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# al-janoub

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**UNIFIL**  
magazine



## Staying the Course

Major-General Serra takes charge



“We shall continuously strive to strengthen our ties of friendship and cooperation with Lebanese Navy - UNIFIL Maritime Task Force Commander Rear Admiral Wagner Lopes de Moraes Zamith (Brazil), who took over command 25 February 2012.

# Staying the course under a new Commander

On 28 January Major-General Paolo Serra assumed command of UNIFIL. Often change in top leadership is associated with change in the direction of the organisation. In the case of UNIFIL, however, this does not apply in the same measure, as Major-General Serra emphasised at the outset: Commanders change, but UNIFIL's mandate remains the same [see special feature on page 9].

This underlying 'continuity' and 'universality' of mandate applies not only at the top, but also down the line and across the 37 different national military contingents as well as civilians, international and Lebanese, serving in UNIFIL.

From 1978, when the Mission was first established, until 2006 UNIFIL had a mandate defined in UN Security Council resolutions 425 and 426. In August 2006, resolution 1701 assigned additional tasks to UNIFIL. This has since remained UNIFIL's mandate and will not change except by a decision of the UN Security Council.

Every single member of UNIFIL, civilian or military, is bound by this mandate. All the troops deployed with UNIFIL, from whichever country they might be, are under UN command. This command is exercised on the ground by the UNIFIL Force Commander who is accountable to the UN Secretary-General.

Within the overall strength of about 12,000 troops, the composition of UNIFIL changes constantly. This often goes unnoticed by the public, except when there is a major visible change: when a country withdraws its troops or a new country joins UNIFIL, or when there is a significant increase or decrease of troop numbers from a national contingent. When this happens, speculations abound on what would be the implications for UNIFIL's mission.

Such concerns are unfounded. The deployment of troops and assets from different countries in UNIFIL, as in all other peacekeeping missions, is a fluid process. When deploying to a peacekeeping mission, each troop contributing country agrees contractual arrangements with the United Nations, and retains the right to withdraw its troops as required. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations is in constant contact with the countries to work out their respective peacekeeping assignments.

What is important is that during the routine changes in the composition of troops from different contributing countries, it is ensured that UNIFIL's overall troop presence is maintained so that UNIFIL retains its operational capability on the ground to adequately perform its mandated tasks.

UNIFIL's relations with the Lebanese Government have remained consistent through these changes and our strategic partnership with the Lebanese Armed Forces has continued to grow from strength to strength.

These fundamentals of UNIFIL's mission – the mandate, the rules of engagement and the way UNIFIL operates – are constants that do not change with rotation of troops or transfer of command at any level. Given the strategic importance of the role UNIFIL plays in southern Lebanon, there is merit in such consistency and continuity.

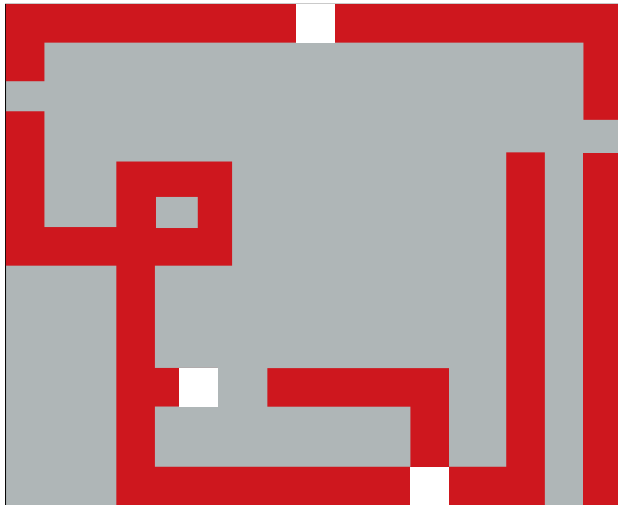
At the same time, positive change is necessary. A number of changes relate to the required adjustments in UNIFIL's composition in light of progress in mandate implementation and changing circumstances on the ground. For example, certain engineering capabilities that were required for building infrastructure during the expansion of the Mission since 2006 are no longer required on the same scale. On the other hand, demining capability has been increased to meet greater mine clearance needs along the Blue Line with the ongoing visible marking process. Again, a priority has been to enhance the mobility and quick-reaction capability of UNIFIL forces.

Such redeployment of military capabilities was undertaken following a Technical Review of UNIFIL in 2009. Further changes are in the offing following the just concluded military capability study and Strategic Review of UNIFIL [see page 10-11]. In the end, it is about enhancing UNIFIL's operational effectiveness by ensuring the Mission is configured most appropriately to fulfil its mandated tasks.

