



Situation in the Middle East and Other Matters

Ambassador John R. Bolton, U.S. Representative to the United Nations

Remarks to the media following a Security Council Stakeout
New York City
August 15, 2006

USUN PRESS RELEASE #206

Ambassador Bolton: Good morning. I don't particularly have anything to start off with other than that we are working hard to support the Secretariat efforts to generate an enhanced UNIFIL force. We've sent one military planner up from the Pentagon. You know, the French have sent either one or two. We're obviously working to discuss with possible troop contributors their interest in adding onto UNIFIL, as Resolution 1701 provides, and that's really, I think, the center of activity. What we think the center of activity for the Secretariat should be is the implementing arm of the organization to help generate the force and get it deployed as quickly as possible.

Reporter: Ambassador, yesterday we were told by the office of the spokesman for the Secretary General that although there is a lot of talk, no one had actually, no individual country had made a firm pledge to commit troops. Are you concerned about this, and what do you think about how -- what the timetable of this should play out in terms of, you know, this week getting troops on the ground or -

Ambassador Bolton: I think that obviously the decisions have to be made by individual countries and their taking into account the circumstances of the mission, the extent of the mandate, the operational difficulties. I did see a story from -- I suppose I should say one wire service from Rome today quoting an Italian military official as being rather skeptical of being involved in a UN force. But in any event, this really is a responsibility of the Secretariat. We're doing everything we can to help support the generation of new contributions, but that's what the Department of Peacekeeping Operations really is there to do.

Reporter: President Bush yesterday said that Syria's borders would be secured by UNIFIL. I don't know where that is in the resolution. Or is that possible while its other responsibilities include southern Lebanon? Can you explain that?

Ambassador Bolton: The resolution provides that, as part of the provisions on the arms embargo, that there shall not be any transfers of arms or weapons into Lebanon without the consent of the government. It calls on the government of Lebanon to police its borders and other entry points to give effect to that provision and says also that UNIFIL, at the request of the government of Lebanon, will assist in that operation. So the idea would be that the Lebanese armed forces, pursuant to Resolution 1559, really, would take control of securing the borders and entry points and that an enhanced UNIFIL could assist them. I think that's what he had in mind.

Reporter: Mr. Ambassador, is the United States encouraged that there seems to be some indication of an Israeli withdrawal of some troops and that there's now talk of speeding this whole thing up and getting it done in 10 days? And is the U.S. still expecting France to lead this force with a significant new commitment of troops?

Ambassador Bolton: I don't think there's any expectation one way or another. The contemplation has always been that there would not be a vacuum in southern Lebanon such that the withdrawal of Israeli forces or the progress of Lebanese armed forces in UNIFIL would be conducted in a way that would not permit Hezbollah to re-infiltrate southern Lebanon. So the question of how rapidly that occurs depends on generating the enhanced UNIFIL up to 15,000 troops, as Resolution 1701 provides, and a decision by the government of Lebanon to carry through on the deployment of the 15,000 Lebanese troops that they mentioned.

So this is really a test for the Secretariat in getting the enhanced UNIFIL in place and the decisions that have to be made by the government of Lebanon. So how and under what circumstances the deployment of the Lebanese armed forces and UNIFIL takes place, and how the consequent withdrawal of the Israeli forces takes place, is still playing out. I'm not sure you can be encouraged by it or discouraged by it at this point.

Reporter: France?

Ambassador Bolton: You know, I think the decision on who the force commander will be will depend in large part on what country makes the most significant troop contribution. And my understanding from various parts of the French government is they have not yet made a decision on whether and at what level their force contribution will be made. So until we hear that definitively from them or until the Secretariat hears that definitively from them, I don't think we know the answer.

Reporter: Ambassador, President Bush has said that while the United States will not be committing any troops to this force, it is open to the idea of logistical support and other things. Is that what the American military planner is coming here to offer and discuss?

Ambassador Bolton: I think the logistician that we're sending up at the request of the Secretariat will be part of a group of perhaps four or five senior, experienced planners to try and scale the nature of the mandate that has been enhanced by 1701 and try and make decisions as to what kinds of forces would be necessary at what point, how to deploy them and the rest of it. So it's not so much to foreshadow American logistical support, although I think that will be forthcoming, as it is to augment DPKO's capabilities, so that force planning and therefore force generation can proceed as effectively and as rapidly as possible.

Reporter: Mr. Ambassador, about the sequence of the withdrawal, are you worried that it is very complicated -- given that the Israeli army would be perceived as an occupation army by the local population of south Lebanon, do you think that's a tricky sequence? And how do you plan to react to it?

Ambassador Bolton: I think the sequence was essentially agreed to by the government of Lebanon, by the government of Israel and by the Security Council, and that that's -- it goes coordinate with the notion that we want to take advantage of this crisis to proceed more fully with the implementation of 1559. And what that has to mean is the effective control, from a security point of view, over southern Lebanon by the government of Lebanon. And that means that -- to prevent armed, as Hezbollah, from reappearing. And in that sense, I think, therefore, it's very much in the interest both of the government of Lebanon and the government of Israel to have the handover take place as rapidly as possible consistent with the goal of avoiding the vacuum. Let me just take one more.

Reporter: Ambassador, is Washington helping the UN round up troops for this mission so that it can go in quickly? And have you heard from countries that were interested in contributing troops?

Ambassador Bolton: Well, the president has made calls. The Secretary of State has made calls. Others are making calls to generate interest. But obviously each decision on troop contribution is made by each country. But we're also relying on the Secretariat, which has the experience of generating contributions. Each country has to make its own decision, and that's what we're working on now.

Reporter: Peacekeepers -- 15,000 peacekeepers go in here, to southern Lebanon; but yet Sudan, a genocide occurred, while in Lebanon/Israel 1,100 dead. What does that say about the Council and the people who are living in Darfur?

Ambassador Bolton: I think that we're certainly accelerating our efforts to get the handover from the African Mission in Sudan to a UN led mission, and hopefully we will make progress on that on the next several days. The question, as always, is whether the Security Council can overcome the political objection from several significant member governments, including two permanent members and the government of Sudan in this case, and we'll just have to see what happens. See you all a little bit later.

Released on August 15, 2006

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.