



U.S. Security Assistance to Lebanon

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September 1, 2010

Congressional Research Service

7-5700

www.crs.gov

R40485

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 01 SEP 2010		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2010 to 00-00-2010	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE U.S. Security Assistance to Lebanon				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 101 Independence Ave., SE, Washington, DC, 20540-7500				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 17	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

Summary

The United States has provided security assistance to Lebanon in various forms since the 1980s, and the program has expanded considerably in recent years. Since fiscal year 2007, the United States has provided more than \$700 million in security assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Internal Security Forces (ISF) to increase the capacity of those forces to combat terrorism and secure Lebanon's borders against weapons smuggling to Hezbollah and other armed groups. U.S. security assistance is part of a broader assistance program designed to foster a stable and independent Lebanese government. Primary components of the assistance program include:

- More than \$490 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) designed to support the LAF's implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions which, among other things, call for the disarmament of Hezbollah's militia and the establishment of a weapons-free zone south of the Litani River.
- More than \$6 million in International Military and Education Training (IMET) training to reduce sectarianism in the LAF and develop the force as a unifying national institution.
- More than \$117 million in Section 1206 funds to move rapidly vehicle spare parts, ammunition, and other basic supplies to the LAF.
- More than \$100 million in support for the ISF for training, equipment and vehicles, community policing assistance, and communications.

In 2005, after the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon prompted Syrian withdrawal from Lebanese territory and brought an anti-Syrian and pro-Western government to power, the United States expanded a program of assistance to support that government. After the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, the United States refocused its policy toward building state institutions including the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and the Internal Security Forces (ISF) to enable them to assert control over the entire territory of the country and fulfill the principals of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701. To that end, the Bush Administration requested and Congress appropriated an expanded program of security assistance to the LAF and ISF. The Obama Administration has maintained this commitment, requesting for FY2011 more than \$132 million for the LAF and ISF.

For Congress, there are broader political questions about the purpose and potential limits of U.S. assistance to Lebanon. Some lawmakers are concerned that U.S. support will be channeled to Hezbollah, while others suggest that U.S. aid could be used against Israel. At the same time, U.S. leaders and some Members of Congress have questioned whether U.S. policy fully considers the political position of the Lebanese and their elected leaders on issues of national defense.

See also CRS Report R40054, *Lebanon: Background and U.S. Relations*, by Casey L. Addis.

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Background and Congressional Interest

Key issues facing U.S. policy makers and Members of Congress when considering U.S. security assistance in the context of U.S. policy toward Lebanon include:

- **Assessing the effectiveness of U.S. assistance programs**—Identifying the most urgent capabilities that are still lacking among the LAF and ISF and deciding whether to tailor pending assistance programs to create or improve them. Understanding the key political and organizational obstacles to the further expansion or improvement of Lebanon’s security forces and developing strategies to overcome them.
- **Assessing overall U.S. policy toward Lebanon**—Prioritizing U.S. policy objectives in Lebanon including building state institutions, countering Sunni extremism, deterring Hezbollah, securing Lebanon’s borders, limiting the influence of external actors on Lebanon’s domestic political process, and mitigating the risk of instability in the Levant.
- **Managing relations with other external actors**—Preventing destabilizing actions by regional parties that could renew conflict. Limiting the threats against U.S. allies in the region, particularly Israel. Recognizing and seizing opportunities for the United States and its allies to influence the decisions of regional actors in support of U.S. objectives in Lebanon and the Levant.

In 2005, after the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon prompted Syrian withdrawal from Lebanese territory and brought an anti-Syrian and pro-Western government to power, the United States expanded a program of assistance to support that government. After the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, the United States refocused its policy toward building state institutions including the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and the Internal Security Forces (ISF)¹ to enable them to fulfill the principals of U.N. Security Council Resolutions.² To that end, the Bush Administration requested and Congress appropriated an expanded program of security assistance to the LAF and ISF.

The Obama Administration and some Members of the 111th Congress have supported the continuation of this program. They hope that continued support will help secure Lebanon’s borders against smuggling and, in particular, against the flow of weapons to Hezbollah and other non-state actors. Over the long term, U.S. officials hope that building the security apparatus of the Lebanese state will improve internal stability and public confidence in the LAF and ISF, creating political space for the Lebanese government to address more complex, politically sensitive issues ranging from political reform to developing a national defense strategy.

