



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Press Statement

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Washington, DC

April 26, 2006

Lebanon and Syria: Anniversary of Syrian Military Withdrawal From Lebanon

One year ago today on April 26, 2005, Syria completed the withdrawal of its military troops and assets from Lebanon, ending nearly 30 years of occupation. The United Nations verified the military withdrawal as complete, but noted that it was unable to conclude with certainty that the Syrian intelligence apparatus had been completely withdrawn. Unfortunately, Syrian interference in Lebanon has continued throughout the past year via economic pressure, political interference and intimidation, and ongoing security incidents. Syria's proxies have prevented the ongoing National Dialogue, which is being conducted in the spirit of the Taif Accord, from being able to properly address the Syrian-orchestrated extension of President Emile Lahoud's term of office.

Today, UN Special Envoy Terje Roed-Larsen briefed the UN Security Council on the status of the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1559. The Security Council still has a crucial role to play in ensuring Lebanon's transformation to a sovereign independent state. Disarmament of militias and extension of effective Lebanese sovereignty throughout the entire country remain priorities. Syria must immediately end the flow of arms to militias within Lebanon and cooperate with the Lebanese government on border security.

The Lebanese people have accomplished much over the past year, but much remains to be done. The United States, and the international community, stand with the Lebanese people as they work to reassert their independence and strengthen their democracy, and we support their call for national dignity, truth, and justice.

We call on the international community to continue to hold the Syrian regime accountable until it responds completely to concerns about its cooperation with the UN International Independent Investigation Commission, interference in Lebanon, insufficient action on the Iraqi border, sponsorship of Palestinian terrorist groups, and harsh crackdown on civil society.

2006/418



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