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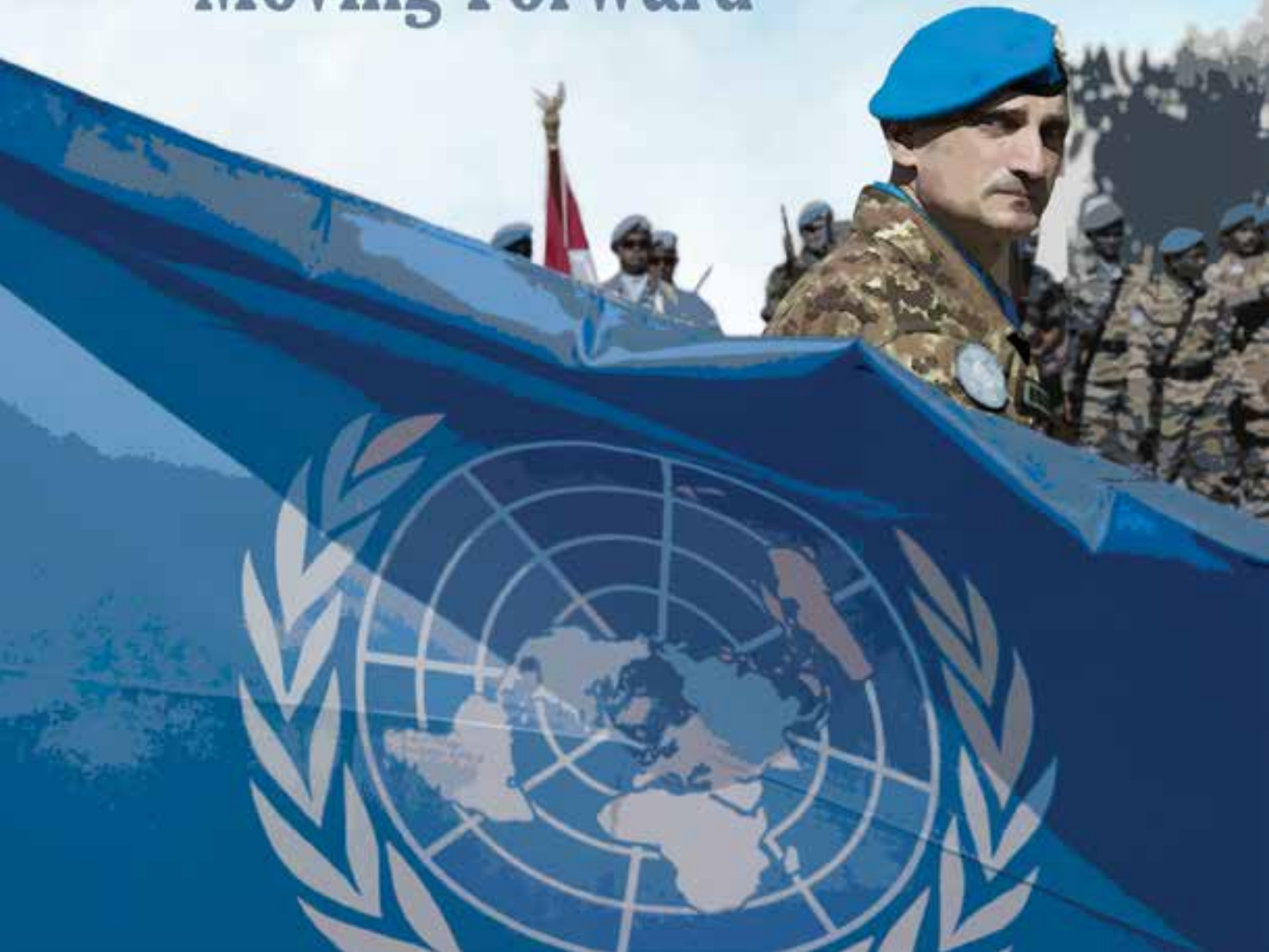
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Moving Forward



Major-General Luciano Portolano takes over Command of UNIFIL



Maj.-Gen. Luciano Portolano formally took over command of UNIFIL from Maj.-Gen. Paolo Serra during a Transfer of Command ceremony held at the UNIFIL Headquarters in Naqoura on 24 July 2014.

Maj.-Gen. Portolano has extensive experience with multinational operations.

On assuming charge as Head of Mission and Force Commander, Maj.-Gen. Portolano said: "In the months to come, I will continue to move forward along the same path: monitoring the cessation of hostilities and fostering the parties' respect for the Blue Line; maintaining close cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces at the tactical level, as well as continuing our strategic dialogue; supporting the local communities to the best of UNIFIL's ability, so as to preserve the strong bond of trust and friendship with the people of the south."

Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil **visits UNIFIL**



The Lebanese Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, Gebran Bassil paid a visit to UNIFIL Headquarters in Naqoura last month. It is the first visit by a Lebanese Foreign Minister since 1978.

Following the meeting, Maj.-Gen. Portolano said "The visit sends a strong message that Lebanon stands firm in its commitment to UN Security Council resolution 1701 and to our mission, notwithstanding the challenges the country faces today. I assured the Minister of our continued full support to the efforts of the Lebanese Government to strengthen the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces."

Maj.-Gen. Portolano also thanked Mr. Bassil for the invaluable assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants to UNIFIL.