¹ The LAF is responsible for border security, counter-terrorism, and national defense. The ISF, or police force, is responsible for maintaining law and order in Lebanon. In some cases, however, the responsibilities of the forces overlap.

² United Nations Security Council 1701 (August 11, 2006) called for, among other things, the full cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in parallel with the deployment of LAF and UNIFIL to the area, and the disarmament of all groups in Lebanon other than the LAF and ISF. The full text of the Resolution is available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8808.doc.htm>.

U.S. Security Assistance to Lebanon

The Bush Administration's 2006 request for increased U.S. military assistance to Lebanon marked the third time in the last 25 years that the United States sought to expand military cooperation with the Lebanese government. In the early 1980s, the United States provided between \$145 and \$190 million in grants and loans to the LAF, primarily for training and equipment during the civil war. In the early 1990s, at the end of Lebanon's civil war, the United States again provided military aid, primarily in the form of non-lethal equipment (such as armored personnel carriers and transport helicopters) through the U.S. Department of Defense's sale of Excess Defense Articles (EDA).

For the first time since 1984, President Bush requested Foreign Military Financing (FMF) grants to Lebanon in the FY2006 foreign affairs budget. Originally, his administration sought approximately \$1.0 million in FMF for FY2006 and \$4.8 million for FY2007 to help modernize the small and poorly equipped LAF following Syria's withdrawal of its 15,000-person occupation force in 2005. However, the summer 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah spurred Western donors to increase their assistance to the LAF. Drawing from multiple budget accounts, the Bush Administration ultimately reprogrammed an estimated \$42 million to provide spare parts, technical training, and new equipment to the LAF.³

The FY2007 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act (P.L. 110-28)⁴ included over \$220 million in FMF for Lebanon, a significant increase from the previous year. The request also included an additional \$60 million in International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement assistance (INCLE) to train and equip Lebanon's ISF. In addition, Section 1206 assistance to Lebanon increased in FY2007 to \$30.6 million from the FY2006 level of \$10.6 million (See "U.S. Defense Department-Administered Programs" below). According to the U.S. State Department, U.S. security assistance would:

promote Lebanese control over southern Lebanon and Palestinian refugee camps to prevent them from being used as bases to attack Israel. The U.S. government's active military-to-military programs enhance the professionalism of the Lebanese Armed Forces, reinforcing the concept of Lebanese civilian control. To foster peace and security, the United States intends to build upon welcome and unprecedented Lebanese calls to control the influx of weapons.⁵

The Obama Administration has continued to support the long-standing goals of independence and stability for Lebanon through assistance to the LAF and ISF in the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 (P.L. 111-8) and in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010 (P.L. 111-117). The FY2011 request also reflects this commitment.

³ According to the U.S. State Department, the \$42 million in FY2006 military assistance to Lebanon was reprogrammed from several accounts, including \$10 million from Department of Defense Section 1206 funds, \$2.7 million from FMF, \$28 million from the Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) account, and \$1.2 million total from the Economic Support Fund (ESF) and International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Account (INCLE).

⁴ Also known as the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007.

⁵ See Department of State FY2008 International Affairs (Function 150) Congressional Budget Justification, February 16, 2007.

Table 1. U.S. Security Assistance to Lebanon, FY2007-FY2011

Regular and supplemental foreign operations and defense appropriations; current year \$U.S. in millions

Acct.	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011 (Request)	Total
IMET	\$0.91	\$1.20	\$2.28	\$2.50	\$2.50	\$9.39
I206	\$30.60	\$15.10	\$49.24	\$23.00		\$117.94
FMF	\$224.80	\$6.94	\$159.70	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$591.44
INCLE	\$60.00	\$0.50	\$6.00	\$20.00	\$30.00	\$116.50
I207	\$5.00	\$9.85	\$10.00	--	--	24.85
Total	\$321.31	\$33.59	\$227.22	\$145.50	\$132.50	\$860.12

Source: U.S. Department of State, Congressional Budget Justifications for Foreign Operations, includes funds from the following accounts: Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Assistance (INCLE), International Military and Education Training (IMET). Funding for 'I206' refers to the Department of Defense Global Train and Equip program, authorized by Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 (P.L. 109-163). Funding for 'I207' refers to the Department of Defense Security and Stabilization Assistance program, authorized by Section 1207 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 (P.L. 109-163).

