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SUBJECT: Israel and the Army of South Lebanon [Redacted]

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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

27 June 1986

Israel and the Army of South Lebanon [Redacted]

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SUMMARY

One year after Israel drew down its forces in southern Lebanon, the security zone along the border manned by the Tel Aviv-supported Army of South Lebanon (ASL) has proven to be a relatively effective anti-terrorist buffer. The ASL and the Israeli Defense Force have antagonized the local Lebanese community, but have kept northern Israel free from serious security problems. As a result, Israel has no incentive at present either to abandon the ASL or to withdraw its own 600-1,000 advisers and troops from the security zone. [Redacted]

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The ASL has its own political agenda--it seeks to control all of the Christian areas of south Lebanon inside and out of the security zone and represent the southern Christian community in national politics--and has retained a measure of freedom in its daily operations. Its long-term existence, however, is dependent on continued Israeli logistic, intelligence and financial support. [Redacted]

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The Army of South Lebanon (ASL), headed by General Antoine Lahad, is located in the section of southern Lebanon that includes Israel's self-proclaimed security zone. This section

This memorandum was prepared by [Redacted] the Israel-Jordan-PLO Branch and [Redacted] the Levant Branch, Arab-Israeli Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Information as of 27 June 1986 was used in its preparation. Questions and comments should be addressed to Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, [Redacted]

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serves as a buffer between the settlements of northern Israel and the violence of southern Lebanon. ASL units in the zone sustain most of the casualties and bear the brunt of the fighting--minimizing politically unacceptable Israeli losses. According to a recent statement by an Israeli Army spokesman, six Israeli soldiers have been killed, two kidnapped, and 29 wounded as a result of more than 1,100 hostile operations during the past year. During the same period, ASL casualties amounted to 45 killed and 160 wounded. ASL casualties are not extensively aired in the Israeli media and have little impact on public opinion. Moreover, according to a recent UNIFIL assessment, hostile incidents in the zone have decreased to about half the level of last summer. [redacted]

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Perhaps even more compelling--particularly to residents of Israel's northern settlements--Israeli casualties on the Lebanese border in the past year have declined substantially compared to before the Lebanon war. Between June 1985 and May 1986, no Israeli civilians were killed, and only 10 were wounded. Between June 1981 and May 1982, 15 Israelis were killed and 132 wounded; between June 1980 and May 1981, 11 were killed and 114 wounded.

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[redacted]

Israeli leaders would like to broker a deal with Amal and Syria to preserve security in the south, but believe that such a deal is unlikely. As a result, Israel views the ASL's presence in the security zone as the only viable nearterm defense against terrorist attacks on its northern settlements.

Background

The ASL militia was formed in 1976--with Israeli assistance and urging--to protect the interests of the southern Christians after the collapse of Lebanon's central government in the civil war. Following Israel's withdrawal from the south after Operation Litani in 1978, control of a small area north of the Israeli-Lebanese border passed to the ASL, then commanded by Lebanese Army Major Sa'ad Haddad. Without Israeli assistance, the Christians would have been unable to fend off the much larger and more powerful Palestinian and leftist Lebanese forces. [redacted]

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[redacted]

Haddad--an extreme rightist, a Greek Catholic, and a native of Marjayun in South Lebanon--was the major Lebanese figure in the formation of the ASL. Haddad operated independently of the Beirut government despite efforts of various Christian parties to control him. The Phalange and Chamun's National Liberal Party

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[redacted]

sent him reinforcements from time to time, but neither group could control him. Half-hearted attempts by the Lebanese government to remove him were fended off. [redacted]

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Lahad--a former Lebanese army officer--was chosen by the Israelis to head the militia after Haddad's death in 1984. He faced an unenviable task--presiding over an organization perceived by most of the area's Shias--75 percent of the security zone's population of 150,000--as an Israeli stooge. He has failed in his efforts to increase the size of his militia to about 6,000 fighters; we currently estimate that the ASL numbers about 2,100-2,500. [redacted]

