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Lebanon

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SUMMARY

The United States and Lebanon continue to enjoy good relations. Prominent current issues between the United States and Lebanon include progress toward a Lebanon-Israel peace treaty, U.S. aid to Lebanon, and Lebanon's capacity to stop Hizballah militia attacks on Israel. The United States supports Lebanon's independence and favored the end of Israeli and Syrian occupation of parts of Lebanon. Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon on May 23, 2000, and Syria completed withdrawing its forces on April 26, 2005. Lebanon is rebuilding after the 1975-1990 civil war.

Lebanon's government is based in part on a 1943 agreement that called for a Maronite Christian President, a Sunni Muslim Prime Minister, and a Shi'ite Muslim Speaker of the National Assembly, and stipulated that the National Assembly seats and civil service jobs be distributed according to a ratio of 6 Christians to 5 Muslims. On August 21, 1990, the Lebanon National Assembly adopted the "Taif" reforms (named after the Saudi Arabian city where they were negotiated). The parliament was increased to 128 to be divided evenly between Christians and Muslim-Druze, presidential authority was decreased, and the Speaker's and the Prime Minister's authority was increased. President Ilyas Hirawi signed the constitutional amendment implementing the reforms on September 21, 1990.

Since the civil war, Lebanon has held elections for the National Assembly in 1992, 1996, 2000, and, most recently, 2005. The National Assembly elected Emile Lahoud President on October 15, 1998, and extended his term for three years by a constitutional amendment in September 2004. The assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, who opposed Lahoud's extension, sparked a political crisis, realignments in Lebanon's domestic politics, and withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. Since June 2005, an independent U.N. commission has been investigating the circumstances of Hariri's assassination, amid allegations of Syrian involvement, directly or through pro-Syrian Lebanese officials.

The United States welcomed the formation of a new Lebanese government following the withdrawal of Syrian forces. After meeting with President Bush in Washington on April 18, 2006, Prime Minister Fouad Siniora said in an interview with that he asked President Bush for three things: to empower the Lebanese government politically through restoration of all its territories (including the disputed Shib'a Farms area), to help build the capabilities of Lebanon's armed forces and security forces, and to empower the government economically. The conference report on the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act for FY2006, H.R. 3057, signed by the President on November 14, 2005, as P.L. 109-102, contains $40 million in Economic Support Funds for Lebanon in FY2006.

Other CRS reports on Lebanon include CRS Issue Brief IB92075, *Syria: U.S. Relations and Bilateral Issues*, by Alfred B. Prados.

MOST RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

According to news reports, the Lebanese government has requested an extension of the mandate of the U.N. commission investigating the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.[1] During testimony on May 25, 2006, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Ambassador Bolton said that "[w]e continue to support Commissioner Serge Brammertz' ongoing investigation of this terrorist act, and will support an extension" of the Commission's mandate when its mandate expires on June 15.

Meanwhile on May 17, 2006, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1680 as a follow-up to a previous resolution (1559) that had called among other things for withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon and for disarming militias in Lebanon. Resolution 1680 noted that some provisions of 1559 had been carried out but others had not, notably the disarmament of militias. The resolution calls on Syria to prevent movement of arms into Lebanon, "strongly encourages" Syria to respond positively to the request by Lebanon to delineate their common border and establish full diplomatic relations, and calls for the disbandment of all militias inside Lebanon.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Lebanon: Demography and Politics

Political Profile

Sectarianism. Lebanon, with a population of 3.8 million, has the most religiously diverse society in the Middle East, comprising 17 recognized religious sects. "Confessionalism," or the distribution of governmental posts by religious sect, is a long-standing feature of Lebanese political life, despite frequent calls to abolish it. Because of political sensitivities related to power sharing among the various communities, no census has been taken in Lebanon since 1932, when Lebanon was under a French mandate. According to current estimates by the Central Intelligence Agency as of 2005, Muslim groups comprise 59.7% of the population while Christian groups comprise 39.0%, with another 1.3%of assorted religious affiliations. A more detailed but less recent estimate by an expert on the geography and demography of the Middle East gives the following breakdown:[2]

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[1] "Lebanon Wants Extension Of UN Hariri Murder Investigation," Dow Jones Newswires, May 2, 2006.

[2] Colbert C. Held, *Middle East Patterns*, Westview Press, 2000, p. 262. Reflecting 1999 figures, Held uses an estimated total Lebanese population of 3.506 million, to which he applies the above percentages.

Table 1. Lebanon Population and Religious Sects

Sect	Number	Percent
Shi'ite Muslim	1,192,000	34%
Sunni Muslim	701,000	20%
Maronite Christian[a]	666,000	19%
Druze[b]	280,000	8%
Greek Orthodox (Christian)	210,000	6%
Armenian (Christian)[c]	210,000	6%
Greek Catholic (Christian)[a]	175,000	5%
Other	70,000	2%
Total (not exact, due to rounding)	3,506,000	100%

a. Affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church but retain their own rituals.
b. Grouped with Muslims; regarded by some as derived from Shi'ite Islam.
c. Armenians are the only sizeable ethnic minority in Lebanon; other Lebanese groups are all ethnic Arab.

Lebanese groups have developed political parties along religious, geographical, ethnic, and ideological lines and are often associated with prestigious families. Christian groups, especially Maronites, tend to be strong advocates of Lebanese independence and opposed to Syrian and other external influences. Christian parties include the Phalange led by the Gemayel family, and smaller parties led by the Chamoun, Frangieh, and Iddi families. Sunni Muslim parties, historically more Arab nationalist in orientation, include the Independent Nasirite group and a new group, the Futures Party, that has coalesced around anti-Syrian supporters of the recently assassinated Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Shi'ite parties include the more moderate Amal under Nabih Berri and the more radical Hizballah (see below), former rivals but now at least temporarily allied; Druze are largely associated with the Progressive Socialist Party led by the leftist yet feudally based Jumblatt family, now somewhat tenuously aligned with the Futures Party. A religiously mixed group, the Syrian National Social Party (SNSP), favors a union of Syria, Lebanon, and possibly other nearby states. Several of these parties and groupings formerly maintained militias, notably the Lebanese Forces, which were affiliated with the Christian Phalange Party, and Hizballah, which has both a political and a military wing. Most of the militias were disbanded after the civil war and Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea was jailed (he has just been amnestied), but Hizballah's militia continues to function.