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Cover Photo:

Major-General Luciano Portolano

UNIFIL's Head of Mission and Force Commander



Former Force Commander's parting words

Prior to his departure, the former Head of Mission and Force Commander Maj.-Gen. Paolo Serra commented on the remarkable progress made by UNIFIL in south Lebanon.

After two-and-a-half years as the head of UNIFIL, what would you say are your main achievements?

A lot of progress has been made in the implementation of UNIFIL's mandate over the past 8 years of UNSCR 1701 and 2½ years under my tenure.

Every challenge we faced brought forth the strengths of the mechanisms we have established with the parties within the framework of resolution 1701 to effectively deal with any development. Comprehensive liaison and coordination arrangements through UNIFIL enjoy the full and active participation of the parties and have been effective in addressing key security and military operational issues.

The Tripartite meeting has proved effective in containing incidents or violations, and engaging the parties in taking practical steps towards conflict-prevention and confidence-building.

The security environment in south Lebanon today is strategically different from the situation that existed until 2006 thanks to the joint efforts of UNIFIL and LAF. The last eight years have seen unprecedented calm that is reflected in the economic development of the south today.

The visible marking of the Blue Line is an important task that has progressed in cooperation with the parties. UNIFIL's Maritime Task Force has effectively carried out its mandate to assist the Lebanese navy in ensuring that there is no illegal arms smuggling by sea.

What challenges remain?

Overall, conditions on the ground have significantly improved, but a number of obstacles remain. The countries are still de facto at war, but the mission is offering a window of opportunity for the parties to move from cessation of hostilities to permanent ceasefire.

We are working on the full implementation of 1701 to strengthen the role of the LAF with the support of the international community through strategic dialogue.

The regional situation is also concerning, but it raises the stakes for both Lebanon and Israel to preserve the calm along the Blue Line. The parties continue to emphasize that they are fully committed to working with UNIFIL to maintain the cessation of hostilities.

These are signs that the foundations for stability laid over the last six years are taking hold in southern Lebanon. But the

we must not lose sight of the unprecedented stability achieved in the last almost 8 years

parties must go beyond the cessation of hostilities, to take advantage of the window of opportunity UNIFIL provides, and move at the political level to achieve a permanent ceasefire.

Do you have a final word for the people of south Lebanon?

I joined the mission on 28 January 2012. I take with me fond memories of a unique country with a rich cultural mix, history, and diversity.

I sincerely thank the people for their hospitality, strong support and commitment to UNIFIL. They have welcomed us into their country and into their homes and have been our excellent hosts. Only with their cooperation and friendship, has UNIFIL been able to advance the implementation of our mandated tasks.

Antonette Miday - Public Information Office

Strategic Dialogue *in progress for South Lebanon*



Brig.-Gen. Mohammad Janbay Lebanese Government Coordinator to UNIFIL, UNIFIL Force Commander Maj.- Gen. Luciano Portolano and Deputy Head of Mission Mr. Imran Riza at UNIFIL HQ

A recent meeting of the Strategic Dialogue (SD) committees marked a major milestone when it brought together members from all three tiers of the SD mechanism and re-established contacts critical to the outcome of the process.

The aim of the SD process is to strengthen the capacity of LAF to assume greater security responsibilities in southern Lebanon and Lebanese territorial waters. The SD process is intended to support efforts to move towards a permanent ceasefire, through implementation of tasks mandated in UNSC Resolution 1701 (2006).

The meeting which was facilitated by UNIFIL Deputy Force Commander Brig.-Gen. Tarundeep Kumar and held at UNIFIL's headquarters in Naqoura on 16 October 2014 is considered a turning point because the SD is set to move past its conceptualization phase.

Previously, the efforts focused on producing the relevant documents in order to set a strategic dialogue framework, running joint exercises for assessment, studies etc. Now the challenge lies in moving from concept to implementation, according to Jovdat Mammadov, Political Affairs Officer (Strategic Dialogue) at UNIFIL.

The Strategic Dialogue Plan which was signed on 21 February 2013 by former UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander Maj.-Gen.

Paolo Serra and LAF Commander-in-Chief Jean Kahwaji took place during the tenure of former Deputy Force Commander Brig.-Gen. Patrick Phelan who was tasked with leading the SD initiative with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), and to finalize Strategic Dialogue Plan.

Before his departure, Brig.-Gen. Phelan stated that the signing the Strategic Dialogue Plan was "a significant achievement". He also identified areas of top priority for the success of the process, which included accommodation, command, control and communication, operations and mobility, logistics and maritime capacity and training.

Brig.-Gen. Phelan also warned that certain operational challenges that the LAF faces can put a strain on the process, especially the deployment of LAF troops outside the UNIFIL Area of Operation.

"We have to understand that the LAF has to look at the security requirements of the entire country, and not only in our Area of Operation," he said.

This concern remains in place according to Mr. Mammadov, since the presence of the

LAF in the south has lessened, and their diminished presence constrains progress with this capacity-building initiative.

At the meeting, attended by representatives from LAF, UNIFIL, UNSCOL and Government of Lebanon, it was agreed that the 'imminent needs' for the process are to be identified by UNIFIL and their LAF counterparts. These needs referred to the most essential requirements for progress, such as funding and equipment.

The Imminent Needs List is to be put forward to donors, who are an essential part of the success of the SD process – another issue that was highlighted at the meeting.

"The donors and international community should show their support not merely in pledges and verbal commitments, but through actual commitment of funds," said Mr. Mammadov. He pointed out that although the UN is not a donor organization, it has donated equipment that has been written-off, but fit for purpose.

