

UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON
(UNIFIL)

Naqoura,
8 September 2006

PRESS RELEASE

UNIFIL Force Commander: Interim Maritime Task Force is now operational

Over the past several days, UNIFIL Force Commander **Major-General Alain Pellegrini** has been coordinating efforts to set up an Interim Maritime Task Force that will support the Lebanese Navy in monitoring the territorial waters until a UNIFIL naval task force is deployed.

The Force Commander held discussions on this matter with the Lebanese and Israeli authorities and with the Italian Navy Commander **Rear Admiral Giuseppe De Giorgi** who will lead the Force. In addition, UNIFIL established a Naval Operations Center at its HQ in Naqoura to coordinate all operational details with the relevant authorities.

“The Force is now operational and I understand that the naval blockade is lifted,” said **Major-General Alain Pellegrini**, *“The blockade has seriously undermined the Lebanese economy and it is high time for it to end so as to allow the people to get back to their businesses.”*

In response to a request from the Government of Lebanon, an expert assessment team comprising police, border and military security experts will be deployed to UNIFIL as of tomorrow, 9 September, to evaluate security conditions at the Beirut International Airport, costal entry points, and the land border, and to identify areas in which the UN might provide technical assistance.

On 8 September, the LAF started deploying in the areas of Al Bayyadah, Tayr Harfa, Shihin, Al Jibbahn, Bustan, Yarin and Al Duhayra which were vacated by the IDF yesterday. UNIFIL patrols confirmed that no IDF troops were present there.

For further information, Please contact Alexander Ivanko, UNIFIL Spokesman, at (+961) 70 910064.