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Strong Israeli Ties

Israel's control over the ASL is pervasive. Israel trains, equips, advises, resupplies, and pays the salaries of Lahad's troops. Additionally, Israeli troops fight alongside ASL militiamen during sweep operations, and Israeli armaments--particularly helicopter gunships--are used to support the ASL. The ASL's primary role in the south purportedly is to protect the Christian villages, but priority is given to securing Israel's northern border by patrolling the security zone, preventing infiltration of terrorists, and uncovering and confiscating arms intended for use against Israel's northern settlements. [redacted]

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In the event of a total pullout of Israeli troops from Lebanon, we believe the ASL would quickly collapse. Lahad's weapons--Israeli-provided tanks, artillery, and armored personnel carriers--would become inoperable without Israeli maintenance support and Lahad's spare parts and fuel stocks would be quickly exhausted. Lahad could sustain military operations for no more than a few weeks until he depleted his ammunition--which the Israelis provide on a piece-meal basis to limit indiscriminate shelling. [redacted]

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Lahad's Agenda

Lahad is a much more ambitious figure than was Major Haddad, who despite occasional rhetoric never sought a national Lebanese political role. Lahad, however, seeks not only to control the border zone but all the predominately Christian areas of south Lebanon. Indeed the most important base of Lahad's political effort is the Christian town of Jazzin which is north of the security zone. Most ASL armor and artillery is deployed near Jazzin which, with about 25,000 inhabitants, is the largest

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Christian town in south Lebanon and a traditional stronghold of the Chamunist National Liberal Party (NLP) with which Lahad has long been linked. The NLP actually recommended Lahad to the Israelis as Haddad's replacement in 1984. [REDACTED]

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We believe Lahad ultimately hopes to exploit Israeli backing and ties with other Christian elements in Lebanon to strengthen his hold over the southern Lebanese Christian community.

According to [REDACTED] press accounts, Lahad envisions regaining control over Christian villages east of Sidon which fell to Shia militias after Israel's withdrawal last year. He would like to launch an assault to regain them in cooperation with the fighters from the NLP. [REDACTED]

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In our judgment an attack launched by Lahad without Israeli approval and extensive logistic, intelligence, and combat support--which would likely not be forthcoming--would fail. Moreover, Lahad's control over some of his own troops is questionable. The Shia members in the ASL probably would not follow orders to attack Palestinian or Muslim strongholds outside the ASL's current area of operations. Although Shias represent less than 15 percent of the ASL militia, they lend credibility to the claims of Lahad and Israel that the ASL is a Lebanese militia representing the south's population. [REDACTED]

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In addition to these military plans to expand the ASL's area of control, Lahad has also energetically sought to strengthen his economic position in the south. The US Embassy in Tel Aviv reports that the ASL is involved in a casino just north of the Israeli border. The ASL with Israeli support has also improved port facilities at Naqurah. Lahad also has expanded on Haddad's invitation to fundamentalist Christians in the United States to use south Lebanon as a base for broadcasting via the Voice of Hope radio and television stations to the entire Levant. [REDACTED]

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Lahad is aware that these steps will never make him free from dependence on Israel, but he seems to harbor ambitions to make the ASL-dominated areas another Christian canton similar to but smaller than the Christian canton north of Beirut. The southern Christians would thus join the ranks of Lebanon's other confessional groups in carving out a protective mini-state of their own in the absence of a viable central authority. Of course, Lahad's canton would be imposed on the Shia majority by the Christian minority--in contrast to Lebanon's other defacto cantons which are more homogenous. Lahad probably envisions that this southern Christian canton would remain an Israeli protectorate, but also develop improved ties with the Maronite Christian entity in central Lebanon. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

In the unlikely event that Israel reaches a security arrangement with Amal or Syria for the south in which Lahad's role as head of the ASL is scuttled, Lahad would have to shelve his ambitious political goals. We do not believe that he could strongly resist an Israeli offer of early--and likely well paid--retirement. He says he is willing to step down but only if the security of the southern Christians is guaranteed. [REDACTED] 25X1

Lahad's Room to Maneuver

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Despite Israel's strict supervision, Lahad has retained a measure of tactical freedom in determining his militia's daily operations. Israeli attempts at curbing Lahad's unruly troops from exacting revenge against residents of the south are not always successful. The ASL apparently was responsible for most of the incidents of brutality during Israel's last major sweep operation beyond the security zone in February. Israeli advisors are assigned to each armor and artillery company, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] but have been unable to stop indiscriminate firing against targets outside the zone. [REDACTED] 25X1 25X1