Details of U.S. Assistance to the LAF

The mandate of the LAF includes defending Lebanon and its citizens against external aggression, maintaining internal stability and security, confronting threats against the country's vital interests, engaging in social development activities, and undertaking relief operations in coordination with public and humanitarian institutions.⁶ U.S. assistance to the LAF is based on a 5-year (2010-2014), \$1.1 billion plan to modernize and equip it to extend the sovereignty of the Lebanese state over the entire territory of the country.⁷ The primary goal of U.S. assistance to the LAF, and of broader U.S. policy toward Lebanon, is the full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolutions and a stable, democratic state. To professionalize the LAF, the U.S. government will continue a comprehensive training program designed to provide basic and advanced skills to the LAF and to shape it into a leaner, more efficient force.

U.S. State Department-Administered Programs

Foreign Military Financing (FMF)

FMF is the largest program through which the United States supports the LAF. According to the State Department, FMF supports LAF implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 which, among other things, calls for the establishment of a weapons-free zone south of the Litani River and an end to weapons smuggling across the Lebanon-Syria border. Another primary objective of FMF is to support the Lebanese government in its fight against

⁶ More information on the LAF is available online at <http://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/english/mission.asp>.

⁷ The FY2009 Lebanese defense budget proposal included \$875 million for the LAF. Approximately 80% of this budget is used for personnel costs including salaries, contractual pay bonuses, social security fund contributions, and other allowances. See Aram Nerguizian, "The Lebanese Armed Forces: Challenges and Opportunities in Post-Syria Lebanon," Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 10, 2009.

terrorist groups.⁸ Since 2006, FMF assistance has been used to provide tires for tactical vehicles, spare parts for helicopters, small arms, small arms ammunition, and to improve the LAF's communications system.⁹

FY2009 funds were used to deliver more sophisticated equipment to the LAF. In April 2009, one Cessna Caravan armed with Hellfire missile was provided to the LAF to bolster close air support and surveillance capabilities. The LAF has requested two additional Caravans. Twelve Raven tactical unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) were delivered to the LAF in May 2009 and are currently being used to deter rocket launches from south Lebanon and monitor areas of militant activity. Ten M60 tanks also arrived in May via a third-party transfer from Jordan. The tanks are intended to fill a gap in the LAF's fire support capabilities, with a plan to upgrade and transfer an additional 56 tanks once donor support is solicited.

The LAF has only recently acquired some limited secure communications capability and is attempting to gradually expand this capability to all sectors and levels of the LAF. The LAF currently relies on obsolete systems for radio communications between its headquarters and units in the field. Neither is completely reliable. The tactical units of the LAF do not have communications systems compatible with other agencies of the government and the lack of reliable capability and interoperability with other governmental agencies drives most commanders and staff officers to use land line or cell phones as their primary means of communication. The purchase of new tactical communications equipment is intended to address these shortfalls.

After two years of preparation, FY2009 supplemental funds will allow the launch of a CENTCOM-directed comprehensive training program that over the course of several years will provide basic and advanced skills, streamline the LAF hierarchy, and serve as an important first step toward comprehensive security sector reform in Lebanon. Supplemental funding will also fund trainers, basic training equipment, and supplies to support the program.

The FY2010 FMF spending plan, as submitted to Congress by the State Department, includes \$10 million for sustainment and repair of current equipment, \$14 million for acquisition of air, ground, and naval systems, \$36 million for personal equipment, weapons, and ammunition and \$40 million for close air support. The plan includes the provision of light attack/armed reconnaissance aircraft (LAAR) that, according to the Defense Department, "will provide the LAF with the capabilities to perform border security aerial surveillance and target acquisition." This platform will be able to carry light support weapons and capable of independent finding, fixing, tracking, and engaging targets.¹⁰

⁸ Report from the Secretary of State to Chairwoman Nita Lowey, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, "Certification on Foreign Military Financing and Non-proliferation, Anti-terrorism, De-mining, and Related Programs Assistance for Lebanon," August 18, 2007.