Greta Isac & Hiba Monzer - Public Information Office



Enhancing relations *with local communities*

Mr. Albagir Adam, UNIFIL's Chief of Civil Affairs explains the section's work in South Lebanon.

What does Civil Affairs do?

You will find Civil Affairs in every UN peacekeeping mission. In UNIFIL, it was established in 2006.

It has four components. They are representation of the mission at the local level, reconciliation of the parties, conflict management and prevention, and most important is the restoration of state authority.

We enhance coordination with the government to restore its authority in the south not only by working with the Lebanese Armed Forces, but also by ensuring that schools are functioning, clinics are well-equipped, roads are built, and electricity and water supplied.

We coordinate the work done with the UN country team and agencies in implementing the stabilization pact for Lebanon.

Finally, we increase the capability of the LAF by enhancing Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) capability.

Why is Civil Affairs important at UNIFIL?

Having more than 10,000 troops in South Lebanon, an area of 64km by 40km, is a big challenge. The heavy machinery and men moving around can create some disturbance and damage the fields or roads.

Civil Affairs helps to prevent this by explaining the objective of Security Council resolution 1701 to the local population and educating the troops on the local culture to ease relations.

We are based at UNIFIL's headquarters in Naqoura and have three field offices: one in Shama in Sector West, and two in Sector East, in Marjayoun and Tibnin.

Lebanon is a very centralized state, with limited resources for local authorities. Civil Affairs fills the gap by supporting the local authorities.

Who are your key partners?

The mayors and mukhtars. They represent the government in the south. We also work with the ministries of Interior, Social Affairs, Education, Environment and Information.

And we cooperate with non-governmental organizations working south of the Litani River, and with UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNESCO, FAO, UNIDO, and OHCHR.

What is the priority currently?

Our biggest problem is water. There was serious scarcity of water this summer. Ponds had dried up due to a lack of rains; the demand was doubled in some areas. Despite a few good rains since then, it does not mean the water problem will be resolved.

We are working with national and local authorities on a plan to be presented to donors on how we can quickly fix the problem. Kabalan Kabalan, who is president of the Council of the South, noted that there needs to be improvement in planning and managing of water resources.

What are some of the projects that Civil Affairs have done?

We have 25 projects every year - 10 to support the restoration of state authority and capacity-building, 8 for access to basic infrastructure (education, water, and sanitation) and 7 for confidence-building.

Can you give us an example of a successful project?

I am proud of the water treatment project

in Naqoura, connecting the municipality to UNIFIL's water treatment system. This will be the first village in the south, if not in the whole of Lebanon, to have a proper sewerage system.

What does QIP stand for and how does it work?

Quick Impact Projects. These are limited in duration (three months) and funding.

The applicant presents his project to the municipality. They meet with our field offices, who discuss it with military colleagues. The G9 units in each battalion deals with CIMIC to ensure the applicants meet the criteria.

At the headquarters, a Project Review Committee (PRC) confirms the availability of funds, in coordination with the military and ensures equal distribution among municipalities. Once a project is approved, a memorandum of understanding is signed with the municipality and funds released.

UNIFIL provides up to \$25, 000 per project. We also get financial support from the TCC (Troop Contributing Countries). We complement each other to meet the community needs.

The challenge with QIPs is that the needs are greater than the resources. But we are needs-driven, not resource-driven.

Who can apply for QIP funding?

Anybody can. You just need to meet certain criteria. You can be a registered organization such as a women's group. The main criteria are that the project should benefit the local population and build trust.

Alban Mendes De Leon - Public Information Office

My dream is my challenge



Bassima al-Zein, Head of Al-Abbasiyeh Food and Handicrafts Cooperative.

The women of Southern Lebanon have proved to be outstanding entrepreneurs. Bassima al-Zein exemplifies what women can achieve when they challenge their limitations through perseverance and determination.

"I realized that I had made the mistake of my life when I discontinued my university studies and did not make good use of my free time," said Ms. Bassima al-Zein, head of Al-Abbasiyeh Cooperative for Food and Handicrafts.

After her university days, Bassima became a housewife and a mother of three. However her eagerness for success sparked off a desire to start all over again.

"It is never late in life," said Ms. Bassima, who at the age of 45 decided to establish a cooperative.

Al-Abbasiyeh cooperative now has 16 members and produces faux bijoux, mosaic art and homemade foods like jams, pickles, cheese and yoghurt. By engaging the women in her community and local farmers to help make the goods, Bassima has created a complete economic cycle in the community.

"I didn't have experience, but I had a sense of challenge, which motivated me to come up with the initiative. The work I am doing should succeed," said Ms. Bassima, with determination mirrored in her eyes and assertiveness in her voice.

The cooperative was registered in 2010. Since then it has participated in exhibitions organized by UNIFIL Civil Affairs at its

headquarters in Naqoura as well as at trading centers and shops in the neighbourhood. They have also exhibited in Beirut and various places in South Lebanon. The products are sold in Biel-Beirut, the Glass Show Room in Hamra, and Ardi Centre - Beirut.

Members of the cooperative are very active in developing new products and searching for new markets. Recently a session was organized by Atayib al Rif, in cooperation with UNIFIL. It focused on making soap and chocolates - an area of great potential given that chocolates are demand for special occasions.

Ms. Bassima's dreams are not limited to Lebanese markets - she hopes one day to export her products to Cote d'Ivoire, Canada, Senegal and other countries.

