



**New York Times LIBRARIAN AWARDS** Accepting nominations until Sept. 15.

THE SIXTH ANNUAL NEW YORK TIMES

OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

## Peacekeepers Are Not Peacemakers

By NANCY SODERBERG  
Published: August 2, 2006

Jacksonville, Fla.

AS the death tolls in Lebanon and Israel rise, calls for a robust international peacekeeping force are increasing. But history should serve as warning. As we all know, the United States and France learned the cost of a poorly planned presence in 1983 when Hezbollah suicide bombers blew up their barracks, killing 300 troops.

More to the point, there has been a peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon since 1978 (paradoxically named the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, or Unifil) charged with confirming Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, restoring "international peace and security" and helping the Lebanese government restore its authority. The force, 2,000 strong, has failed in all but the first task, instead focusing on humanitarian aid.

The Lebanon mission is the most deadly United Nations operation, with some 260 personnel killed over 28 years. The most recent deaths came last week, when four peacekeepers were killed by Israeli fire, outraging Secretary General Kofi Annan. Regrettably, instead of bringing these lame-duck troops out of the fray, the Security Council chose to extend the mission's mandate, which was to have expired Monday, until the end of the month.

Now the United Nations and European Union officials are urging a strengthened force to "sort out the question of disarmament of the militia" in southern Lebanon and "guarantee sovereignty and freedom for Lebanon." These are goals so ambitious that no peacekeeping force, not even NATO, could achieve them.

In any case, one cannot deploy a peacekeeping force until the questions of disarmament and sovereignty have been addressed. Unless the path forward is agreed upon, the peacekeeping troops are at best without a clear mandate and at worst can become pawns in the negotiations.

Think of what happened in Bosnia in the 1990's: the initial United Nations peacekeeping force in the Balkans, called Unprofor, was powerless to stop the fighting and had its troops used as human shields by the combatants. Its successor, a NATO-led force called IFOR, was far more effective — largely because the Dayton Accords were agreed upon before it went in.

The way forward in Lebanon is clear. First, the Syrians, the Lebanese and the Iranians must give up the fiction that Israel did not fully withdraw from Lebanon in 2000. Hezbollah justifies its terrorist attacks by claiming that Israel never withdrew from a small area called the Shebaa Farms.

In fact, however, the Shebaa Farms area is not in Lebanon; all international records clearly show it is part of Syria. When it was clear in 2000 that the Israelis were going to withdraw from Lebanon, Syrian and Lebanese officials circulated in the United Nations a crudely altered map purporting to show the area in Lebanon. The Security Council rejected that claim and confirmed

[More Articles in Opinion »](#)

E-MAIL  
PRINT  
SAVE

ARTICLE TOOLS  
SPONSORED BY  
**LITTLE MISS  
SUNSHINE**

Tell us about a librarian who enriched your life. Or even helped you turn a new page.

THE SIXTH ANNUAL NEW YORK TIMES LIBRARIAN AWARDS

Accepting nominations until Sept. 15.

the Israeli withdrawal. But myths have a way of surviving in the Middle East and the Arabs continue to use it as a justification for attacks.

Second, no cease-fire will hold unless the root cause of the current crisis is addressed: the continuing presence of armed Hezbollah militia in southern Lebanon. Any solution will require a new security arrangement that not only disarms the Hezbollah militia but also mandates the deployment of Lebanese forces to the south, as well as a return of prisoners on both sides. Without such a deal, it would be folly to send in peacekeepers.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice faces a tough challenge in Lebanon, especially given that the key players, Syria and Iran, are not even in the room. Success will take more sophisticated diplomacy than we have yet seen from her or from President Bush. In the meantime, Lebanese and Israeli civilians, along with blue-helmeted peacekeepers, are paying the price for the West having ignored the rising threat of Hezbollah over the last six years.

*Nancy Soderberg, the author of "The Superpower Myth," was, from 1997 to 2001, a United States ambassador to the United Nations, where she negotiated the Security Council's endorsement of Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon.*

[More Articles in Opinion »](#)

#### Related Articles

[DESTRUCTION; For Lebanese, Calm Moment to Flee Ruins \(August 1, 2006\)](#)

[THE PRESIDENT; Bush Calls Attack on Qana 'Awful,' but Refrains From Calling for Immediate Cease-Fire \(August 1, 2006\)](#)

[DIPLOMACY; Lebanon Asks U.N. to Open Qana Inquiry \(August 1, 2006\)](#)

[THE OVERVIEW; Israel Pushes On Despite Agreeing to Airstrike Lull \(August 1, 2006\)](#)

#### Related Searches

[Lebanon](#)  
[Israel](#)  
[Soderberg, Nancy](#)  
[Hezbollah](#)

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM



ARTS »



[Congressman Gets an Assist From a Film](#)

WORLD »

[In Indonesia, School Lessons Courtesy of Uncle Sam](#)

TimesSelect



[Douglas Coupland: Too Good](#)

BUSINESS »



[Hollywood Relies More on Foreign Box Office](#)

TimesSelect

[Patterns of War](#)

Readers respond to Chibli Mallat, who wrote that Lebanon's Shiites bear the brunt of Israel's attacks.

N.Y. / REGION »



[Destroying Public Housing to Save It](#)

[Home](#) | [World](#) | [U.S.](#) | [N.Y. / Region](#) | [Business](#) | [Technology](#) | [Science](#) | [Health](#) | [Sports](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Arts](#) | [Style](#) | [Travel](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Automobiles](#) | [Back to Top](#)

Copyright 2006 The New York Times Company | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [XML](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)