Even many Lebanese who might be inclined to criticize Hezbollah for precipitating a crisis that devastated much of southern Lebanon have been muted, at least temporarily, by Nasrallah's soaring popularity and Hezbollah's success in delivering aid to large numbers of displaced persons and other homeless or destitute Lebanese.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, he finds himself in a strong position to withstand pressures to disarm Hezbollah. Syria too, as a major sponsor of Hezbollah, finds that it has more maneuver room in dealing with Lebanese issues.

The inevitable comparisons being drawn between Hezbollah effectiveness and Lebanese government ineptitude raised questions about the future of the Siniora government and its ability to withstand domestic criticism over its leadership. Although not all Lebanese Shiites support Hezbollah, many observers believe Sheikh Nasrallah is being heeded to a greater degree in the post conflict environment in Lebanon; he benefits from his ability to play multiple roles including military leader, reconstruction czar, and political participant. Despite his currently favorable image, however, Nasrallah had seemed until recently to be reluctant to allow the situation to escalate into a resumption of civil or border strife. Nasrallah agreed to abide by the Doha Agreement in May 2008, but warned that "the state's weapons must not be used to target the resistance and its weapons."<sup>61</sup>

## Subsequent Tensions

**Cabinet Resignation.** After the conclusion of the 2006 fighting, Hezbollah pressed for a larger role in the Lebanese government headed by the anti-Syrian Prime Minister Siniora. A "victory rally" staged by Hezbollah in September 2006 was followed by increased pressure for the replacement of the Siniora government with a "national unity" government, more than one third of whose members would be members or supporters of Hezbollah.<sup>62</sup> In an interview on October 31, 2006, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah warned that if a national unity government had not come into being by mid-November, "[w]e will take all available democratic steps to achieve this goal, including resigning from the government." On November 11, the Hezbollah-led bloc carried out this threat, and its ministers and supporters resigned from the cabinet, a decision that cost the Siniora government crucial support within the Shiite community.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Sharon Behn, "U.S., Hezbollah Vie to Rebuild for Lebanese; Hope To Win Public Opinion," *Washington Times*, August 18, 2006; Paul Richter, "Cease-Fire in the Middle East," *Los Angeles Times*, August 17, 2006.

<sup>61</sup> OSC Document - GMP20080527617001, "Lebanon's Nasrallah Addresses Rally on Political Developments, Hizballah Weapons," May 26, 2008.

<sup>62</sup> A minority of one third of the cabinet seats plus one additional seat would provide the Hezbollah bloc with effective veto power of cabinet decisions; hence, the governing coalition's refusal to consider this demand. Michael Slackman, "Lebanon Talks Collapse as Shiites Vacate Cabinet," *The New York Times*, November 12, 2006.

<sup>63</sup> "Hezbollah Quits Lebanese Cabinet," *The Washington Post*, November 12, 2006. Five ministers from Hezbollah and its ally Amal resigned, plus a Sunni Muslim minister opposed to Siniora's policies.

The proximate causes of the resignation of the six ministers were the breakdown of national unity talks and the recommendation of the U.N. Security Council to establish an international tribunal to try suspects in the Hariri murder case, a step strongly opposed by Hezbollah and other pro-Syrian groups. On November 13, following the resignations, a depleted Lebanese cabinet minus the Hezbollah ministers approved a draft law establishing a tribunal.

**The Tribunal and Resolution 1757.** On November 25, 2006, remaining members of the Lebanese cabinet approved the U.N. Security Council proposal to establish the court, in the face of strong opposition from pro-Syrian elements, who maintained that the truncated cabinet lacked a popular mandate to take this step (see above).<sup>64</sup> Approval from the Parliament and pro-Syrian then-President Emile Lahoud proved all but impossible to obtain. The Hezbollah-led opposition reportedly stated that it accepts the principle of the court but does not want it to become a vehicle for attacking Syria.

Confronted with this impasse, supporters of the tribunal decided on a new approach that would circumvent the Lebanese governmental machinery and enlist the international community. On April 4, 2007, a U.N. spokesman announced that 70 members of the Lebanese parliament petitioned the U.N. Secretary-General to act under the U.N. Charter and set up a special tribunal to try suspects in the Hariri murder. On May 14, Lebanese Prime Minister Siniora wrote to the Secretary-General, asking that the Security Council establish the court as a matter of urgency. Subsequently, on May 30, 2007, a divided U.N. Security Council voted by 10 to 0 with 5 abstentions (Russia, China, South Africa, Indonesia, and Qatar) to adopt Resolution 1757, which establishes a tribunal outside of Lebanon to prosecute persons responsible for the attack of February 14, 2005.

Establishment of the tribunal has proven divisive among Lebanese citizens and elsewhere in the region. Pro-Syrian elements have criticized Resolution 1757 and Syria has threatened not to cooperate with the tribunal, while some third world countries have expressed reservations. Western countries including France and Germany praised this step; Egypt welcomed the June 10 target date, which in effect gave the Lebanese parliament one last chance to establish the tribunal itself. Opponents of the resolution objected on grounds that it was passed under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, which could include the use of force, and that it represents interference in Lebanon's internal affairs; the Russian delegate commented that "never before has the Security Council ratified agreements on behalf of a parliament of a foreign country."