The cooperative faces many challenges in this pursuit - financial backing and marketing, for instance. Ms. Bassima believes it is crucial to forge a recognizable identity in order to expand its reach. To bolster this effort, the members are currently developing a slogan, labels and brochures that can reach a broader audience.

"My dream is to succeed, which is my challenge as well. I do not wish to be disappointed."

Hiba Monzer - Public Information Office

Traditions:

'Homestay' is a Nepalese tradition to receive a guest and make them feel at home. The host greets the guest with the Anjali Mudra and a bow. Anjali Mudra is performed by pressing the palms of the hands together, keeping fingers together with fingertips pointing up.

It is a gesture of reverence. The bowing depends on the age and status. Elderly always respond by saying Nameste and give their blessings. The guest is not required to bring a gift; the only thing required is to express respect and appreciation for the host's mother and father upon entering the home.

A valued tradition cherished by Serbians in the rural areas involves the first coffee of the day. Every morning, the housewife opens the main door of her house as a sign to welcome visitors.

There is no invitation or planning required. The housewife puts the coffee pot on the fire, waves her hand to signal to her neighbor across the gardens and balconies to come over and take coffee.

Youth club's *call to serve the needy*

Enthusiastic, persistent and determined. These adjectives aptly describe members of Leo Beirut Mid-West, which is part of the Lion's Club.



Leo Beirut Mid-West is a group of young men and women operating under the slogan "We Serve", motivated by the determination to assist the needy in Lebanon. They do not get external funding and mainly rely on fund drives.

Their fundraising meetings revolve around lunches and dinner banquets. The funds raised are donated to an orphanage or a nursing home, inspired by the popular Lebanese saying, "Little giving achieves much."

The young people of Leo Beirut Mid-West operate under the guidance of lawyer Ms Aphrodite Hodeib. Ms. Hodeib sought the help of UNIFIL to implement a series of joint projects for the benefit of needy people in south Lebanon – even if the assistance was limited, "giving a little is better than deprivation," she said.

This is how the first joint project with UNIFIL's Civil Affairs Office was born. More than 200 school bags were distributed to students in public schools in the towns of Ein Arab and Recheknanay.

Subsequent projects included the Dar al-Aytam al-Islamiya school for children with special needs in Souk al-Khan and the distribution of sweaters to schoolchildren in al-Mari and Habariyeh. Six computers were donated to the public school in Ramiyeh, and metal nets were fixed on all the windows to keep out insects in the school for children with special needs in Souk al-Khan.

In addition, the members volunteered in olive harvesting, in collaboration with agricultural

cooperatives in the towns of Kfar Kila, Deir Mimas and Ibl al-Saqi. They worked on the projects in the villages alongside representatives of the municipalities and UNIFIL peacekeepers from various contingents, including the Indians, Spanish, Ghanaians and Malaysians. The activities included entertaining children.

"We are very pleased because UNIFIL gave us an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the local population in our beloved southern Lebanon," said Ms Hodeib.

"We have worked as much as possible to leave positive hallmarks in this area," she added.

"Our members have become acquainted with the south and its good-hearted people, especially since most of them come from other areas in Lebanon, including in the north, Bekaa, Beirut, and Keserwan," Ms Hodeib said.

For his part, the head of the club, Mr Nadeem Younis, said: "I will never forget the day when we volunteered in olive harvesting with farmers in the towns of Deir Mimas and Kfar Kila."

There were 15 young men and women. "This is probably the only time we throw away our smartphones to engage in hard but productive work," he added.

They enjoyed listening to farmers singing folk songs such as Ataba and Mijana, while doing their work.

"It is true that our day would be tough, but it was fun, too. It became more interesting when Civil Affairs staff accompanied us on a tour of modern and ancient olive presses, during which we learned how to extract oil from olives," said Mr Younis.

They started by laying large networks on the ground under the trees, and each took a long wooden rod and began hitting the twigs to bring down the olives. Others were collecting and sorting the olives, putting the green ones on one side and the black ones, on the other. Then the harvest was packed in huge plastic boxes before immediately sending it to the press.

"It is hard work that requires a lot of patience. However, it encouraged us to do similar work this year as well, and I think we will make this project an annual tradition," he said.

UNIFIL appreciated the initiatives of Leo Beirut Mid-West, and is considering this a model for cooperation between civil society institutions and the peacekeeping mission to assist the needy.

"We were very pleased with the creative initiatives by these young people who are mostly students from schools and universities," said Civil Affairs Chief Albagir Adam.

"We are always working hard to motivate young people to do more," he added.

Sultan Suleiman - Civil Affairs

A peacekeeper's search for family roots

Brazilian Navy rescue diver, Lieutenant Pedro Salgado Dibo came to Lebanon with two clear intentions. As a UN peacekeeper and crew member of UNIFIL's Maritime Task Force (MTF), he was responsible to help train sailors in the Lebanese Navy, while carrying out his regular duties onboard the ship.



Pedro was also in search of something more personal – a long-lost family connection. "I am on a historical mission to find a link in my family tree that has been missing after my great-grandfather moved from Lebanon to Brazil a hundred years ago."

His great-grandfather died when Pedro's father was only two, and stories of the family's past died with the patriarch. However, Pedro was optimistic about his chances. He had a phone number and the name of his family's village, Kafer Habou, near Tripoli.

The phone number turned out to be a dead-end - it was a wrong number. However, the tide turned when UNIFIL's radio unit heard about Pedro's quest and offered to assist him. The team saw how busy he was with his daily tasks and made nearly a hundred calls on his behalf, eventually locating a possible relative – Nadeem Deeb, a retired soldier from Kafer Habou.