Political Structure and Power Sharing. Post-civil war Lebanon retains the country's unique political system, based on power sharing among the diverse religious sectarian communities and political factions that comprise the modern Lebanese state. Under the constitution of 1926, Lebanon is a republic with a president elected by parliament for a non-renewable six-year term, a prime minister and cabinet appointed by the president, and a parliament, elected by universal adult suffrage for a four-year term. Composition of parliament varies in accordance with electoral laws that are promulgated before each election; current membership is 128. Unlike the President, the prime minister and cabinet must receive a vote of confidence from parliament.

In 1943, when Lebanon became fully independent from France, leaders of the principal religious communities adopted an unwritten agreement known as the National Covenant, which provided that the President be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of Parliament a Shi'ite Muslim; parliamentary seats were divided on the basis of six Christians to five Muslims. Cabinet posts are generally distributed among the principal sectarian communities, notably Maronites, Greek Orthodox, smaller Christian sects, Druze (a small sect associated with Islam), Sunni Muslims, and Shi'ite Muslims. As time passed, the 1943 ratios, which had been based on the country's sole census conducted in 1932, became less reflective of Lebanese society as Muslims gradually came to outnumber Christians, while within the Muslim community, Shi'ite Muslims came to outnumber Sunni Muslims. Discontent over power sharing imbalances was a major factor in inter-communal tensions and civil strife culminating in the 1975-1990 civil war.

The Civil War and Taif Reforms. At stake in the civil war was control over the political process in Lebanon, the status of Palestinian refugees and militia, and the respective goals of Syria and Israel (see the section below on Foreign Presence in Lebanon). From 1975 to 1990, the civil war killed, wounded, or disabled hundreds of thousands and rendered comparable numbers homeless at one time or another during the fighting. At one point, a terror bombing in October 1983 killed 241 U.S. armed forces personnel, who were part of a short-lived multinational force attempting to keep peace among Palestinian refugees and Lebanese factions. From 1987 until July 1997, the United States banned travel to Lebanon because of the threat of kidnaping and dangers from the ongoing civil war. Lebanon continues to rebuild in the aftermath of the civil war.

The Lebanese parliament elected in 1972 remained in office for 20 years, since it was impossible to elect a new parliament during the civil war. After a prolonged political crisis near the end of the war, Lebanese parliamentary deputies met in 1989 in Taif, Saudi Arabia, under the auspices of the Arab League and adopted a revised power sharing agreement. The so-called Taif Agreement raised the number of seats in parliament from 99 to 108 (later changed to 128), replaced the former 6:5 ratio of Christians to Muslims in parliament with an even ratio, provided for a proportional distribution of seats among the various Christian and Muslim sub-sects, and left appointment of the prime minister to parliament, subject to the president's approval. It also addressed the status of Syrian forces in Lebanon, as explained in a section below. Parliamentary elections held in 1992, 1996, and 2000 resulted in pro-Syrian majorities, given the presence and influence of Syrian forces in Lebanon ostensibly as part of a peacekeeping force. Though supported by some Lebanese, including many Shi'ite Muslims, the Syrian presence was increasingly resented by other elements of the Lebanese population.

Political Upheaval of 2005

Assassination of Former Prime Minister. By 2004, tensions had increased between the pro-Syrian Lebanese President Emile Lahoud and the independent Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, a self-made billionaire who had spearheaded the reconstruction of Lebanon after the civil war. Matters came to a head when the Lebanese parliament, apparently under Syrian pressure, adopted a Syrian-backed constitutional amendment extending President Lahoud's tenure by an additional three years. Hariri, who disagreed with the move, resigned in October 2004, and subsequently aligned himself with an anti-Syrian opposition coalition. Hariri's assassination in a car bombing on February 14, 2005, blamed

by many on Syrian agents, led to widespread protests by an anti-Syrian coalition comprising many members of the Christian, Druze, and Sunni Muslim communities and counter-demonstrations by pro-Syrian groups including Shi'ites who rallied behind the Hizballah and Amal parties. Outside Lebanon, the United States and France were particularly vocal in their denunciation of the assassination and a possible Syrian role in it.

Resolution 1595. A statement by the President of the U.N. Security Council on February 25, although it did not mention Syria by name, condemned the assassination and requested the Secretary General "to report urgently on the circumstances, causes and consequences of this terrorist act." In accordance with this request, a U.N. fact-finding team visited Lebanon and concluded that "the Lebanese investigation process suffers from serious flaws and has neither the capacity nor the commitment to reach a satisfactory and credible conclusion."