Lahad recently announced that the ASL holds approximately 200 Shia fighters in a southern Lebanese prison near Al Khiyam. Lahad has fended off Israel requests--in response to frequent International Red Cross (IRC) entreaties and Washington's urging --to allow the IRC access to the detainees. Israeli efforts have probably been half-hearted--in our judgment Israel has sufficient leverage over Lahad to force him to comply with these requests. [REDACTED] 25X1

Relations With Other Lebanese Groups

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Other Christians

Lahad is a Maronite and wants to establish closer ties to the Christians of Central Lebanon. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Lahad met recently with Samir Ja'Ja, the leader of the Lebanese Forces militia, the military arm of the Christian Phalange Party and NLP leader Dany Chamun, son of former President Camile Chamun, in south Lebanon. This meeting may be an indication that prospects for cooperation between the various Christian communities are improving. The ASL and the LF share a common interest: protecting Lebanese Christians from Syrian-backed militias, the pro-Iranian Hizballah, and returning Palestinian fighters. [REDACTED] 25X1 25X1

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[REDACTED]

The deep-seated rivalries that plaque the Christian population, however, will make progress very slow. Moreover, the two groups are geographically separate, making military cooperation very complicated. Resupply of materiel or movement of troops in either direction would be a logistical nightmare and almost certainly would require Israeli assistance. [REDACTED]

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Druze

The Druze Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) controls most of the area between Lahad and the northern Christians and therefore influences their efforts to cooperate. Although the Druze have a tacit understanding with Lahad over his control of Jazzin they have been reluctant to aid a Christian linkage. The rise of the Hizballah--which poses a threat to Druze and Christians alike --however, may encourage the Druze to accommodate the Christian efforts to develop closer ties. Walid Jumblatt noted in recent discussions with US Embassy officials that the PSP regard recent Shia activities in southern Lebanon as a potential threat to their community, and have quietly supported the ASL's activities, particularly in Jazzin. [REDACTED]

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The Druze also have an interest in good ties with Lahad to maintain contact to the Druze community in southeastern Lebanon around Hasbayya, a Druze holy site. The ASL forces in this area include a few Druze in their ranks, according to press reports, and Druze villagers pass via Jazzin between the two Druze communities. Ties with Lahad and his Israeli patrons also allows the PSP to maintain important ties to the large Druze community on the Golan Heights. [REDACTED]

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UNIFIL

Prospects for UNIFIL-ASL cooperation in the event of a total Israeli withdrawal are bleak. Current relations between UNIFIL and the ASL range from non-cooperation to open hostility and would likely erode unless UNIFIL reverses its current policy and accords the ASL the same quasi-official status as it gives other Lebanese militias. UNIFIL and ASL posts in the south regularly deny each other passage through their respective areas of control, and exchanges of fire between the two forces are becoming increasingly frequent. [REDACTED]

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UNIFIL's departure would have little impact on the Army of South Lebanon, in our view. Lahad would like to expand the ASL's zone to areas now occupied by UNIFIL north of Israel's security

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[REDACTED]

zone. But unless he recruits a large number of new militiamen--a prospect we judge as unlikely--he will be unable to do more than make limited territorial gains. We estimate that Lahad would have to come close to his original goal of 6,000 troops to expand his influence significantly north of the current zone. Israeli leaders, moreover, are unlikely to support Lahad's expansionist designs. They would be unwilling to augment IDF troop levels following an ASL move to occupy areas evacuated by UNIFIL. [REDACTED]

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Outlook

Israeli leaders would like Syria and Amal to agree to preserve security in the south--in return for which Israel would incrementally withdraw its troops from selected portions of the zone after six months of relative calm. Israel, however, insists on a role for the ASL to provide security for Christian areas following an Israeli withdrawal; Amal and Assad want Lahad's force disbanded. [REDACTED]

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Short of an agreement, Israel is very unlikely to risk unilateral withdrawal from the security zone. The Israelis believe growing numbers of Palestinian fighters are returning to the south and that the Shia and Amal are becoming increasingly radical, making an already volatile region more dangerous. The Israelis believe that the security zone--patrolled by the ASL and relatively small numbers of IDF troops--is the best way to stem cross-border violence and they are likely to rely on this arrangement for the foreseeable future. [REDACTED]