Mr. Deeb's family history matched what Pedro knew of his father's family. So with great anticipation, they arranged to meet onboard the frigate.

When the two men met for the very first time, they closed the gap of time and distance with a warm hug. Mr. Deeb looked at young Pedro and was struck by the apparent family resemblance. "He has features of the Deeb family," said Mr. Deeb. "I have a son who looks exactly like him. I think it is something in the blood."

A love for the sea is another shared family trait – Mr. Deeb's son RabiH serves in the Lebanese Navy. Pedro's father was a rear-admiral in the Brazilian Navy. Through a lengthy discourse, they worked out their family connection. It emerged that Mr. Deeb's mother and Pedro's great-grandmother were cousins.

A few weeks later, Pedro visited Kafer Habou to meet the rest of his family. "I had two doors leading to my family history," he said. "One is on my mother's side and it had always been open. The other one is on my father's side, which has always been closed..." With this trip, he hoped to open that closed door forever.

Pedro received a joyous welcome from the Deeb family who were delighted to meet their Brazilian kinsman. The reunion was marked with a meal of traditional Lebanese food and Pedro's first lessons in Arabic began as he tried to learn what each dish is called.

He visited his great-grandfather's home and marveled at his modest beginnings. "I cannot imagine how my grandfather's family managed to live in such a small house," he said. "When I saw the room where they all used to sleep – together with a cow sometimes, in the cold nights, I had a very strange feeling as if a small part of me used to live here."

Despite having very few clues at the start, Pedro's search for his family was met with



unexpected success. "What impressed me the most was the hospitality and emotions that my relatives showed. I felt like we had known each other for a long time and that I was at home," he said.

Pedro has since returned to Brazil thankful to UNIFIL radio unit for their help. He has also promised to return someday. "I feel Lebanon is my home – almost to the same extent as Brazil," he said.

"I will definitely come back to this beautiful country since I have left half of my heart."

Yuri Kushko and Rania Bdeir -
Public Information Office





Blue Line Marking: *The boots on the ground*

“The stronger the borders, the stronger the peace,” says Mr. Michael Iseli UNIFIL’s Geographical Information System (GIS) officer, rewording Lord Curzon famous quote, “Frontiers are, indeed, the razor’s edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of war or peace, of life or death to nations.”



Every day, teams of technicians work along the Blue Line, undertaking the critical and complex task of marking it.

To the naked eye, putting up a blue barrel might appear simple, but the reality is to the contrary. It entails a carefully thought-out technical and political process. According to Mr. Iseli, the two normally overlap.

At the height of the project, up to 500 people worked on the marking of the Blue Line on a daily basis.

They included de-miners, engineers and surveyors from the Joint Geographical Information System Section (JGIS), who has the overall technical responsibility for the activity).

Now things are slightly quieter and the number has dropped to about 150 people.

The Line of Withdrawal is not the border

The Line of Withdrawal – also called the “Blue Line” – was identified in 2000 by the UN, in cooperation with Lebanese and Israeli officials to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli

Defense Forces (IDF) from Lebanon, in conformance with UN Security Council resolution 425. It is not the border between Lebanon and Israel.

In 2007, UNIFIL submitted a proposed list of coordinates, extracted of the digital version of the Line of Withdrawal, of points to be marked. To have the entire Line visibly marked, some 470 markers would be needed. This would mean about four markers per kilometer on average.

In the spring of 2007, UNIFIL with the other parties, started a pilot project of marking the Line of Withdrawal. The rationale was to provide clarity to the population and the troops to help avoid violations and inadvertent crossings, and reduce tension between the parties.

The first Barrel

Mr. Iseli was there since its inception and remembers exactly when the first barrel was put up.

It was erected on 21 September 2007, and four days later, it was verified by both the LAF and IDF. The exact point was Boundary Pillar 3... that first barrel went up in a record one day.

“We were thrilled. Both sides agreed easily, today it has become more difficult to reach consensus.

Mr. Iseli sees the Blue Line marking as the only tripartite project involving both sides and UNIFIL. It is more of a confidence- building process than merely a technical undertaking.

Constructing the Blue Barrel

The construction of each barrel goes through a lifecycle: firstly, concerned parties should agree of the coordinates. Once agreement is attained, deminers kickoff their work to ensure safe access to the border point.

Then measurements are done; the LAF, IDF, and UNIFIL do their own measurements, which will result in erecting three pickets. If the three pickets fall within a diameter of 50 cm, then the center is taken as the reference point to erect the barrel.

UNIFIL then begins to construct the blue barrel. Once the engineers have built the pillar, the UNIFIL team invites the LAF and IDF to confirm that its location corresponds with the agreed coordinates. However, the process does not end here - maintenance and refurbishments of the erected blue barrels is carried out throughout its life.

It is worth noting that LAF or IDF usually check before they agree to mark a point. If it is contentious, they do not mark the point at all.

Challenges faced

Some areas have been difficult to reach because of the terrain, the weather, vegetation or the threat of mines. There are also areas of contention, including the Wazzani River, the tomb of Sheikh Abbad and the olive fields in Blida.

“If the parties don’t agree, they don’t go there,” says Mr. Iseli. He pointed out that the technical side of the project is less difficult than the political as geography, geodesy and geometry apply to all parties equally.

Already some barrels need refurbishing, replacement and re-measurement.

“The lifecycle of the project depends on many factors - mainly political,” he says. “It is unrealistic to set a time frame for completion.”

