US MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO LEBANON: EQUIPPING LAF NOT TRANSFORMING IT

[**Issue Number 82 - October 2012**](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/82-d)

**US Military Assistance to Lebanon: Equipping LAF Not Transforming It**
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**I. Introduction**

Lebanon became of particular importance to the United States in 1957 when President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued the Eisenhower Doctrine declaring the Middle East vital to US national security interests. Subsequently, political disputes and fighting erupting in Lebanon in May 1958 brought about a US military incursion that proved only marginally successful in producing favorable conditions to America’s Middle Eastern interests and policies[[1]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn1%22%20%5Co%20%22).

The US display of force failed to stymy the onrush of events that challenged American aims. The creation of the United Arab Republic in early 1958; the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon in May 1958; and the “coup d’état” against the kingdom in Iraq in early July all provoked Eisenhower to order the marines to land in Lebanon on the 15th and 16th of July 1958 with US army airborne forces flown in three days later. Following the election of President Fuad Chehab, US forces were withdrawn in October 1958[[2]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn2%22%20%5Co%20%22). A low level of military cooperation between the US army and the Lebanese armed forces was initiated during this US incursion in Lebanon.

The second involvement of US marines in Lebanon happened in 1982-84. When Israeli forces invaded Lebanon in June 1982, President Ronald Reagan became concerned over the regional instability and ordered to land marines in Beirut in August to help restore stability. The 32nd Marines Amphibious Unit was withdrawn in 15 days. The US with its western allies participated in a multi-national effort later that year. At the same time, an army Special Forces unit was deployed to Beirut with the task of training Lebanese army units. The 1958 incursion in Lebanon was casualty free, but the 1980’s involvement was wholly different. In mid-April of 1983, a truck bomb exploded at the gate of the US embassy killing more than sixty people, and on the 23rd of October 1983 another truck drove into the marines’ compound near the airport killing 241 of the 300 marines asleep in a barracks. The marines were withdrawn from Lebanon on the 26th of February 1984. During this period of involvement, the Pentagon supplied the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) with weapons, ammunition, helicopters, and other supplies which were paid for by the Lebanese government.

For the second time in three decades, a substantial American investment of time, effort, and money is being deployed to strengthen the LAF as a means to support Lebanon’s democracy[[3]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn3%22%20%5Co%20%22). This new program conducted by the US government and the US military came about as a necessity to help Lebanon’s stability and to fill the vacuum left by the Syrian troops withdrawal from Lebanon in April 2005 after former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri was assassinated on February 14, 2005.

This dissertation will be looking at the goals and reasons for the new US support to Lebanon as well as defining the pillars on which the current US policy in Lebanon rests. The dissertation will also try to analyze the adequacy of the military assistance the US is providing to the LAF as far as resources and kinds of equipment supplied. This analysis, will also examine the successes and failures of the US policy in Lebanon and the US willingness to continue their plan to help in building the LAF and other security institutions.

**II. Renewed US Interest**

Although the civil war in Lebanon ended with the 1989 Taif Agreement, the Lebanese state continued to stagnate under Syria’s strong presence. The US interest in Lebanon was limited at best for the next decade and a half by its concern about calming the situation in Lebanon, including negotiating the 1996 April Understanding between Lebanon and Israel. The agreement established a multi-national monitoring mechanism (including Syria) to control and minimize shelling of civilian localities on both sides of the border. The US granted Lebanon limited economic assistance and military aid. However, the country remained low on the US list of priorities[[4]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn4%22%20%5Co%20%22). Events and political developments in 2004 began to restore the US interest in the country. President Bush dispatched the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to Paris to discuss with President Jacques Chirac what could be done to help improve the situation in Lebanon. In September 2004, the UN Security Council passed UNSC resolution #1559 calling for foreign forces to withdraw from the country as well as forthe disbanding and disarming of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. US Assistant Secretary of State Bill Burns and Deputy Secretary Richard Armitage visited Damascus to discuss the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon among other things concerning Iraq.These developments had encouraged Prime Minister Rafic Hariri to declare his opposition to President Bashar Assadextending President Emile Lahoud’s term of office. However, under Syrian pressure Hariri was forced to accept the Syrian decision and vote with his parliamentary bloc for Lahoud’s term extension.

