

LEBANON

When WWI ended, what was later called the "Lebanese Republic" was taken away from the Ottoman Empire and placed under French administration. In 1923, the League of Nations formally mandated this area to France to act as caretaker until such time as a permanent disposition of its status should be determined. The pro-French Maronite Christians welcomed this. Under French rule, they enjoyed a political preeminence far beyond their numbers. Overall, the population was more or less equally divided between Christians and Muslims. To reduce tension between these religious communities, the constitution of 1926 provided that each should be equitably represented in public offices. Thus, by convention, the president of the republic was normally a Maronite, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the chamber a Shi'ite Muslim. This worked for a while, but during the thirties and forties, the territory was plagued by crisis after crisis, including a 1941 invasion of this Vichy stronghold by British and Free-French forces. In 1945, agreement was reached on a simultaneous withdrawal of both the British and French, which was completed by the end of 1946, leaving Lebanon wholly independent.

In 1957, disputed parliamentary elections led to a general strike followed by armed insurrection. The army's commanding general, Fuad Chehab, refused to act from fear that full civil war would result. When, in July, the pro-Western regime in Iraq was toppled by a coup, Lebanese President Chamoun immediately requested US military intervention. On the following day, US Marines landed outside Beirut. The presence of US troops had little immediate effect on the internal situation, but the insurrection slowly faded out. Chehab was soon ruling in Chamoun's place. By his refusal to take offensive action against the insurgents, Chehab had earned the confidence of the Muslim population. Once in power, he proceeded to allay long-standing Muslim grievances by fully integrating them within his administration and attending to neglected areas of the country where Muslims predominated.

Under Chehab's popular leadership, Lebanon began to prosper as capital poured in from less-stable neighboring states. Charles Hérou, a former journalist, was elected to succeed Chehab in 1964, to be followed in 1970 by the troubled regime of Suleiman Franjeh. At this point, the country's complex political structure, often based on informal agreements between various religious and ethnic minorities, began to unravel. Lebanon and the city of Beirut had become prosperous and cosmopolitan during the previous decade, but a Lebanese "national" identity never developed. Each quarter of the capital and each country village took on a specific religious affiliation. As the rural population moved about seeking work, newcomers turned neighborhoods into armed enclaves, where they found themselves struggling to earn a decent living in competition with the residents of other enclaves. By the early 1970s, the society, as a whole, split along economic, social, and religious lines. It had become a struggle between prosperous, urban, Christians and poor, rural, Muslims.

By this time, roughly ten percent of Lebanon's population was made up of Palestinians. Many had fled from Jordan after "Black September" in 1970. Poor and landless, these refugees resented exploitation as a source of cheap labor and found common cause with other Lebanese who were also poor, rural, and mainly Muslim. They soon established an organization and acquired arms. This made them sought-after allies for other disaffected groups. Faced in September 1975 with an agreement between Egypt and Israel over Sinai, the Palestinians concluded that their cause was being ignored by the Arab states and that they were merely another pawn in the game of Middle Eastern politics.

Toward the end of Hérou's presidency, various factions of the "Palestine Liberation Organization" (PLO) began to clash with Lebanese security forces. On November 3rd, 1969, an agreement was announced in Cairo. Under it, the Lebanese government gave the Palestinians virtual self-rule in areas surrounding their refugee camps along the Israeli frontier. In return, the PLO had to promise not to intervene in Lebanese internal politics. The Palestinians, and their leftist allies, never intended to keep this promise. They were soon completely out of control. Fighting broke out between them and the Israelis. Retaliatory Israeli border raids also encouraged Lebanese Christian Phalangists to act. Their heavily armed militia began to attack Palestinians at every opportunity. Franjeh's election had dumped him right into the middle of this powder keg.

Civil War

Events moved rapidly now. By 1975, the Muslim dominated "Lebanese National Movement" led by Kamal Jumblatt, sought political reform and support for the Palestinian guerrillas. The relatively deprived Shi'ite Muslims, by now the most numerous religious community in Lebanon, also stepped into the arena. They found themselves confronted by Maronite Christians, frantically seeking to keep their political dominance by crushing the power of the Lebanese left and the PLO. The powder keg exploded! By April, a full-fledged civil war was raging and the country was torn apart. Central government virtually ceased to exist. The army dissolved. The combatants, amply supplied with weapons by various foreign groups, turned on each other with savage ferocity. Lebanon had become a huge "free-for-all" melee, in which thousands of fearless, well-armed, fanatics slaughtered each other with reckless enthusiasm.