Most notably, any change in UNIFIL is done through a transparent and consultative process involving the troop contributing countries, other UN member states and, above all, the Government of Lebanon as the host that has requested UNIFIL's deployment. Ultimately, any significant change in the Mission must have the approval of the UN Security Council.

**Neeraj Singh**  
Editor-in-Chief

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### **Disclaimer**

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**Medical assistance to El Adeisse**



UNIFIL's Force Commander Reserve offered resources and expertise to the medical polyclinic in El Adeisse as part of its assistance to the local community. A ceremony was held for the occasion at the polyclinic during which a UNIFIL French medical team handed medical supplies to the clinic director, Hassan Fakh, and examined a number of patients, prescribing them the appropriate medication.

**Irish vs. Lebanon - in Rugby**



The Irish showed their true colours - in Rugby, that is, against Lebanon's national team. A match between UNIFIL's Irish Battalion and the National Lebanese Rugby Federation team in Tyre on 10 February displayed some competitive Rugby. IRISHBATT team ended up winning, and afterwards exchanged plaques and memorabilia with the Lebanese team.

**Italian art classes for Majdal Zun**

UNIFIL's Italian CIMIC inaugurated a painting and drawing classroom in the school of Majdal Zun in Tyre district. School Director Nawaf Harmoush, at a ceremony organized by the school for the occasion, lauded the UNIFIL Italian Battalion for its role in maintaining stability and security in the south.

**Veterinary campaign to protect livestock**

UNIFIL's Italian battalion began a veterinary campaign to look after livestock in communities in its area of responsibility. Lieutenant-Colonel Dr. Alfonso Ingrizani led the campaign in Shama, vaccinating livestock with IVERMECTINA, that protects from diseases and increases milk production.

**Science lab for Tyre school**



UNIFIL's South Korean Battalion presented a fully equipped science laboratory to the "Martyr Mohammad Saad High School" in Tyre. Contingent Commander Colonel Ha Jong Sik said on the occasion that the South Korean Battalion has embarked on a number of projects to support and develop schools and students.

**Containers delivered to Qantara**

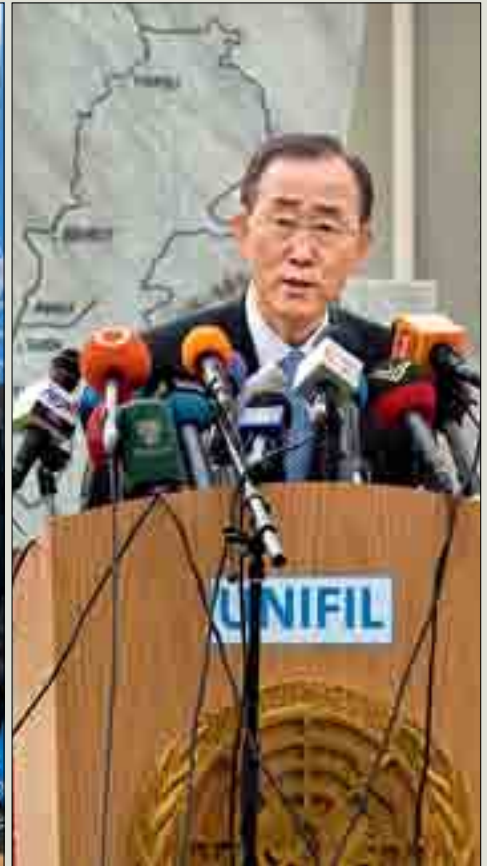


UNIFIL's Spanish Battalion provided 150 trash containers to the town of Qantara in Marjayoun district. The containers were presented during a ceremony attended by UNIFIL's Sector East Commander, Brig.-Gen. Fernando Guierrez Diaz De Otazu, and Mayor Abdul Hamid Ghazi.



# SG visits UNIFIL; sacrifices and contributions of peacekeepers highlighted

“A Lebanese woman from the south once said, I quote, ‘If I am alive today, it is because of UNIFIL.’ End of quote. I am sure she is not the only one who could pay such eloquent testimony to the value of the mission.”



With these words, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon summed up his appreciation of the work undertaken by UNIFIL peacekeepers in southern Lebanon.

“Each of you makes a difference for the people of Lebanon,” he said, in an address at a ceremony at UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura on 14 January 2012. The Secretary-General underlined the contribution of the peacekeepers to the peace and stability that southern Lebanon has witnessed in the last five years.

During his brief visit, the Secretary-General inspected a Guard of Honour representing various contingents from UNIFIL’s 37 troop-contributing countries. He laid a wreath at the Cenotaph and observed a minute of silence in memory of the 293 peacekeepers who gave their lives in the service of peace in southern Lebanon. He also undertook a brief tour by helicopter of the Line of Withdrawal (Blue Line) and was briefed by senior UNIFIL officials about the Mission and its operations.