Preparations for the establishment of the tribunal continue. In December 2007, the United Nations finalized an agreement with the Netherlands to host the tribunal. Judges also were named. In January 2008, Daniel Bellemare was named the prosecutor for the tribunal. On March 10, the United Nations appointed Robin Vincent to serve as registrar for the tribunal and oversee its management and budget.

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<sup>64</sup> The U.N. proposal for international court is contained in U.N. Security Council document S/2006/893, Report of the Secretary-General on the establishment of a special tribunal for Lebanon, November 15, 2006.



The United States has contributed \$14 million for tribunal; Lebanon is expected to fund 49% of the tribunal's costs.<sup>65</sup>

## Hezbollah Demonstrations and Mediation Efforts

Meanwhile, a new phase of the confrontation began in December with the beginning of massive demonstrations led by Hezbollah with the avowed purpose of bringing down the Siniora government. Beginning on December 1, pro-Hezbollah crowds, estimated by some at more than 100,000, camped in front of the government building (the "Serail") where Prime Minister Siniora remained with his supporters, who organized counter rallies to show solidarity with the government. Government supporters called for a presidential election to replace President Lahoud, while the Hezbollah supporters called for new parliamentary elections that they expected would deprive the Prime Minister of his majority. Meanwhile, Hezbollah's unlikely ally retired General Aoun sought the presidency, a position reserved for the Maronite Christian community, to which Aoun belongs. The standoff continued for almost two months with little or no violence.<sup>66</sup>

The situation escalated on January 19, 2007, when the Hezbollah-led opposition called for a general strike on January 23 in an effort to step up its campaign against Prime Minister Siniora. Leaders of the 350,000-member labor federation called for a parallel strike protesting Siniora's planned tax increase. The strikes succeeded in paralyzing much of Beirut and some other areas; initially peaceful, they quickly turned violent causing three deaths and numerous injuries as protesters threw up road blocks with burning tires and cars and clashed with government supporters, while military, police, and firefighters tried to reopen roads. The unrest died down and a tense calm returned to the city on January 24 as the opposition suspended the strike, saying that it had served as a warning to the government. Pro-government groups, on their part, warned of counter-protests if the opposition resumed their strike.

More violence marked the second anniversary of the late Prime Minister Hariri's assassination, when three Lebanese were killed and 23 wounded in the bombing of two minibuses in Beirut. Commentators noted that this was the first time since the 1975-1990 civil war that such attacks were directed against ordinary Lebanese rather than public figures and speculated that it was designed to scare people away from attending the Hariri memorial service; however, many did attend.<sup>67</sup> The Lebanese Army, according to its commander General Michel Suleiman, deployed throughout Lebanon in an effort to keep the peace; General Suleiman added that the army was "suffering from pressure" and "has been bearing above its load for months." He went

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<sup>65</sup> Michael Bluhm, "Registrar of Hariri court to take up post this week," *Daily Star* (Lebanon) April 30, 2008.

<sup>66</sup> Anthony Shadid, "Lebanese Government Issues Own Warning," *The Washington Post*, December 14, 2006; Megan K. Stack, "The World; A key player in Lebanon shreds script," *Los Angeles Times*, December 20, 2006.

<sup>67</sup> Anthony Shadid, "Anger and Homage, Side by Side Along Lebanon's Divide," *The Washington Post*, February 15, 2007; Michael Slackman, "Rival Groups Kept Apart at Hariri Memorial in Beirut," *The New York Times*, February 15, 2007.

on to say that the army “is ready to bear more on condition that officials and civilians also bear their responsibilities in preventing security disturbances.”<sup>68</sup>

**Seeking a Rapprochement.** In the aftermath of the strikes and demonstrations, there were some signs of forward movement in attempts by the various parties to resolve the current political deadlock. On March 8, 2007, a series of meetings began between two main rival leaders, Parliament Speaker Berri and March 14 Movement leader (and son of the late prime minister) Saad Hariri. After a follow-up meeting between the two politicians on March 16, Hariri told reporters that the meetings would continue “until a settlement is reached.”<sup>69</sup> The Berri-Hariri meetings were held against the backdrop of external diplomatic contacts aimed at encouraging the Lebanese parties to find common ground; Saudi Arabia, for example, was active in seeking to settle growing religious sectarian crises. Saudi Arabia also hosted an Arab League summit conference on March 28-29, 2007. Nevertheless, unrest continued in Lebanon. Two assassinations of parliamentarians (November 2006 and June 2007) reduced the Hariri bloc in parliament from 72 to 70 while decreasing overall membership from 128 to 126. By-elections to fill these two positions were held on August 5, 2007, but some Lebanese figures do not accept their validity. (See below.)

## Confronting Palestinian and Palestinian-Associated Militia

On the heels of Lebanon’s internal rivalries, Palestinian militants in Lebanon — relatively quiet during recent years — mounted further challenges to the fragile Lebanese government. Up to 400,000 Palestinians, mainly refugees, reside in Lebanon, often in squalid camps. Most of them are denied Lebanese citizenship, work permits, or other amenities. Discontented with their austere living conditions, some are drawn to radical Palestinian organizations and militias.<sup>70</sup> In the past, Palestinian militias in Lebanon were secular and in some cases Marxist in outlook, with little affinity for Islamic fundamentalism. More recently, however some Palestinians in Lebanon have moved closer to the type of hard-line Sunni Muslim fundamentalism espoused by Osama bin Laden and the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Some have joined the insurgency in Iraq, while others have sought to turn Lebanon into a recruiting ground for terrorist activities. Since early 2006, Lebanese authorities have reportedly been concerned about two militias in southern Lebanon with reported ties to bin Laden:

- Jund al-Sham (Army of Greater Syria), composed mainly of Lebanese veterans of the 1980s war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. It numbers less than 100.