On February 14, 2005, Hariri was murdered in Beirut. His death mobilized a majority of the Lebanese populace who asserted that they would no longer tolerate political assassinations and called for Syrian withdrawal from their country.Backed by an international consensus, Lebanon managed to push the Syrian troops out of the country two months later. Washington stepped in recognizing the importance of the Cedar Revolution and showed its readiness to support the Lebanese state to fill the vacuum left by the Syrian military withdrawal. President Bush pledged support, telling the Lebanese, “The American people are on your side”[[5]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn5%22%20%5Co%20%22). There were also promises to strengthen the Lebanese institutions, particularly the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). The US also supported the establishment of an international investigation of the Hariri assassination; a step which meant to isolate the Syrian regime and to prevent it from destabilizing Lebanon. Such attempts proved to be complex and more difficult than it was imagined at the beginning. The Syrian and Iranian backing to their allies in Lebanon proved to be more effective than the US commitment to devote two hundred million dollars to train and equip the Lebanese Armed Forces. Though, it has to be noted that despite all the US urgency, it took over one year for the first load of assistance to arrive in Lebanon.

In the meantime the Lebanese army took quick steps to maintain internal security through deploying its forces to fill the vacuum left by the Syrians as well as deploying in South Lebanon and engaging terrorist groups affiliated to Al-Qaeda[[6]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn6%22%20%5Co%20%22).

**III. US Strategy for Lebanon**

Through the NSCR 1559 the United States adopted a new approach towards Lebanon hoping to secure its interest in the country and in the broader region. That approach proved to be very cautious. There had been a strong sentiment in Washington not to commit itself to pay a high price, fearing a repetition of previous failures. The US planners assumed that the Administration could treat the Lebanese problems on the cheap. When the United States did engage, it did so inconsistently without a long term plan in mind, “Thus, undermining not only Lebanon’s stability but also US interest in the region”[[7]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn7%22%20%5Co%20%22).

The Bush Administration did not pay enough attention on how to help Lebanon address its new problems. Such an approach to help Lebanon secure its independence and sovereignty fell short of dealing with the geopolitical realities surrounding the country. Such a task required a great US effort to contain Iran’s and Syria’s abilities to meddle in Lebanese affairs to support their strategies at the expense of the US allies in Lebanon.

The United States failed to take a bold position in supporting the democratic process initiated by the Cedar Revolution as well as in strengthening the Lebanese government institutions. In fact, the US diplomacy, although recognizing the importance of the new liberal movements, failed to bring about the necessary measures to help the Cedar Revolutions to fulfill its aims. Such a task required the formulation of a more effective strategy taking into consideration the political realities in Lebanon. Accordingly, the United States should have avoided taking sides with Israel during its war against Hezbollah in July-August 2006 war. By all means, the US should have avoided excessive meddling in Lebanon’s domestic affairs and should not have used Lebanon as a battlefield against regional adversaries or as a bargaining chip in regional diplomacy. Doing so would only further destabilize the situation.

Implementing such a new strategy for Lebanon has proven to be a difficult endeavor given the country’s internal and external complexities. However, it is a challenge worth pursuing[[8]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn8%22%20%5Co%20%22).

After the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, the Bush administration requested and Congress appropriated an expanded amount of security assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces.

The Obama Administration and some members of the 111th Congress have supported the continuation of the Bush Administration’s program. They hope that continuing such support will help secure Lebanon against terrorist organizations and non-state actors. Over the long term, the Obama Administration hope that building the security institutions will improve internal stability and will create political space for the Lebanese government to carry out a political consensus towards developing a national defense strategy[[9]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn9%22%20%5Co%20%22).