“UNIFIL is one of the oldest United Nations peacekeeping missions. It is one of the most prominent in terms of strength and resources. Most importantly, UNIFIL is playing a major role in bringing peace to this troubled region and our world,” the Secretary-General pointed out.

Then he especially singled out the sacrifices of its members since the Mission was established in 1978.

“Members of UNIFIL risk their lives to rescue others. You have been attacked, again and again. This is an appalling injustice. It is a tragedy for the affected families, for the people of Lebanon, and for the United Nations,” he said. “Today, we pay tribute to the brave individuals who came to Lebanon to bring peace but were never able to return to their families.”

“I also honour many personnel who have been injured in the line of duty,” he added.

In his speech, the Secretary-General stressed that the safety of UNIFIL personnel was “critically important” and that he had called on government officials during his meetings to strengthen protection for UNIFIL.

More UNIFIL personnel lost their lives than in any other UN peacekeeping operations, he said. “This weighs heavily on my heart.”

He noted the strong partnership with the Lebanese Armed Forces to maintain peace and stability and said UNIFIL’s confidence-building role is “creating space

**“UNIFIL is playing a major role in bringing peace to this troubled region and our world”**

**UN Secretary-General**

in which the parties can seek a long-term solution to the conflict.”

The Secretary-General last visited UNIFIL in January 2009. This is his third visit to the Mission. Deployed to southern Lebanon in 1978, UNIFIL currently has about 12,000 soldiers from 37 countries. UNIFIL’s Maritime Task Force, the first in a UN peacekeeping mission, currently comprises nine ships patrolling Lebanese waters. In addition, UNIFIL has about 700 national and 300 international civilian staff members.

**Samir F. Ghattas** UNIFIL Public Information



Taking over the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) as Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major-General Paolo Serra left no doubt to anyone about his unequivocal commitment to the Mission and its mandate under UN Security Council resolution 1701.



# New Force Commander “I will give my best”

Major-General Paolo Serra

“What will be the key elements of continued UNIFIL success? The answer lies in the continued commitment of all the parties to the cessation of hostilities and full respect of the resolution 1701,” the new Force Commander said.

He was addressing peacekeepers, Lebanese officials, dignitaries, diplomats and military officers at the Transfer of Authority ceremonial parade at UNIFIL Headquarters in Naqoura on 28 January 2012.

“Rest assured that I will give my best, my complete commitment, to continue this joint effort to bring peace and stability to the region,” Major-General Serra said. He underlined continuity of the mission despite leadership changes.

“What will change in UNIFIL? What will change is just the Commander. The mandate remains the same as laid down by the Security Council in resolution 1701,” he said. Major-General Serra of Italy, who replaced Major-General Alberto Asarta Cuevas of Spain, is the 13th Force Commander since the Mission was established in 1978.

UNIFIL's close cooperation and coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) is a cornerstone of UNIFIL's activities in southern Lebanon and a key element in the implementation of its mandate. Major-General Serra announced that he was fully committed to working with the LAF, promising to further enhance that relationship.

“I would like to underline the importance I attach to further developing our strategic partnership with LAF that must continue in order to achieve the common goal of peace and stability,” he said.

Going into some specifics, the new Force Commander added: “The respect for the Blue Line by the parties and their cooperation in UNIFIL's efforts to further the visible marking of the Blue Line is a process that can support the improving of the general security for the people of southern Lebanon who welcomed and host us here.”



The hand-over ceremony at UNIFIL Headquarters in Naqoura was attended among others by the Lebanese Defence Minister Mr. Fayez Ghosn representing the President and Prime Minister of Lebanon, Member of Parliament Mr. Ali Bazzi representing the Parliament Speaker, LAF Commander General Jean Kahwagi, Director-General of the General Security Major-General Abbas Ibrahim, the Italian Minister of Defence, Mr. Giampaolo Di Paola, the Italian Deputy Foreign Minister Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Spanish and Italian Chiefs of Defence Staff Admiral Fernando García Sánchez and General Biagio Abrate, Deputy Commander of the French Army Operations Command Lt. Gen. Didier Castres, Deputy Commander Bundeswehr Operations Command Major-General Wolf-Dietrich Kriesel (Germany), Members of Lebanese Parliament, senior officers of the Lebanese Armed Forces, Internal Security Forces, General Security and State Security, regional and local government officials, Ambassadors and senior UN officials.

The Lebanese Defence Minister, on behalf of President Michel Sleiman, awarded

Major-General Asarta ‘The National Order of the Cedar – Commander Grade’.

In his farewell speech, Major-General Asarta looked back at his two years of service in UNIFIL. “The cessation of hostilities and respect for the Blue Line have generally been upheld by the parties,” he said, adding that UNIFIL has played and will continue to play an important role in this regard and in preventing any incidents from escalating.