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<sup>68</sup> “Suleiman says army is trying to keep the peace,” *The Daily Star (Beirut)*, January 27, 2007; Lebanese general says army under pressures,” Reuters, January 27, 2007.

<sup>69</sup> Hassan M. Fattah, “2 Key Lebanese Leaders Meet,” *The New York Times*, March 9, 2007.

<sup>70</sup> The U.S. State Department estimates Lebanon’s Palestinian population at 200,000 to 400,000. Extension of Lebanese citizenship to Palestinians is opposed by most Lebanese, who fear that such a step would upset Lebanon’s delicate confessional balance. U.S. Department of State, *Background Note: Lebanon*. August 2005.

- Asbat al-Ansar (League of Partisans), composed mainly of Palestinians and numbering 300-400.

One Lebanese military official expressed the belief that the two organizations were largely the same and described them as “very dangerous men.”<sup>71</sup> Subsequently, during an interview with Reuters News Wire on September 22, 2006, then U.S. Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte expressed concern that Al Qaeda may be seeking to extend its influence into the Levant area (basically, Lebanon and Syria), despite religious differences between the Sunni Al Qaeda and the Shiite Hezbollah in Lebanon.

**Fatah al-Islam.** A relatively obscure Palestinian-associated group known as Fatah al-Islam has mounted a more serious challenge to the Lebanese government. Numbering between 100 and 300, this group is variously described as having ties to Al Qaeda or to Syrian intelligence; however, Syrian officials deny any links with it and maintain that they have pursued Fatah al-Islam through Interpol and other channels.<sup>72</sup> Observers also differ on its composition, some calling it a Palestinian organization and others saying its membership includes Syrians, Saudis, Jordanians, and other Arab nationals. The organization is particularly strong among Palestinian refugees residing in the Nahr al-Bared camp located near the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli. Some observers believe Jund al-Sham has joined forces with Fatah al-Islam in clashes discussed below. General Michel Suleiman calls the Fatah al-Islam “a branch of the al-Qaida<sup>73</sup> [variant spelling] organization.”

On May 20, 2007, Lebanese police conducted raids against suspected Fatah al-Islam hideouts in Tripoli reportedly in pursuit of bank robbers. Fighting between Fatah al-Islam and army and police units spread to the nearby Nahr al-Bared refugee camp and were echoed in smaller clashes near the Ayn al-Helweh refugee camp in southern Lebanon. Prohibited by a 1969 agreement from entering Palestinian camps, the army besieged the camps and shelled militia positions in an effort to force the militia out. Sporadic fighting continued for more than three months between the Army and the Fatah al-Islam militia until September 3, when the Army announced that it had taken control of the Nahr al-Bared camp. As of June 11, 2007, according to a Lebanese Army spokesman, numbers of casualties had reached 58 soldiers, 41 militants, and 31 civilians. By the time the siege of Nahr al-Bared had ended, Lebanese Army spokesmen said the Army had lost 163 soldiers, while between 400 and 500 had been wounded according to press accounts.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Mitch Prothero, “A Wellspring of Anger,” *U.S. News and World Report*, June 26, 2006, p. 34.

<sup>72</sup> Liz Sly, “Lebanon’s stability under fire; Al Qaeda-linked group emerges as new threat,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 22, 2007.

<sup>73</sup> Hussein Dakroub, “Army commander: Militant group battling Lebanese troops in refugee camp al-Qaida affiliated,” Associated Press, August 13, 2007.

<sup>74</sup> Tom Perry, “Lebanon crushes militant group, but threat remains,” Reuters News Wire, September 3, 2007.

Shakir al Absi (current whereabouts unknown),<sup>75</sup> the leader of Fatah al-Islam, was described by U.S. officials as a well-known Palestinian-Jordanian militant sentenced to death in absentia in Jordan for involvement in the 2002 murder of U.S. diplomat Laurence Foley. U.S. officials further describe his organization as an offshoot of a Syria-backed secular Palestinian terrorist group called Fatah al-Intifada. On August 9, 2007, U.S. Secretary of State Rice designated Fatah al-Islam as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist organization, citing his role in the Foley murder, the unprovoked attack on Lebanese security forces in May 2007, and use of civilian camp-dwellers as human shields in the subsequent fighting between Lebanese military and Fatah al-Islam forces. The designation, among other things, cuts Fatah al-Islam off from the U.S. financial system and blocks any of its property or interests in the United States. Meanwhile the U.S. Administration, already supporting the Lebanese government and army against other internal challenges, notably Hezbollah, responded with assistance to the Lebanese government including humanitarian supplies, ammunition, and light weapons and equipment, some already promised but with deliveries accelerated. In June 2008, Al Absi released an audio statement condemning the Lebanese government and Hezbollah for serving various foreign interests.<sup>76</sup>

