

Ceasefire Options for Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1559

by [David Schenker \(/experts/david-schenker\)](/experts/david-schenker)

Jul 24, 2006

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[David Schenker \(/experts/david-schenker\)](/experts/david-schenker)

David Schenker is the Taube Senior Fellow at The Washington Institute and director of the Program on Arab Politics. He is the former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.



Brief Analysis

On Wednesday, an international conference will open in Italy to discuss the state of Lebanon and explore potential formulas for an Israeli-Hizballah ceasefire. Current conditions make an immediate ceasefire unlikely, but should changing events make a ceasefire possible, one of the first priorities for the Bush administration and the international community will be to find a mechanism to reinvigorate and implement the remaining stipulations of UN Security Council Resolution 1559. In particular, that means disarming Hizballah. The group will no doubt oppose international and domestic efforts to disarm it, but the Lebanese government and the international community can take steps in the context of a ceasefire to consolidate Lebanese resentment toward Hizballah and press ahead with Resolution 1559.

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1559, which called for “all remaining foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon,” “extension of the control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory,” and “the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias,” in September 2004. But the resolution had little practical effect until the February 2005 assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri. In the aftermath of the killing, Syria was forced out of Lebanon.

While the Syrian withdrawal was a significant first step toward implementation, little progress was made on the resolution’s other clauses. In March 2006, leaders from across the Lebanese political spectrum convened in a National Dialogue specifically to discuss disarmament and other controversial issues. Because of the respect for consensus decisionmaking—a product of the years of civil war—the talks made no headway. Indeed, save for a meaningless agreement to disarm Palestinian militias outside their camps—to which the Palestinians responded that they would move their weapons into the camps—five months of National Dialogue discussions have resulted in no tangible gains. The presence of Iranian troops on Lebanese soil—the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)—remains an outstanding critical issue in 1559 implementation as well.

A Role for the Lebanese Armed Forces?

Last week, Lebanese minister of defense Elias Murr said that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) would join Hizballah to fight Israel in the event of a ground invasion. But the LAF could play a more productive role in the event of a

ceasefire: Lebanese troops could deploy to the border with Israel with government support and Hizballah quiescence.

The LAF is a fighting force of approximately 70,000 men. During the decades-long Syrian occupation, Syrian troops were responsible for much of Lebanon's security requirements. As such, in the aftermath of Syria's April 2005 withdrawal, LAF responsibilities have increased dramatically. The LAF also faces several other difficulties.

Funding. The LAF budget covers just enough to sustain current equipment levels, and not enough to procure new or additional materiel. As such, the military suffers from shortages of basic equipment, ranging from bullets to operational helicopters.

Cohesion. There are questions regarding the LAF's ability to maintain unit cohesion should it be called upon to deploy into politically sensitive missions. Although the officer corps largely reflects the sectarian composition of Lebanese society, the enlisted ranks do not receive routine training and are widely believed to be predominately Shiite. This demographic mix could undermine the effectiveness of the LAF in the event of a deployment to the South.

Possible Hizballah sympathies. It is difficult to ascertain the level of support within the LAF for Hizballah. However, last week the Israelis destroyed an LAF radar station in the belief the facility was used to support the firing of the Chinese-Iranian C-802 missile that nearly sunk one of Israel's three Saar-5-class missile boats. If the Israeli claim of collusion is true, it would suggest that either the LAF leadership authorized cooperation with Hizballah, or rogue elements in the LAF supported the missile firing. Both explanations are troubling.

Based on numbers alone, the LAF could pose a serious counterweight to Hizballah—70,000 LAF soldiers to approximately 1,000 hardened Hizballah fighters and 15,000 Hizballah reservists—should the central government choose to support implementation of Resolution 1559. The LAF did intercept a shipment of twelve trucks of Iranian weapons traveling from Syria to Lebanon in February 2006. Regrettably, the arms were allowed to proceed, according to LAF chief of staff Michel Suleyman, based on prime minister Fouad Siniora's pronouncement that Hizballah was a "legitimate resistance" organization.

It is hard to foresee circumstances under which the LAF would forcibly disarm Hizballah. At the very least, any attempt to do so would seriously strain the capabilities and cohesion of the LAF. A more realistic role for the LAF would be to assume a more active role on the Israeli border if Hizballah agreed to pull back and to enforce a ban on Hizballah rearmament. The risk is that LAF performance in even this limited capacity would be spotty, either due to political pressure or due to sympathy with Hizballah by local LAF commanders. In this scenario, Hizballah could continue to pose a serious threat to Israel, but Israel would be constrained from reacting because of the LAF presence on the border.