He added: “Working in close partnership with UNIFIL, [the Lebanese Armed Forces] demonstrated, time and again, and despite constraints faced, its professionalism and outstanding commitment to fulfill resolution 1701.”

Major-General Asarta pointed to the “enduring bond” between UNIFIL and the people of southern Lebanon. “Over the past two years, our relationship acquired ever new forms of interaction and we made every effort to gain the understanding and support of the local population, so vital for the fulfillment of our tasks,” he said.

**Samir F. Ghattas** UNIFIL Public Information



**Milos Strugar**

# Strategic Review of UNIFIL: the way forward

In August 2011, while extending UNIFIL's mandate for one more year, the UN Security Council requested the Secretary-General to conduct a Strategic Review of UNIFIL in order to ensure that the Mission is configured most appropriately to fulfil its mandated tasks.

To conduct the Review, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) appointed a multi-disciplinary team under the leadership of an independent expert, Mr. Julian Harston, a former UN Assistant Secretary-General with long years of experience in UN peacekeeping. The findings and recommendations of the Strategic Review – based on wide consultations with the Security Council members, the troop-contributing countries and the parties as well as a comprehensive Military Capability Study of UNIFIL – were approved by the Under-Secretary-General of Peacekeeping Operations and conveyed by the Secretary-General to the Security Council in March 2012.

It was not a review of UNIFIL's mandate, authorized strength or rules of engagement. Rather, taking into account the progress made in the last five years and changing circumstances on the ground, it was a strategic assessment of the best way forward to address the challenges that remain in the implementation of UNIFIL's mandate and, importantly, in this process look at ways to further the overarching goal of UN Security Council resolution 1701 for lasting peace in southern Lebanon.

The Strategic Review recognized that UNIFIL has effectively contributed to the parties' continued commitment to the cessation of hostilities under resolution 1701. However, the root causes of the conflict remain largely unaddressed. UNIFIL does not have the mandate or the tools to tackle this. However, by providing a strong deterrence to the resumption of hostilities it has laid the foundation for building a process that can achieve

a permanent ceasefire and long-term solution as envisaged in resolution 1701, an opportunity that the parties must take advantage of.

To this end, the Strategic Review looked at how UNIFIL's achievements could be safeguarded and its strengths capitalized on to further the implementation of resolution 1701.

It identified three strategic priorities for UNIFIL:

First, establish an integrated comprehensive approach to the implementation of resolution 1701, prioritize United Nations goals and ensure better integration between UNIFIL, the Office of the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL) and the UN Country Team.

Second, further involve the Government of Lebanon in the implementation of resolution 1701 in particular through seeking to increase its involvement and that of its ministries and security institutions in southern Lebanon.

Third, increase the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), not only as a pre-requisite for the gradual assumption of effective and sustainable security control of the UNIFIL area of operations and Lebanese territorial waters, but also as a key element to support moves towards a permanent ceasefire.

In light of these priorities the Strategic Review also made a number of key recommendations, particularly with respect to the following aspects of

UNIFIL's work: liaison and coordination with the parties; the tripartite mechanism; strategic dialogue with the LAF; and operational activities.

## **Liaison, Coordination and the Tripartite mechanism**

Through its daily liaison with the parties and the tripartite mechanism, UNIFIL has had notable success in preventing incidents, diffusing tensions and taking a number of confidence-building initiatives with the parties including the Blue Line marking process and security arrangements for sensitive areas along the Blue Line.

These mechanisms must be further developed, particularly for times of crises so that there is no escalation in case of an incident. UNIFIL must continue efforts to promote arrangements and pragmatic localized understandings with the parties to further stabilize the situation along the Blue Line, remove possible points of friction and prevent future incidents.

The tripartite forum has proved to be a vital tool in this endeavour. UNIFIL will examine the possibility of further strengthening the tripartite mechanism with the necessary flexibility to be able to discuss a wider range of issues at the request of the parties and, if deemed appropriate and acceptable by the parties, establish additional tri-partite sub-committees to focus on particular issues.

As the process for visible marking of the Blue Line progresses, contentious points will have to be addressed. The Review recommends a flexible approach where UNIFIL should seek agreement



with both the parties either to mark a location or to reach an understanding on the rules of engagement and security arrangements.

### Strategic Dialogue

The UNIFIL-LAF Strategic Dialogue process is identified as a vital necessity to strengthen not only the capacity of the LAF, but also as a means to enable the LAF to move towards a permanent ceasefire.

To ensure a comprehensive approach and support to the Strategic Dialogue mechanism, the Review recommends the establishment of a coordination mechanism between UNIFIL, the LAF, the Government of Lebanon at large and international donors.

In this process, UNIFIL will also work closely with UNSCOL, the UN Agencies in Lebanon and international partners including UNIFIL's troop-contributing countries in exploring the possibility to equip, train and provide assistance to LAF in order to enable it to fulfil its mandated tasks under resolution 1701.

