



Security Council

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United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides an account of the activities of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) for the period from 30 May to 17 September 2019, pursuant to the mandate set out in Security Council resolution [350 \(1974\)](#) and extended in subsequent Council resolutions, most recently resolution [2477 \(2019\)](#).

II. Situation in the area of operations and activities of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

2. During the reporting period, the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic was maintained despite a number of violations of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces (Disengagement of Forces Agreement) of 1974, which are set out below. While the overall security situation in the UNDOF area of operations remained stable, there was some military activity in the area of separation and across the ceasefire line, in violation of relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution [2477 \(2019\)](#), in which the Council reiterated that there should be no military activity of any kind in the area of separation.

3. In employing its best efforts to maintain the ceasefire and see that it is scrupulously observed, as prescribed in the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, UNDOF reports all breaches of the ceasefire line that it observes. All incidents of firing into the area of separation and across the ceasefire line, as well as the crossing of the ceasefire line by individuals, constitute violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. In its regular interactions with both sides, the leadership of UNDOF continued to call upon the parties to exercise restraint and prevent any miscalculation that might lead to an escalation of the situation.

4. During the reporting period, there were several breaches of the ceasefire line. In the early hours of 12 June, United Nations personnel at observation post 51 heard a large explosion and observed a fire close to Hamadiyah al-Jadidah in the area of separation. Shortly thereafter, United Nations personnel observed five missiles being fired from the Alpha side (Israeli-occupied Golan) towards the area of separation. UNDOF was not in a position to determine the point of origin or impact of the missiles. On 24 July, United Nations personnel observed the firing of three missiles



from the Alpha side towards the Bravo side. One of the missiles impacted the vicinity of Ruhinah in the area of separation. Around the same time, UNDOF personnel heard over 50 heavy explosions, as well as aircraft activity. On 1 August, United Nations personnel heard two explosions and observed smoke in the vicinity of Ruhinah, approximately 5 km from observation post 51. At the same time, UNDOF observed a heavy explosion close to a position of the Syrian armed forces in the vicinity of Burayqah in the area of limitation. Open sources reported that these explosions were the result of Israeli strikes directed at alleged targets on the Bravo side.

5. The Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that, on 1 June, projectiles had been fired from the Bravo side towards a ski resort on Mount Hermon on the Alpha side. On 2 June, military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in Observer Group Golan, who are under the operational control of UNDOF, inspected the site, which was about 100 m south of an Israel Defense Forces position, and found a crater and an indication that a projectile had been fired from an east-south-easterly direction.

6. The Israel Defense Forces continued to carry out their planned operation of laying razor concertina wire, which they had begun on 1 May, and also installed steel-reinforced concrete blast walls west of the Israeli technical fence in the northern part of the Alpha side. The Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that the purpose of the reinforcement walls was to protect civilians and military personnel on the Alpha side. On 8 June, the Syrian authorities protested against the operations of the Israel Defense Forces and requested UNDOF to conduct an investigation into the matter. In its investigation, UNDOF found that, on five occasions during the Israel Defense Forces operations, Israel Defense Forces soldiers had crossed the ceasefire line and damaged farmland and vegetation in the northern part of the area of separation. The leadership of UNDOF liaised with the Israel Defense Forces and the Syrian authorities to de-escalate the situation.

7. Sporadic heavy explosions and bursts of heavy machine gun and small arms fire persisted throughout the reporting period in the northern, central and southern parts of the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side. UNDOF assessed that this military activity was due to controlled detonations of unexploded ordnance as part of clearance and training by the Syrian armed forces. UNDOF observed the continuous presence of the Syrian armed forces, some of whom were armed, staffing a number of checkpoints within the area of separation, including in the vicinity of Ba‘th and Khan Arnabah, as well as along the main road connecting Qunaytirah to Damascus. The number of main battle tanks in the area of separation increased over the reporting period, in particular in the vicinity of Khan Arnabah in the area of separation. UNDOF also observed the presence of new artillery self-propelled howitzer and anti-aircraft guns in the area of limitation.

8. The military violations on the Alpha side included the presence of Iron Dome systems and multiple rocket launcher systems within 10 km of the ceasefire line, which are considered unauthorized military equipment in the area of limitation pursuant to the terms of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement.

9. UNDOF continued to observe daily crossings of the ceasefire line by unidentified individuals from the Bravo side. UNDOF assessed that these individuals were shepherds and farmers from the surrounding areas tending livestock. The Israel Defense Forces continued to express deep concern about these crossings, which they stated were a threat to the safety and security of Israel Defense Forces personnel operating in proximity of the ceasefire line and to their activities. UNDOF began placing warning signs along the ceasefire line to deter any such crossings.

10. UNDOF protested to the parties all violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement that it had observed, including the crossings of the ceasefire line by

civilians from the Bravo side, the presence of unauthorized equipment and personnel in the areas of separation and limitation and the firing into the area of separation and across the ceasefire line.

