

Following further negotiations, the humanitarian agreement was signed by Hizbullah and Israel on 2 July, providing for an exchange of reports on humanitarian cases of particular sensitivity, including the case of Ron Arad, an Israeli airman missing in Lebanon since 1986, as well as on the fate of four Iranians abducted in Lebanon in 1982. The second phase of the agreement called for the two Israeli soldiers to be repatriated in exchange for the five Lebanese prisoners remaining in Israeli custody, the remains of eight Lebanese killed in action during the 2006 war, information on two Lebanese citizens, Yahya Skaff and Muhammad Farran, the remains of four members of the Dallal Mughrabi group, as well as up to 199 other Lebanese citizens, mostly of Palestinian origin. In a final phase, Israel would release Palestinian detainees in appreciation of successful UN facilitation and in anticipation of further UN-sponsored support for its endeavours to uncover the fate of Ron Arad and other persons missing in action.

Implementation of the agreement started shortly after it was signed, with the exchange of the bodies of the two Israeli soldiers for the bodies of some 200 Lebanese and Palestinian fighters and five Lebanese prisoners. After 18 months of intense efforts, the Secretary-General remarked, the humanitarian aspect of resolution 1701(2006) had been met. On 6 August, Israel freed five Palestinian prisoners in a move directly related to the agreement with Hizbullah, and Prime Minister Olmert announced that a large number of Palestinian prisoners would be released later in the month in a move designed to support the Annapolis peace process [YUN 2007, p. 445]. On 25 August, 198 Palestinian detainees were released.

Following their summit meeting in Damascus on 13 and 14 August, the Presidents of Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic announced the reactivation of the Lebanese-Syrian committee tasked with delineating their common border.

Concerning the key question of Shab'a Farms, in a meeting in Damascus on 6 November, the Syrian Foreign Minister categorically reiterated to the Special Coordinator for Lebanon that Shab'a Farms fell under Lebanon's sovereignty. The Secretary-General still had not received any response from either Israel or the Syrian Arab Republic to the provisional geographical definition of the area.

The period under review was one of relative calm in the UNIFIL area of operations, albeit punctuated by specific threat warnings emanating from militant and extremist groups, including Al-Qaida. Joint efforts and cooperation with the Lebanese authorities and LAF continued to ensure that such threats were addressed appropriately. As at 11 November, UNIFIL total military strength was 12,770 personnel, with a civilian strength of 318 international and 656 national

staff. The Force was supported by 51 UNTSO military observers of the Observer Group Lebanon.

In his concluding observations, the Secretary-General stated that, although there were no breaches of the cessation of hostilities between Lebanon and Israel and relative calm continued to prevail, greater progress should have been achieved since the adoption of resolution 1701(2006). The general improvement of the situation, together with the continued stability in the area of operations and encouraging prospects in the region, created a momentum that both Lebanon and Israel should seize to make bold strides towards a permanent ceasefire and long-term solution.

**Further developments.** According to the Secretary-General's ninth report on the implementation of resolution 1701(2006) [S/2009/119], tension in the UNIFIL area of operations rose in late December, with the outbreak of the crisis in Gaza (see p. 492). On 25 December, LAF discovered, and with UNIFIL's assistance, defused and dismantled eight rockets that were armed and ready to be launched in the direction of Israel. Several violations of the Blue Line by IDF, as well as Lebanese civilians, were registered. Regarding Israel's claim that Hizbullah had held manoeuvres both north and south of the Litani River on 22 November, UNIFIL did not observe any activity that would substantiate that allegation.

#### *Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team*

On 25 August [S/2008/582], the Secretary-General transmitted to the Security Council the report of the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team II (LIBAT II), dispatched, in coordination with the Lebanese Government, to undertake a thorough follow-up assessment of the implementation of the recommendations of the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team I, which, in accordance with resolution 1701(2006), had conducted a first assessment in 2007 [YUN 2007, p. 484].

Led by Lasse Christensen (Denmark), LIBAT II visited Lebanon from 15 to 31 July. It held talks with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence, the directors of the four border security agencies and regional military commanders, stakeholders in the German-led Northern Border Pilot Project and donor representatives. The Team visited all four operational border crossing points and one not yet open, as well as locations along the Green Border in the north and east of Lebanon, including locations of Lebanese-Syrian territorial dispute and cross-border areas under Palestinian control. It also visited the Beirut airport and the Beirut and Tripoli seaports.

Although the Northern Border Pilot Project was deemed to be in a consolidation phase, the Team believed that it had not yet reached the stage of full