**Effect on Perceptions of the Lebanese Army.** One byproduct of Lebanon's extended governmental crisis and the siege of the radical Palestinian Fatah al-Islam has been an enhancement of the Lebanese army's standing in the eyes of a wide spectrum of Lebanese citizens. During the demonstrations and counter-demonstrations led by pro-Syrian and anti-Syrian factions starting in late 2006, the army carefully avoided taking sides, while keeping the two groups apart. The army's subsequent clashes with radical Palestinian groups exposed certain weaknesses on the part of the poorly equipped army units in their efforts to expel the Fatah al-Islam groups from the refugee camps; however, observers say that most Lebanese regardless of their affiliation have perceived the army as defending the country against foreign elements such as Palestinians and pro-Palestinian fighters. One experienced observer described the Lebanese army as "the only national institution left in the country" and went on to say that the army has "credibility and respect in the country."<sup>77</sup>

## Political Stalemate

From mid-2007 until recently, Lebanon's political environment has been paralyzed by a number of interrelated disagreements. Preparations for a September presidential election went ahead, but were mooted by Lebanese leaders inability to agree on a consensus Presidential candidate and subsequent wrangling over the

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<sup>75</sup> Al Absi's current whereabouts are unknown. After fighting ended in September 2007, his wife mistakenly identified a corpse as her husband Al Absi. Since then, there has been speculation that Al-Absi is in hiding under Syria protection.

<sup>76</sup> OSC Document - FEA20080610711190, "Leader of Fatah al-Islam Rallies Support of Sunnis in Lebanon Against Hizballah," June 9, 2008.

<sup>77</sup> Hassan M. Fattah, "Army Provides a Sense of Unity in Fractured Lebanon," *The New York Times*, June 20, 2007.

distribution of cabinet seats under potential candidate Michel Suleiman. Several U.N. reports engendered further interest in Lebanon during this period:

- The U.N. Secretary General's report on implementation of Resolution 1701. In his sixth report (February 2008), the Secretary General noted that "Israel maintains that Hezbollah is significantly rebuilding its military presence and capacity, inside UNIFIL's area of operations. At times the Israeli military has provided UNIFIL with information about locations in which it claims that these activities take place.... To date, UNIFIL has found no evidence of new military infrastructure in the area of operations." However, the Secretary General also noted that rocket firing emanating from southern Lebanon and attacks against UNIFIL indicate that there are still hostile elements and unauthorized arms, including in the area of operations, which undermine joint efforts to implement resolution 1701 (2006) and constitute a direct threat to peace and security.<sup>78</sup>
- Three further reports by the UNIIIC, submitted in July 2007,<sup>79</sup> November 2007,<sup>80</sup> and March 2008,<sup>81</sup> as described above.

**Presidential Succession.** A vote to elect a new president, originally set for September 25, was postponed until October 23, after members of parliament failed to agree on a consensus candidate and opposition deputies (Hezbollah and its allies) boycotted the balloting.<sup>82</sup> After October 22, the election was repeatedly delayed. Parties failed to agree on a consensus presidential candidate prior to the expiration of President Lahoud's term in November 2007. Army commander Michel Suleiman eventually emerged as a consensus presidential candidate; however, the 128-member parliament, which must elect a Maronite Christian president based on the unwritten 1943 National Covenant, postponed the election due to disputes between March 14 and the opposition over cabinet seats. Lebanon remained without a president for months. The constitution gave only limited guidance for such a contingency. Article 73 provides that parliament should be convened between one and two months before the expiration of an outgoing president's term for the purpose of electing a successor. Similarly, the constitution provides that if the presidency becomes vacant for any reason, parliament convenes to elect a successor. It does not, however, directly address the question of what happens if it proves impossible to convene parliament. In practice, on at least two occasions when this situation arose, an outgoing president appointed a caretaker prime minister to exercise the powers of the presidency until the prescribed electoral procedures could be implemented.

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<sup>78</sup> U.N. Security Council document S/2008/135, February 28, 2008.

<sup>79</sup> U.N. Document S/2007/424, dated July 12, 2007.

<sup>80</sup> U.N. Document S/2007/684, dated November 28, 2007.

<sup>81</sup> U.N. Document S/2008/210, dated March 28, 2008.

<sup>82</sup> "Foreign pressures help entrench political impasse in Beirut," *The Daily Star*, October 2, 2007.

The circumstances created an intricate set of possible outcomes and the issue of choosing a successor president remained mired in constitutional questions. Article 49 of the Lebanese Constitution requires a two-thirds majority vote in parliament to elect a new president on the first ballot but only requires a simple majority on subsequent ballots. In the past, this provision has led to complications and challenges. Recent debate centered on requirements for a quorum for a presidential election, with some constitutional scholars maintaining that attendance by two-thirds of the members of parliament was needed before elections could be held.<sup>83</sup> Some observers believed that opponents of an election (a category that appeared to include pro-Syrian groups) were behind recent assassinations of anti-Syrian Lebanese members of parliament in an effort to derail the elections or to shape their outcome by undermining the dwindling majority that the pro-Hariri bloc still enjoyed in parliament.<sup>84</sup>

**Parliamentary By-elections.** By-elections held on August 5, 2007, to elect replacements for the two parliamentary deputies assassinated in November 2006 and June 2007 had the potential to affect both the balance of power in the Lebanese parliament and the outcome of future presidential elections. The slain former members of parliament were both members of the anti-Syrian March 14 bloc headed by deputy Saad Hariri and Prime Minister Fouad Siniora. The winners of the by-elections, however, included one member of the March 14 bloc but also a member of General Aoun's group, which is loosely linked to the Hezbollah bloc. Consequently, Prime Minister Siniora's majority slipped incrementally from 72 to 71, while General Aoun's bloc has gained a seat (advancing from 21 to 22), thereby benefitting Aoun's semi-ally Hezbollah. Moreover the seat gained by Aoun's bloc was at the expense of former President Gemayel, who had contested one of the by-elections but lost his bid.