**IV. Obstacles and Setbacks**

After the Cedar Revolution, the US government sought to encourage stable and accountable government institutions. Such a task required dispersing substantial resources. The US did not possess such agility and efficiency due to the complexity of the decision making system as well as to the slow interaction between the various departments and agencies. Consequently, its ability to provide enough resources to help the Lebanese government was not adequate.The US commitment to devote more than a half billion dollars to train and equip the Lebanese army faced many obstacles within the ponderous machinery of the state.

Many new developments aggravated the situation. Among these was the 2007 battle of Nahr Al-Bared. As the army units waged war against the terrorist organization of Fatah Al-Islam, there were shortages of appropriate weaponry, special equipment, and ammunition. The US government managed to send more than forty C-130 and C-17 planeloads of military assistance to Lebanon over a period of a few weeks. This timely assistance contributed to the success of the Lebanese army in its operation against Fatah-Al-Islam.

The US was aware of the importance of its role in preventing Syria from re-establishing its influence in Lebanon, but it failed to devise an adequate plan to contain the Syrian and Iranian attempts to spoil the Lebanese political scene. The Syrian regime’s meddling in Iraq as well as in Lebanon made it clear to many American observers that it was problematic for US strategy and US interests in both countries. The US tried to build on the tools offered by the ‘Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act’. US policy towards Syria became more aggressive, and the rhetoric towards the Syrian regime became harsher. In reality, during this period, Washington was torn by internal dissention over Syrian policy, and its efforts to control Syria’s behavior was undermined by Turkey and Israel conducting negotiations for a peaceful agreement between Syria and Israel.

A major setback for the US policy occurred in May 2008 with the crumbling of the March 14th coalition in its struggle to contain Hezbollah attempts to create a parallel communications network– this was considered as a serious challenge to the state’s sovereignty. With this development the US had no means to influence the situation and faced a critical decision about what it should do: should it continue with its plan to build government institutions, particularly the military and police forces?

Washington decided to stop its military aid, forcing its Lebanese allies to deal with internal developments and Syrian pressure on their own.The March 14th coalition found itself forced to accept the Doha Agreement brokered by Qatar in May 2008 which granted Hezbollah veto power within the Cabinet of Ministers. As a consequence of these events, Jumblat began to move away from the United States and the March 14th coalition and to get closer to Hezbollah and Syria. This shift changed the balance of forces inside the Parliament and forced the Hariri government to fall, opening the way for a new majority and a new government[[10]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn10%22%20%5Co%20%22).

The Obama Administration adopted a policy of outreach towards Syria. This policy was met with great concern by the March 14th Coalition. The Americans, however, continued their assistance for the Lebanese army.

**V. LAF Current Status and the US**

The LAF was reorganized in 1991: the ground forces were made of eleven brigades and a few Special Forces regiments in addition to small air and naval forces. In 2005, it was composed of 56,000 soldiers and non-commissioned officers and 3,200 officers. The LAF faced considerable equipment and training deficiencies, particularly given the Syrian efforts to weaken it. It lacked mobility, secure communications, capable air power, training, fire support, and ammunitions[[11]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn11%22%20%5Co%20%22).

As we know, the LAF has been challenged by rival military and sectarian militias ever since the outbreak of the civil war in 1975.The challenge for the LAF after the Syrian withdrawal in 2005 has been to become a uniting force with a long term goal of deterring external and internal threats. The LAF has been successful in staying clear of divisive politics and in maintaining its cohesion when national politics continued to degenerate. Its success in the deployment of five brigades to the South in August 2006 was the fruit of such cohesion and unifying effort conducted within the military establishment. The LAF was able to preserve its neutrality and its unity despite the country’s continuous instability and the heightened, divided, and sectarian politics[[12]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn12%22%20%5Co%20%22).