### Operational Activities

In advancing the objectives of resolution 1701, the effectiveness and impact of UNIFIL's operations on the ground are contingent on a number of factors, mainly in three broad areas:

UNIFIL's freedom of movement, which is critical for the success of the Mission, must be upheld in full measure.

UNIFIL's relations with the people of south Lebanon is an important priority. This requires ever greater engagement between peacekeepers and the local communities, better cultural awareness among troops as well as outreach initiatives to inform the people about UNIFIL's activities and properly address their related concerns. To this end, the Review recommends that UNIFIL should reinforce its Civil Affairs capacity particularly by employing more Lebanese staff for this purpose.

At the same time, it is important for UNIFIL to prioritise tasks that contribute directly to mandate implementation by enhancing its coordinated activities

with LAF while maintaining also its independent operations. This was assessed by a comprehensive Military Capability Study that looked into the capability, deployment and configuration of UNIFIL's land and maritime forces. The Strategic Review also recommended that UNIFIL take greater advantage of the added value of UNTSO Observer Group Lebanon (OGL) military observers and utilize them for specific functions under the UNIFIL mandate.

These are very important recommendations that should help optimize the considerable human and material resources within UNIFIL, the larger UN presence in the country, Lebanese State institutions particularly our strategic partners in the LAF, as well as the international community including UNIFIL's troop-contributing countries. All this for further strengthening the credentials of the cessation of hostilities and moving towards a permanent ceasefire and long term solution envisaged in resolution 1701.

# Southerners partake in

Nadia Awada and Zouhair Arnaout had dreams about their south Lebanon homeland, and both their dreams had come true. Nadia is owner of a three-star hotel in Naqoura and Zouhair is building a seaside resort in Bayyada up the Mediterranean coast. The area is just a few kilometers from the Blue Line. Yet, the two Lebanese see the stability provided by the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL's deployment in south Lebanon as enough guarantee to invest millions of dollars in a region that has long been at the forefront of the Arab-Israeli conflict and forgotten by many in Lebanon.

Since the 2006 war, the south has witnessed a major reconstruction effort. It was not only confined to rebuilding damaged residences and houses of worship or repairing a wrecked infrastructure in UNIFIL's Area of Operation south of the Litani River. The reconstruction also attracted unique and large investment projects unseen in the region for decades, and there is consensus among investors that UNIFIL's presence was the prime reason that encouraged them to spend millions of dollars.

Mrs. Awada, a 51-year-old woman from the seaside fishing village of Naqoura, is one of those investors. Together with her Greek Cypriot husband, a former UNIFIL staff member, they embarked on fulfilling their dream of having a hotel in her hometown. The idea came up in 2000 after the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon, which reconnected Naqoura and surrounding areas with the rest of Lebanon. But the 2006 war put the plan on hold, only to be revived after the robust deployment of an expanded UNIFIL under resolution 1701 (2006).

Today, the Hotel Cyprianna stands out amid the banana groves off the coast near the UNIFIL Headquarters in Naqoura.

"We named this small hotel, Cyprianna, a mix between my husband's nationality and the name of my eldest daughter," Mrs. Awada said.

The three-star, stone-walled hotel cost about 5 million dollars. It began welcoming guests about a year ago. Built on 4,000 square metres of land, the hotel has 26 rooms, a swimming pool, a restaurant, a dining hall and a garden.



UNIFIL's presence in Naqoura prompted the idea to build the hotel, she told *'Al Janoub'* in an interview, adding that her husband was very much in favour. "We could see how the international soldiers and civilian personals had to go all the way down to Tyr to find basic entertainment features, so why not provide it to them over here."

Mrs. Awada's relationship with UNIFIL dates back to the mid-1980s. Her husband, a Greek Cypriot engineer, joined the force since its deployment in 1978. Soon after the deployment, shops and restaurants sprung up next to the UNIFIL Headquarters in Naqoura to provide services to the troops and civilians working there. One day in 1986, he

was struck by Nadia and started frequenting her parents' store, "buying different clothes, regardless of their color, style or size" only so he could see her, Mrs. Awada recalls. They overcame the religious, national and cultural obstacles, marrying a year later.

The couple went through the difficulties of when the area was under occupation. Mrs. Awada had to relocate with her three children to Beirut where schools were available while her husband remained behind in Naqoura.

"Years passed as we lived apart, up until the Israeli withdrawal in 2000," she said. "As stability set in, I had a dream to build a hotel in a town that lacked this sort of projects."

# economic development

So far, the return from her “dream” is good and the accomplished results encouraged her to develop the project further. “The results were extremely positive,” she added.