⁹ CRS consultation with Defense Security Cooperation Agency official, September 10, 2008.

¹⁰ CRS Consultation with U.S. Department of State Official, August 5, 2010.

International Military and Education Training (IMET)

The International Military and Education Training (IMET)¹¹ program funds military education and training activities on a grant basis to foreign military and civilian officials from allied and friendly nations. According to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, IMET training in Lebanon is designed to reduce sectarianism in the LAF and develop the force as a unifying national institution. U.S. Professional Military Education (PME) courses help foster one-on-one relationships with U.S. counterparts to improve interoperability, access, coordination, cultural sensitivity, and mutual understanding.¹²

U.S. Defense Department-Administered Programs

Section 1206

In 2005, Congress provided the Department of Defense (DOD) with authority and funds for a major DOD-run train and equip program. Established by Section 1206¹³ of the National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 109-163, adopted January 6, 2006), as a pilot program, this foreign military capacity building authority allows DOD to transfer funds to partner governments to train and equip foreign militaries. According to the Department of Defense, traditional security assistance can take three to four years from conception to execution. Section 1206 responds to urgent and emergent threats and opportunities in six months or less. In Lebanon, Section 1206 funds have been used to move rapidly vehicle spare parts, ammunition, and other basic supplies to the LAF to establish a stronger stabilizing presence throughout the country.¹⁴ In particular, equipment provided under Section 1206 was used to restock the LAF arsenal with basic ammunition after the 2007 siege at Nahr al Bared Palestinian refugee camp and, more recently, to begin to build the LAF's first secure communication system.¹⁵

Details of U.S. Assistance to the ISF

The Internal Security Forces (ISF) is the primary police agency in Lebanon and is responsible for law enforcement, physical security, and crime prevention and investigations. Much like the LAF, the ISF was neglected under Syrian occupation.¹⁶ In 2007, the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) launched an assistance program for

¹¹ Unlike FMF and INCLE, the U.S. has provided IMET grants to Lebanon every fiscal year since 1959, with the exception of 1991 and 1992.

¹² CRS consultation with Defense Security Cooperation Agency official, September 10, 2008.

¹³ See also CRS Report RS22855, *Security Assistance Reform: "Section 1206" Background and Issues for Congress*, by Nina M. Serafino.

¹⁴ *FY2009 DOD Summary Justification*, p. 103.

¹⁵ On May 20, 2007, Lebanese police conducted raids against suspected terrorist organization Fatah al Islam hideouts in Tripoli, Lebanon, reportedly in pursuit of bank robbers. Fighting between Fatah al Islam militants and Lebanese army and police units spread to the nearby Nahr al Bared Palestinian refugee camp and echoed in smaller clashes in the Ayn al Hilweh refugee camp in southern Lebanon. Fighting continued for three months until September 3, 2007, when the Army announced that it had taken control of the camp. By the end of the hostilities, 168 Lebanese soldiers and 42 civilians had died in the fighting. The camp was badly damaged, and as many as 30,000 residents were displaced.

¹⁶ The FY2009 Lebanese budget proposal for the ISF was \$425 million. The FY2009 budget proposal is available online at <http://www.finance.gov.lb/NR/rdonlyres/F468E478-D9E5-4174-9E1D-D1570832F97F/0/BudgetProposalReport2009.pdf>.

the ISF to address these weaknesses. The program is funded through a combination of Section 1207 and INCLE accounts.¹⁷ Specifically, the program is designed to increase the operational capacity of the force to combat crime, prevent and respond to terror attacks, monitor Lebanon's borders, and combat the infiltration of weapons and terrorists into Lebanon as called for in United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701.

There are four primary components of INL support to the ISF: training, equipment and vehicles, community policing assistance, and communications.