The main question has been whether the government would be willing to devise a plan to build up suitable deterrent and defensive capabilities by providing the financial resources to purchase modern weapons, ammunitions, and secure communications. The LAF continues to improve its capabilities at a slow rate and, if permitted, could meet Lebanese national defense needs and confront asymmetric threats at home[[13]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn13%22%20%5Co%20%22). The LAF doctrine considers Israel as an immediate threat to Lebanon. However, it looks at itself as a defensive force with its main task to confront all threats against the country and its vital interests as well as maintaining security and stability in the country.

The two principle current missions of the LAF are, first, participation with the UNIFIL in the implementation of UNSCR 1701 and, second, the combatting of terrorism and taking a vital role in securing internal peace and stability[[14]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn14%22%20%5Co%20%22). These two missions imply deploying most of the army units on a near continuous basis.The continuous deployment stopped the army short of conducting brigade or even regiment level exercises.

LAF-US relations have been relatively consistent over the years; however, these relations were at times strained by the government relations with Syria or Hezbollah. The US has always looked at the LAF as a status quo actor in safeguarding the unity and the security of the country. Nevertheless, the US has had reservations in providing the LAF with heavy offensive weapons in light of Israeli concerns. Unlike Egypt and Jordan, the LAF is a recipient of US assistance with some measures on the kind of weapons and ammunitions provided by the US[[15]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn15%22%20%5Co%20%22).

**VI. US Security Assistance**

**A- Lebanon on the US List of Priorities**

The Bush Administration’s 2006 request for increased US security assistance to Lebanon marked the third time in the last twenty-five years that the United States sought to expand military cooperation with the Lebanese government[[16]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn16%22%20%5Co%20%22).The US provided to the LAF in the early eighties 145 and 190 million dollars in grants and loans. The US provided military assistance in the early 1990’s in the form of non-lethal equipment such as M-113 vehicles and UH-1 helicopters. For the first time since 1984, the Bush Administration requested foreign military financing (FMF) for Lebanon in the fiscal year (FY) 2006 budget. The summer 2006 war spurred many western and Arab donors to increase their assistance to the LAF. The Bush Administration re-programmed and raised its assistance to Lebanon to 42 million dollars to provide equipment and spare parts for the LAF[[17]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn17%22%20%5Co%20%22).

The FY 2007 Emergency Supplemental Appropriation Act included over 220 million dollars in FMF for Lebanon. In addition, Section 1206 Assistance to Lebanon increased to 30.6 million dollars. There were also 60 million dollars for narcotics control and law enforcement.

The Obama Administration has continued to support Lebanon’s stability and independence through assisting the LAF and ISF through Appropriation Acts 2009, 2010, and 2011.

According the US State Department, US Security Assistance would promote Lebanese control over southern Lebanon and Palestinian refugee camps to prevent them from being used as bases to attack Israel. US government’s active Military to Military Program enhances the professionalism of the LAF, re-enforcing the concept of Lebanese civilian control. To foster peace and security, the United States intends to build upon welcomed and unprecedented Lebanese calls to control the influx of weapons into the county[[18]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn18%22%20%5Co%20%22).

**B- Reassessing LAF Needs**

Given the summer 2006 war and LAF deployment in South Lebanon, the United States sent a team from the Army Central Command in the fall of  2006 led by Brigadier General Joseph Martz to assess for the second time the Lebanese equipment shortages and training deficiencies. The aim of the assessment envisioned a limited US effort to strengthen the Lebanese military rather than considering its transformation into a modern force. The assessment focused mainly on Lebanese equipment requirements, highlighting how the military had been impoverished by the Lebanese state and prescribing “low cost, high pay-off training assistance”[[19]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn19%22%20%5Co%20%22).The committee asserted that the military was “not equipped or trained to accomplish their strategic mission” and they focused on establishing border control and internal security[[20]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn20%22%20%5Co%20%22).

On training needs, the committee said, “The most important and most expensive part of the efforts to aid Lebanon’s military, it lacked specificity beyond strengthening the special operations forces, mine removal and generically professionalizing the military”[[21]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn21%22%20%5Co%20%22).

