Israel, U.S. working to upgrade UNIFIL’s mandate to weaken Hezbollah

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<https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Israel-US-working-to-upgrade-UNIFILs-mandate-to-weaken-Hezbollah-597097>

Israel and the United States are jointly working to have the United Nations Security Council to upgrade the mandate of the international peacekeeping force based in [southern Lebanon](https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Port-of-Beirut-now-Port-of-Hezbollah-Danon-tells-UNSC-596590), providing it with greater authority in an effort to weaken Hezbollah.

Israel Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon told The Jerusalem Post that Israel is working with the US to upgrade UNIFIL’s mandate, specifically to give it the ability to visit and inspect any area in southern Lebanon. Under the existing mandate, UNIFIL cannot enter villages and urban areas unless it first coordinates such visits with the Lebanese Armed Forces.

Danon told the Security Council last week that in the 13 years since the war ended, “[we have] yet to receive an accurate picture of the gravity of [the situation in southern Lebanon](https://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Lebanon-at-UNSC-Israel-violates-resolution-1701-daily-574830). It is unfortunate that some have chosen to turn a blind eye to the reality on the ground.”

Danon added that “UNIFIL must be fully equipped to discharge its mandate and contribute to stability in the region.”

Resolution 1701 calls for no sale or supply of arms and related material to Lebanon except as authorized by its government, he pointed out. “It appears, however, that this call for an embargo has been completely ignored.”

Israel and the US want to add two clauses to UNIFIL’s mandate. The first would give UNIFIL authority to enter any village or area it would like without restriction.

The second would obligate UNIFIL to report if Hezbollah attempts to prevent the international force from visiting a specific location, something not enforced today.

“We believe that they should do more, and that they should be more effective,” Danon told the Post. “We think that the mandate should be more specific. Unfortunately, today they are not allowed to enter many areas. Once they’re being blocked from entering a location, the least they could do is to put it in their report, the exact location, and who blocked them. They are failing to do that, and it happens daily.”

Israel believes that Hezbollah is storing most of its weapons within residential areas inside homes, hospitals and schools in the nearly 180 Shi’ite villages throughout southern Lebanon, which fall within UNIFIL’s area of operations.

Danon said that he respects the work of UNIFIL, and that changing the mandate will allow its personnel to get “better results on the ground.”

The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was established in 1978 and beefed up in 2006, after the Second Lebanon War ended with the passing of Security Council resolution 1701. UNIFIL’s mandate is renewed annually in August.