Some observers interpreted the election results as a victory for opponents of the March 14 bloc, particularly inasmuch as it entailed the defeat of a potential presidential candidate from the Hariri (March 14) bloc, but others thought the split results represented a draw.<sup>85</sup> Still others attributed the outcome to local issues, including rivalries between Gemayel supporters and the small Armenian Christian minority. The situation was further complicated by the subsequent assassination of another anti-Syrian deputy, Antoine Ghanem, a member of Amin Gemayel's Phalange Party, on September 19. As noted above, the Doha agreement and subsequent election of General Suleiman to the presidency represent a temporary solution to Lebanon's political disputes. The allocation of cabinet seats and the performance of the new Siniora government may be overshadowed by preparations for new parliamentary elections in 2009.

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<sup>83</sup> For further analysis, see "Lebanese constitution said 'vague' on outgoing president's last 10 days," BBC Monitoring Middle East, November 15, 2007.

<sup>84</sup> Nadra Bakri and Hassan M. Fattah, "Car Bomb Near Beirut Kills Christian Lawmaker," *The New York Times*, September 20, 2007; Nada Bakri, "In Lebanon, Staying Alive in Order to Preserve the Government," *The New York Times*, September 21, 2007.

<sup>85</sup> "Opposition wins seat in Lebanon," *The New York Times*, August 6, 2007; Alia Ibrahim, "In Lebanon Vote, Implications for the President," *The Washington Post*, August 6, 2007.

## Appendix A - U.S. Assistance to Lebanon (1946-2004)

**Table 3. U.S. Assistance to Lebanon (1946-2004)**  
(millions of dollars)

Year	Total	Economic Aid (Grants)	Food Aid (Grants)	Military Aid (Loans)	IMET (Grants)
1946 - 1980	332.7	120.2 <sup>a</sup>	86.2 <sup>b</sup>	123.3 <sup>c</sup>	3.0
1981	24.3	4.0	0	20.0	0.3
1982	21.8	9.0	2.2	10.0	0.6
1983	153.9	52.2	0	100.0	1.7
1984	44.0	28.1	0.3	15.0	0.6
1985	21.1	19.9	0.5	0	0.7
1986	17.6	16.0	1.1	0	0.5
1987	23.0	12.8	9.7	0	0.5
1988	12.3	5.1	6.8	0	0.4
1989	15.5	2.8	12.3	0	0.4
1990	19.4	8.3	10.7	0	0.4
1991	19.2	9.3	9.9	0	0
1992	16.4	9.2	7.2	0	0
1993	14.4	10.3	3.5	0	0.6
1994	2.0	1.7	0	0	0.3
1995	16.0	15.6 <sup>d</sup>	0	0	0.4
1996	2.5	2.0	0	0	0.5
1997	12.8	12.3	0	0	0.5
1998	12.6	12.0	0	0	0.6
1999	12.6	12.0	0	0	0.6
2000	15.6	15.0	0	0	0.6
2001	35.4	34.9	0	0	0.5
2002	35.6	35.0	0	0	0.6
2003	35.5	34.8	0	0	0.7
Totals	916.2	482.5	150.4	268.3	15

**Source:** U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants. Available at [<http://quesdb.usaid.gov/gbk/>].

IMET = International Military Education and Training

a. Of the \$120.2 million total, \$19 million was loans.

b. Of the \$86.2 million total, \$28.5 million was loans.

c. Of the \$123.3 million total, \$109.5 was loans and \$13.8 million was grants.

d. Includes about \$6 million from 1994.

## Appendix B

### Background on UNIIIC Proceedings

**UNIIIC Reports and Findings.** On August 30, a U.N. spokeswoman announced that three former heads of Lebanese intelligence agencies and a former Lebanese member of parliament had been identified as suspects in the assassination of Hariri. A subsequent press report describes the suspects as Syrian proxies with close ties to President Lahoud.<sup>86</sup> Tensions mounted as reports circulated that Syrian and Lebanese officials would be implicated in the findings of the Mehlis Commission. After encountering initial resistance from Syria, from September 20-23, members of the commission visited Damascus, where they interviewed senior Syrian military and security officials including the last two Syrian chiefs of intelligence in Lebanon, who were widely regarded as the effective viceroys of Lebanon during their respective tenures: Generals Rustom Ghazali and Ghazi Kanaan. Kanaan, who was reassigned to Syria in 2002 and appointed minister of the interior, apparently committed suicide in October 2005. Some observers speculate that Kanaan was killed or forced to commit suicide by Syrian authorities because of what he might reveal — or might have revealed — about Syrian involvement in the Hariri assassination or that he chose to take his own life because he feared that he would become the scapegoat for Syrian actions in Lebanon.

In actuality, however, Kanaan was not mentioned in the Commission's initial report of October 19, 2005 (commonly referred to as the 'Mehlis report').<sup>87</sup> Two central conclusions reached by the Commission deal with the question of culpability, although they do not constitute a conclusive finding:

It is the Commission's view that the assassination on 14 February 2005 was carried out by a group with an extensive organization and considerable resources and capabilities.