Of the 313 markers agreed by the parties almost all have been demined and more than 200 have already been built.

Hiba Monzer - Public Information Office

Endless war against 'immortal soldiers'



After the July 2006 war ended, Youssef Mohammad Fawaz headed eagerly to check on his farmlands in Ein al-Hour, near Sahl al-Kham in Tibnin and start planning for the next planting season. The bounteous lands here produce olives, melons, zucchini, wheat, barley, cucumber, and tobacco.

"I had just started digging when I heard a friend scream: Get down on the ground! There is a cluster (bomb) right next to you!" Youssef recalled.

He would later learn that his land was full of cluster bombs and that it was impossible to walk on it. "I was so close to losing my foot," he said.

Much effort had been exerted prior to 2006 to clear more than 5 million square metres of land of all sorts of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), also called "the immortal soldiers that do not need food or rest, and will wait a lifetime for their victim."

Over one million cluster bombs on the lands in south Lebanon, in the wake of the July 2006 war. "We were back to square one," said Jihad Samhat, Operations and Quality Assurance Officer in the United Nations Mine Action Support Team (UNMAST).

Since August 2006, cluster bombs have been found on agricultural fields, roadsides and even in swimming pools, gardens, bedrooms and in water tanks. Children often mistake them for toys. As a result, 29 people have been killed and 264 injured, in addition to the 14 killed and 49 injured in demining accidents.

After Youssef was miraculously saved, the Belgian de-mining team from UNIFIL worked for

several months to clear the land before handing it back to him. Today, he farms on his 20,000 square metres, planting vegetables and fruits, and proudly providing for his family once again.

Like Youssef, many landowners and farmers in Tibnin have the Belgian battalion in UNIFIL to thank for clearing around 60,000 square metres of land. Some landowners chose to clear their land without professional assistance, resulting in an increase in accidents, casualties and severe injuries.

Jihad, who has been involved in demining since before 2006, recalls: "I have seen people kiss the ground on entering their property after thirty years of never setting foot on it. Others just jumped all over their land, not believing this was happening."

In April 2009, most of the built-up areas were cleared and UNIFIL's priority turned to the Blue Line to facilitate the construction of marker barrels along the withdrawal line. UNIFIL's demining teams have so far facilitated the construction of 313 marker barrels along the Blue Line, boosting security in the region, in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 1701.

The interior sectors of the Area of Operation is now the responsibility of the Lebanon Mine Action Centre (LMAC), which also supervises the work of several NGOs and companies.

Facts and Figures

- One of the largest concentrations of cluster bombs globally was in South Lebanon after the 2006 war.
- Some landmines and unexploded ordnances (UXOs in Lebanon are from World War I).
- Since 2006, de-miners from Finland, Spain, Italy, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, China and Cambodia have cleared more than 35,000 explosive remnants of war (ERW), UXOs, cluster munitions and mines in an area of approximately 4,800,000 square meters.
- Over 570 people have been injured or killed by ERWs in South Lebanon since 2000.
- Explosive Remnants of War include landmines, UXOs, cluster bombs and booby traps.
- Thanks to clearance and mine risk education, the number of civilian victims has dropped to 2 or less per month.
- UN Mine Action Support Team (UNMAST) provides planning, coordination and Quality Assurance capability that ensures mine/UXO clearance is done in the most effective, safe and time efficient manner, in accordance with National Technical Standards and Guidelines.
- UNMAST has conducted wide-scale awareness campaigns since the 2006 war
- UNMAST receives, briefs, trains, validates and monitors new rotations of the Troop Contributing Countries and organises mine/UXO awareness sessions.
- UNMAST coordinates with Lebanon Mine Action Centre (LMAC) through exchange of information on landmines and UXOs.
- UNIFIL Cambodian team helped clear contaminated areas in the Cypriot island between 7 April and 13 June 2014 at the request of the UN peacekeeping mission in Cyprus for UNIFIL assistance. UNMAST monitored the work.
- UNIFIL mine clearance activities are both operational and humanitarian.

Rania Harb - Public Information Office



Did You Know?

Cambodia is a country of 14.2 million people, located in Southeast Asia, with a history stretching back to 4,000 BC. It is bordered by Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, and the Gulf of Thailand. The land is rich in oil, gold, silver, zircon, limestone, iron, phosphate, and rubies.

Cambodia is a UN troop contributing country (TCC) – the Cambodian company joined UNIFIL in 2010. It comprises 179 troops operating in engineering, demining and explosive-ordnance disposal.

The company works in cooperation with force engineering, UN Mine Action Support Team (UNMAST) and Joint Geographical Information System (JGIS) and technical investigation teams.

The Cambodians are tasked with the construction of the blue barrel for marking the Blue Line. They refurbished 18 Blue Line barrels and Recce 10 Blue Line barrel points, as well as constructed nine markers.

The company conducts mine-clearance operations along the Blue Line. They have carried out EOD/ IED operations, road

reconnaissance, road de-mining and mine disposal. The total area cleared by the company to date is 7,583 m2.

The troops have been involved in preparing base terrain – fencing and installation work among other tasks.

The Cambodians also helped in road construction in Ghajar and Blida, installation of pipes for water wells in Blida, and cleaning up the course of the Wazzani River. Their work is commendable in particular because it is carried out without the help of construction vehicles – the rugged terrain along the border points does not allow trucks. Therefore, tasks like transferring concrete, gravel and other construction material is done by hand.