On April 7, as domestic and international outrage mounted, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1595, under which the council decided to "establish an international independent investigation Commission ('the Commission' or UNIIIC) based in Lebanon to assist the Lebanese authorities in their investigation of all aspects of this terrorist act, including to help identify its perpetrators, sponsors, organizers and accomplices." Heading the Commission was Detlev Mehlis, described as "a 25-year veteran of the Berlin prosecutor's office with a record of solving high profile terror cases."[3] The resolution requested the Commission to complete its work within three months from the date it commences operations, authorizes the Secretary General to extend the Commission's mandate for another period of up to three months, and requests an oral update every two months while the Commission is functioning. The U.N. Secretary General informed members of the Security Council that the Commission was fully operational as of June 16, 2005. On September 8, 2005, the Commission requested a 40-day extension to complete its work. Upon submission of the Commission's initial report on October 19, the Secretary General extended its mandate until December 15 to enable the Commission to pursue further gaps it had identified (see "The Mehlis Commission," below).[4] On August 30, a U.N. spokeswoman announced that three former heads of Lebanese intelligence agencies and a former Lebanese member of parliament had been identified as suspects in the assassination of Hariri. A subsequent press report describes the suspects as Syrian proxies with close ties to President Lahoud.[5]

The Mehlis Report. Tensions mounted as reports circulated that Syrian and Lebanese officials would be implicated in the findings of the Mehlis Commission. After encountering

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[3] Warren Hoge, "Bush Pushes U.N. to Move Swiftly on Syria Report," *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 2005.

[4] In its operative paragraph 1, Resolution 1595 "Decides ... to establish an international independent investigation Commission ("the Commission") based in Lebanon to assist the Lebanese authorities in their investigation of all aspects of this terrorist act ..." The resolution requests that the commission complete its work within three months from commencement of operations. The U.N. subsequently announced that the Commission began its operations on June 16, 2005.

[5] Hassan M. Fatah, "Lebanon's President Facing Growing Pressure to Resign," *New York Times*, Sept. 6, 2005. The press report lists the four as the current head of security, the former head of security, a former military intelligence chief, and a former chief of police.

initial resistance from Syria, from September 20-23, members of the commission visited Damascus, where they interviewed senior Syrian military and security officials including the last two Syrian chiefs of intelligence in Lebanon, who were widely regarded as the effective viceroys of Lebanon during their respective tenures: Generals Rustom Ghazali and Ghazi Kanaan. Kanaan, who was reassigned to Syria in 2002 and appointed minister of the interior apparently committed suicide in October 2005. Some observers speculate that Kanaan was killed or forced to commit suicide by Syrian authorities because of what he might reveal — or might have revealed — about Syrian involvement in the Hariri assassination or that he chose to take his own life because he feared that he would become the scapegoat for Syrian actions in Lebanon. In actuality, however, Kanaan is not mentioned in the Commission's report of October 19 (see below).

The 54-page report submitted by the Mehlis Commission represented four months of research in which Commission members interviewed more than 400 persons and reviewed 60,000 documents, identified several suspects, and established various leads. Two central conclusions reached by the Commission deal with the question of culpability, although they do not constitute a conclusive finding:

> It is the Commission's view that the assassination on 14 February 2005 was carried out by a group with an extensive organization and considerable resources and capabilities.
>
> ...there is converging evidence pointing at both Lebanese and Syrian involvement in this terrorist act.... Given the infiltration of Lebanese institutions and society by the Syrian and Lebanese intelligence services working in tandem, it would be difficult to envisage a scenario whereby such a complex assassination plot could have been carried out without their knowledge.

The Commission report adds that the investigation is not complete and calls for further investigation; states that Syrian authorities, including the foreign minister, while extending limited cooperation, have provided some false or inaccurate information; and calls on Syria to help clarify unresolved questions. Syrian officials, including President Bashar al-Asad, have denied complicity in the Hariri assassination and said the Mehlis report was biased. On October 29, President Asad said Syria has set up a commission to investigate the assassination.[6]

Questions have been raised regarding the apparent exclusions in the report of the names of suspects who had been identified in earlier drafts of the report. The principal example appears in Paragraph 96 (page 29) of the report, in which a witness told the Commission that in September 2004 "senior Lebanese and Syrian officials decided to assassinate Rafik Hariri" and held several follow-up meetings in Syria to plan the crime. An earlier version reportedly listed the names of five of the senior officers, including President Asad's brother Maher al-Asad and the President's brother-in-law Asif Shawkat, chief of military intelligence and widely considered the second most powerful official in the regime. Some reporters questioned whether or not the Commission chief Detlev Mehlis had come under pressure to make the report less accusatory. At a news conference on October 21, both Mehlis and Secretary-General Kofi Annan denied this; Mehlis went on to explain that he suppressed the

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[6] Warren Hoge and Steven R. Weisman, "U.N. Is Expected to Pass Measure Pressuring Syria," *New York Times*, Oct. 31, 2005.

names of the officers when he found out that the Commission's report was to be made public, because he had only one anonymous source for the specific accusation.[7] Maher al-Asad does not appear at all in the official copy of the report and Asif Shawkat appears only once (paragraph 178) when Shawkat allegedly forced an individual 45 days before the assassination to make a tape claiming responsibility for the crime, purportedly in an effort to hide Syrian or Lebanese complicity.

Resolution 1636. On October 31, 2005, the U.N. Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1636, which requires Syria to cooperate "fully and unconditionally" with the Mehlis investigation into the assassination of the late Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri or face unspecified "further action." By dropping a threat appearing in earlier drafts of specific economic sanctions, the sponsors of the resolution were able to attract support from Russia and China while leaving the door open to the imposition of sanctions at a later date. U.S. officials noted that the resolution was adopted under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, which gives the Council power to impose penalties, including use of military force.[8] After temporizing, Syria acceded to a request by the Mehlis Commission to make five Syrian officials available for questioning by the commission at U.N. offices in Vienna, Austria. The Syrians, whose names were not announced, were reportedly intelligence and security officials including the former Syrian intelligence chief in Lebanon Rustom Ghazali; meetings took place from December 5 to 7.

