

UN peacekeepers outline rules of force in Lebanon

By [Global Research](#)

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BEIRUT, Oct 3 (Reuters) - U.N. peacekeepers in Lebanon outlined their rules of engagement on Tuesday, saying they could use force against "hostile activity", set up temporary checkpoints and, if the Lebanese army was unable to do so, intercept the movement of unauthorised weapons.

The U.N. force, known as UNIFIL, has grown to 5,200 since Israel's 34-day war with Hizbollah guerrillas ended on Aug. 14 under a Security Council resolution that mandated U.N. troops to help the Lebanese army patrol a border zone in the south.

UNIFIL spokesman Alexander Ivanko said U.N. troops had not fired a shot in anger since the end of the war which cost the lives of nearly 1,200 people in Lebanon and 157 Israelis. "Should the situation present any risk of resumption of hostile activities, UNIFIL rules of engagement allow U.N. forces to respond as required," UNIFIL said in its clearest public statement yet on how its troops can operate.

"UNIFIL commanders have sufficient authority to act forcefully when confronted with hostile activity of any kind."

It said UNIFIL had established temporary checkpoints at key points in the south, while Lebanese troops were setting up permanent ones to stop and search traffic.

UNIFIL said the Lebanese army would act on any specific information regarding the movement of unauthorised weapons or equipment, adding that if the army was not in a position to take such action, "UNIFIL will do everything necessary to fulfil its mandate in accordance with Security Council resolution 1701".

The resolution does not mandate the peacekeepers to disarm Hizbollah by force. The Shi'ite Muslim group has said its fighters remain in the south, with their weapons hidden.

UNIFIL listed several situations in which the peacekeepers could use force beyond self-defence. In one broad category, it said force could be applied "to ensure that UNIFIL's area of operations is not utilised for hostile activities".

Israel completed its withdrawal from all but one small area of south Lebanon on Sunday. Lebanon has threatened to complain to the Security Council unless the Israelis also leave the Lebanese side of the divided village of Ghajar.

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