Cambodia's flag is red with blue borders. In

the centre is a depiction in white of Angkor Wat - Cambodia's famous three-tiered temple that draws visitors from all over the world. According to UNESCO, Angkor Wat is of great archeological, architectural and cultural significance.

The blue color of the Cambodian flag stands for liberty, brotherhood, and cooperation; red is for bravery and the white color of Angkor Wat stands for integrity, justice, and heritage.

Despite the hardship of labour-intensive tasks and working in a remote location, the troops remain committed to contributing to the UN efforts in south Lebanon, embodying the virtues symbolized by their flag and those of the UN.

Hiba Monzer - Public Information Office





Ibl al-Saqi: A town's long history with UNIFIL

From grandparents to grandchildren, the residents of the southern town of Ibl al-Saqi in Lebanon relay a legend about a dove, which, they say, brought the olive branch to Noah during the biblical flood from the beautiful hill of al-Qbaybeh, located just 800 metres to the south of their village.

A retired professor, Dr Shafiq al-Biqai, says this legend, if anything, denotes the deep-rootedness of Ibl al-Saqi's olives and al-Qbaybeh Hills, as a series of myths are associated with the latter. They include tales about fairies and buried treasures. Such tales are proudly narrated to children and grandchildren around the fireplace during the winter season.

From this myth, one can conclude that Ibl al-Saqi, or Ibl al-Hawa (another name for the town) has been inhabited since the dawn of history. Despite the lack of a reference to its old history, the remnants of homes in and around the town date back more than 500 years.

According to Prof al-Biqai, the town was named during the era after the Birth of Christ, and naturally, its compound name has meanings associated with the globetrotters who used it as their resting place with their camels during their travels from Palestine to the Levant. This is because it is rich in water resources, and its hills are planted with olive, oak, and pine trees, which generate pure cool air. The town rises to about 750 metres above sea level. It is located above the Hasbani River in the south-east of Lebanon.

In 1965, one of Ibl al-Saqi's hills was declared a nature reserve. Extending over an area of 450 dunums (acres), the reserve constitutes a corridor for migratory birds.

Mayor Mr. George Rahal says the registered population of the town is nearly 4,000, distributed almost equally between the Druze and Christians (Orthodox and Protestant sects). However, those living in the town permanently do not exceed 1,750 people, with over 2,000 during summer.

Ibl al-Saqi has suffered successive migration waves. Since 1820, the migrants mainly headed for Brazil.

Many former residents have become scholars in the diaspora. They include Jamil al-Mansour Haddad, a prominent poet in Latin America, he won the poetry award of the Brazilian Linguistic Academy in the first half of the last century. Unfortunately, successive generations of immigrants have lost contact with their hometown, affecting its population and hampering economic growth.

Residents mainly earn their living from agriculture and public sector jobs. Its major products include vegetables and olives.

During the Israeli occupation from 1978, many residents were killed and homes destroyed. But the deployment of UNIFIL changed the town's fortunes, as the presence of the peacekeepers became a major source of income. There are 116 employees and contractors working with UNIFIL who are from Ibl-al-Saqi.

Ibl al-Saqi was the headquarters of the Norwegian Battalion, when UNIFIL arrived in south Lebanon in 1978. Relations with the peacekeepers strengthened, with 14 local women now married to Norwegian soldiers. The National Day of Norway has become an annual tradition celebrated on 17 May. The residents have maintained strong relations with UNIFIL even after the departure of the Norwegians.

Ibl al-Saqi is one of the towns with the highest number of marriages to UNIFIL soldiers in southern Lebanon.

A number of development projects have been implemented, including a public park in the town centre, which was named after Indian independence hero Mahatma Gandhi. Doctors from the Spanish Battalion visit the town every two weeks to examine patients at the municipality.

Sultan Suleiman - Civil Affairs

We did not see it coming

Memories of living at the office during the war



During the 33-day war of 2006, John Molloy (JM) and Hassan Siklawi (HS) were among a crew of 16 civilians who continued to work at UNIFIL's headquarters in Naqoura. They recall the arduous days in the office and on the road under challenging conditions.

How do you remember the first few days of the war?

HS: On the morning of 12 July, I got a call from journalists, who told me that there had been a lot of shelling and bombardment, and that people had started running away. I was working in Tyre at that time, and I was told to report to the office immediately.

I went back to Naqoura, and information started to trickle in. It was a difficult moment. The war had broken out, and nobody was prepared. I thought about my family first, and so in the evening, I went back home to Tyre and I remember the shelling, air raids and so on. For the rest of the war, I stayed at UNIFIL headquarters.

JM: Nobody saw it coming. Even after it had started, people didn't realize what was happening. Communication immediately broke down because the mobile phone antenna had been taken out in the first two hours. For the next weeks, we had great difficulties making phone calls.

HS: A phone call that would normally take five minutes took an hour. We used to go to the roofs of buildings to get better reception.

What was your job during the war?

JM: I was a senior liaison officer, so I coordinated with the parties. It was very difficult to coordinate movements because UNIFIL's positions would be shelled at times. And, you must not forget, UNIFIL was a

Nobody saw it coming. Even after it had started, people didn't realize what it was. Communication immediately broke down because the mobile phone antenna had been taken out in the first two hours.

I was touched when the Secretary-General visited after the war, and he said how proud he was of his people. He said we easily could have gone home - but no, we stayed there.



different operation. We only had 2,000 people - two battalions in the south, the Ghanaians and the Indians, and a handful of civilians.

