Trump Team Wants U.N. to Monitor Hezbollah Violations on Israel's Border

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The Trump administration is seeking to expand the mandate of U.N. peacekeepers in southern Lebanon so they investigate any violations by the Lebanese Shiite militant group Hezbollah on the shared border with Israel.

Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said Monday that she would look for "significant improvements" to the role of the peacekeepers. The U.N. Security Council is to vote on a renewal of the U.N. unit known as the U.N. interim force in Lebanon, or UNIFIL, later in August.

The U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres last week expressed a desire for peacekeepers to keep an eye on the presence of "armed personnel, weapons or infrastructure" where it operates. Israel says that Hezbollah keeps many of its fighters and weapons arsenal in the villages of southern Lebanon near its border.

"We share the secretary-general’s strong desire to enhance UNIFIL’s efforts to prevent the spread of illegal arms in southern Lebanon," said Haley in a statement.

"These arms—which are almost entirely in the hands of Hezbollah terrorists—threaten the security and stability of the region," she continued. "UNIFIL must increase its capacity and commitment to investigating and reporting these violations."

Hezbollah fought a one-month war with Israel in 2006. It considers Israel to be its arch-enemy. Israel is concerned that Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian conflict in support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has bolstered its armory and expertise.

The Iranian regime supports the group and Israel has conducted airstrikes in Syria to stop arms deliveries from Iran reaching the group.

Hezbollah now has a presence not only on Israel's shared northern border with Lebanon, but its northern border with Syria in the Golan Heights, a territory it occupied in the 1967 Six-Day War.

Haley has been a vocal support of Israel and its security and an opponent of Iran and Iranian-backed proxies across the Middle East.

The group's elusive leader Hassan Nasrallah suggested in May that the group could battle Israel within its borders, as tensions continue to rise over Hezbollah’s continued involvement in the Syrian conflict.

"Israel has been threatening for 10 years to open a front against Hezbollah, but it hasn't done anything. Israel is afraid of any confrontation...and knows that it could be inside the occupied Palestinian territories," he said in a televised speech.

Nasrallah was referring to what is known as modern-day Israel, but for anti-Israel groups like Hezbollah, part of their mission is to oppose the existence of a homeland for the Jewish people.

"There will be no place that is out of reach of the rockets of the resistance or the boots of the resistance fighters," Nasrallah continued. He called Israel’s attempts to place barriers along its shared border with Lebanon an acknowledgement of defeat in the face of the threat from the north.