



## INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

# AUDIT REPORT

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### Public information in UNIFIL

UNIFIL should develop its public information concept of operations

22 July 2011

Assignment No. AP2010/672/04

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United Nations  Nations Unies

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

OFFICE OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES · BUREAU DES SERVICES DE CONTRÔLE INTERNE  
INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION · DIVISION DE L'AUDIT INTERNE

TO: Major General Alberto Asarta Cuevas  
A: Force Commander and Head of Mission  
United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

DATE: 22 July 2011

FROM: Fatoumata Ndiaye, Director  
DE: Internal Audit Division, OIOS

*Fatoumata*

REFERENCE: IAD: 11- 00497

SUBJECT: **Assignment No. AP2010/672/04 - Audit of public information in UNIFIL**

OBJET:

1. I am pleased to present the report on the above-mentioned audit.
2. Based on your comments, we are pleased to inform you that we have closed recommendation 3. In order for us to close the remaining recommendations, we request that you provide us with the additional information as discussed in the text of the report and also summarized in Annex 1.
3. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/263 that requires OIOS to include as an annex the complete response of management, please find attached your complete response to the draft report.
4. Please note that OIOS will report on the progress made to implement its recommendations in its annual report to the General Assembly and semi-annual report to the Secretary-General.

cc: Mr. Girish Sinha, Director, Mission Support, UNIFIL  
Mr. Wolfgang Weiszegger, Chief, Integrated Support Services, UNIFIL  
Mr. Milos Strugar, Director of Political and Civil Affairs, UNIFIL  
Mr. Swatantra Goolsarran, Executive Secretary, UN Board of Auditors  
Ms. Susanne Frueh, Executive Secretary, Joint Inspection Unit  
Mr. Moses Bamuwamye, Chief, Oversight Support Unit, Department of Management  
Mr. Byung-Kun Min, Special Assistant to the USG-OIOS  
Ms. Eleanor Burns, Chief, Peacekeeping Audit Service, OIOS

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## INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

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### FUNCTION

*“The Office shall, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations examine, review and appraise the use of financial resources of the United Nations in order to guarantee the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates, ascertain compliance of programme managers with the financial and administrative regulations and rules, as well as with the approved recommendations of external oversight bodies, undertake management audits, reviews and surveys to improve the structure of the Organization and its responsiveness to the requirements of programmes and legislative mandates, and monitor the effectiveness of the systems of internal control of the Organization” (General Assembly Resolution 48/218 B).*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Audit of public information in UNIFIL

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of public information in United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The overall objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls over public information activities. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

The Public Information Office had produced various television broadcasts, radio programmes, magazines and brochures aimed at disseminating UNIFIL's messages. Also, adequate procedures were in place for clearing public information materials and coordinating public information activities.

However, the internal control system over public information activities was not fully adequate since it did not have a public information concept of operations, which is the recommended planning tool to ensure its strategy, work plans and budgets are aligned and complement the Mission's priorities and activities.

OIOS made four recommendations to address issues identified in the audit and to further improve internal controls over the management of public information in UNIFIL.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Paragraphs
I. INTRODUCTION	1-5
II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE	6
III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	7
IV. AUDIT RESULTS	
A. Governance	8-11
B. Implementation of public information activities	12-21
C. Management of resources	22-24
V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	25
ANNEX 1 – Status of audit recommendations	

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of public information in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.
2. UNIFIL's public information activities are guided by the Policy and Guidance for Public Information in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (the Policy) promulgated by the Department of Public Information (DPI) in cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). This Policy provides that public information programmes are a political and operational necessity intended to enhance the ability of the Mission to carry out its mandate successfully.
3. The UNIFIL Public Information Office (PIO) is headed by an officer at the P-5 Level. The PIO is composed of the Office of the Spokesperson and five units including Media Monitoring, Video, Radio, Publications and Photography. The PIO had 23 authorized posts and there were also 23 military public information officers (MPIOs). The PIO's budget for the fiscal years 2009/10 and 2010/11 were \$610,000 and \$686,000, respectively.
4. In addition to the PIO, there was the Military Community Outreach Unit (MCOU) responsible for producing some multimedia materials and conducting outreach activities in the Mission's area of operations (AO). MCOU is independent of the PIO and reports to the Force Commander through the Chief of Staff as part of the military chain of command.
5. Comments made by UNIFIL are shown in *italics*.