Possible Credibility Issue. In a related development, on November 28 a former key witness questioned by the Mehlis Commission stated on Syrian TV that he had provided false testimony to the commission after having been kidnapped, tortured, injected with drugs, and offered a $1.3 million bribe by Lebanese officials who wanted him to implicate Syrian intelligence in the murder of Hariri. The witness, Hussam Tahir Hussam, describes himself as a Syrian intelligence agent. Mehlis and Lebanese officials have expressed doubts regarding his statement. Two other Syrian government employees have said another former witness, like Hussam, would soon recant his original testimony before the commission, in what some commentators think may be a Syrian-instigated campaign to undercut the credibility of the Mehlis report.[9]

More Violence. On December 12, 2005, a car bomb killed Gibran Tueni, a prominent Lebanese journalist and newly elected member of the Lebanese parliament, who had often criticized Syria's role in Lebanon. Several anti-Syrian Lebanese politicians have blamed Syria, which in turn denied complicity and said the crime was aimed at directing fresh accusations against Syria. Commentators note that the explosion occurred only a few hours before the U.N. investigating commission was due to submit an update of its report on the Hariri assassination to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan. Other anti-Syrian Lebanese victims of recent major attacks or assassinations include journalists Samir Kassir (June 2, 2005) and Mai Chidiac (September 25, 2005) and politician George Hawi (June 21, 2005). Of these, Chidiac was critically injured and the others were killed.

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[7] Warren Hoge, "Bush Pushes U.N. to Move Swiftly on Syria Report," *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 2005.

[8] Warren Hoge, "U.N. Tells Syria to Stop Impeding Slaying Inquiry," *New York Times*, Nov. 1, 2005.

[9] Michael Slackman, "Syria Attacks Evidence as U.N. Case Turns More Bizarre," *New York Times*, Dec. 7, 2005.

The Mehlis Follow-On Report. On December 12, the Mehlis commission submitted a follow-on report which states that "[t]he Commission's conclusions set out in its previous report ... remain valid." According to the follow-on report, the Commission interviewed additional witnesses (for a total of 500 as of December 12), identified 19 suspects (reportedly including the five Syrian officers interviewed in Vienna), and reviewed additional documentation. Statements by two of the suspects indicated that all Syrian intelligence documents concerning Lebanon had been burned. Also, the head of a separate Syrian investigative commission informed the Mehlis Commission that no material regarding the Hariri assassination had been found in Syrian archives. The Mehlis follow-on report further expresses the view that Hussam, the witness who recanted his statement, "is being manipulated by the Syrian authorities." Analysts are reportedly reviewing the material in an attempt to find material relevant to planning for the assassination. The report stated that "[t]he detailed information [from the additional statements and documents reviewed by the commission] points directly at perpetrators, sponsors and organizers of an organized operation aiming at killing Mr. Hariri, including the recruitment of special agents by the Lebanese and Syrian intelligence services." The report recommended that the commission be extended by an additional six months.

Resolutions 1644 and 1664. On December 15, 2005, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1644, which extended the mandate of the Independent Commission for six months until June 15, 2006, as recommended by the Commission, and requested the Commission to report on its progress at three-month intervals. The Council acknowledged a Lebanese request that suspects be tried by "a tribunal of an international character" and asked the Secretary General to help the Lebanese government identify the nature of such a tribunal (Paragraph 6). The Council also requested the Secretary General to present recommendations to expand the Commission's mandate to include investigations of other attacks on Lebanese figures (Paragraph 7). In a subsequent Resolution 1664 adopted on March 29, 2006, the Council requested the Secretary General to negotiate an agreement with the government of Lebanon aimed at establishing the requested tribunal. Meanwhile, Mehlis, who wanted to return to his post in Germany, stepped down as Commission chairman in early January 2006 and was replaced by Serge Brammertz, a Belgian prosecutor serving with the International Criminal Court.

Brammertz Progress Report. On March 14, 2006, Brammertz released his first progress report to the U.N. Security Council. The 25-page document, described by one commentator as more conservative and less detailed than the Mehlis reports (*New York Times*, March 15, 2006), stated that "[t]he individuals who perpetrated this crime appear to be very 'professional' in their approach" and went on to say that "[i]t must be assumed that at least some of those involved were likely experienced in this type of terrorist activity" (Paragraph 33 of the Brammertz report). Syrian spokesmen put a positive interpretation on the report, saying that it "was realistic and has a lot of professionalism." President Asad, who had temporized for several months over the Commission's demand for an interview, agreed to meet Brammertz under a deal that will give the Commission access to individuals, sites, and information, including the head of state (Paragraphs 91-95). Pursuant to these understandings, news media reported that Brammertz met with the Syrian president and vice president in Damascus on April 25; however, the news reports did not give details on the course of the meetings. Earlier, U.S. State Department spokesman J. Adam Ereli told a news briefing audience on March 15 that "we support the work of Investigator Brammertz. He's continuing the important and invaluable work of his predecessor, Mr. Mehlis."

Other Recent Activity. According to news reports, the Lebanese government has requested an extension of the UNIIIC's mandate beyond the current deadline of June 15, 2006.[10] During testimony on May 25, 2006, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Ambassador Bolton said that "[w]e continue to support Commissioner Serge Brammertz' ongoing investigation of this terrorist act, and will support an extension" of the Commission's mandate when its mandate expires. A proposed extension is likely to engender considerable discussion in Beirut and Washington, as well as at the U.N. Security Council. Some Lebanese officials, for example, have expressed concern that repeated extension of the mandate will make it impossible for the Commission to come to closure. Others think the Commission needs more time to complete the collection and analysis of data.