More broadly, the size and scope of US security assistance to Lebanon’s military had skyrocketed; it had increased from 4 million dollars to roughly 250 million dollars by 2007.

**C- Cooperation at a Crossroads**

After a clash on the Lebanon-Israel border on August 3, 2010 between the LAF and the Israeli army, the House of Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Howard Berman (D-CA) and Nita Lowey (D-NY) held up the military aid to Lebanon. Congressional opponents of US aid to Lebanon are backed by various groups with a strong interest in Israel’s security (like AIPAC and others).

The Obama Administration and various Middle East experts have expressed concern that the cutoff of military aid presents a serious blow to the LAF’s ability to function as a regional stabilizing force, inadvertently strengthening Hezbollah and pushing Lebanon further into Iran’s sphere of influence[[22]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn22%22%20%5Co%20%22).

The State Department stated that strengthening the LAF is a foreign policy objective. “US support to Lebanon is part of an international commitment to help strengthen the institution of the Lebanese state and the ability of the Lebanese government to exercise sovereignty and authority over all its territory”[[23]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn23%22%20%5Co%20%22).

After the announcement of the US aid freeze in August, Iran offered its own military assistance to the LAF trying to fill the vacuum created by the Berman-Lowey initiative. At that point of tension, Washington became impatient to see meaningful results from the five years - $100 million per year – of military assistance. Pro-Israeli Congressmen became frustrated by the LAF unwillingness to confront Hezbollah.

(From my perspective, the LAF will never be engaged in direct confrontation with Hezbollah which had succeeded to a considerable extent in declaring itself as Lebanon’s primary defense force against Israel).

**VI.Overall Assessment of the Military Assistance****[[24]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn24%22%20%5Co%20%22)**

“Our cooperation with the Lebanese Army is very broad and comprehensive, and it is all about strengthening the Lebanese Armed Forces as the sole, legitimate defense of the country in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolutions #1559 and #1701”. This is how a high ranking diplomat at the US embassy in Beirut described the objective of the US military assistance to Lebanon. The army is seen by the US Administration as a non-political and non-sectarian organization. It represents all the sects of Lebanon. It is a professional force and remains out of politics.

The US program is very broad and comprehensive, aiming to supply the LAF with all kinds of equipment to increase its mobility as well as with small arms and ammunitions to include Special Forces training through several mobile training teams. The comprehensive training program is a contractor-led training program that has been tailored to respond to the LAF needs ranging from marksmanship, engine repair, aircraft maintenance, power plant, and engineering skills. The International Military Education Training (IMET) for Lebanon is the fourth largest IMET program in the world with US funding, where around 200 officers go to the US military colleges and schools ranging from the War College, Command and Staff Colleges, Mid-career, to basic courses for second lieutenants. The program may train LAF personnel also in civil-military affairs to explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) to close air support.

The number of personnel undergoing training under the US assistance is estimated at 5,000 soldiers and officers every year with an aim to strengthen the capabilities and the capacity of the LAF to fulfill its obligations under UNSCRs #1559 and #1701.

The assistance program was expanded this year with the LAF’s multi-lateral participation in the exercise “Eager Lion” that was a large exercise carried out in Jordan. “Eager Lion” was the largest regional exercise; it was even bigger than the “Bright Star” that used to be held in Egypt. One hundred sixty Lebanese soldiers and officers were flown to Jordan on C-130 planes to participate in this great exercise. The four Lebanese platoons participating in the exercise had an excellent experience and they got to do “some of the best training that they will ever do in their lives with US Seals, Special Forces, and Navy”.The exercise involved 16 countries and 18,000 troops. US trainers who come from the US to Lebanon think highly of their Lebanese army partners. They admire the high education level, the discipline, the leadership quality, and the ethics of the units as well as of individuals. The US diplomat interviewed about the program said, “We’re covering a lot of ground, but it is pretty tough to build an army with the resources we have. We are receiving now about $100 million dollars altogether per year”. It’s a significant amount of money, but it is much less than that needed to respond to all the needs; however, it’s more than the total acquisition fund of the Lebanese army’s budget.