...[T]here is converging evidence pointing at both Lebanese and Syrian involvement in this terrorist act.... Given the infiltration of Lebanese institutions and society by the Syrian and Lebanese intelligence services working in tandem, it would be difficult to envisage a scenario whereby such a complex assassination plot could have been carried out without their knowledge.

The Commission report added that the investigation was not complete and called for further investigation; stated that Syrian authorities, including the foreign minister, while extending limited cooperation, provided some false or inaccurate information; and called on Syria to help clarify unresolved questions. Syrian officials, including President Bashar al-Asad, denied complicity in the Hariri assassination and maintain

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<sup>86</sup> Hassan M. Fatah, "Lebanon's President Facing Growing Pressure to Resign," *New York Times*, September 6, 2005. The press report lists the four as the current head of security, the former head of security, a former military intelligence chief, and a former chief of police.

<sup>87</sup> The 54-page report submitted by the Mehlis Commission represented four months of research in which Commission members interviewed more than 400 persons and reviewed 60,000 documents, identified several suspects, and established various leads.



that the report was biased. On October 29, President Asad said Syria has set up a commission to investigate the assassination.<sup>88</sup>

Questions have been raised regarding the apparent exclusions in the report of the names of suspects who had been identified in earlier drafts of the report. The principal example appears in Paragraph 96 (page 29) of the report, in which a witness told the Commission that in September 2004 “senior Lebanese and Syrian officials decided to assassinate Rafik Hariri” and held several follow-up meetings in Syria to plan the crime. An earlier version reportedly listed the names of five of the senior officers, including President Asad’s brother Maher al Asad and the President’s brother-in-law Asif Shawkat, chief of military intelligence and widely considered the second most powerful official in the regime.<sup>89</sup>

The 25-page document, described by one commentator as more conservative and less detailed than the Mehlis reports (*New York Times*, March 15, 2006), stated that “[t]he individuals who perpetrated this crime appear to be very ‘professional’ in their approach” and went on to say that “[i]t must be assumed that at least some of those involved were likely experienced in this type of terrorist activity” (Paragraph 33 of the Brammertz report).

Some reporters questioned whether or not the Commission chief Detlev Mehlis had come under pressure to make the report less accusatory. At a news conference on October 21, both Mehlis and Secretary-General Kofi Annan denied this; Mehlis went on to explain that he suppressed the names of the officers when he found out that the Commission’s report was to be made public, because he had only one anonymous source for the specific accusation.<sup>90</sup>

**Resolution 1636.** On October 31, 2005, the U.N. Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1636, which requires Syria to cooperate “fully and unconditionally” with the UNIIC investigation or face unspecified “further action.” By dropping a threat appearing in earlier drafts of specific economic sanctions, the sponsors of the resolution were able to attract support from Russia and China while leaving the door open to the imposition of sanctions at a later date. U.S. officials noted that the resolution was adopted under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, which gives the Council power to impose penalties, including use of military force.<sup>91</sup> After temporizing, Syria acceded to a request by UNIIC to make five Syrian officials available for questioning by the commission at U.N. offices in Vienna, Austria. The

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<sup>88</sup> Warren Hoge and Steven R. Weisman, “U.N. Is Expected to Pass Measure Pressuring Syria,” *New York Times*, October 31, 2005.

<sup>89</sup> Maher al Asad does not appear at all in the official copy of the report and Asif Shawkat appears only once (paragraph 178) when Shawkat allegedly forced an individual 45 days before the assassination to make a tape claiming responsibility for the crime, purportedly in an effort to hide Syrian or Lebanese complicity.

<sup>90</sup> Warren Hoge, “Bush Pushes U.N. to Move Swiftly on Syria Report,” *New York Times*, October 22, 2005.

<sup>91</sup> Warren Hoge, “U.N. Tells Syria to Stop Impeding Slaying Inquiry,” *New York Times*, November 1, 2005.

Syrians, whose names were not announced, were reportedly intelligence and security officials, including the former Syrian intelligence chief in Lebanon Rustom Ghazali; meetings took place from December 5 to 7. Meanwhile, further violence took place in Lebanon, with several attacks directed against Lebanese politicians and journalists opposed to the Syrian presence in Lebanon.

**The Mehlis Follow-On Report.** On December 12, UNIIIC submitted a follow-on report which states that “[t]he Commission’s conclusions set out in its previous report ... remain valid.”<sup>92</sup> Statements by two of the suspects indicated that all Syrian intelligence documents concerning Lebanon had been burned. Also, the head of a separate Syrian investigative commission informed the Mehlis Commission that no material regarding the Hariri assassination had been found in Syrian archives. The Mehlis follow-on report further expressed the view that Hussam, a witness who recanted his statement, “is being manipulated by the Syrian authorities.” The report stated that “[t]he detailed information [from the additional statements and documents reviewed by the commission] points directly at perpetrators, sponsors and organizers of an organized operation aiming at killing Mr. Hariri, including the recruitment of special agents by the Lebanese and Syrian intelligence services.”

