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“Review of the Situation in Lebanon and the Way Ahead”

Thank you, Mister Chairman, and other distinguished Members of the Committee for inviting me here today. I welcome the opportunity to discuss the important developments in Lebanon over the past several weeks and the ways in which the U.S. and the international community can help create the conditions that will ensure a lasting peace.

The recent conflict in Lebanon was instigated by Hizballah’s unprovoked July 12 attack across the Blue Line into Israel – an attack in which several Israeli soldiers were killed and two captured. This attack was not an isolated incident, but rather reflected a long-standing policy of Hizballah to engage in periodic attacks against Israel – even after Israel’s withdrawal (which was confirmed by the United Nations) from Lebanon in 2000. That such terror attacks have continued with considerable frequency in the six years since Israel’s withdrawal is hardly surprising; since its inception in the early 1980s, Hizballah has belied its claims to be a movement resisting occupation by engaging in terrorism, including its involvement in the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut which killed 63 people, the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut that same year which killed 241 U.S. servicemen, the 1984 bombing of the U.S. Embassy annex which killed 2 U.S. servicemen, and the 1992 attack on the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires which killed 29, as well as the 1994 attack on the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires which killed 85. As this record shows, Hizballah is a major destabilizing factor in the Middle East, closely allied with Syria and Iran. The Lebanon war instigated by Hizballah this summer must therefore be seen in the context of the broader Middle East situation which we face.

Hizballah has operated as a “state-within-a-state” in the Lebanese body politic, outside of the control of the central government. The events of July 12, which touched off a conflict that led to enormous suffering and destruction in both Lebanon and Israel, highlighted the risks of allowing this situation to continue. Secretary Rice made it clear that while a cease-fire was of the utmost urgency, it needed to be lasting and sustainable. U.S. diplomacy aimed at a permanent solution that would reduce the risk of a return to the ‘status quo ante’. We thus led

the effort to create a new dynamic in Lebanon for greater stability and peace in that country, an effort that resulted in the passage of UNSCR 1701.

The international community had earlier voiced its commitment to support the Lebanese people in their goal of a fully sovereign democratic state when it passed UNSCR 1559 (September 2, 2004) and UNSCR 1680 (May 17, 2006). Security Council Resolution 1559, in particular, is premised on supporting a fully sovereign government, and called for foreign forces operating in Lebanon without the permission of the government of Lebanon to depart. A framework for establishing Lebanese sovereignty goes back even further to the Taif Accord of 1989 and UNSCR 425 (March 19, 1978).

The brutal assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and 22 others on February 14, 2005, brought the Lebanese people to the streets demanding an end to violence and foreign intervention in Lebanon's internal affairs. Two months later, Syria withdrew its military forces from Lebanon ending a nearly thirty-year occupation. The international community expressed its solidarity with the people of Lebanon with the passage of UNSCR 1595 authorizing an international investigation into Mr. Hariri's murder. We support the efforts of the UN and the Lebanese government to create a tribunal with international elements to bring to justice those responsible for this heinous crime.

With UNSCR 1701, unanimously approved by the UN Security Council on August 11, the international community established important new instruments for security. The resolution called for an immediate cessation of hostilities to the most recent conflict between Hizballah and Israel, imposed an international embargo on arms to unauthorized groups in Lebanon, created an enhanced international force to support the LAF in deploying to the south as Israel withdraws and at the request of Lebanon to secure Lebanon's borders from the illegal transport of arms, put in place mechanisms to assist the government of Lebanon to expand its sovereign authority throughout the country, and laid out the political principles for a lasting peace. If carried out, these new rules will change the situation in Lebanon and in the region significantly for the better and will more than meet our standard of 'no return to the status quo ante'.

We are making good progress. For the first time in almost 40 years, the Lebanese Armed Forces have deployed to the south. Capable new UNIFIL forces, much more heavily armed and numerous and with an expanded and robust mandate, are accompanying them, and force commitments are nearing their desired levels. Also for the first time, UNIFIL has a maritime role. Reflecting these developments, and

as a result of significant diplomatic efforts by Secretary Rice with the Israelis, Lebanese and the UN, Israel lifted its air blockade on September 7 and its maritime blockade on September 8.

The initial response to the needs in Lebanon has been impressive. The international community has mobilized to provide impressive quantities of humanitarian aid, and Lebanese citizens are returning to their homes. On August 21, President Bush announced more than \$230 million in humanitarian, reconstruction, and security assistance to Lebanon – more than \$55 million of which has already been provided for Lebanon. We will also be leveraging the private sector and other economic incentives to support Lebanon.

Pledges of \$940 million made at the August 31 International Conference on Early Recovery hosted by Sweden doubled the amount the Government of Lebanon was seeking in its appeal document.

An impressive international relief effort during and just after the crisis has produced results. Over 750,000 of the estimated 980,000 people displaced by the conflict have now returned to their homes. However, much more remains to be done to enable these people to rebuild their lives and their homes.

An immediate need will be the removal of the thousands of unexploded ordinance in the south left behind after the conflict. The U.S. has announced that it will provide an initial \$420,000 and will request congressional approval in the next fiscal year for an addition \$2 million to aid in this effort.