Initially in 2006, fulfilling the LAF needs was based on a US assessment. As the relationship with the LAF command matured, a process called a Joint Capability Review was developed where the US and the Lebanese collectively identify the priorities and how to go about fulfilling those priorities. A review of these priorities is conducted every six months – in fact, it really has more Lebanese than US input. The LAF staff does a great job of collectively figuring out the priorities with a focus on protective ability, counter-terrorism, close air support, communications, equipment maintenance and spare parts, infrastructure, maritime and land force security. The priorities are right now on protective mobility like armored Humvees or M-113 vehicles, communications, and the helicopter fleet. From these priorities, it seems that there is a Lebanese-US consensus on improving the borders defense and internal security operations.

There was a ban on supplying Lebanon with lethal equipment for almost a year based on the March 14th government collapse. There was a lot of uncertainty about what this March 8th government would look like and what its policies would be to fulfill Lebanon’s international obligations in regards to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and the UNSCR #1701. Since then most of those concerns were allayed. The US resumed supplying Lebanon with lethal weapons, including approximately 10,000 rifles (new M-4’s or M-16 A4’s) and 9 million rounds of ammunition.

For the air mobility, since the US new helicopters are very expensive, the LAF will be looking to purchase six new Huey 2 helicopters to be added to the older Huey 1 fleet. The US assistance will cover for that deal as well as the maintenance of the Huey 1 fleet. The helicopter fleet will be made of Huey 2’s and Huey 1’s, Pumas, and Gazelles, and it will be capable of responding to the LAF Special Forces air mobility.There were provisions for sixty five M60 A1 tanks to be transferred to the LAF from the Jordanian army; ten tanks so far have been received. The program was stalled because the funding needed for the refurbishment and upgrading of the fire-control system was unavailable. The purchase of the ten tanks was funded by United Arab Emirates and not by the US assistance. The US assistance was used to increase the LAF’s fire-power capabilities. Thirty M190 howitzers were delivered in November 2010 with more mortars being scheduled to come.

The US assistance will focus during the upcoming budget on four priorities: protective mobility by acquiring armored Humvees and M113 vehicles; air mobility with the new Huey 2 helicopters; communications; and, lastly, small arms and ammunition.

To improve the mobility of the LAF brigades and regiments, a contract funded by the US military assistance was carried out by a US company to rebuild the tracks and suspension systems of 300 of theM-113 fleet. There is a provision to upgrade 300 more vehicles in the upcoming year.

There were Lebanese complaints about the FMS system; the US acknowledged that the system was built to be slow based on the Arms Export Control Act which was passed in 1976 during the Vietnam era. The US government wanted a lot of checks and balances to make sure they weren’t arming or equipping the ‘bad guys’. There are some initiatives to improve its responsiveness. The Americans’ response to the Lebanese complaints is by talking about similar complaints from the Saudis and the Israelis.

The US embassy staff as well as visitors from the Army Central Command are pleased with the Lebanese army’s performance on the internal security missions, but they think that there is a long way to go concerning the implementation of UNSCR #1701 that entails border control and the flow of weapons into the country. They look at the Lebanese army as a very dedicated, professional force with good leadership and excellent human capital. The problem the army is facing is not a human resource one, but it is a monetary and equipping challenge. A US official complained that the US assistance is three times more than the amount dedicated in the Lebanese budget for military procurement, and he thinks that if the Lebanese government shows more commitment it will probably convince the US Congress to increase the US assistance for Lebanon.

When asked about supplying the LAF with anti-tank guided missiles or air defense missiles, the US officials respond that those weapons are not on the priorities list. On the close air support, the US officials talk about the armed Caravan AC20A armed with Hellfire missiles they supplied, and they assume that this plane along with the Gazelles and occasional armaments on the Huey’s seem to be enough for now.

