



Middle East Situation: An Update

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

Remarks at Monthly Meeting on the Situation in the Middle East
New York City
August 22, 2006

USUN PRESS RELEASE #210

Mr. President,

It has been 11 days since the passage of Resolution 1701. We believe this Resolution is an important step forward, and when fully implemented, will help lay the foundation for a lasting peace in the region. The United States is now actively engaged with others to turn this opportunity into a reality.

The United States takes seriously the imperative of fully implementing Resolution 1701, starting with its call to take immediate steps to extend financial and humanitarian assistance to the people of Lebanon. The United States has pledged \$50 million in humanitarian assistance to Lebanon, over half of which has already been distributed. As President Bush announced yesterday, we will increase this humanitarian and reconstruction aid to more than \$230 million in the weeks ahead. The President has also announced his intention to work with Congress to extend the availability of loan guarantees to help rebuild Israeli infrastructure damaged by Hezbollah's rockets.

In addition to alleviating the humanitarian problems unfolding in Southern Lebanon, it is imperative that we move as quickly as possible to secure the peace by enhancing UNIFIL, and providing robust rules of engagement. We urge potential troop contributing countries to expedite their internal decision-making processes as we strive to reach our goal of an expanded 15,000-member international force. Delay in this case does not serve the interests of anyone except those who oppose a sovereign, free and democratic Lebanon, one which is no longer used as a base to launch terrorist attacks against Israel, killing its innocent civilians.

As we plan for this deployment, we should be encouraged that, broadly speaking, one of the important goals of Resolution 1701 has been achieved -- a cessation of hostilities. We are concerned, of course, by reports of sporadic violence, but we stress that Resolution 1701 guarantees Israel's right to defend itself and its forces. Israel has said that this past weekend's operation in the Bekaa valley was targeted against arms shipments to Hezbollah from Iran and Syria. Such arms shipments are, of course, legally prohibited by the arms embargo established by Resolution 1701 unless specifically authorized by the Government of Lebanon. All states must comply with their obligations observe this embargo, which, if not strictly observed, will significantly enhance the risk of further hostilities. This burden of abiding by the arms embargo, and the world's attention, falls especially on Syria and Iran.

Resolution 1701 is not just about a cessation of hostilities. Resolution 1701 correctly emphasizes not only the need for an end of violence, but "the need to address urgently the causes that have given rise to the current crisis, including the unconditional release of the abducted Israeli soldiers." It is impossible, indeed dangerous, to divorce the two issues. If the international community applies only a temporary band-aid solution to the problem and allows Hezbollah to regroup and re-arm, then the suffering of the people of Lebanon and Israel may very well intensify in the near future. But we must keep in mind that responsibility for this conflict rests squarely on the shoulders Hezbollah. As President Bush stated unequivocally last week: "It was an unprovoked attack by Hezbollah on Israel that started this conflict. Hezbollah terrorists targeted Israeli civilians with daily rocket attacks. Hezbollah terrorists used Lebanese civilians as human shields, sacrificing the innocent in an effort to protect themselves from Israeli response."

If we are to achieve the goal of a lasting peace in the region, then we must put an end to Hezbollah operating as a state within a state. To do so, of course, requires us to address the backing of Hezbollah by Damascus and Tehran. Their continued support to Hezbollah in the form of financing, training and supply of armaments does not just perpetuate this crisis -- it sustains it. Cutting off these supply lines, as mandated in 1701, is a matter that can no longer be ignored. The United States calls upon Iran and Syria to comply immediately with Resolution 1701.

The United States remains deeply concerned with the attitude of Syria and Iran in this crisis -- states whose leaders have both respectively called for the destruction of Israel in recent days. We recognize, as President Bush stated last week, that: "The conflict in Lebanon is part of a broader struggle between freedom and terror that is unfolding across the region." We believe that full implementation of Resolution 1701 will lay the foundation to achieve a lasting peace and realize the goals outlined originally in Resolution 1559 -- a sovereign and democratically elected government in Lebanon, free from coercion by all outside governments.

The United States also remains deeply concerned by the ongoing crisis between Israel and the Palestinians, instigated by the June 25 attack by Hamas inside Israel in which two Israeli soldiers were killed, and Corporal Gilad Shalit was kidnapped. The United States is keenly aware of the humanitarian impact of the current crisis, which has been caused by the refusal of the Hamas-led PA government to govern responsibly. Instead, the Hamas government has made a strategic decision to reject peace and continue to embrace terrorism. In order to ease the hardships faced by the Palestinian people due to the intransigent policies of the Hamas-led PA government, we have increased humanitarian assistance to over \$270 million, including more than \$50 million in response to UNRWA's Emergency Appeal for the West Bank and Gaza. We have also substantially increased our support for democracy and civil society promotion, and private sector development.

In the days ahead, we look forward to the continued implementation of Resolution 1701. But we cannot stress enough the urgent need to move quickly to implement fully the obligations imposed on us in accordance with Resolution 1701. The price of failure in this case is to condemn the people of Lebanon and Israel to further violence and tragedy.

Released on August 22, 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.