**Resolutions 1644 and 1664.** On December 15, 2005, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1644, which extended the mandate of the Independent Commission for six months until June 15, 2006, as recommended by the Commission, and requested the Commission to report on its progress at three-month intervals. The Council acknowledged a Lebanese request that suspects be tried by “a tribunal of an international character” and asked the Secretary General to help the Lebanese government identify the nature of such a tribunal (Paragraph 6). The Council also requested the Secretary General to present recommendations to expand the Commission’s mandate to include investigations of other attacks on Lebanese figures (Paragraph 7). In a subsequent Resolution 1664 adopted on March 29, 2006, the Council requested the Secretary General to negotiate an agreement with the government of Lebanon aimed at establishing the requested tribunal. (See The Tribunal/Resolution 1757, below.) Meanwhile, Mehlis, who wanted to return to his post in Germany, stepped down as Commission chairman in early January 2006 and was replaced by Serge Brammertz, a Belgian prosecutor serving with the International Criminal Court.

**Brammertz Progress Reports.** On March 14, 2006, Brammertz released his first progress report to the U.N. Security Council (the third progress report by the Commission, counting the two released by Mehlis). The 25-page document, described by one commentator as more conservative and less detailed than the Mehlis reports (*New York Times*, March 15, 2006), stated that “[t]he individuals who perpetrated this crime appear to be very ‘professional’ in their approach” and went on to say that “[i]t must be assumed that at least some of those involved were likely experienced in this type of terrorist activity” (Paragraph 33 of the Brammertz report). Syrian spokesmen put a positive interpretation on the report, saying that it “was

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<sup>92</sup> According to the follow-on report, the Commission interviewed additional witnesses (for a total of 500 as of December 12), identified 19 suspects (reportedly including the five Syrian officers interviewed in Vienna), and reviewed additional documentation.

realistic and has a lot of professionalism.” President Asad, who had temporized for several months over the Commission’s demand for an interview, agreed to meet Brammertz under a deal that will give the Commission access to individuals, sites, and information, including the head of state (Paragraphs 91-95). Pursuant to these understandings, news media reported that Brammertz met with the Syrian president and vice president in Damascus on April 25; however, the news reports did not give details on the course of the meetings. Earlier, U.S. State Department spokesman J. Adam Ereli told a news briefing audience on March 15 that “we support the work of Investigator Brammertz. He’s continuing the important and invaluable work of his predecessor, Mr. Mehlis.”

Brammertz released his *second* progress report (the *fourth* progress report by the Commission) to the U.N. Security Council on June 14, 2006. Like its predecessor, the June 10 report did not name suspects; however, it described the crime as “a targeted assassination.” Brammertz said the level of assistance provided by Syria to the Commission during the reporting period “has generally been satisfactory,” with that country responding to all requests in a timely manner. Brammertz welcomed and endorsed the request of the Lebanese government for a one-year extension of the Commission’s mandate. On June 15, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1686, which extended the Commission’s mandate until June 14, 2007 and supported the extension of the Commission’s mandate to offer further technical assistance to Lebanese investigation of other possibly related assassinations during the last two years.

Brammertz completed his *third* progress report (the *fifth* progress report by the Commission) on September 25, 2006. The 22-page report is largely technical in nature and deals mainly with three main issues: continuing work related to the crime scene; broadening knowledge and evidence of possible linkages; and developing new projects and leads (Paragraph 9). In his report, Brammertz said that cooperation from Syria “remained generally satisfactory” (Paragraphs 6 and 82) and noted that the commission has received “ongoing strong support” from Lebanese authorities, even during the July-August 2006 fighting described below (Paragraph 2).<sup>93</sup>

In his *fourth* progress report (*sixth* report by the Commission), submitted on December 12, Brammertz stated that the investigation into the Hariri assassination “is approaching a sensitive and complicated phase” that requires confidentiality in order to create a secure environment in which witnesses and staff will be able to carry out their functions (Paragraph 115). Without naming names, Brammertz added that the investigation is bringing to light “significant links” between the Hariri case and 14 other cases involving attacks or assassinations (Paragraph 116) that have occurred in Lebanon since October 2004. Again, the report noted that the “level of assistance provided by the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period remains generally satisfactory” (Paragraph 101).<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> The report is U.N. Document S/2006/760, dated September 25, 2006. See also Warren Hoge, “U.N. Inquiry Into Death of Lebanon’s Ex-Premier Focuses on Killers,” *New York Times*, September 26, 2006.

<sup>94</sup> The report is U.N. Document S/2006/962, dated December 12, 2006.

In his *fifth* progress report (*seventh* by the Commission), submitted on March 15, 2007, Brammertz noted in his summary that “the Commission has made progress in collecting new evidence and in expanding the forms of evidence collected,” but did not specifically identify a perpetrator. He pointed to close cooperation with Lebanese authorities (Paragraphs 91-94), and said the cooperation with Syria “remains generally satisfactory,” while commenting that responses by interviewees “can be characterized as variable in quality on occasion.” (Paragraphs 95-98) Brammertz recalled that in his previous report (December 12, 2006) he had noted requests from information from ten unidentified other states were overdue, but added that as of the current report, “almost 11 outstanding matters were resolved.” (Paragraphs 99-102) In his conclusion, Brammertz anticipated that the Commission will need more time to complete its work and welcomed the request of the Lebanese government on February 21 for an extension of the Commission’s mandate beyond its then-current expiration date of June 15, 2007 (Paragraph 118; also in the U.N. Secretary General’s forwarding letter).<sup>95</sup> Pursuant to this recommendation, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1748 on March 27, 2007, which extended the Commission’s mandate until June 15, 2008, and changed the frequency of the Commission’s reports from three to four months. (See below.)