And upon asking her, what if a war was to erupt, she replies: “Having the UNIFIL at such a close range makes us feel safe, and we consider their presence amongst us a comfort factor.” In retrospect, she added: “Even if a war was to erupt, what’s the difference between an investment in Naqoura and any other place? We have seen what happened in the 2006 war, and how places in northern and eastern Lebanon, and in the capital were bombed. So we count on God and UNIFIL for our safety.”

Mrs. Awada’s circumstances are an ocean apart from those of Zouhair Arnaout, who returned from America to build his dream resort in south Lebanon. Yet, both agree on counting on the stability and security that prevails in the area.

“The project aims at helping people to forget the war and its problems, thus developing their own hope in peace,” Mr. Arnaout said in an interview with *‘Al-Janoub’* about his resort at Bayyada. “That is a small contribution on my part to building peace and stability in the area.”

The presence of UNIFIL, with so many nationalities mingling with the people of the south, encouraged him to forge ahead with the project. “This is the kind of picture I love for my country to reflect: a place for everyone,” he added.

Mr. Arnaout, 63, worked as a mechanic and left his native Tyr in 1984. He started a successful workshop in the San Francisco area of California. But his love for his country proved to be insurmountable. He returned to Tyr in 2002 although his three children live and work in the United States.

The resort at Bayyada, on the coast between Tyr and Naqoura, is being built on 7,000 square metres of land. It encompasses 32 chalets, a restaurant, a terrace and wedding and party areas as well as a swimming pool for those who do not wish to use the 300 metres of sandy and rocky beach.

Overall cost of construction is expected to exceed 5 million dollars, not counting the price of the land. It will take two years to complete the project in three stages.

Asked if he fears an outbreak of war, Mr. Arnaout, who also owns the TYROS seafront restaurant in Tyr, agrees with Mrs. Awada, the hotelier, that the geographical location is not an impediment.

“I m a business man, a gambler in a way, and who doesn’t gamble doesn’t profit. And anyways, there isn’t any business safe from any war catastrophe no matter the geography,” he said.

He used the opportunity to urge Lebanese authorities and influential forces to assist in accomplishing tourism and entertainment projects for the welfare of the people.

**Sultan Sleiman** UNIFIL Civil Affairs

## Water is scarce in the south, particularly in communities where the people rely on ponds to collect rain water or have to dig deep for wells to draw fresh water. So it was befitting for UNIFIL to assist in water conservation

In collaboration with the Association of the Friends of Ibrahim Abd El Al (AFIAL), the Lebanese Centre for Water Management and Conservation (LCWMC) and local authorities, UNIFIL's Civil Affairs office embarked on a water awareness campaign targeting intermediate high schools of the south, initially along the Blue Line and subsequently across the region.

The main objectives of the campaign are to raise public awareness on conservation and protection of water resources; educate and instill in the young people new habits and behaviours aimed at preserving water resources; and ultimately promote the participation of the young generation in eco-friendly activities aimed at promoting conservation, protection and prudent use of water resources.

The head of Tyre Union of Municipalities, Mr. Abd El Muhssen Al Hussein, highlighted the pressing need for such a campaign.

We must increase awareness in schools on how to use water sparingly so that there is enough for everyone to share this precious resource," he said at the launching of the campaign on 8 December 2011.

By the end of February 2012, 16 public intermediate schools with more than 1,000 students were covered in the south by the campaign. During the awareness sessions, a presentation on water, its availability, challenges in water conservation and steps in protection of this resource, was made by AFIAL. A brochure providing practical hints on protection and conservation of water was distributed to students. The students were urged to think of water as their right and disseminate the message regarding the value of water to people around them.

Mayors and Directors of the concerned Public Intermediate Schools in Tyre, Bint Jbeil, Marjayoun and Hasbaya districts, have all wholeheartedly welcomed the initiative and have extended their complete support and cooperation to ensure the success of the campaign.

The Mayor of Bint Jbeil, Mr. Afif Bazzi, welcomed the initiative, calling it a laudable effort and a much needed initiative considering the severe water shortages that the south particularly faces.

In the 2006 war, numerous water supply systems and reservoirs were destroyed in Bint Jbeil. The poor condition of the country's infrastructure led to further disruptions of water access in rural areas and chaotically built urban neighborhoods.

In most villages, people drink rain water, collected without being properly disinfected, and waterborne diseases are, therefore, common. Speaking to UNIFIL Civil Affairs representatives, Mayor Bazzi said, "Although I contemplated many a time about conducting such a campaign for the residents of my Municipality; I unfortunately did not have the means or knowhow to address this and I cannot be appreciative enough of UNIFIL for stepping in with this crucial campaign".

The response to the campaign in the eastern sector has been equally enthusiastic and heartwarming.

