**Israel Lobbies UNIFIL Nations Against Hezbollah Arms Ahead of UN Debate**

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Israel made its case on Monday to countries that contribute troops to the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), saying they have to do much more to both inspect for, and report on, Hezbollah arms violations in southern Lebanon.

Foreign Ministry deputy director-general for diplomacy Alon Ushpiz and deputy director-general for the United Nations and International Organizations Alon Bar briefed a number of ambassadors from states contributing to UNIFIL to voice Israel’s expectations before a discussion on UNIFIL scheduled for the Security Council on Wednesday.

Israel’s position is that while UNIFIL plays an important role, it needs to do more to implement UNSC Resolution 1701, by inspecting sites where there are suspicions that Hezbollah has stored weapons, and reporting to the UN on Hezbollah violations.

The resolution, which put an end to the Second Lebanon War in 2006, increased the size of UNIFIL and mandated it with ensuring that arms are not transferred to Hezbollah in south Lebanon.

Israel does not expect UNIFIL to confront the terrorist organization militarily, but it wants there to be a better record of violations, one diplomatic official said. Jerusalem has complained in recent months that it has provided information to UNIFIL about Hezbollah establishing outposts along the border with Israel, but that these complaints were summarily dismissed without serious investigation or inspection.

Among the states contributing the most troops to UNIFIL are, in descending order: Indonesia, Italy, India, Spain, Ghana, Nepal, Malaysia, France, Finland and Ireland.

Neither Indonesia, with 1,288 soldiers in the force, nor Malaysia, with 829, have diplomatic relations with Israel. The force has some 10,700 military personnel from 41 countries.

The meeting at the ministry came just days after senior UNIFIL officials briefed the same ambassadorial delegation about the situation, but from UNIFIL’s perspective.

According to Israeli officials, Israel’s call for more reporting of Hezbollah violations of 1701 stems from the belief that both Hezbollah and its Iranian backers are sensitive to international opinion and do not want to have to deal with reports of violations.

Israeli officials acknowledged that Israel and the UN do not see eye to eye on the effectiveness of the UNIFIL force.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued a report on Friday saying the UN was unable to confirm Israel’s claims that the terrorist organization was arming itself in southern Lebanon, in violation of 1701.

He said that although there are regular allegations of arms transfers to Hezbollah, the UN “is not in a position to substantiate them independently.”

Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon said in an interview in September that UNIFIL “needs to do more,” including reporting on arms that are being transferred to Hezbollah.

UNIFIL, Danon said, claims the situation in the south is “excellent” and quiet, “although we know that it is not quiet, and they are arming along the border.”

US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley concurred in August, slamming the Irish head of UNIFIL, Maj.-Gen. Michael Beary, for ignoring Iran’s covert arming of Hezbollah.

“Hezbollah openly brags about their weapons. They parade them before TV cameras. The secretary-general’s reports have confirmed this. For the UNIFIL commander to deny it... shows that we need to have changes in UNIFIL,” Haley said.