Elections of 2005 and Aftermath

As Syrian troops departed from Lebanon under U.S. and international pressure (see below), the Lebanese prepared to hold parliamentary elections without Syrian interference for the first time since 1972. Parliamentary elections, held in four phases between May 29 and June 5, 2005, gave a majority (72 out of 128 seats) to a large, anti-Syrian bloc known as the Bristol Gathering or the March 14 Movement, headed by Saad Hariri, a son of the late prime minister. A second, largely Shi'ite and pro-Syrian bloc grouping Hizballah and the more moderate Amal organization won 33 seats. A third bloc, the Change and Reform Movement (also known as the Free Patriotic Movement), consisted of largely Christian supporters of former dissident armed forces chief of staff General Michel Awn,[11] who returned to Lebanon from exile in France in May 2005. Awn's bloc, which adopted a somewhat equivocal position regarding Syria, gained 21 seats. Despite Hariri's success, the electoral pattern resulted in a mixed government, which complicates its abilities to adopt clear policy lines. Hariri associate Fouad Siniora became prime minister and the 24-member cabinet contains 15 Hariri supporters; however, it also contains five supporters of the Shi'ite bloc including for the first time in Lebanese history a member of Hizballah — Mohammed Fneish, Minister of Energy and Water Resources. Other key pro-Syrians remaining in the government are President Lahoud and veteran parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri, who heads the Amal organization (Hizballah's junior partner in the Shi'ite coalition) and has held the speakership since 1992.

Siniora will continue to face difficulties in working with this mixed government. First, pressure has mounted for the resignation of President Lahoud with the identification of several of his close associates in the Hariri assassination.[12] Second, the role of the formerly exiled General Awn is uncertain: though long an opponent of the Syrian role in Lebanon,

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[10] "Lebanon Wants Extension Of UN Hariri Murder Investigation," Dow Jones Newswires, May 2, 2006.

[11] General Awn, a controversial former armed forces commander and prime minister, rejected the Taif Agreement and ultimately obtained political asylum in France.

[12] In early January an anti-Syrian Lebanese political figure described Lahoud's extension in office as "null and void." On the other hand, Shi'ite cabinet ministers reportedly refused to attend a cabinet meeting unless President Lahoud was present. Majdoline Hatoum, "Calls for Lahoud's Resignation Intensify," *The Daily Star* (Beirut), Jan. 4, 2006; Adnan al-Ghoul, "Hizbullah Takes Gloves off in Row with Jumblatt," *The Daily Star* (Beirut), Jan. 16, 2006.

Awn formed tactical alliances with several pro-Syrian Lebanese politicians during the recent elections in an effort to defeat pro-Hariri candidates. On the other hand, Awn's grouping is not represented in the newly formed cabinet and Awn has said he will form the backbone of an opposition to Siniora's government. Some observers believe Awn has his eye on the presidency. Third, the inclusion of a Hizballah official in the cabinet raises further potential problems; for example, the U.S. State Department, while welcoming the Siniora cabinet, has said it will not deal with an official of Hizballah, which the U.S. Government has listed as a foreign terrorist organization. Fourth, a major stumbling block for the government is a U.N. demand contained in Security Council Resolution 1559 that all militias be disbanded, which in effect refers mainly to Hizballah. This demand has proven difficult to implement in view of Hizballah's strong block of supporters in parliament and its paramilitary capabilities, together with support for Hizballah from Syria and Iran.

Deadlock and Potential Realignments. Disputes over Lahoud's status and Hizballah disarmament led to a cabinet crisis and temporary boycott by Shi'ite cabinet ministers in December 2005. The crisis was temporarily resolved when Prime Minister Siniora stated on February 3, 2006, that "we have never called and will never call the resistance [Hizballah] by any other name" [thereby avoiding the term "militia" in characterizing Hizballah]. In the meantime, leaders of two major parliamentary blocs with strongly differing views on Syria and other topics — Hizballah chief Hasan Nasrallah and Free Patriotic Movement leader General Michel Awn — held what some describe as a historic meeting in a Beirut church on February 6, 2006. At the meeting, the two adopted a "Paper of Understanding" that called for ways to end rampant corruption; draft a new election law and envisages ways of confronting issues such as the demarcation of borders and establishment of diplomatic relations with Syria; and disarming Hizballah guerrillas and Palestinian factions. The parties emphasized that they were not forming an alliance or seeking to terminate other bilateral undertakings involving either of the two parties. Some parties, however, have gone so far as to call the Awn-Nasrallah meeting a "coup," saying that a meeting between the two leaders who have wide followings in their respective communities "will leave its impact on balances of power that have emerged since Hariri's assassination."[13]

National Dialogue. On March 2, 2006, 14 Lebanese leaders representing major sectarian communities and political groups convened a National Dialogue conference to address key issues currently dividing Lebanon. The ground-breaking conference, pushed by parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri and other Lebanese politicians, agreed to address such issues as the status of President Lahoud, the international investigation of the Hariri and other assassinations, arms maintained by Hizballah and Palestinians outside refugee camps, demarcation of the Syrian-Lebanese border including the disputed Shib'a Farms area (see below), and establishment of diplomatic relations between Lebanon and Syria (which has never taken place). According to press reports, the conferees reached initial agreement on March 13 to disarm Palestinians outside refugee camps and to work to establish diplomatic relations with Syria; however, Syria is resisting border demarcation or establishment of diplomatic relations at this time; moreover, the parties were unable so far to agree on the status of President Lahoud or disarmament of Hizballah. More sessions resumed in late April 2006.

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[13] Hussein Dakroub, "Alliance between pro-and anti-Syrian leaders seen as "coup in Lebanon's politics," *Associated Press*, February 8, 2006.

Recent or Current Foreign Presence in Lebanon

Syria

Thirty-five thousand Syrian troops entered Lebanon in March 1976, in response to then President Suleiman Frangieh's appeal to protect the Christians from Muslim and Palestinian militias; later, Syria switched its support away from the main Christian factions. Between May 1988 and June 2001, Syrian forces occupied most of west Beirut and much of eastern and northern Lebanon. Syrian forces did not venture south of a "red line" running east and west across Lebanon near Rashayah, inasmuch as territory south of the line was considered to fall within the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) operating area.

