

Editor: **Mark A. Heller**

August 22, 2006

## HOW HIZBULLAH UNDERSTANDS RESOLUTION 1701

**Aiman Mansour**  
**Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies**

For Hizbullah and its supporters in Lebanon, UN Security Council Resolution 1701 is, if not a clear victory, then certainly the least of all evils. The main reason is that 1701 keeps the discussion of Hizbullah's disarmament within the confines of the barren exercise known as the "Lebanese National Dialogue." Moreover, the Resolution provides no effective mechanism for action by the Lebanese Government or UNIFIL to disarm Hizbullah or terminate its existence as a state within a state.

Israel's initial decision to act against Hizbullah raised hopes that it would damage the Shi'ite organization severely enough to empower the United Nations and the Lebanese Government to act decisively against Hizbullah and disarm it completely. But while the IDF did seriously degrade Hizbullah's missile array, it was unable to strike a decisive blow at the organization's senior military or political leadership. Moreover, the military campaign did not initially involve destructive operations against Hizbullah's civilian infrastructure; that only happened toward the very end.

From the viewpoint of Hizbullah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, the Security Council Resolution does not undermine his status but rather the opposite. The Resolution creates a situation in which Lebanon after the campaign is

little different from Lebanon before it. True, the Resolution does call on the Lebanese Government to deploy through the south – which was apparently impossible a month before – and it does provide for the augmentation of UNIFIL by some 13,000 troops, but it does not create any framework that can threaten Hizbullah's existence or ongoing terrorist activity. The viewpoint is evident in the following ways:

1. effectiveness of the international force: Hizbullah was extremely apprehensive about the possibility that a NATO force might be deployed with extensive authority similar to that of the multilateral force sent to Lebanon in the early 1980s. Indeed, that prospect was so threatening that Hizbullah's leaders declared their intention to fight such a force. Moreover, the idea that even a reinforced UNIFIL might be authorized under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter provoked outright rejection by Hizbullah. That position led the Lebanese Government to endorse the deployment in southern Lebanon of UNIFIL with very ambiguous authority. This is apparent from the provisions under which it will operate. Although it is explicitly stipulated that UNIFIL can use its weapons to defend its troops and

Published by TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

The Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies & The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies  
through the generosity of Sari and Israel Roizman, Philadelphia

[www.tau.ac.il/jcss/](http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/)

[www.dayan.org/](http://www.dayan.org/)

equipment, the force is merely enjoined to do everything “within its capabilities” to prevent hostile actions within its area of operations.

2. deployment of the Lebanese army: a Lebanese army force is deployed in the south with the explicit consent of Hizbullah. That constitutes a concession compared to Hizbullah’s position a bit more than a month ago. But given that the army is not charged with disarming Hizbullah, its deployment is a much less dramatic development than might appear to be the case.
3. demilitarization of the area south of the Litani: the Resolution states that the area south of the Litani River should be free of armed personnel or weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and UNIFIL. However, the reality of the south is more complicated. In the Shi’ite villages there, Hizbullah maintains “security committees” that provide a framework for security coordinators whose ongoing task is to “protect the Shi’ite villages.” In fact, this framework constitutes a militia, and it is unlikely that the Lebanese army or UNIFIL will have the political will to disarm an ostensibly “civilian” framework.
4. disarmament of Hizbullah and arms embargo: the IDF’s inability to disrupt Hizbullah’s civilian infrastructure or eliminate its leadership mean that the Lebanese Government lacks sufficient self-confidence to act decisively to disarm Hizbullah, even with the assistance of any international force. Consequently, the “National Dialogue” may reconvene but Hizbullah’s opponents will have no capacity whatsoever to translate their political

power into a decision to disarm Hizbullah, either by peaceful means or by force. The absence of an effective framework to do that means that the Security Council’s stipulation that all states will prevent the “sale or supply to any entity or individual in Lebanon of arms and related materiel of all types” will remain a dead letter. The ineffectiveness of the embargo is due to the fact that the Lebanese Government will continue to control border crossings (as it did in the past) and UNIFIL will assist in this control only if it is asked to do so by Beirut. Absent any decision to disarm Hizbullah (and with Hizbullah officially represented in the government), the smuggling of weapons into Lebanon, primarily by Iran and Syria, will be far less difficult than might appear from the wording of the Resolution.

Less than seventeen hours elapsed between the adoption of Resolution 1701 by the Security Council and the acceptance of it by Nasrallah. In one sense, that reflects the extent of the damage the IDF had inflicted on Hizbullah’s military infrastructure and the pressure placed on Nasrallah. But it also demonstrates the extent to which the Resolution does not really constrain Hizbullah. A resolution that had truly jeopardized Hizbullah would have prompted it to fight on, as it apparent from the organization’s reaction to the original Franco-American draft. And while regional governments may be ambivalent about the outcome, the ability of Nasrallah and the rest of the Hizbullah leadership to survive has just strengthened their popularity on the “Muslim street.”

**KEYWORD:** Lebanon