Strange Bedfellows

After about a year of bloodletting, the leftists and Palestinians began to win. It became clear that Lebanon would soon become a left-dominated, pro-PLO state. The Syrians realized that this was likely to bring in Israeli intervention, which they did not want. Working in concert with the Israelis, they moved quickly. During the summer of 1976, they entered Lebanon with 20,000 troops, grabbing certain strategic points to prevent the Palestinians from occupying them. The Israelis blockaded the coast, trained a contingent of Lebanese in Israel, and shipped arms and equipment to the Christians. With strong Syrian and Israeli support, Christian forces recovered, and were soon on the offensive.

Lebanon was now partitioned along the "Green Line". This line split Beirut and the rest of the country into two de-facto states. The Christians controlled the north, a Druze-Muslim-Palestinian coalition the south. A formal "summit" meeting was held on October 25th, 1976, establishing peace terms. A peacekeeping force of 30,000 troops (mostly Syrians) moved in to enforce it. By the end of November, despite minor clashes, the civil war simply wound down. It never really ended, however, since the major issues remained unresolved. Relative peace led to the emergence of a new generation of militia leaders among the Palestinians. The destruction and violence had caused hundreds of thousands of southern Lebanese to flee their homes, which were under constant threat of Israeli raids. In March, one of these raids led the UN to move in a small force to keep the peace. Many Palestinians returned.

Consequences

The effects of the civil war were appalling. Lebanon had suffered a national catastrophe. There seemed to be no compromise acceptable to the Muslims, who now represented more than half the population, or to the Christians, who were determined to maintain control of key government institutions. Foreign intervention merely restrained open warfare. The economy was nearly ruined, though attempts at financial recovery were partly successful. Twenty thousand people had been killed and twice as many wounded. Every

family had been touched by tragedy. Bitterness and hatred smoldered in the ruins. The very possibility of Lebanese living together again in one nation with one government had become a pipe dream. The Syrian army of occupation appeared strong. But, having moved into Lebanon, it now faced the problem of finding its way out again. Syrian concern over Israeli intervention persisted. The Palestinians not only failed to take control of the country, they had antagonized their former allies, the Syrians. The Lebanese Christians not only failed to take control of the country, they had antagonized their former allies, the Syrians. The Lebanese Christians were now deep in Israel's debt. The war had caused Arabs everywhere to question their ability to work together in any cause. The overall situation was no better than before. Everywhere there was chaos and anarchy. Private armies roamed the countryside. Progress stopped.

Invasion

In 1981, Palestinian raiders were crossing into Israel regularly once again. In retaliation, Israel bombed the PLO headquarters in West Beirut on July 17, killing more than three hundred civilians. Attempts by the US to arrange a cease-fire failed and war inevitably followed. On June 6, 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon with 60,000 troops. Their stated goal was to secure the border territory and stop PLO raids. Egypt and the other Arab states did little but protest. But Israel's true aim was more than just temporary security. They intended to destroy the PLO completely and establish a Lebanese government capable of concluding a peace treaty with Israel similar to the Egyptian-Israeli agreement of 1979.

The invasion force quickly defeated the Syrians and drove the PLO into West Beirut. But, Israeli troops hesitated to attack into the densely populated city. Its tall buildings and narrow alleys could become a death trap. Instead, they blockaded it. Then they shelled and bombed it to pressure the PLO to evacuate. This failed. There was nothing else left. They had to move in and drive them out.

At dawn on August 12th, Israeli forces launched a massive artillery barrage and air bombardment that lasted for eleven straight hours. Five hundred persons, mainly Lebanese and Palestinian civilians, were killed. Lebanese Maronites then moved in to clear out camps filled with defenseless civilians at Sabra and Shatila, killing another thousand. An Israeli commission later found Ariel Sharon "personally responsible" for the killing, leading to his dismissal as Israeli defense minister. The massacres, for that's what they were, caused an international outcry. The UN called for a peacekeeping force to supervise the peaceful evacuation of remaining PLO leaders and troops from the city. This force, made up of Italian "Bersaglieri", French "Legionnaires", and US Marines, arrived on August 25th, 1982.