In October 1989, as part of the Taif agreements, Syria agreed to begin discussions on possible Syrian troop redeployment from Beirut to the eastern Beqaa Valley two years after political reforms were implemented and discuss further withdrawals at that time. Then President Elias Hirawi signed the reforms in September 1990. However, the withdrawal discussions, which according to most interpretations of the Taif Agreement were to have started in September 1992, did not take place, in part because the Lebanese government said it needed more time to establish its authority over the country. Syrian officials maintained that they were waiting for the Lebanese government to complete rebuilding the army and police forces and assume security responsibilities in Lebanon before beginning the withdrawal discussions.

In the meantime, Syria and Lebanon signed a treaty of brotherhood, cooperation, and coordination in May 1991, which called for creating several joint committees to coordinate policies. Although Syrian troop strength in Lebanon reportedly declined from 35,000-40,000 in the 1980s to approximately 14,000 by early 2005, Syria continued to exercise controlling influence over Lebanon's domestic politics and regional policies; moreover, its intelligence agents were active in Lebanon. U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559 adopted on September 2, 2004, called among other things upon "all remaining foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon."

The Hariri assassination in February 2005 prompted strong international pressure on the Syrian regime, particularly from the United States and France, to withdraw its forces and intelligence apparatus from Lebanon in accordance with Resolution 1559. On April 26, 2005, the Syrian foreign minister informed U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and the President of the U.N. Security Council that Syrian forces had completed their withdrawal from Lebanon. In his *first* semi-annual report on the implementation of Resolution 1559,[14] the U.N. Secretary General stated that as of April 26, however, he had not been able to verify full Syrian withdrawal; consequently, he dispatched a U.N. team to verify whether there had been a full Syrian withdrawal. On May 23, the U.N. Secretary General forwarded a report by a team he had sent to Lebanon to verify Syrian withdrawal. The team "found no Syrian military forces, assets or intelligence apparatus in Lebanese territory, with the exception of one Syrian battalion" deployed near the disputed village of Deir Al-Ashayr on the Lebanese-Syrian border. The team also concluded that "no Syrian military intelligence personnel

[14] U.N. Security Council document S/2005/272, Paragraph 17.

remain in Lebanon in known locations or in military uniform" but added that it was "unable to conclude with certainty that all the intelligence apparatus has been withdrawn."[15]

On June 10, 2005, following reports of Syrian involvement in attacks on anti-Syrian Lebanese officials and journalists, Secretary General Annan sent the verification team back to Lebanon to see if Syrian intelligence agents were still in the country. The team returned on July 11 and subsequently submitted a report to Annan. In his *second* semi-annual report on implementation of Resolution 1559, submitted on October 26, 2005, Annan reported that "[o]verall, the team corroborated its earlier conclusion that there was no remaining visible or significant Syrian intelligence presence or activity in Lebanon, though the distinctly close historical and other ties between the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon also had to be taken into account when assessing a possibly ongoing influence of Syrian intelligence in Lebanon." He acknowledged that there were some credible reports that Syrian intelligence continued to influence events in Lebanon but said most of these reports were exaggerated. On the other hand, the Secretary General noted that other requirements of Resolution 1559 remained to be implemented, particularly disbanding and disarming Lebanese and non-Lebanese militia (notably Hizballah and several Palestinian groups) and extension of Lebanese government control throughout all of the country.[16]

The *third* semi-annual report on implementation of Resolution 1559, submitted to the Security Council on April 19, 2006, recounted previously reported threats by Syrian officials against Lebanese legislators if they did not vote for extension of President Lahoud's term. The report says that Syrian forces and intelligence services have effectively left Lebanon, but some other U.N. demands remain unmet, including disarmament of Hizballah, demarcation of the border, and establishment of diplomatic relations. In an interview with Lally Weymouth published in the May 1, 2006, edition of *Newsweek*, Prime Minister Siniora said "Syria has its men and people in the country: supporters, some politicians and quite a number of Syrian intelligence."

Resolution 1680 and Related Activity. As concerns continued over a possible Syrian "shadow" presence in Lebanon, sentiment began to build among some members of the Security Council to consider further follow-up action. Speaking to reporters on April 26, 2006, U.S. Ambassador John Bolton suggested that another Security Council resolution might be appropriate as a means of "highlighting the areas of deficiency in Syria's performance under 1559 and possibly under 1595 as well" to show the Council's "continuing resolve" on the question of Lebanon. After further consultation among U.S., British, and French representatives, on May 17, 2006, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1680 by a vote of 13 to 0. Russia and China, which had favored a Security Council presidential statement rather than another resolution, abstained. The resolution noted progress in implementing provisions of Resolution 1559 but noted with regret that some provisions of Resolution 1559 have not yet been met. The resolution calls on Syria to prevent movement of arms into Lebanon, "strongly encourages" Syria to respond positively to the request by Lebanon to delineate their common border and establish full diplomatic relations, and calls for the disbandment of all militias inside Lebanon.

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[15] Annex to U.N. Security Council document S/2005/331, Letter dated May 23, 2005, from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

[16] Text of report is attached to U.N. Security Council document S/2005/673, Oct. 26, 2005.

Syrian officials and supporters rejected the resolution. Syria's Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying that it "constitutes an unjustifiable pressure tool and aggravation that complicates matters rather than solving them." A pro-Syrian Lebanese political party described Resolution 1680 as "a dangerous precedent that violates sovereignty of countries."[17] Russia's U.N. Ambassador said he disagreed with using the Security Council as a medium for Syrian-Lebanese discussion, while the Chinese Deputy Ambassador said China does not believe the Security Council should get involved in bilateral issues.

