

Making the Lebanon Ceasefire Work: Security Requirements and Implications for an International Force

by [Michael Eisenstadt \(/experts/michael-eisenstadt\)](/experts/michael-eisenstadt)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Michael Eisenstadt \(/experts/michael-eisenstadt\)](/experts/michael-eisenstadt)

Michael Eisenstadt is the Kahn Fellow and director of The Washington Institute's Military and Security Studies Program.



Brief Analysis

On August 23, 2006, Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Daniel Christman, Emile El-Hokayem, and Michael Eisenstadt addressed The Washington Institute's Special Policy Forum. General Christman is senior vice president for international affairs at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and previously served as assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Emile El-Hokayem is a Middle East analyst at the Henry L. Stimson Center. Michael Eisenstadt is director of The Washington Institute's Military and Security Studies Program. The following is a rapporteur's summary of their remarks.

DANIEL CHRISTMAN

UN Security Council Resolution 1701 grants broad discretionary power to the international force, yet it also tasks the force with duties that it cannot undertake on its own. The international force cannot be expected to aid with the disarmament of Hizballah without a domestic Lebanese mandate to carry out this task. No peacekeeping force can be expected to solve the problems of securing political consensus within Lebanon on such an issue. If the internal political issues are not resolved, no peacekeeping force will be able to keep the peace.

The size of the peacekeeping force is critical to its success. While thirty thousand troops would be satisfactory, the reality appears to be fifteen thousand at most. While European NATO members have competent forces to fulfill this role, shrunken military expenditure in those countries means that their militaries will not be able to sustain a long-term effort. And while the Europeans would certainly be willing to maintain a long-term logistical presence, this is not what is needed to achieve the stated goals of Resolution 1701.

Another key to success will be a simple, unified chain of command. Commanders on the ground must report to a single theater command, which in turn reports to a single point of contact at UN headquarters. If field commanders report directly to the governments in their countries of origin, that will undercut the force's effectiveness. A force made up of units with similar doctrines, training, and tactics would maximize the effectiveness of the peacekeeping force. The various European forces train on much the same level, and they should enjoy a superior degree of coordination. Yet the more forces that are brought in from different parts of the globe, the less effective the response will be if hostilities break out again.

A final key to success will be consistent and adequate rules of engagement that grant a broad mandate to the peacekeeping mission. Further, the forces should enter the region prepared to implement those rules of engagement. Prior to their deployment, possible scenarios should be rehearsed and analyzed to ensure the force's effectiveness in promoting stability. Their weaponry must match the mission, which means the force must have access to heavy weaponry and air support, and it must have reliable and comprehensive intelligence channels.

Bearing in mind all these issues, prospects for the success of the peacekeeping mission are not good.

EMILE EL-HOKAYEM

Lebanese prime minister Fouad Siniora has remained consistent since the outbreak of hostilities, calling from day one for an immediate ceasefire and the deployment of an international force while trying to prevent the collapse of his cabinet. Siniora acknowledged that the Lebanese government had to be a constructive force in reaching a solution and therefore put forward a number of initiatives to demonstrate his resolve—such as his seven-point plan and the proposal to deploy fifteen thousand troops—even before the UN agreed to Resolution 1701. His diplomatic efforts paid off, putting pressure on Israel, Hizballah, and the international community to end the fighting. Most Lebanese credit him with finding a solution, though his other main concern was avoiding the collapse of his government and averting possible civil war. By putting himself at the center of international diplomacy, Siniora preserved the credibility of his government and managed to create the political conditions to obtain Hizballah's buy-in to the eventual ceasefire.

The Lebanese government is now working hard to demonstrate that it is serious about deploying its military in the south, monitoring its borders, and constraining Hizballah. Nevertheless, it lacks the political and military capabilities to disarm Hizballah. Hizballah has one minister in the government and ties to other Shiite cabinet members; the group therefore can cripple the government either by boycotting, resigning from, or even forcing the hand of the government. In any case, Hizballah currently is more concerned with tending to the humanitarian needs of its constituency, capitalizing on its perceived victory, and adapting to a changed environment in southern Lebanon. Hizballah seeks normalcy—that is, quiet with Israel—since its survival and its enhanced standing are enough of a success in the aftermath of the war with Israel. Moreover, for now Syria is unlikely to incite Hizballah to act out further and enflame the region. Thus, the government is relying on Hizballah's judgment not to provoke an international crisis, though Hizballah may find itself held accountable within the government and by the public following the deployment of an international force.

Much hinges on the performance of the Lebanese Army. Its capabilities remain very limited and it is ostensibly powerless and unwilling to confront Hizballah. There is sympathy within the army for Hizballah's struggle against Israel, though this is a far cry from actual allegiance or alignment with the organization. The Lebanese public regards its army as a legitimate and credible force—when deployed to southern Lebanon, it represents the hope of national unity in a society prone to factionalism.

While the situation may still be manageable, the international peacekeeping force is vital if another crisis—this time of much bigger proportion—is to be averted. Terje Roed-Larsen, the UN special representative for Lebanon, has stated that the security vacuum in southern Lebanon could lead to a major escalation.

MICHAEL EISENSTADT

Peacekeeping experiences in other parts of the world throw light on the prerequisites for success in Lebanon. The most successful missions have been to monitor settlements that have already been reached, not to impose settlements by force. Key issues addressed in Resolution 1701 are not agreed upon by the relevant parties, and the international force cannot be expected to enforce such norms on their own.

Moreover, it is imperative to get the size, composition, and mandate of the peacekeeping force right the first time

around, since there may not be another opportunity to correct shortcomings in these areas later. When the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was introduced in 1978, the prime concern was the rapid deployment of some kind of peacekeeping force along the Israeli-Lebanon border to prevent the crisis in Lebanon from endangering the fledgling Egypt-Israel peace process. In the rush to deploy such a force, the number of troops and their mandate received insufficient attention. This same dynamic seems to be at work now.

To succeed, UNIFIL should engage not just in peacekeeping, but in stabilization. The conventional forces that provide the foundation for peacekeeping should be supplemented by police, engineering, and civil affairs units to help build the capacity of the Lebanese government. Yet the political turmoil within Lebanon, coupled with the tepid response of the international community, will likely hinder the new international force's effectiveness. Hizballah reconstruction efforts are already underway. The international community must quickly launch reconstruction efforts in support of the Lebanese government as a counterweight to Hizballah's influence.

Hizballah seems to be preoccupied not with renewing the conflict but with rearmament. The primary responsibility of preventing Hizballah's rearmament falls on the Lebanese government with the assistance of UNIFIL. Since they currently are incapable of assuming this responsibility, the international force should be particularly concerned with patrolling the Syrian border and hindering the rearmament process, which has the potential to be the spark that ignites the next round of conflict.

This rapporteur's summary was prepared by David Kugel. ❖

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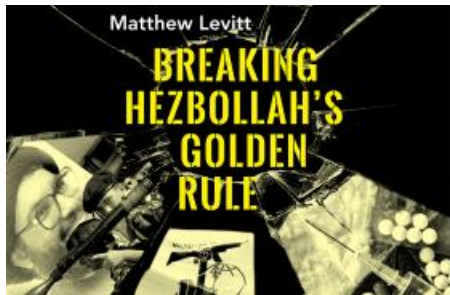
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