For a while events proceeded smoothly. UN peacekeepers moved into blocking positions between Israeli and PLO lines, with the Americans taking the area around the Beirut International Airport. Food and medicine were distributed. Yasser Arafat, the PLO leadership, and the remaining PLO fighters trapped in the city's western sector were evacuated. All the parties involved seemed to be satisfied. Then things began to go wrong. Once Arafat and the PLO were safely out of Beirut, they worked without success to piece together a coalition government and induce the Israelis and Syrians to withdraw from Lebanese territory. US leaders felt this was a cause worth supporting and decided to continue the Marines' mission beyond its original limits. It was hoped that their presence would discourage further fighting, allowing cooler heads to prevail.

Israeli Withdrawal

The next six months passed without serious incident. But tensions rose in April when Shi'ite guerillas, backed by Iran, became active in the Beirut area. Soon, they were sniping at Marine sentries guarding the airport perimeter. When the Marines returned fire, tensions increased still further. Then, on April 18th, the US Embassy in Beirut was destroyed by a massive bomb, with the loss of sixty-three lives. The Iranian-backed "Islamic Jihad" claimed responsibility for the attack. The Marines were no longer capable of being "peacekeepers". They simply hunkered down in their airport bunkers, waiting for confused and frustrated politicians to make a decision.

There appeared to be a breakthrough on May 17, 1983. Israel and Lebanon concluded what was very nearly a peace treaty. It called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces, a special security zone in the south, and the establishment of a bilateral commission on future relations. The PLO, the Syrians, and especially the Shi'ites, were screaming for blood. Israel's power in Lebanon began to deteriorate. Resistance groups grew bold, attacking Israeli troops almost daily. Casualties mounted. On September 3rd, 1983, Israel began withdrawing its forces south.

Semper Fi, Mac!

The Israeli withdrawal caused heavy fighting between Christian Lebanese Forces and pro-Syrian Druze units, squabbling over the positions they evacuated. The Marines found themselves caught in the crossfire, and were under daily attack. The battleship USS *New Jersey* arrived off Beirut at this time and the Marine force ashore grew to sixteen hundred personnel. The fight was now truly joined between the Shi'ites and the Marines, who were under orders not to take offensive action. The tragic climax came on October 23rd, when a Muslim guerrilla drove a truck past guards at the Marine compound and detonated the equivalent of twelve thousand pounds of dynamite under a building being used as a temporary barracks. At almost the same instant, a car bomb exploded at the French compound across town. The "butcher's bill" came to two hundred forty-one Americans and fifty-eight French dead. Hezbollah (Party of God), a Shi'ite group, claimed the honors. The international peacekeeping force left Beirut on February 26th, 1984. The Marines' mission had ended in total failure.

Full Circle

The US withdrawal left a power vacuum that brought about a return to anarchy. In March, Syria, Lebanese Muslims, and leftists forced President Amin Gemayel to abrogate Lebanon's treaty with Israel. By June 1985, Israel had withdrawn its military from most of the country. Christian rightists, the Shi'ite-Druze alliance, and the PLO began fighting amongst themselves again. Even the amazingly resilient Lebanese economy finally began to collapse under the cumulative strain of years of warfare and destruction.

In 1988, Lebanon found itself with no president and two prime ministers. Chaos reigned. But, Lebanese of every political stripe rejected the possible disappearance of their country. Instead, the chief issue became which group would dominate a newly reunited Lebanon. In March 1989, General Aoun, a self-proclaimed patriot, launched a "war of liberation" against Syria and its Lebanese allies. Despite Iraq's covert assistance, this effort failed. In September Aoun accepted a cease-fire.

On October 22nd, most members of the Lebanese Parliament (The last election had been in 1972) met in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia. They accepted a constitutional compromise that adjusted the parliament, presidency, and cabinet so that Christian and Muslim representatives would equally share power. Everything was back the way it was in 1926! On November 24th, General Aoun denounced the agreement because it ignored the issue of Syrian occupation. After more factional fighting in early 1990, Syria finally took decisive action against Aoun. On October 13th, the Lebanese government's central army and the Syrians forced his surrender.

From the beginning of the civil war in 1975 to the early 1990s, as many as 150,000 Lebanese died in the fighting. About one-quarter of the country's population fled abroad, and hundreds of thousands were forced to move from one part of Lebanon to another. The Lebanese were exhausted by the interminable violence, and most seemed prepared to accept any compromise peace, even if it meant Syria's predominance in Lebanese affairs.