There is a need for greater efforts on the part of the Government and other local authorities for sustained public information campaign to raise sensitivity and to educate the masses about judicious water consumption and its conservation. Water conservation is not a day's work, it's a continuous process," highlighted the Director of Blida Public school Mr. Mohamed Hijazi,

The students interacted with the activity and were excited about the content and its usefulness.

"We thought that our country is rich with water but it looks that we may suffer from drought if we don't act wisely and take care of our environment," said Zainab, a 13-year-old student from Houla Public School.

Ali, 14, a student at Meiss el Jabal Public School, said that "We should put pressure on our families and decision-makers in our countries to save the environment for us 'the next generation' in order to live in our villages without pollution."

Wissam, also 14, from Markaba Public School, said "We should take the initiative now to ensure better future for our families ahead."

The response from the most immediate beneficiaries, the school students, has

# Water is life, so save it

been very encouraging. Even during the sessions, the students displayed great understanding of the subject and at the end of the presentation also came up with innovative ideas on how to save water in everyday life. A focal point from each school has been designated by the Director to follow up with the students on preparation of a water conservation and protection project.

"This the first time that someone explained to us about the water problems facing our region, and gave us an opportunity to express our opinion, our views and also voice our needs and concerns on water," remarked Farah Al Sayyed, a 12-year-old student from Naqoura Intermediate School.

The student added: "As an Ambassador for water conservation from my school it is now my duty and responsibility to spread the message regarding the value of water first among my family members and then among others around me."

The Director of Al Qulaylah Intermediate School, Mr. Abdel Karim Hasan, explained that Lebanese communities, despite their knowledge of environment friendly practices, are routinely engaging in destructive environmental activities. Therefore, he added, more efforts should be made in developing activities, taking into account specific circumstances existing in south Lebanon.

The ongoing water conservation campaign has also been integrated within the health and environmental clubs established for schools by the Lebanese Ministry of Education. The clubs comprising of student volunteers have developed action plan focusing on water conservation and protection for the first quarter of 2012, and have assigned various activities and tasks to students that were a part of the campaign.

**Yousra El Ghorayeb** UNIFIL Civil Affairs



- Sitting on a rocky hill 750 metres above sea level between the towns of Kfar Shouba and Chebaa, about 110 kilometres from the capital Beirut, Hebberiyeh encompasses some 30 square kilometers of farmland, deep valleys, caves, and sarcophagi carved in the rocks, surrounded by pine and oak woods.



- The town's name carries a double meaning: the first implies "the feast" in the wake of a funeral, and the second "blathers".

- Farming is a primary source of income, particularly olive growing and that is evident from the fact that the town has four presses to extract olive oil. Besides, townspeople are financially dependent on relatives who have emigrated primarily to Latin America, including Brazil.

- A southern town blessed by both Jesus Christ and Imam Aba thir Al-Ghafary while passing through it, according to its people. The area was inhabited since Roman times, with the "Baal Jad" temple in the centre of town a testament to that. In addition, remains of some Crusader towers can be found.





# Hebberiyeh



- Some of the town's 6,000 people consider themselves descendants of Arab tribes. Its population year round does not exceed 2,000. There are 2,400 Hebberiyeh residents on the voters' list.
- There are two elementary schools in the town, a private one attended by 200 students and a public one that has 45 students. Medical emergency cases are treated at a public clinic operating under the Ministry of Social Affairs.
- UNIFIL deployed to the area in 1978, with the Norwegian contingent setting up position there in April that year.

The relationship between UNIFIL and the town of Hebberiyeh is so deep and meaningful that it cannot be described in mere words. What can we say about those who provide us with security, stability and tranquility? What can we say about soldiers who are vigilant round the clock for the sake of our peace of mind and our children's safety?

The relationship with UNIFIL troops went above and beyond their role. It grew to become one of family. We shared the bread and salt and lived through the bitterness of the occupation and paid in blood together in confronting it. In addition, we have shared together our national and social ceremonies.

How are we to describe the peace doves and the love birds that tended to our children's wounds, and treated our elders' illnesses, and even took care of our livestock? The peacekeepers, ever since they deployed to Hebberiyeh and the Arqoub region, were a compensation

for the deprivation that befell us. They have attended to the education sector and contributed to building the public school. They also assisted in a sanitation project, the first in the area, and contributed to building a wastewater treatment facility. The peacekeepers have provided us with shelter and protection as well as health and social care. There were cultural exchanges and they contributed to organizing heritage, music and sport festivals.

What can we say about the UNIFIL soldiers, to whom some of our sisters married and have become outreach messengers between us and their many countries?

Hebberiyeh and UNIFIL share hundreds of stories. It all started with the UN Security Council resolution 425 in 1978 and it is still ongoing, and I don't think it will end. No matter where you go in Hebberiyeh, you will find marks left by the Norwegian, Indian and



Spanish battalions. These marks will be remembered in our country, for generations to come.