In his *sixth* progress report (*eighth* by the Commission), submitted on July 12, 2007, “the Commission has identified a number of persons of particular interest who may have been involved in some aspects of the preparation or commission of the crime or could have had prior knowledge that such a plan was under way.” (Paragraph 55.) Brammertz, however, has not named any suspects so far.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> This report is U.N. Document S/2007/150, dated March 15, 2007.

<sup>96</sup> This report is U.N. Document S/2007/424, dated July 12, 2007.

## Appendix C

### Text of the Doha Agreement on the Results of the Lebanese National Dialogue Conference<sup>97</sup>

“Upon the kind invitation of His Highness Shaykh Hamad Bin-Khalifah Al Thani, amir of the State of Qatar, and pursuant to the efforts undertaken by the Arab ministerial committee in charge of addressing the Lebanese crisis, led by His Excellency Shaykh Hamad Bin-Jasim Bin-Jabr Al Thani, Qatari prime minister and minister of foreign affairs; Amr Musa, secretary general of the Arab League; and their excellencies the foreign ministers of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Republic of Djibouti, the Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of Morocco, and the Republic of Yemen, the Lebanese National Dialogue Conference was held in Doha from 16 to 21 May 2008 on the basis of the Arab initiative to solve the Lebanese crisis and the agreement reached among the Lebanese parties under the patronage of the Arab ministerial committee in Beirut on 15 May 2008 — an agreement which is an inseparable part of this declaration.

The Lebanese political leaders and members of the National Dialogue Conference attended the conference. They stressed their desire to salvage Lebanon, solve the current political crisis, and put an end to its serious repercussions on the formula of coexistence and civil peace among the Lebanese. They also stressed their commitment to the Lebanese constitution and Al-Ta’if Agreement. As a result of the work done and the bilateral and collective consultations and meetings the chairman and members of the Arab Ministerial Committee held with all parties participating in this conference, agreement has been reached on the following:

**First:** The parties agreed that the speaker of the Chamber of Deputies shall call the Lebanese parliament into session in accordance with the observed regulations within 24 hours in order to elect consensus candidate General Imad Michel Suleiman as president of the republic. This is the most ideal constitutional method to elect a president under the current exceptional circumstances.

**Second:** The formation of a 30-member national unity cabinet as follows: 16 ministers for the majority, 11 for the opposition, and three for the president. In accordance with this agreement, all parties pledge not to resign or obstruct the work of the government.

**Third:** The district-as-constituency system shall be adopted in Lebanon in accordance with the 1960 Law provided that Marj Uyun and Hasbayya Districts remain one constituency, Ba’labakk and al-Hirmil Districts remain one constituency, and western Al-Biqa and Rashayya Districts remain one constituency. With regard to Beirut, it will be divided as follows: The first constituency: Al-Ashrafiyah, Al-Rumayl, and Al-Sayfi. The second constituency: Al-Bashurah, Al-Mudawwar,

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<sup>97</sup> Text as read by Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Shaykh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al Thani, OSC Document - GMP20080521617001, “Lebanese Leaders Reach Agreement To End Lebanese Political Crisis,” May 21, 2008.

and Al-Marfa. The third constituency: Mina al-Husn, Ayn al-Muraysah, Al-Mazra'ah, Al-Musaytibah, Ra's Beirut, and Zuqaq al-Balat.

Agreement has been reached to refer to the Chamber of Deputies the reform clauses as stated in the law prepared by the national committee in charge of drafting an elections law, led by Minister Fu'ad Butrus, for study and discussion in accordance with the valid regulations.

**Fourth:** Implementation of the abovementioned Beirut agreement, especially paragraphs 4 and 5, which state the following:

1. The parties pledge to refrain from using weapons or violence again with the aim of achieving political gains. [Paragraph 4]

2. The parties agree to launch dialogue to enhance the authority of the Lebanese state over all its territories and its relationship with the various organizations in Lebanon in a manner that ensures the security of the state and citizens. [Paragraph 5]

Accordingly, dialogue was launched in Doha to enhance the authority of the state in accordance with paragraph 5 of the Beirut agreement. Agreement has been reached on the following:

1. Banning resort to arms or violence when differences emerge regardless of the nature of these differences and under any circumstances whatsoever. This will prevent any departure from the national partnership contract, which is based on the Lebanese people's determination to live together within the framework of a democratic system. It will also restrict security and military authority over the Lebanese people and residents to the state in a manner that guarantees the continuation of the formula of coexistence and civil peace among all the Lebanese. The parties pledge to respect this.

2. Implementing the law, respecting the sovereignty of the state in all Lebanese areas so that there will be no areas in which fugitives of justice take shelter, respecting the sovereignty of law; and referring to Lebanese justice anyone who commits a crime or a violation.

This dialogue shall resume under the chairmanship of the president of the republic as soon as he is elected and a national unity government shall be formed with the help of the Arab League in a manner that enhances confidence among the Lebanese.

**Fifth:** Reaffirming the Lebanese political leaders' commitment to immediately stop charging others with treason or engaging in political or sectarian incitement. The Arab ministerial committee shall deposit this agreement with the General Secretariat of the Arab League as soon as it is signed.

The Lebanese political leaders participating in the conference signed this agreement in Doha on 21 May 2008 in the presence of the chairman and members of the Arab ministerial committee."