Hezbollah’s Use of UNIFIL as Yet Another Human Shield

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The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has come under heavy criticism for its failure to maintain peace and prevent Hezbollah’s aggressive activities in southern Lebanon, particularly along the Israeli border. Despite its mandate, established by UN Security Council Resolution 1701, to keep the area south of the Litani River free from armed militias and to prevent hostile activities, UNIFIL has been largely ineffective in curbing Hezbollah’s influence and military build-up. Hezbollah continues to use southern Lebanon as a base to launch attacks against Israel, often embedding its weapons and operations within civilian areas, creating a human shield to deter Israeli retaliation​

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been vocal about the dangers UNIFIL’s inaction poses, accusing the United Nations of allowing its peacekeepers to be used as human shields by Hezbollah. Netanyahu has called on UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to evacuate UNIFIL forces from Hezbollah-controlled areas, arguing that their presence is doing more harm than good. He has pointed out that, rather than enforcing peace, UNIFIL has become a pawn in Hezbollah’s broader strategy to manipulate international law by positioning itself among civilians and peacekeepers​

UNIFIL’s presence in southern Lebanon, with roughly 10,000 peacekeepers, was intended to monitor and enforce the terms of the ceasefire established after the 2006 Second Lebanon War. However, over the years, Hezbollah has entrenched itself deeper into the region, stockpiling weapons and expanding its military capabilities, often with Iranian support. This situation has rendered UNIFIL ineffective, as its forces have frequently been blocked from accessing Hezbollah’s strongholds. Hezbollah’s growing arsenal, which now includes tens of thousands of rockets and drones, stands in direct violation of UNIFIL’s mandate​.