The U.S. has also announced projects to rebuild vital infrastructure including roads and bridges, support residential reconstruction and provide temporary shelters for families as they repair their homes, restore and repair schools that were damaged or used as shelters, clean up environmental damage linked to the massive oil spill off Lebanon's coast, and restore the livelihoods of thousands of fishermen along the coast from Tripoli to Naqoura where recovery hinges on getting the fishing industry back up and running.

Looking ahead to longer-term reconstruction, we have urged the government of Lebanon to take a leading role. Lebanon will present its initial findings at a meeting of the Economic Core Group to be held on the margins of the World Bank/IMF Meetings in Singapore next week. We look forward to a larger reconstruction conference to be held in Beirut at a later date.

Our assistance to Lebanon will also include assistance to the Lebanese security services and armed forces to fulfill their mandate to secure the borders and territory of Lebanon. The LAF has undertaken its responsibilities in deploying even before the delivery of essential supplies and equipment. We will need to accelerate our assistance to the LAF to ensure current deployments are sustainable. An effective and well-trained Lebanese Armed Forces is a crucial component to the implementation of UNSCR 1701, the sovereignty of government of Lebanon, and lasting peace in the region.

The government of Lebanon has identified key equipment and training needs, which we are working with the international community to address. President Bush has announced approximately \$42 million in FY06 security assistance as part of the \$230 million assistance package to Lebanon.

We have also worked closely with our international partners in establishing the concept of operations and identifying contributing countries for the expanded French-led UNIFIL Force. This force is the first new peacekeeping operation in the Middle East since August 1981 when the Protocol to the Treaty of Peace established the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in the Sinai.

UNIFIL has begun to deploy, accompanying the LAF as it takes up positions along the Blue line. As of September 6, 8,500 troops had been committed to UNIFIL and 3,138 troops were already on the ground. Nine hundred additional French troops will arrive this week. French, Greek, and Italian ships troops are assisting the Lebanese Navy in patrolling their coastline; a more permanent fleet of German ships will replace them in approximately two weeks. Additional UNIFIL troops are scheduled to arrive at the end of the month. We expect complete withdrawal of IDF troops from southern Lebanon within the next week.

However, while progress has been made, much remains to be done. Our challenge now is to maintain the momentum towards a lasting peace in Lebanon while countering the efforts of Hizballah, Syria, and Iran to repaint the conflict as a victory for Hizballah. We will need to move quickly.

Moving forward, we must maintain our emphasis on economic and security assistance to Lebanon, channeling it in a way that supports the government of Lebanon as it works to fulfill its responsibilities under UNSCR 1701.

It is imperative that we continue to assist Lebanon in making its land border more secure, but that responsibility is not Lebanon's alone. UNSCR 1701 imposes a legally binding obligation on all states to ensure that weapons are not supplied to Lebanon without the authorization of the Lebanese government or UNIFIL. We have called on all UN member states to act aggressively in enforcing this embargo, ensuring that their territory and airspace are not used to undercut it.

The embargo imposes a particular requirement on Syria and Iran, both of whom have a long history of interfering in Lebanon and of supplying Hizballah and other regional terrorist groups with weapons and funding. They have continually failed to heed international calls to stop resupplying these groups with deadly arms.

The disarmament of all militias, including Hizballah, as called for in UNSCR 1559, will continue to pose a significant challenge. The key to Hizballah's disarmament, and to a lasting peace, will be to ensure the conditions necessary to permit the Lebanese government to assert its sovereignty across all of Lebanon. Our security and reconstruction assistance is designed to do just this.

While this conflict brought much destruction and heartache, its resolution has provided us with opportunities that extend beyond Lebanon. The Middle East stands at a critical crossroads, with profound implications for America's national security. While there is a trend towards democracy, there is also resistance to it. We must continue to engage now to ensure that the loudest voices are not those that would like to wipe the slate clean and start over with an exclusionary, intolerant world view. We must continue to go on the offensive against radicals and extremists who exploit conflicts to undermine a non-violent and liberal order.

While making progress in Iraq and in the Arab-Israeli conflict remain core concerns, the determination of the international community and friends in the region to improve the economic and political situation in the broader Middle East remains the only way to create conditions for real change and lasting stability. To the degree that we and they are successful, the ambitions of radicals and extremists will fail. Increasing the scope of political freedom, reducing high rates of unemployment, creating opportunities for personal economic improvement, and raising the standard of living will help address the "root causes" of terrorism and reduce the appeal of extremist political movements.

We must continue our efforts to support moderate governments like the democratically elected government of Lebanon in their efforts to meet the needs of their people and to encourage genuine freedom to take root. In no place are the

risks and opportunities more apparent than in the current situation in Lebanon. Our approach must be comprehensive and it must seize opportunities when only dangers seem present.

We are under no illusions. Conflict resolution and reform in the region will require a great commitment from the United States. How we respond will define our relationship with the region for generations to come.

Thank you for your time. I would be pleased to address your questions.