FOREIGN WEAPONS

M113A2 ZU-23/2 - EG; ACMAT, AML-H90, AMX-13/75, AMX-VCI - FR; 81mm M29, 105mm M101, 106mm M40 RcR, 155mm M114, 155mm M198, M42 Duster, M48, M113 - US; All other foreign weapons - RU

TABLES OF ORGANIZATION AND EQUIPMENT

LEBANESE FORCES: 1980+

Generation: II, Air Superiority Rating: 15, Class: Militia/Conscripts, Base Determination Factor: 25%

Infantry Company: 3xTL2 Infantry(B)/M113
"PLO" Infantry Company: 3xTL2 Infantry(B) or (C), 1x82mm M43 Mortar(2) or 120mm M43 Mortar(2),
1xTL2 Infantry Support
Support Company: 1x81mm M29(3)/Truck, 1xJeep/Milan
Tank Company: 3xT-55 or 4xM48A5
"PLO" Tank Company: 3xT-34 or 3xT-54 or 3xT-55
Recon Company: 3xAML-H90[R] or AMX-13/75[R]
Mortar Company: 2x120mm M43(2)/Truck or 2x120mm M43(3)/Truck

Infantry Battalion: 1xTL2 Infantry(B) HQ/M113, 3xInfantry Company, 1xSupport Company
"PLO" Infantry Battalion: 1xTL2 Infantry(B) HQ, 3x"PLO" Infantry Company, 0-1x"PLO" Tank Company
Tank Battalion: 3xTank Company
Artillery Battalion: 2-3xArtillery Battery(2)/Truck

Infantry Brigade: 1xTL2 Infantry(B) GHQ/M113, 3xInfantry Battalion, 1xMortar Company, 1xZPU-23/2, 0-1xTank Battalion,
0-1xArtillery Battalion, 0-1xRecon Company

Available Support Units: (One or more of these units or parts thereof, may appear in a particular action at your discretion.)
Special Forces Company: 3xTL3 Infantry(B)[R] /ACMAT/HMG[R]
OR: 2xTL3 Infantry(A)/M113, 1xM113/ZU-23/2
Commando Company: 3xTL3 Infantry(S)
Rocket Battalion: 3x122mm BM21(12)
Anti-Aircraft Battery(SP): 1xM42 Duster
Heavy Artillery Battalion: 3x130mm "M46"(2)/Truck

Notes: 1) Infantry and Support stands may go from TL2 to TL3 around 1985.
2) Artillery Batteries may contain the following weapons (most common first). Mixed battalions are allowed:
[US]155mm M198, [RU]122mm M38, [US]105mm M101, [RU]122mm D30, [US]155mm M114A1
3) M113s may be replaced by AMX-VCI. If so, one in three may mount a 106mm M40 RcR.
4) You may add "PLO" infantry companies or "PLO" battalions to any scenario at your discretion.
5) One infantry stand per battalion may contain an attached SA-7 team (MP).
6) Around 2000, the organization of Lebanese brigades has stabilized. Each now contains:
1xGHQ, 3xInfantry Battalion/M113, 1xTank Battalion, and 1xArtillery Battalion: @3xArtillery Battery(3)/Truck

TACTICAL NOTES

Fighting was widespread during the Lebanese civil war and equipment holdings changed little between 1975 and 1985. You should be able to put together some exciting multi-player scenarios using this as a backdrop. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was very one-sided and good wargaming situations are hard to find. However, once Israel pulled out of Beirut, the situation changed. Surprise attacks on Israeli bases became common during their long occupation of south Lebanon. Some of these actions were quite large and although exact numbers are not available, press coverage was intensive and fairly accurate scenarios can be put together using the TO&Es above. Relations between Israel and its neighbors are once more in a considerable state of flux. Lebanon's recent military recovery should make any future Israeli incursion much more than a simple "walkover".

Then there is the possibility that Lebanon may finally decide that it has had enough of Syrian occupation. The chances for setting up good gaming situations in this case are even better than with Israel. The US may be dragged in, but remember, we've been burned in Lebanon before! Any US force would be heavily armed but cautiously handled.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Fighting in Lebanon resumed on January 8th, 1997, after a Katyusha rocket was fired into northern Israel. The ensuing clashes between Israeli soldiers and Lebanese Hezbollah forces ended the cease-fire that had been in effect since April 1996. In June the United Nations General Assembly endorsed a non-binding resolution assessing Israel US\$1.7 million in damages for shelling the UN headquarters in Qana, Lebanon. In September, Israel and Lebanon resumed diplomatic negotiations. The Lebanese government reiterated its position on Israeli withdrawal, basing it on UN Security Council Resolution 425. This requires Israel to withdraw from Lebanon "without preconditions".