May God help us in rewarding the peacekeepers' efforts, and we hope for their lasting presence so we can enjoy the security, stability and development, in addition to the cultural exchanges.

**Atwe Atwe** Mayor of Hebberiyeh

# Women peacekeepers in challenging jobs

Among UNIFIL's 12,000 soldiers there are many women in uniform, performing jobs traditionally portrayed as man's profession. There is the construction helper, the fire-fighter, the doctor and the member of the Close Protection Team, to name a few. The UN encourages women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security as called for also by the Security Council resolution 1325.



On 11 January 2012, the first women-only medal presentation ceremony was held in UNIFIL when 11 women peacekeepers of the Malaysian contingent were honoured.

Colonel Badrul Hisham Bin Muhammed, Commander of the UNIFIL Malaysian contingent, praised the peacekeepers' work. At the ceremony held in the southern Lebanese town of Kawkaba, he noted that the female peacekeepers had been well accepted by the Lebanese in the south and had made vital contribution to the Mission.

"I am proud of their contribution to the community and hope we will increase the participation of female peacekeepers in future," he said.

The 11 peacekeepers, including two officers, are the first group of female soldiers from Malaysia to serve in UNIFIL for six months. Their tour of duty ended 26 January.

Corporal Nadia Leboy expressed her deep gratitude for the honour. As a member of the medical team that had been organising medical camps, she said her work gave her an opportunity to interact with the Lebanese people and learn about their traditions and way of life.

"I feel so proud to have received the [United Nations] medal," she said. "I am

honoured to be among the chosen few female peacekeepers to serve in this Mission."

In many contingents of UNIFIL there are women peacekeepers.

At UNIFIL's aviation unit at Headquarters in Naqoura, Italian Army Corporal Maila Squillace has her own story to tell. Her job is not only about fire-extinguishing, but first and foremost about rescuing people.

"It is difficult for a woman to carry a man who weighs 80 or 90 kilos to rescue him from a dangerous area. I don't complain: in all lines of work there are pleasant and unpleasant aspects, not only in the army. The important thing is to be passionate about what you are doing."

UNIFIL is Maila's first mission abroad. She says she likes its multinational nature. "Italians, Indonesians, Danish, French, Spanish... One thing I will miss is exchanging words and smiles with people from different countries, cultures, religions... We are all far away from home. And we are all here for the same purpose – to maintain peace on the Lebanese soil. This is something common between us."

Another woman peacekeeper is Dr. Ipsita, from the Indian battalion in the eastern sector of UNIFIL.

"As a doctor the most important thing for me is to save a life and that is what gives me maximum satisfaction," she said.

One case she remembers particularly well. "At the middle of the night a young (local) man was brought... bitten by a snake... I'm glad that we were able to identify the poison and gave anti-venom required. Hence a life of a 20-year old man was saved."

Other women peacekeepers perform even more challenging duties.

Sabina Guimaraes, a soldier from the Portuguese Engineer Unit based at Shama in UNIFIL Sector West headquarters, works as a truck driver and at construction sites. Some solace and reward for her tough job comes from the fact that the work she and other peacekeepers of the Portuguese Engineer Unit are doing contributes to stability in south Lebanon and brings benefit to the local people.

"It is a pleasure that we are helping this country through renovation of public schools or improving playgrounds for children. We are happy to build... to let the Lebanese forget the war, and remember us."

**Rania Bdeir & Antonette Miday**  
UNIFIL Public Information



# Salam

## from the South

## UNIFIL Radio Program “Salam from the South”

A 10-minute episode broadcast every two weeks in Arabic on stations Al-Risala, Sawt El-Mada, Voice of Lebanon and Voice of the People brings voices of the people of south Lebanon and their views on UNIFIL, and at the same time explains the peacekeepers’ activities in the Area of Operation.

## “Discover UNIFIL in 60 Seconds”

A video rich in action that depicts UNIFIL troops conducting various tasks and in just 1 minute highlights one of those many activities in south Lebanon, such as the Blue Line marking and patrolling. The clip airs on Lebanese stations NBN, New TV and TeleLiban.



## UNIFIL on the Web

The UNIFIL website (<http://unifil.unmissions.org>) in both English and Arabic is continuously updated with the latest in news, photos, radio and video about the Mission, its history and past and current activities, along with a whole range of background information, from troop strength and Troop Contributing Countries to related UN documents and Secretary-General’s reports.

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Reforestation project in the town of Shhur to mark UNIFIL-Lebanese friendship. "Lions Club" donated more than 500 trees, and its regional governor, Wafa Khoury (centre) and environmental officer Ferial Haddad (right) helped in planting some of the trees. Seven hundred more trees were planted in the areas of Tibnin and Ainata.