A Potential International Role

As former United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) official Timur Goksel told the New York Times on July 18, UN forces in Lebanon would be either ineffective or provocative or both. The current small monitoring force, he said, is "barely able to take care of themselves," adding that any more substantial deployment geared toward deterring Hizballah actions "will immediately be seen as an occupation force and then the trouble will start." [See [PolicyWatch no. 1130 \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2495\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2495) by Michael Eisenstadt for a detailed discussion of international peacekeepers and Lebanon.]

However, there is a need for credible monitors to prevent weapons destined for Hizballah from entering Lebanon. Rather than rely on UN peacekeepers ill equipped for the mission, a much more promising approach would be to use one of several commercial firms with experience monitoring shipments. Several of these firms have experience running the customs service for developing countries. One example of employing such a firm to verify that

prohibited items were not being shipped was the role Lloyds played inspecting shipments to Iraq in the 1990s, especially its role taking over from the U.S. Navy the inspection of all goods arriving at the Jordanian port of Aqaba to ensure that no prohibited goods were in transit to Iraq. If the Lebanese government were to request it, the international community could support this kind of monitoring. To be sure, the monitors would need robust powers to inspect shipments in order to detect smuggling.

Lebanon Must Take the Lead

Even if the Siniora government had international support to deploy the LAF to the south and establish third-party monitors on the border, Hizballah would attempt to evade any controls placed upon it. In order to prevent a renewal of Hizballah's destabilization of Lebanon through its attacks on Israel, the Lebanese government will need to move away from traditional Lebanese consensus politics and rally the majority of the Lebanese who do not support Hizballah behind the ideas that the state must have a monopoly on force in Lebanon and only the government can make decisions about when to go to war.

To move ahead with the implementation of Resolution 1559, Siniora and his coalition may well have to remove Hizballah from the government and make otherwise distasteful choices about the composition of his cabinet and the Office of the Presidency. Another option would be to couple the pressure on Hizballah with positive incentives. In this scenario, Siniora would encourage Hizballah's political participation—in exchange for laying down its weapons and expelling IRGC forces—by reapportioning positions within the government to reflect the high percentage of Shiites (not necessarily Hizballah supporters) in Lebanon. If any of these options are to work, Hizballah's arms and personnel may eventually have to be absorbed by the LAF. Granted, none of these options will be appealing to the Siniora government or to Hizballah, and will take a great deal of political capital to push forward. At the end of the day, the international community will support the Lebanese government in its determination to take difficult decisions. Regardless of the direction Siniora chooses, however, Lebanon must lead.

David Schenker is a senior fellow in Arab politics at The Washington Institute. ❖

Policy #1131

RECOMMENDED



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Iran Takes Next Steps on Rocket Technology](#)

Feb 11, 2022

◆
Farzin Nadimi

(/policy-analysis/iran-takes-next-steps-rocket-technology)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

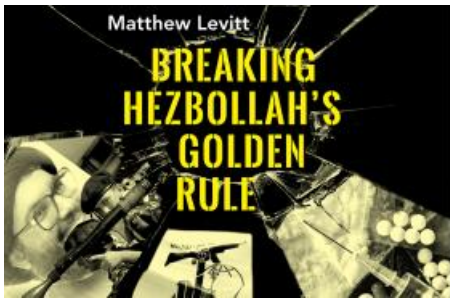
[Saudi Arabia Adjusts Its History, Diminishing the Role of Wahhabism](#)

Feb 11, 2022



Simon Henderson

[\(/policy-analysis/saudi-arabia-adjusts-its-history-diminishing-role-wahhabism\)](#)



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

[Podcast: Breaking Hezbollah's Golden Rule](#)

Feb 9, 2022



Matthew Levitt

[\(/policy-analysis/podcast-breaking-hezbollahs-golden-rule\)](#)

TOPICS

[Arab & Islamic Politics \(/policy-analysis/arab-islamic-politics\)](#)

[Military & Security \(/policy-analysis/military-security\)](#)

[U.S. Policy \(/policy-analysis/us-policy\)](#)

REGIONS & COUNTRIES

[Lebanon \(/policy-analysis/lebanon\)](#)