



Joint Statement by Lebanese-American Organizations on the US Assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces

August 16, 2010

Strengthening the Lebanese security forces to implement all UN Security Council resolutions relevant to Lebanon and to fulfill their duty to defend Lebanon's sovereignty, democracy, and all Lebanese citizens, serves US national security interests. Since 2006, the U.S. has appropriated \$782.35 million in security assistance to Lebanon. The US has much at stake in the success of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF).

Lebanese-American organizations greatly value US assistance provided to the LAF to build a strong, national institution. We believe that well trained and well equipped Lebanese security forces remain indispensable instruments for the country's stability and prosperity.

For the above reasons, we strongly urge Members of Congress to reconsider the hold on US security assistance to Lebanon, despite the tragic exchange of fire on the Lebanon-Israel border.

We do not believe that this exchange of fire was "staged" by the LAF. Israel's tree-trimming operation occurred over Israel's technical fence in an area of the border where the "blue line" is not marked. We urge the United Nations to expedite re-marking the "blue line" so that all parties know where the "blue line" is with certitude. Both Lebanon and Israel should reaffirm their commitments in 2000 to the United Nations Secretary General to respect the "blue line." Lebanese, Israeli, and UNIFIL representatives meet in the tripartite committee to discuss border and military issues and this is the appropriate forum to devise a protocol to prevent an incident of this nature from recurring. In his August 5 briefing, Philip J. Crowley, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, asserted that "we have no indication that U.S. equipment played any role in this incident earlier this week."

The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) is a work in progress. However, progress has been indisputably made since 2006 and much of this is attributable to US security assistance. In 2006, the LAF deployed south of the Litani River for the first time since 1968. It is the presence of the LAF in the south that allowed an enhanced UNIFIL to deploy according to UN Security Council Resolution 1701. The August 3 incident notwithstanding, the Lebanon-Israel border is the quietest that it has been in decades. This LAF-UNIFIL partnership south of the Litani River should not be shaken by the withholding of US security assistance. Additionally, the role of the LAF in combating al-Qaeda-inspired groups, such as Fatah al-Islam, is commendable and in the US interest.

We remind members of Congress that the administration has repeatedly voiced its support for LAF assistance and highlighted that no US equipment has ever been lost to third parties, including Hezbollah. Hezbollah would prefer that US security assistance to Lebanon totally cease, which should be instructive.

We support the relevant provisions of the Taif Accord, and UN Security Council resolutions 1559, 1680, and 1701 requiring “the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon, so that . . . there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than that of the Lebanese state.” At the same time, we expect the Lebanese security forces to be answerable only to the Lebanese government and not subject to influence from Hezbollah or any other non-state actor.

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American Lebanese Alliance* (ALA)



American Lebanese Assembly (ALA)



American Lebanese Coordination Council* (ALCC)



American Task Force for Lebanon (ATFL)



Assembly for Lebanon* (AFL)



Lebanese Information Center* (LIC)



Lebanon Renaissance Foundation (LRF)



National Alliance of Lebanese Americans (NALA)

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