Hezbollah's position in Lebanese politics has become increasingly secure. When it accepted the accords that ended the civil

war and participated in the 1996 elections, it became more than a guerrilla organization. Hezbollah has developed a political infrastructure, educational and health care services, and local media resources. Its avowed goal in 1997 was to drive Israel from southern Lebanon but not necessarily into the sea. This mellowing of party doctrine has led to splits within the group.

In June 2000, the Israelis finally ended decades of occupation and abandoned nearly all of southern Lebanon. Within two days the "South Lebanese Army", which was dependent on their support, collapsed. A small UN force now patrols the Israeli/Lebanese border. Six thousand Christian and Druze militia have fled to Israel to escape prosecution. Hezbollah continues to demand the release of all Lebanese prisoners held in Israel. They also demand the return of a strip of land known as the "Shebaa Farms". Israel has occupied this bit of the Golan Heights since 1967. This area is more valuable than it might first appear. It contains vineyards, several Israeli settlements, and a ski resort! Though the Lebanese are certain the UN will back their claim to the "Farms", they can't afford to appear too self-satisfied. Syria is still fighting to regain the Golan Heights, and Syria still calls the political shots in Lebanon.

Currently Lebanon is "host" to 30,000 Syrian troops. These have pulled back from around Beirut and other cities in response to angry Lebanese protests. There are also around one million Syrian workers living in Lebanon. Tough economic times have made these even more unwelcome than the soldiers. Then there is Hezbollah, made up of of four to five thousand armed Shi'ite Muslim fundamentalists. The Lebanese government recently issued a statement concerning these fighters saying that, "...As long as the Israeli occupation of any portion of Lebanon continues, the state will support (this) resistance movement."

Since the 1990s the US has shipped thirty-two UH-1 "Huey" Helicopters to Lebanon. This is in addition to hundreds of trucks and utility vehicles, 860 M113 APCs, and spare parts for Lebanon's aging M48 tanks. Prices have been extremely reasonable. Jeeps have been going for US\$100 and heavy trucks for only US\$200. The Syrians have also been a major source of weapons to Lebanon, with deliveries of one hundred or so tanks and 20,000 AK-47 rifles in recent years. Based on total weapons transfers, it appears Lebanon is once more developing a respectable military deterrent that Israel would be wise not to ignore.

2002 LEBANESE ARSENAL

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| Vehicles: | 180xT-55, 130xM48A5 Tanks, 800+M113, 35 VAB, Some M3 "Halftrack", and V-150 "Commando" APCs |
| AT Weapons: | 106mm "M40" RcRs, 200xMilan, 18xTOW, and some ENTAC and SS-11 ATGMs |
| Artillery: | 200+Pieces (75mm, 105mm, 122mm, and 155mm Towed Guns, 25x120mm Mortars) |
| Anti-Aircraft: | 60x23mm and 30mm, 15x40mm M-42 "Duster" AAGs |
| Combat Aircraft: | 3xHawker "Hunter" |
| Helicopters: | 6xAlouette II/III, 32xUH-1H "Huey", 7xAB-212s, 4xGazelle, 9xSA-330L "Puma" |
| Small Arms: | 9mm FN35, Walther P-38, MAT-49, & Colt "Commander" Pistols, 9mm Sterling Submachineguns, 5.56mm FAMAS, FN-CAL, M16A1, SIG 540, FN FAL & G3 Rifles, 7.5mm M24/29, 7.62mm AAT-52, FN MAG, & .50 cal Browning M2 Machineguns, 40mm M79 & M203 Grenade Launchers, RPG-7 ATGLs |

- Notes:
- 1) An additional 500 M113 APCs have been requested from surplus US inventory.
 - 2) The US has vetoed a Jordanian plan to transfer 50+M48 tanks to Lebanon from its surplus inventory.
 - 3) Plans are currently being finalized for Saudi Arabia to transfer an undisclosed number of AMX-30 Tanks to Lebanon from its surplus inventory. France would act as middleman in this case.

POINTS OF CONTACT

Armed Forces Headquarters - Tel: (+961 1) 45 04 00 or 42 24 00

Postscript

For a more complete history of the Marine Corps mission to Beirut, I refer you to:
Frank, Benis M., U.S. Marines in Lebanon: 1982-1984, History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1987.