Israel

In March 1978, Israel invaded and occupied Lebanese territory south of the Litani River, to destroy Palestinian bases that Israel believed were the source of attacks against Israelis. Israeli forces withdrew in June 1978, after the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was placed south of the Litani to serve as a buffer between Israel and the Palestinians (U.N.S.C. Resolution 425, March 19, 1978). In June 1982, Israel mounted a more extensive invasion designed to root out armed Palestinian guerrillas from southern Lebanon, defeated Syrian forces in central Lebanon, and advanced as far north as Beirut. As many as 20,000 Palestinians and Lebanese may have perished in the fighting. Israeli forces completed a phased withdrawal in 1985, but maintained a 9-mile wide security zone in southern Lebanon from 1985 to 2000. About 1,000 members of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) patrolled the zone, backed by a 2,000-3,000 Lebanese militia called the South Lebanon Army (SLA), which was trained and equipped by Israel. On its part, Israel continued its air and artillery retaliation against Palestinian and Lebanese Shi'ite militia and Lebanese armed forces units that attacked IDF and SLA positions.

In May 2000, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak fulfilled a 1999 campaign promise to withdraw Israeli forces from the security zone in southern Lebanon. Barak had hoped to do this in conjunction with a Syrian withdrawal, but the continued stalemate in Syrian-Israeli talks led Barak to decide to move unilaterally. Some 500 Hizballah militia moved into portions of the southern security zone vacated by the IDF and SLA. Israel gave asylum to approximately 6,700 SLA fighters and their families, while another 1,500 SLA were captured by Hizballah and turned over to the Lebanese Government to stand trial. Of the 6,700 exiles, many emigrated to Australia, Canada, and Latin America; approximately 2,000 remained in Israel as of mid-2005, where they were recently granted the right to Israeli citizenship but few applied.

The Shib'a Farms. Syria and the then pro-Syrian Lebanese government asserted that the Israeli withdrawal was incomplete because it did not include a 10-square-mile enclave known as the Shib'a Farms near the Israeli-Lebanese-Syrian tri-border area. Most third parties maintain that the Shib'a Farms is part of the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan Heights and is not part of the Lebanese territory from which Israeli was required to withdraw under a 1978 U.N. Security Council resolution (425). On June 16, 2000, the U.N. Secretary General informed the Security Council that Israel had withdrawn from Lebanon in compliance with Resolution 425.

[17] American Embassy, Damascus, Syria, via LOC Cairo, Damascus Media Reaction, May 29, 2006.

Hizballah, on its part, claimed credit for forcing Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, thereby boosting its credentials within the Arab world. Since May 2000, Israeli forces in the Shib'a Farms area have been the main focus of Hizballah attacks. Some analysts believe that Syria, the Lebanese government, and Hizballah raised the issue of this obscure enclave as a justification for continuing to put military pressure on Israel to withdraw from the Golan Heights in the aftermath of its withdrawal from Lebanon.[18] Syria denies this. Moreover, Lebanese politicians across the spectrum, including those opposed to Syria, appear to agree that the Farms are Lebanese territory; in his interview with Lally Weymouth, Prime Minister Siniora said the "Sheba (variant spelling) Farms is Lebanese." Commentators have speculated that through its contacts with Hizballah, Iran may seek to fill the vacuum left by Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon. Others doubt that Iran has the means to fill Syria's former role in Lebanon, noting that unlike Syria, Iran does not have contiguous borders with Lebanon.[19]

U.S.-Lebanese Relations

U.S. Policy Toward Lebanon. The United States has enjoyed good diplomatic relations with Lebanon and has supported its political independence. During the 1975-1990 civil war, the United States expressed concern over the violence and destruction taking place there; provided emergency economic aid, military training, and limited amounts of military equipment; and briefly deployed military forces to Lebanon in the early 1980s, as noted earlier. The United States supported and participated in various efforts to bring about a cease-fire during the civil war and subsequent efforts to quiet unrest in southern Lebanon along the Lebanese-Israeli border. In 1996 the United States helped negotiate an agreement between Hizballah and Israel to avoid targeting civilians and is a member of a five-party force monitoring this agreement. The United States endorsed the U.N. Secretary General's findings in May 2000 that Israel had completed its withdrawal from southern Lebanon. The U.S. Administration reacted strongly to the assassination of the late Prime Minister Hariri in February 2005, criticized the Syrian presence in Lebanon, and demanded withdrawal of Syrian forces; following the assassination, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice recalled U.S. Ambassador to Syria Margaret Scobey to Washington for consultations.

The United States has welcomed the formation of a new Lebanese government following the withdrawal of Syrian forces. On July 22, 2005, Secretary of State Rice met with President Lahoud, Prime Minister Siniora, and other officials during a brief surprise visit to Lebanon. After a meeting with Siniora, Dr. Rice said, "I think that you cannot find a partner more supportive of Lebanon than the United States. This is a tremendous achievement for the Lebanese people; namely, to be able to control their future by themselves." On a subsequent trip to Lebanon, however, Ms. Rice declined to meet with President Lahoud. After meeting with President Bush in Washington on April 18, 2006, Prime Minister Siniora said in his Lally Weymouth interview that he asked President Bush

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[18] Michael Slackman, "Shabaa [variant spelling] Farms at Center of Tension for Lebanon, Syria and Israel," *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 28, 2001.

[19] Michael Slackman, "As Syria's Iinfluence in Lebanon Wanes, Iran Moves In," *New York Times*, March 13, 2006.

for three things: to empower the Lebanese government politically through restoration of all its territories (including the Shib'a Farms); to help build the capabilities of Lebanon's armed forces and security forces; and to empower the government economically.

Role of Congress

Congress has also shown considerable interest in Lebanon and Members have spoken frequently against Syrian domination of the Lebanese scene. For example:

On July 1, 1993, the U.S. Senate passed by voice vote S.Con.Res. 28, which stated that Syria had violated the Taif Agreements (see below) by not withdrawing from Lebanon in September 1992, urged an immediate Syrian withdrawal, and called upon the President to continue withholding aid and support for Syria.