11. Despite the improvement in the security situation in the UNDOF area of operations, open sources reported the presence of armed groups and a number of attacks against Syrian armed forces. In addition, open sources reported the assassination and attempted assassination of several opposition leaders that had “reconciled” with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, in particular in the vicinity of Nawa, Tasil, Yadudah and Muzayrib in the area of limitation on the Bravo side.

12. During the reporting period, UNDOF did not observe any internally displaced persons or tents in the area of separation. On 30 June, at the request of the Israel Defense Forces and with the agreement of the Syrian authorities, UNDOF and the International Committee of the Red Cross facilitated, through the Qunaytirah crossing, the handover to Syrian authorities of a Syrian national who had previously been detained by the Israeli authorities in the area of Mount Hermon.

13. Pending its return to full operations carried out on the Bravo side prior to its relocation in August 2014, UNDOF continued to maintain visibility, albeit limited, of the area of separation and the ceasefire line. UNDOF maintained its positions on Mount Hermon and at Camp Faouar and United Nations positions 32 and 37, in the central part of the area of separation, 80, in the southern part of the area of separation, and 22, on the Alpha side. UNDOF reoccupied United Nations positions 27, in the central part of the area of separation, and 85, in the southern part of the area of separation. UNDOF operations continued to be supported by the military observers of Observer Group Golan. They maintained five fixed and three temporary observation posts along the ceasefire line, as well as four temporary observation posts on Mount Hermon. Observer Group Golan also continued to maintain temporary observation posts in the vicinity of vacated United Nations observation posts 56, 71 and 72. The military observers in Observer Group Golan will not be deployed at observation posts in the area of separation on a permanent basis until the security conditions permit, when adequate accommodation and appropriate force protection measures are in place. The focus of Observer Group Golan remains on continuous static observation and situational awareness.

14. UNDOF made progress towards its gradual return to the area of separation as it continued to develop the infrastructure of positions 27, 37 and 85 and improve the force protection measures at these positions. The Force carried out clearance operations at United Nations position 68 in preparation for its reconstruction and reoccupation. The refurbishment of United Nations observation posts 72 and 56 began in June and is expected to be completed in September 2019.

15. Through Observer Group Golan, UNDOF continued to carry out fortnightly inspections of equipment and force levels in the area of limitation on the Alpha side. Liaison officers from the Alpha side accompanied the inspection teams. With the improvement in the security situation on the Bravo side, UNDOF plans to resume inspections in the area of limitation, which were suspended for security reasons.

16. UNDOF continued to engage with the Israel Defense Forces with a view to addressing restrictions on movement and access to United Nations positions in the area of separation and to reducing the delays and challenges experienced by United Nations personnel in crossing the technical fence to United Nations observation posts. The leadership of UNDOF continued to remind the parties of their obligation to scrupulously abide by the terms of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel on the ground and to extend all cooperation to UNDOF in the fulfilment of the tasks under its mandate.

17. UNDOF, in consultation with both parties, continued to review the situation in the area of separation as the Force advanced its return to vacated positions in the area of separation. During the reporting period, UNDOF increased its monthly operational patrols on routes in the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side from 346 in June to 573 in August. In addition, in July UNDOF conducted patrols for the first time since 2014 to observation post 58, located close to the southernmost part of the area of limitation on the Bravo side. The opening of the patrol route to observation post 58 increased the situational awareness of UNDOF of the area of operations. UNDOF enhanced its visibility on the Bravo side by progressively opening new patrol routes in the areas of separation and limitation. UNDOF patrol routes covered approximately 90 per cent of the area of separation and about 50 per cent of the area of limitation. The clearance of temporary observation posts for use by UNDOF on Mount Hermon further enhanced the footprint of UNDOF. Liaison officers of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic accompanied UNDOF personnel on all patrols and assessment visits.

18. In accordance with the UNDOF operational concept, the new UNDOF mechanized infantry company scheduled to be deployed to the southern part of the area of separation joined the Force on 5 September, enhancing the progress of the Force in its gradual return to the area of separation.

19. UNDOF regularly used the Qunaytirah crossing to move equipment and personnel between the Alpha and Bravo sides. Since 15 July, UNDOF military police have reoccupied on a full-time basis the United Nations Charlie gate position between the Alpha gate and the Bravo gate at the Qunaytirah crossing.

20. UNDOF continues to liaise with the Israel Defense Forces with regard to their facilitation of the crossing of UNDOF and Observer Group Golan personnel at the Qunaytirah crossing, in particular the need for United Nations personnel to use only documents issued by UNDOF to cross and for an increase in the opening days and hours of the crossing.

21. UNDOF continues to assess that there is a significant threat to United Nations personnel in the UNDOF area of operations from explosive remnants of war, including unexploded ordnance and mines, and from the possible presence of sleeper cells of armed groups, including listed terrorist groups. UNDOF continues its assessment of the security situation in the southernmost part of the area of separation in view of the planned deployment to positions in that area.