Through the US military assistance a forty-two meter vessel will be supplied this fall to the Lebanese Navy. The vessel is a great coastal security craft capable of sustained operation at sea.

**VII. Conclusion**

Adopting a new US strategy for Lebanon was and still is a very difficult task given the country’s internal and external complexities, but it is a challenge worth pursuing. A great opportunity for a more consistent American assistance to Lebanon, one that benefits the country and advances the American interests, still exists despite all the regional developments surrounding Lebanon. Despite points of contention, the US Administrations under both Bush and Obama view the LAF as a reliable partner in Lebanon and in the region; thus, the US needs to set new guidelines with respect to US assistance to Lebanon under the FMF and IMET programs.Congressional appropriated funding should be set high to reflect US interests in Lebanon and match the US recognition of the LAF’s needs and role. If the LAF is to consolidate its position as the guarantor of Lebanon’s sovereignty and stability, the present unique opportunity to develop the LAF as a fighting force must be pursued.

Current US policy towards Lebanon and US assistance to the LAF have been built around the implementation of UNSCRs #1559 and #1701 as well as Lebanon’s commitment to support the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. The US Administration hopes that building the LAF will improve internal stability and public confidence in the military institution, creating political space for the government to address political reform and to develop a national defense strategy. US officials have clearly stated that the assistance to the LAF is not intended to prepare it to confront Hezbollah. Rather, US assistance is a part of a larger package designed to strengthen the government to extend its sovereignty and provide adequate national defense.

Israel, along with its friends in Congress and the American- Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), has expressed its reservation and even opposition to the US military assistance to the LAF. They have alleged that the LAF with UNIFIL has allowed Hezbollah to rebuild its arsenal in violation of UNSCR #1701. The US military assistance does not respond to the needs of the LAF; it has focused mainly on increasing land mobility, but failed to provide the badly needed lethal weapons and ammunition. It seems that US strategy towards the LAF is unclear and is not very effective in bolstering the LAF capabilities to control all non-state actors as well as protecting the borders. The actual strategy should be revised to allow supplying the LAF all the needed combat systems to face all the challenges and threats.

To augment LAF capability to bolster Lebanon’s stability from regional spillover and, particularly, to contain the Syrian crisis fallout, the US Administration should revise the former program and give LAF a much higher priority.

[[1]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref1%22%20%5Co%20%22)-   “U.S. Military Involvement in Lebanon”, OxfordCompanion to U.S Military History, 2000. Text based on Roger J. Spiller, “Not War But Like War”: The American Intervention in Lebanon, 1981. And Eric M. Hammel, “The Root: The Marines in Beirut”, August 1982-February 1984, 1985.

[[2]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref2%22%20%5Co%20%22)-   Ibid.

[[3]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref3%22%20%5Co%20%22)-   Eric S. Edelman and Mara Kralin, “Fool Me Twice: How the United States Lost Lebanon Again”, Edelman was Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in 2005-2009. Kralin served as the Pentagon’s Levant Director and Special Assistant to Edelman as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. Both were fully involved in the current military assistance programs

[[4]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref4%22%20%5Co%20%22)-   Ibid.

[[5]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref5%22%20%5Co%20%22)-   Ibid.

[[6]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref6%22%20%5Co%20%22)-   Kralin, unpublished research data for Ph.D. thesis based on her interview with former senior American political official of November 3, 2011.

[[7]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref7%22%20%5Co%20%22)-   “Levantine Reset: Toward a More Viable U.S. Strategy for Lebanon”,

[[8]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref8%22%20%5Co%20%22)-   Ibid

[[9]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref9%22%20%5Co%20%22)-   Casey, L. Addis, **“U.S. Security Assistance to Lebanon”**, Congressional Research Service. January 2011.

[[10]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref10%22%20%5Co%20%22)-  These developments were reported and analyzed by the Lebanese press during the summer and fall of 2008.