The House of Representatives added an amendment to the State Department Authorization bill, Section 863 of H.R. 1646, in mid-May 2001, which would have cut $600,000 in International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds to Lebanon unless Lebanon deployed its armed forces to the border with Israel. Section 863 also called upon the President to present a plan to Congress to cut ESF funds if Lebanon did not deploy within six months.

Section 1224 of P.L. 107-228, the Security Assistance Act of 2002, stated that $10 million of the funds available for FY2003 and subsequent years could not be obligated until the President certified to Congress that Lebanese Armed Forces had deployed to the internationally recognized Lebanon-Israel border and that Lebanon was asserting its authority over the border area. The amendment (popularly called the "Lantos Amendment" after its initial sponsor) was added to compel Lebanon to exercise control over the border area, displacing Hizballah forces. Lebanon refused to move to the border until Israel evacuated the Shib'a Farms disputed area. According to unconfirmed sources, the $10 million was held in an escrow account pending negotiations among the United States, Israel, Lebanon, and Members of Congress.

On December 12, 2003, President Bush signed H.R. 1828, the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act (P.L. 108-175), which directs the President to apply economic and diplomatic sanctions to Syria if Syria does not meet several demands, including withdrawal from Lebanon and deployment of Lebanon's armed forces in all parts of Lebanon.

Both houses have passed measures condemning the Hariri assassination, calling for a full investigation, and calling on Syria to withdraw from Lebanon (for example, H.Res. 91, H.Res. 273, S.Res. 63, and S.Res. 77).

Recent and Current U.S. Assistance to Lebanon

In December 1996, the United States organized a Friends of Lebanon conference, which resulted in a U.S. commitment of $60 million in U.S. aid to Lebanon over a five-year period beginning in FY1997 and ending in FY2001, i.e., $12 million per year mainly in Economic Support Funds (ESF). Congress increased this amount to $15 million in FY2000 and $35

million in FY2001, reportedly to help Lebanon adjust to new conditions following Israel's withdrawal and cope with continuing economic strains. U.S. economic aid to Lebanon has hovered around $35 million in subsequent years.

The Bush Administration requested $35 million in ESF and $700,000 in International Military Education and Training (IMET) for FY2006. H.R 3057 (the foreign operations appropriations bill for FY2006), which was passed by the House on June 28, 2005, raises the requested ESF amount from $35 million to $40 million, of which $6 million is to be devoted to scholarships and U.S. educational institutions in Lebanon. The Senate version of H.R. 3057, reported on June 30, contained $35 million in ESF, of which $4 million is for educational institutions. During floor debate on July 19, however, the Senate adopted Amendment 1298, which increased ESF to Lebanon by $5 million and provided that an additional $2 million of these funds would be available for scholarships and educational institutions, thereby aligning the Senate figures with those of the House bill. The Senate passed its version of the bill on July 20. (See **Table 2**, below, for annual U.S. aid to Lebanon.) The conference report (H.Rept. 109-265) contained the $40 million for Lebanon (including $6 million for scholarships). The President signed H.R. 3057 as P.L. 109-102 on November 14, 2005.

According to the Administration's original planning (based on $35 million in ESF), ESF for Lebanon in FY2006 is targeted toward three main objectives: economic growth, agriculture, and trade ($22 million); promoting democracy and good governance ($7 million); and protection of the environment ($6 million). IMET programs are designed to increase military professionalism among Lebanese Armed Forces personnel, reduce sectarianism in a major national institution, foster personal working relationships with U.S. military personnel, and offer an alternative to training conducted by Syria and other countries less amenable to U.S. democratic ideals. IMET-funded maritime training will emphasize port security and search and rescue operations.

Table 2. U.S. Assistance to Lebanon

(millions of dollars)

Year	Total	Economic Aid (Grants)	Food Aid (Grants)	Military Aid (Loans)	I.M.E.T. (Grants)
1946 - 1980	332.7	120.2[a]	86.2[b]	123.3[c]	3.0
1981	24.3	4.0	0	20.0	0.3
1982	21.8	9.0	2.2	10.0	0.6
1983	153.9	52.2	0	100.0	1.7
1984	44.0	28.1	0.3	15.0	0.6
1985	21.1	19.9	0.5	0	0.7
1986	17.6	16.0	1.1	0	0.5
1987	23.0	12.8	9.7	0	0.5
1988	12.3	5.1	6.8	0	0.4
1989	15.5	2.8	12.3	0	0.4
1990	19.4	8.3	10.7	0	0.4
1991	19.2	9.3	9.9	0	0
1992	16.4	9.2	7.2	0	0
1993	14.4	10.3	3.5	0	0.6
1994	2.0	1.7	0	0	0.3
1995	16.0	15.6[d]	0	0	0.4
1996	2.5	2.0	0	0	0.5
1997	12.8	12.3	0	0	0.5
1998	12.6	12.0	0	0	0.6
1999	12.6	12.0	0	0	0.6
2000	15.6	15.0	0	0	0.6
2001	35.4	34.9	0	0	0.5
2002	35.6	35.0	0	0	0.6
2003	35.5	34.8	0	0	0.7
2004	35.9	35.2	0	0	0.7
2005	35.9	35.2	0	0	0.7
2006[e]	40.7	40.0[e]	0	0	0.7
2007	41.2	35.5	0	4.8	.9
Totals	1,069.9	628.4	150.4	273.1	18.0

Source: U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants.

I.M.E.T. = International Military Education and Training
a. Of the $120.2 million total, $19 million was loans.
b. Of the $86.2 million total, $28.5 million was loans.
c. Of the $123.3 million total, $109.5 was loans and $13.8 million was grants.
d. Includes about $6 million from 1994.
e. Administration requested $35 million in ESF, increased to $40 million by P.L. 109-102.