- As of August 2010, INL has trained over 4,300 ISF police, including 260 ISF trainers and over 200 supervisors, in its 10 week basic training and other advanced courses. Additional specialized training has been provided on narcotics investigation, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) protection, and executive leadership. The INL program is also refurbishing ISF training facilities.
- INL has provided non lethal equipment including 4000 sets of basic duty gear, 3000 sets of riot control gear, 480 police cars, 60 police SUVs, 35 handheld radios, 20 computers, 20 new and 24 repaired Harley Davidson motorcycles, and refurbished 21 Armored Personnel Vehicles. These procurements are intended to increase ISF capacity to patrol and respond in an expanding area of Lebanon.
- To prepare the ISF for a new security role in the Nahr al Bared refugee camp, INL began an extensive community policing training and assistance program in FY2010. Assistance includes training of ISF officers who will serve in the camp and assistance to support the adoption of a community policing strategy throughout Lebanon. INL has also begun construction of an ISF police station near the camp.
- INL is developing a program to provide a secure, nationwide command, control and communications system for the ISF. The program will be funded with FY2011 funds.

Issues for Congress

U.S. foreign assistance to the LAF and ISF has improved the capability of those forces to provide for Lebanon's internal security needs (See "Recent LAF Accomplishments" and "Recent ISF Accomplishments" below), but broader political questions are unanswered about the purpose and potential limits of U.S. assistance. Some Lebanese leaders continue to question the appropriateness of U.S. and other international security assistance and characterize LAF/ISF cooperation with external parties as an infringement on Lebanese sovereignty.¹⁸ Statements from Lebanese leaders across the political spectrum suggest that most perceive Israel to be the primary external threat to Lebanon's security, even as some who hold this view simultaneously argue that Hezbollah's weapons and Syrian and Iranian support for Hezbollah are significant if not comparable transnational threats. To the extent that U.S. assistance and arms sales are limited to training and items designed to improve Lebanese government capability to contain and

¹⁷ CRS consultation with U.S. State Department official, March 3, 2009.

¹⁸ In June 2010, Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri reportedly sent a letter to Prime Minister Saad Hariri and President Michel Sleiman calling a 2007 agreement governing security cooperation between the United States and the ISF "unconstitutional."

potentially disarm Hezbollah and other internal threats, they may become incompatible with the evolving threat perceptions and political intentions of Lebanon's political leadership. Events continue to suggest that Lebanese leaders are prepared to seek security assistance and weapons from non-U.S. sources to meet their perceived needs.¹⁹

On August 3, 2010, the LAF opened fire on an Israeli Defense Force (IDF) unit engaged in routine brush-clearing maintenance along the Blue Line,²⁰ alleging that it had crossed over into Lebanese territory. Two Lebanese soldiers, a journalist, and an Israeli officer were killed in the confrontation.²¹ Soon after the incident, UNIFIL issued a report confirming that the IDF had not been in Lebanese territory, but it later concluded that the IDF was, in fact, on the Lebanese side of the border. Although incidents along the Blue Line are not uncommon, UNIFIL called this incident the "most serious" along the Israeli-Lebanese border since 2006.

In response, Congresswoman Nita Lowey, chair of the State Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations placed a hold²² on the FY2010 \$100 million FMF appropriation for Lebanon citing the need to "determine whether equipment that the United States provided to the Lebanese Armed Forces was used against our ally, Israel."²³ Prior to the incident on August 3, Congressman Howard Berman, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, also placed a hold on the FY2010 assistance, pending a better understanding from the State Department about the strategy for U.S. assistance to Lebanon and assurances that the LAF is a responsible actor.²⁴ Other Members also publicly expressed concerns. The Administration is currently reviewing U.S. policy toward Lebanon, although initial State Department statements indicate that the Administration's commitment to the assistance program is not in question.²⁵ It is

¹⁹ For example, on June 4, 2010, Prime Minister Saad Hariri and Defense Minister Elias Murr met with Russian defense officials to discuss the delivery of helicopter, artillery, and tank systems to Lebanon. OSC Report GMP20100604966117, "Hariri Meets With Russian Officials, Discusses Military Cooperation" NOW Lebanon (Beirut) June 4, 2010; and, OSC Report GMP20100604966121, "Russian Helicopters To Be Delivered Before End of June," NOW Lebanon (Beirut) June 4, 2010.

²⁰ The Blue Line is a U.N.-determined border used to confirm Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2001. It is not the internationally recognized border between Israel and Lebanon. Israel also erected a technical fence in the border area. It also is not the internationally recognized border nor is it the same as the Blue Line. For more information, see UNIFIL's official website at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unifil/index.shtml>.