22. In accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolution [2477 \(2019\)](#) and the UNDOF operational concept, UNDOF continued its efforts to deploy appropriate technology to ensure the safety and security of UNDOF personnel and equipment. A surveillance trailer to support UNDOF observation tasks remained deployed on the Alpha side at Camp Ziouani and United Nations position 22, while another was maintained at Camp Faouar.

23. UNDOF continued to conduct and update its contingency planning for the reinforcement and evacuation of United Nations positions and observation posts on both the Alpha and Bravo sides, as well as facilities in Damascus. UNDOF conducted regular rehearsals, exercises and training for contingencies identified. Risk mitigation measures, including force protection measures, continued to be developed at United Nations positions and observation posts and at the UNDOF operational base at Camp Ziouani and headquarters at Camp Faouar.

24. As at 17 September, UNDOF comprised 1,058 troops, including 40 women peacekeepers. Troops are deployed from Australia (1), Bhutan (3), Czechia (4), Fiji (193), Ghana (13), India (184), Ireland (134), Nepal (352), the Netherlands (2) and

Uruguay (172). In addition, 75 military observers from Observer Group Golan, including 13 women, assisted UNDOF in carrying out its tasks.

III. Implementation of Security Council resolution 338 (1973)

25. In its resolution 2477 (2019), the Security Council called upon the parties concerned to immediately implement its resolution 338 (1973). It decided to renew the mandate of UNDOF for a period of six months, until 31 December 2019, and requested the Secretary-General to report every 90 days on developments in the situation and the measures taken to implement resolution 338 (1973). The search for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in the Middle East, in particular the efforts made at various levels to implement resolution 338 (1973), was addressed in my report on the situation in the Middle East (A/74/310), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 73/22 on Jerusalem and 73/23 on the Syrian Golan.

26. Since the discontinuation of indirect peace talks in December 2008, there have been no negotiations between the parties. I look forward to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and the resumption of efforts towards a comprehensive, just and durable peace settlement, as called for by the Security Council in its resolution 338 (1973) and other relevant resolutions.

IV. Observations

27. I note the generally continued calm situation in the area of separation. However, I am concerned about the continued violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement in a particularly volatile time for the region. I am particularly concerned about the firing on 12 June of missiles across the ceasefire line by the Israel Defense Forces. Furthermore, I remain concerned by the continued presence of the Syrian armed forces in the area of separation. There should be no military forces in the area of separation other than those of UNDOF. The Israel Defense Forces should refrain from firing across the ceasefire line and crossing the ceasefire line. The continued presence of unauthorized weapons and equipment in the area of limitation on both the Alpha and Bravo sides is also of concern. These developments have the potential to jeopardize the Agreement. I continue to urge the parties to the Agreement to exercise utmost restraint. I continue to encourage members of the Security Council to support efforts to sensitize both parties to the risk of escalation and the need to preserve the long-standing ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic.

28. It remains critical that the parties maintain their liaison with UNDOF to prevent any escalation of the situation across the ceasefire line. All violations of the ceasefire line increase tensions between the signatories to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and contribute to undermining stability in the area. The continued liaison of UNDOF with the parties has contributed to de-escalation during times of heightened tensions. The continued commitment of both Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic to the Agreement and their continued support for the presence of UNDOF remain essential. The full return of UNDOF to the area of separation continues to be a priority for the Force. I welcome the stated intentions of the parties to continue to support the return of UNDOF to full operations on the Bravo side. UNDOF personnel must be allowed to make use of the Qunaytirah crossing across the ceasefire line, in line with established procedures, and to move freely within its area of operations to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of its mandate. At the same time, the parties must continue to support the enhancement of the liaison function of UNDOF.

29. I count on the continued cooperation of both parties to facilitate the advancement of the Force's plans for furthering the objectives set forth by the Security Council and to ensure that the Force is able to implement its mandate fully, including through inspections on the Bravo side, conditions permitting.

30. I welcome the fact that the Security Council continues to bring to bear its influence on the parties concerned to ensure that UNDOF is accorded the ability to operate in a safe and secure manner and is allowed to operate freely in accordance with the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. The support of the parties in facilitating the clearance of mines, unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war in the UNDOF area of operations is crucial. It is also necessary for UNDOF to continue to have at its disposal all means and resources necessary for it to return fully to the area of separation, conditions permitting.

31. The continued support of Member States, and in particular the confidence of troop-contributing countries in and their commitment to UNDOF, remain key factors in the Force's ability to carry out its mandate. I continue to count on the support of the troop-contributing countries as UNDOF proceeds with the implementation of its agreed plan to increase operations in the areas of separation and limitation. I am grateful to the Governments of Australia, Bhutan, Czechia, Fiji, Ghana, India, Ireland, Nepal, the Netherlands and Uruguay for their contributions, commitment and resolve and the consummate professionalism of their military personnel in UNDOF. I am also thankful to the Member States that have contributed military observers to UNTSO.

32. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the acting Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Shivaram Kharel, and all military and civilian personnel of UNDOF and Observer Group Golan serving under his leadership, who continue to perform the important tasks assigned to them by the Security Council with efficiency and commitment under challenging circumstances.