UNIFIL was making every effort to coordinate with the parties, mainly the IDF, to get old, sick and injured people out of their villages to a hospital or to Tyre, trying to make sure that they would not be attacked while on the move.

HS: We were not prepared for it. It happened suddenly. The whole day, we would get calls from villages, Mukhtars, the Civil Defense, the LAF, ISF, and the offices of ministers, informing us that Village A or B was being shelled and the people were trapped. They asked UNIFIL to help bring them out.

So we went out, and brought the injured and old people to a hospital or to a safe haven at the LAF barracks in Tyre. The main difficulty was that we never knew what we would encounter. The drive was long and unsafe; sometimes we had to clean the debris from the road before we could continue.

Can you give an example?

HS: Prime Minister Siniora officially asked the mission to evacuate some 380 civilians, particularly women and children, from Marwahin. So we organized this huge convoy, under French protection with APCs, four buses, an ambulance, and three LAF soldiers.

I was terrified. When we arrived in the village, we gathered everybody in an assembly area. Then, suddenly, we got shelled. The brave French soldiers were putting children inside the APCs. It was like a sardine can with people inside.

There was also a small pool, which was dry, so they put the people there, and themselves on top of them to protect them. I will never forget the moment.

How was your daily life during those 33 days?

HS: There was no schedule. We were reacting to events as they unfolded. During the day, we tried to help people, and in the night, we would receive phone calls from Lebanese abroad, inquiring about their families.

We didn't sleep until three, four in the morning. Sometimes we slept for only two hours a day. And we didn't have a lot of food or water. John and I would share a bottle of water a day - for everything, washing ourselves and drinking.

JM: The Irish house in Naqoura camp remained open 24/7 during the war. It became a place of refuge. People used to go there and talk.

Did you ever think about resigning?

HS: No. If I resigned, somebody else would come - and resign. Who would do the job?

What is in your view the most significant transformation in the south since 2006?

JM: I think the most visible change is the infrastructure, especially roads. Immediately after the start of the war, the entire road network was completely destroyed. The journey from Tyre to Beirut once took me six hours - it normally takes an hour.

HS: I was amazed at how quickly the people rebuilt the main road from the south to

Beirut - it only took nine months! Also, in 2006, there was no LAF, only one liaison team in Naqoura.

Today, the LAF is deployed in the south, and resolution 1701 was established. UNIFIL was increased to 15,000 troops, got the Maritime Task Force (MTF), and the Civil Affairs unit is supporting the presence of the Lebanese Government in the south.

Do you have any good memories you wish to share?

JM: One day, I was getting many phone calls, including some from the Red Cross, that there was a young girl in a Ghanaian position close to Yarin, who was badly injured, and if she wasn't evacuated, she was going to die.

There was no way to evacuate her, because the shelling was too intense. I checked with the nearest Ghanaian position, and they said they were prepared to move her in an armoured car to Naqoura. So, I went to Force Commander Pellegrini to ask for his approval, and he said: "Go ahead."

So the Ghanaians brought her in, having lost two tires of the armoured car. And she survived. We were getting a lot of phone calls like this. The reason, I now remember this so well, is because it was the Force Commander's birthday.

HS: I was touched when the Secretary-General visited after the war, and he said how proud he was of personnel on the ground. He said we easily could have gone home - but no, we stayed there.

Ingrid Koeck - Political Affairs Office

New Deputy Head of Mission arrives in Lebanon



Mr. Imran Riza arrived in Lebanon on 16 Sep 2014 to take up his new appointment as Deputy Head of Mission and Director of Political and Civil Affairs.

Previously, Mr. Riza was the UNHCR Regional Representative in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Riza brings with him extensive knowledge and expertise on Lebanon and the Middle East region. He has worked with the UN on various continents, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

Water treatment system in Naqoura municipality



sewage system of 230 houses in Naqoura has now been connected to the Mission headquarters' wastewater refinery. The cost of the project amounted to around \$22,000.

Opening the event, Mayor Mahdi praised the role of UNIFIL, for contributing to the development of this area and preserving its environment.

The Municipality of Naqoura became the first in UNIFIL's area of operations with a suitable water treatment system.

Thanks to a UNIFIL-sponsored Quick-Impact Project (QIP), the

This project comes at the core of UNIFIL's concerns in terms of preserving the environment, assisting the local population and create environmental awareness in the area.

So we can play football again



The southern town of Yaroun held a friendly football game between UNIFIL footballers and a local team to mark the inauguration of the town's renovated football pitch. Yaroun is located in a remote area in Bint Jbeil District where recreational

facilities are scarce. The football pitch will be important in helping the youth to engage in sports.

The work was funded through the UNIFIL Civil Affairs Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and Yaroun municipality, with the

help of the Finnish and Italian battalions. The project involved purchasing and installing a canopy for the football pitch, at a cost of around US\$ 21,000.

"The project helps to promote fitness within the community,"

said Lt. Col. Kari Nisula from the Finnish battalion. "Now the football field can also serve as a shelter." Ali Mostafa Saeb, football player in Yaroun's team, welcomed the inauguration: "Thanks to UNIFIL, so we can play again."



UNIFIL runs for peace





Meet The South

UNIFIL's new TV/Web Series is out

In each episode see how UN peacekeepers meet with residents from south Lebanon. Twice a month on NBN, OTV, New TV & YouTube



Salam 
from the South

Every two weeks a new 10-minute radio episode is aired in Arabic on: Al-Risala, Sawt El-Mada, Voice of Lebanon, Voice of People & Radio Delta



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