[[11]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref11%22%20%5Co%20%22)-  Kralin, unpublished research for Ph.D., (see endnote 6).

[[12]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref12%22%20%5Co%20%22)-  Aram Nerguizian, **“The Lebanese Armed Forces: Challenges and Opportunities in Post Syria Lebanon”**,

[[13]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref13%22%20%5Co%20%22)-  Ibid.

[[14]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref14%22%20%5Co%20%22)-  Ibid.

[[15]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref15%22%20%5Co%20%22)-  Ibid.

[[16]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref16%22%20%5Co%20%22)-  L. Addis, **“Congressional Research Service: U.S. Security Assistance to Lebanon”**, (see endnote 9).

[[17]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref17%22%20%5Co%20%22)-  According to the U.S. State Department, the $42 million in FY 2006 was reprogrammed from several accounts, including $10 million from the Department of Defense Section 1206 funds, $2.7 million from FMF, $28 million from Peace Keeping Operations (PKO), and $1.2 million from the Economic Support Fund (ESF). See Department of State FY 2008 International Affairs.Also reported by Casey L. Addis in **“Congressional Research Service”**.

[[18]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref18%22%20%5Co%20%22)-  United States.Department of State.“FY 2008 International Affairs (Function 150) Congressional Budget Justification”, GPO, February 16, 2007.

[[19]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref19%22%20%5Co%20%22)-  United States. U.S. Defense Department, “Executive Summary: The Lebanese Armed Forces – Assessment of 8-13 September 2006”, cited in Kralin’s unpublished work, (see endnote 6).

[[20]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref20%22%20%5Co%20%22)-  Ibid.

[[21]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref21%22%20%5Co%20%22)-  United States, U.S. Defense Department, “Martz Report Finding, Recommended Strategy for Assistance: The Lebanese Armed Forces”, Assessment of 8-13 September 2006”.

[[22]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref22%22%20%5Co%20%22)-  Eli Clifton, **“U.S.-Lebanese Military Cooperation at a Crossroads”**,

[[23]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref23%22%20%5Co%20%22)-  Ibid.

[[24]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref24%22%20%5Co%20%22)-  Most of the information within this part of the dissertation is taken from an interview I have conducted with a high ranking official at the U.S. embassy in Beirut on May 23, 2012.

**المساعدات العسكرية الأميركية للبنان: تجهيز الجيش وليس تحويله**

أصبح لبنان ذات أهمية خاصة للولايات المتحدة في العام 1957 حين أصدر الرئيس دوايت د أيزنهاور «عقيدة أيزنهاور» معلناً بأن الشرق الأوسط منطقة ذات أهمية حيوية بالنسبة إلى المصالح القومية للولايات المتحدة. في ما بعد، أدى الاقتتال والخلافات السياسية التي حصلت في لبنان في أيار/مايو من العام 1958 إلى حصول تدخّل عسكري أميركي أثبت عن نجاح هامشي فقط في إنتاج ظروف مؤاتية لمصالح الولايات المتحدة وسياساتها في الشرق الأوسط.
هذه الدراسة ستنظر في أهداف وأسباب الدعم الأميركي المستجد للبنان إضافة إلى تحديد الأركان التي تقوم عليها السياسة الأميركية الحالية في لبنان. كما ستحاول الدراسة تحليل ملاءمة المساعدات العسكرية التي تقدّمها الولايات المتحدة للجيش اللبناني في ما يتعلّق بالموارد وبأنواع المعدات التي يتم تقديمها.
إضافة إلى ذلك سيناقش هذا التحليل نجاحات السياسة الأميركية وفشلها في لبنان ورغبة الولايات المتحدة في متابعة خطتها للمساعدة في بناء الجيش اللبناني والمؤسسات الأمنية الأخرى.

- See more at: https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/us-military-assistance-lebanon-equipping-laf-not-transforming-it#sthash.AGH9QJCK.dpuf