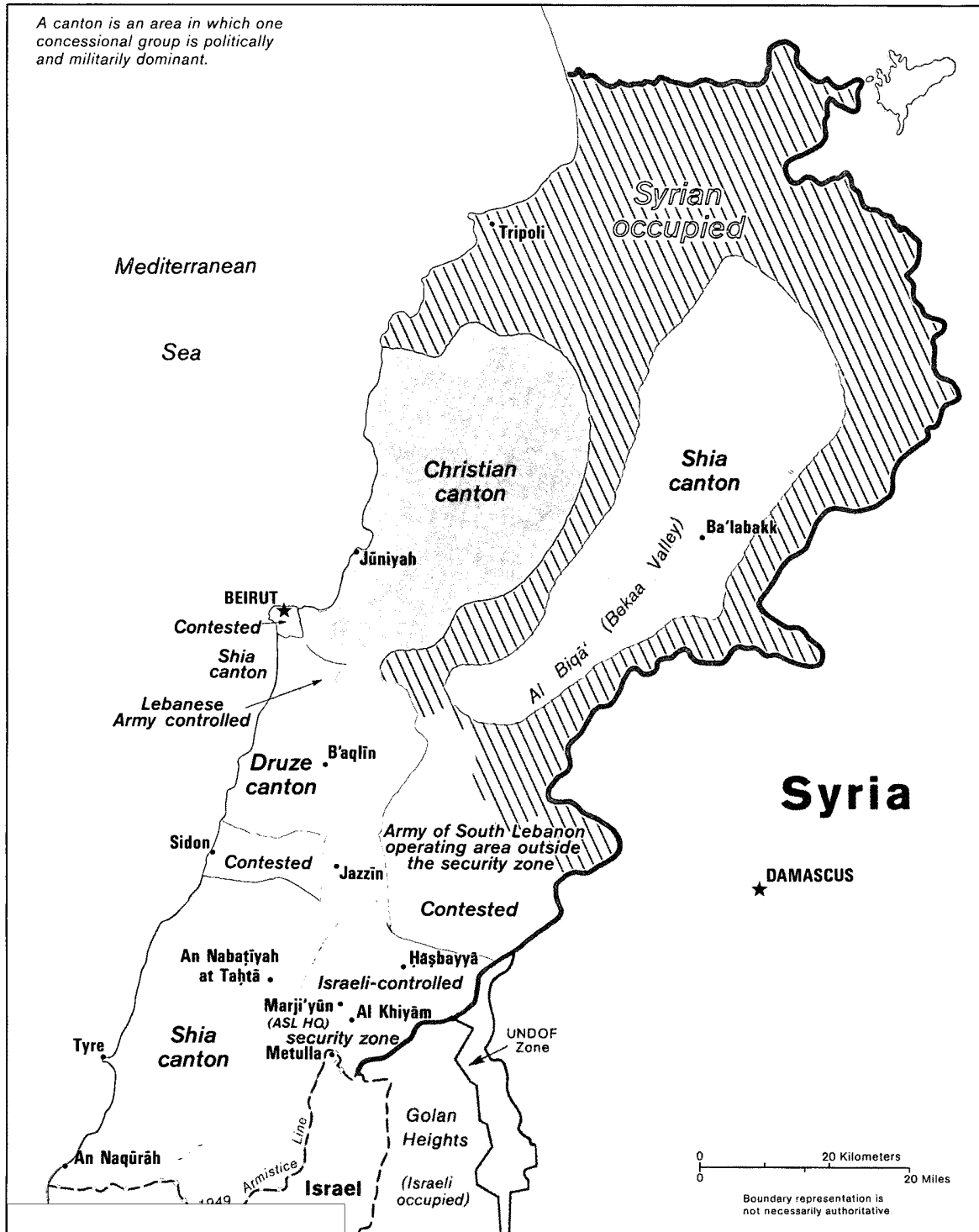
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The Partition of Lebanon

A canton is an area in which one concessional group is politically and militarily dominant.



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