²¹ The Lebanese government has reportedly denied that any U.S.-provided equipment was used in the attack and Israeli officials have informed the U.S. Department of State that they have no information indicating that such equipment was used. CRS consultation with U.S. State Department Official, August 5, 2010.

²² Foreign aid laws since 1977 have required the Administration to notify congressional committees 15 days in advance of obligating funds for economic and military aid projects under certain circumstances. Formally, these legal provisions only require the Administration to notify relevant committees, but do not offer authority for the committees to block the obligation of funds. Executive branch officials have consistently maintained the position that these are "notification and wait" requirements and that they are not legally bound by a congressional objection. In practice, however, informal arrangements have been adopted by the two branches whereby the chairman and other committee members can place "holds" on the obligation of funds, pending further consultation with agency officials. In most cases, discussions are held, the hold is removed, and funds are obligated, possibly with some modification to accommodate congressional concerns. For a detailed assessment of this informal arrangement, see Senate Foreign Relations hearings, *El Salvador: Reprogramming*, March 1983.

²³ Jonathan Broder, "U.S. Military Aid to Lebanon Placed on Hold," *CQ Today Online News*, August 9, 2010.

²⁴ House Committee on Foreign Affairs Press Release, August 9, 2010, available online at http://www.hcfa.house.gov/press_display.asp?id=751.

²⁵ According to Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Philip Crowley, "...We are, as we said last week, going to review our programs with Lebanon. That review is ongoing as we speak. We still believe that the assistance – the security assistance that we provide to Lebanon is in our national interest." U.S. Department of State Daily Press Briefing, August 16, 2010, available online at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2010/08/146001.htm>.

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unclear how current concerns will impact Congressional consideration of the Administration's FY2011 request for Lebanon.

How Effective is U.S. Security Assistance to Lebanon?

U.S. State Department and Defense Department officials praise both the LAF and ISF for their performance and laud both forces' End Use Monitoring (EUM) record, but larger questions remain about long-term strategy and the overall effectiveness of U.S. assistance in meeting challenging U.S. policy objectives.

Recent LAF Accomplishments

- LAF Ranger Regiment and Marine Commandos secured downtown Beirut during the February 14 commemoration of the 5th anniversary of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.
- In January and February 2010, LAF Marine Commandos responded to the crash of Ethiopian Airlines flight ET 409, recovering 80 victims in addition to the black box flight recorder.
- In July 2009, the LAF arrested a Syrian citizen trying to smuggle out of Lebanon several people wanted in connection to attacks against the LAF in Tripoli.
- In June 2009, the LAF thwarted an attempt to drive a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device into the Ayn al Hilweh refugee camp in Sidon. A Fatah al Islam member was arrested in connection with the incident.
- In April 2009, in response to an ambush of the 8th Brigade, the Ranger Regiment conducted operations in the Bekaa Valley from Riyak Airbase north to the Syrian border, which resulted in the arrest of numerous wanted men, in addition to the seizure and destruction of illicit crops.²⁶

Vetting and End Use Monitoring

The Lebanese government complies with end-use, security, and retransfer obligations concerning military equipment and training. Equipment and training are subject to regular end-use monitoring by the U.S. Embassy's Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC), including visual inspections of LAF depots, serial number checks for equipment, and close monitoring of in-country, U.S.-sponsored training. According the Department of State, the Lebanese government has readily agreed to extensive end-use monitoring procedures at the request of the U.S. government for sensitive equipment such as night vision devices and sniper rifles. According to the State Department, the government of Lebanon is a "model" in end-use monitoring cooperation.²⁷ Candidates for U.S.-sponsored training are subject to the vetting process for human rights abuses specified in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.²⁸

(...continued)

²⁶ CRS Consultation with U.S. Department of State Official, August 12, 2010.

²⁷ Testimony of Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman to Congress, March 24, (continued...)

Recent ISF Accomplishments

Recent ISF accomplishments include:

- Public confidence in the ISF as a non-sectarian institution committed to a united, stable Lebanon increased by 17% from 2008 to 2009.²⁹ Unlike the LAF, the ISF has not historically had the reputation as a cross-sectarian, national institution.
- The ISF has expanded its area of operation in the traditionally Hezbollah-controlled areas of South Beirut and the Bekaa Valley.
- During the June, 2009 elections, the ISF helped maintain security in Lebanon and facilitated a safe and secure election environment.
- End use monitoring of INL provided equipment shows that the equipment is being properly used and maintained by the ISF.³⁰

Vetting and End Use Monitoring

INL requires end-use monitoring agreements for all equipment delivered and facilities refurbished under the INCLE program. Monitoring is conducted by U.S. Embassy Beirut. All information is compiled into INL's annual End-Use Monitoring Report which includes information on location, use, condition, and program impact of the equipment provided. The reports also contain information on any problems encountered during the monitoring period and any program changes implemented. INL secures relevant binding commitments from the government of Lebanon through Letters of Agreement, setting forth extensive end-use, retransfer, and human rights related commitments, which the Lebanese government undertakes as a condition for receiving assistance.³¹ All ISF candidates selected for U.S. sponsored training are first vetted for human rights abuses as specified in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 as well as for connections to Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) through a process coordinated by the Terrorist Screening Center.³²

Does U.S. Security Assistance Address Broader Policy Goals?

Current U.S. policy toward Lebanon and U.S. assistance to the LAF has been built around the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions, particularly UNSCR 1701, adopted on August 11, 2006. Section 14 and other language in the resolution that bans the delivery of weapons to "any entity or individual" in Lebanon, except the Lebanese Army, have been interpreted as a call for Hezbollah to disarm and a mandate for the Lebanese government to

(...continued)

2009.

²⁸ Section 6205 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 USC 2378d) was enacted in annual foreign operations appropriations. Popularly cited as the "Leahy Amendment," the law prohibits U.S. military assistance to foreign military units that violate human rights. The provision was put into permanent law in FY2008.

²⁹ INL/Lebanon Program Fact Sheet, U.S. Department of State, July 2010.

³⁰ INL/Lebanon Program Fact Sheet, U.S. Department of State, July 2010.

³¹ CRS consultation with Department of State official, September 9, 2008.

³² CRS consultation with Department of State official, September 9, 2008.

prevent the flow of weapons to Hezbollah.³³ Over the long term, U.S. officials hope that building the security apparatus of the Lebanese state will improve internal stability and public confidence in the LAF and ISF, creating political space for the Lebanese government to address more complex, politically-sensitive issues ranging from political reform to developing a national defense strategy.

Advocates of U.S. assistance to the LAF/ISF have argued that rooting out Sunni extremism, like in the case of Nahr al Bared, along with other counterterrorism and counternarcotics success are important measures of success for assistance programs. They also argue that assistance to the LAF/ISF is symbolic as well as functional – demonstrating the commitment of the U.S. to the Lebanese state and countering the influence of Iran and Syria. Some of these advocates also argue that cutting off U.S. assistance would do greater harm to U.S. interests in the region and greater harm to Israel's security, since it would allow Syria and Iran to fill the vacuum left by the United States.

The skirmish between the LAF and IDF on August 3, 2010 raised fundamental questions about U.S. strategy in Lebanon. On one hand, the United States is committed to building state institutions in Lebanon, including enabling the LAF to extend its control over all areas of the state, taking up the mantle of national defense from Hezbollah, which has historically claimed it. The LAF's willingness to engage the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) indicates that it is assuming more responsibilities along its shared border with Israel but also exposes what critics have identified as an inherent tension in current U.S. policy—the U.S. aims to build a force strong enough to provide national defense for Lebanon, but the LAF, and arguably most Lebanese, view Israel as the greatest potential threat to Lebanese sovereignty.

The Integrity of the LAF

Is It a Threat to Israel?

The LAF enjoys a positive image among a wide spectrum of Lebanese citizens. Observers say that most Lebanese, regardless of their affiliation, perceive the army as defending the country against foreign elements, particularly Israel. Many Lebanese view the LAF as the only national institution left in the country.³⁴ While the United States and other members of the international community have trained and equipped the LAF, the Lebanese government has worked to define the role of the LAF and other militias through a series of discussions on national defense policy known as the National Dialogue. Following the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel, and the months of political gridlock that followed, Hezbollah styled itself as the Lebanese “resistance” against Israeli aggression, and gained popular support through its relief and reconstruction efforts following the war. If a goal of U.S. policy is to increase the capacity of the LAF to such a size that it could compel Hezbollah to give up its weapons, then the LAF would first need to pass the political test of convincing the Lebanese that it could credibly defend the country against regional threats. This political reality raises questions about whether U.S. security assistance to the LAF is consistent with expressed U.S. policy goals in Lebanon, and whether U.S. policy fully considers the political position of the Lebanese and their elected leaders on issues of national defense.

³³ See statement of U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice to the U.N. Security Council, August 11, 2006. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8808.doc.htm>.

³⁴ Hassan M. Fattah, “Army Provides a Sense of Unity in Fractured Lebanon,” *New York Times*, June 20, 2007.

U.S. policy toward Lebanon has been further complicated by the fact that Lebanon's political process is now intensely focused on Hezbollah's future role in the country's political system and security sector. Hezbollah politicians won 10 seats out of 128 in parliament in the 2009 national elections, and Hezbollah currently controls the Agriculture and Administrative Reform ministries within Lebanon's cabinet. This reality has called into question how Hezbollah's growing influence in the Lebanese government does or does not extend its influence in the day-to-day operation of government institutions, including the LAF.

Some critics of U.S. assistance, including the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), have alleged that the LAF and even UNIFIL have "allowed" Hezbollah to restock its arsenal since 2006 in violation of 1701.³⁵ These same critics also might argue that the LAF and Hezbollah are, to a certain degree, natural allies, bound by a common threat perception and a regional outlook that is not shared by the United States. Recently, Israeli media sources reported that Israel was launching a campaign to end U.S. support for the LAF. Israel has, at times, opposed the transfer of certain equipment and weapons to the LAF based on concerns that the equipment could fall into the hands of Hezbollah or adversely affect its Qualitative Military Edge (QME).³⁶ U.S. officials have often expressed an unwavering commitment to Israel's QME when discussing U.S. assistance to the LAF.³⁷

Is It Deterring Hezbollah?

U.S. officials have repeatedly stated that U.S. assistance to the LAF is not intended to enable the force to militarily confront Hezbollah. Rather, U.S. assistance to the LAF and ISF are part of a larger assistance package designed to strengthen Lebanese institutions in an effort to create the political space necessary for Lebanon to address the question of Hezbollah's weapons in the context of a national defense strategy. At present, however, clear solutions to the challenges that Hezbollah poses to the governments of Lebanon, Israel, and the United States are not evident. Administration reports state that Hezbollah has rearmed and expanded its arsenal in defiance of United Nations Security Council resolutions and in spite of international efforts to prevent the smuggling of weaponry from Iran and Syria into Lebanon. Lebanese border and maritime security capabilities remain nascent, and longstanding political conflicts continue to prevent the clear delineation of boundaries between Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. Administration reports state that Iran continues to provide Hezbollah with weapons, training, and financing, thereby sustaining the organization's ability to field an effective military force that threatens Israel's security and the sovereignty of the Lebanese government. Hezbollah's electoral success in the 2009 national elections and its seats in Lebanon's cabinet complicate U.S. and other international efforts to engage with Beirut on security issues and a number of key reform questions. Lebanon's domestic political environment remains fractured by sectarian and political rivalries and its leaders remain

³⁵ See, for example, "LAF Provocation Demands Tough International Response," August 4, 2010, available online at http://www.aipac.org/Publications/AIPACAnalysesMemos/AIPAC_Memo_-_LAF_Provocation_Demands_Tough_International_Response.pdf.

³⁶ "Israel Worried Over Proposed U.S. Tank Sale to Lebanon," Israel National News Online, November 23, 2008.

³⁷ In response to such concerns, a U.S. Department of Defense official said that the United States does not provide assistance to Lebanon without "considering the concerns of Israel and Israel's qualitative edge," adding that U.S. military aid to the LAF is designed to "strengthen the army domestically, not regionally" and that M60 tanks would be "no match" for Israel's Merkava 4 tanks. See Andrew Wander "U.S. Mindful of Israel When Aiding Lebanese Army," *Daily Star* (Beirut), December 3, 2008.

at an impasse with regard to the overarching questions of the country's security needs and the future of Hezbollah's weapons.

Appendix. Map of Lebanon



Source: Map Resources. Adapted by CRS.

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