## II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE

6. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls over public information activities.

## III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

7. The audit covered public information activities from 1 July 2008 to 31 January 2011, and included the activities of the PIO and MCOU. The audit methodology included interviews with key personnel including the military who were involved in the dissemination of public information in UNIFIL, field visits to the sectors, review of public information products and analysis of relevant documents and records.
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## IV. AUDIT RESULTS

### A. Governance

#### Governance structure and reporting lines

8. The Policy stipulates that the public information component of a peacekeeping mission should normally be directly supervised by the Head of Mission (HoM). The Chief, PIO (CPIO) reports to the Force Commander through the Director of the Department of Political and Civil Affairs (DPCA) of UNIFIL. The governance structure differs from the recommended structure in the Policy in that the HoM does not directly supervise the activities of the PIO. However, its programme of work and activities were approved by the HoM. Reviews by DPI and DPKO conducted in 2007 and 2009 respectively, concluded that the structure was effective to enable UNIFIL to deliver its public information mandate.

#### Public information concept of operations and strategy

9. The Policy requires the CPIO to prepare, in close collaboration with other Mission components, a public information concept of operations (PI CONOPs) that complements the Mission's CONOPs. The PI CONOPs is a planning tool for making the public information components operational in a coordinated and coherent manner.

10. Although the Mission had established its Military Strategic Concept of Operations (the Mission CONOPs) with the latest update in September 2010, there was no related PI CONOPs. The CPIO informed OIOS that since the inception of the PIO in 2006, it had implemented its strategy, work plans and budgets independent of a PI CONOPs and therefore, was of the opinion that it was not needed. OIOS is however of the view that considering that the Mission's CONOPs has been up-dated recently, it is an opportune time to establish its PI CONOPs. This will enable the Mission to re-evaluate its overall objectives and priorities, as well as allocation of resources for public information activities. Once the PI CONOPs is developed, it should be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure its strategy, work plans and budgets are aligned and its aims, target audiences and activities are adjusted accordingly to complement the Mission's priorities and activities.

#### **Recommendation 1**

**(1) UNIFIL should ensure that a public information concept of operations is developed in compliance with the Policy on Public Information in United Nations Peacekeeping Missions and align its strategy, work plans and budget for public information activities accordingly.**

11. *UNIFIL accepted recommendation 1 and stated it would develop a PI CONOPs for approval by the HoM by 31 July 2011.* Recommendation 1 remains open pending the receipt of a copy of the final approved PI CONOPs.

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## B. Implementation of public information activities

12. During fiscal year 2009/10, the PIO produced 3,798 television broadcasts, eight radio programmes, four photo exhibitions, 60,000 copies of three magazines, as well as various posters and brochures aimed at disseminating the UNIFIL message and its products to the public. In addition, the PIO carried out 571 interviews, press releases and media visits and launched English and Arabic websites to disseminate its products. These websites attracted 66,839 hits in 2010, of which 27,229 were from Lebanon. Other web products included YouTube which attracted 22,700 hits, and Facebook which had a fan base of 2,271.

### Mechanism to measure the effectiveness of public information activities

13. According to paragraph 104 of the Policy, the priorities of public information should include: (i) ensuring a wide understanding of the Mission's mandate; and (ii) promoting all aspects of the Mission's work to the national and international community. To gauge the level of understanding of the local population about the Mission's mandate and activities, the Mission had conducted a series of surveys since 2007. The questionnaire was developed by the Mission with the assistance of an external consultant. The survey was conducted by the consultant and involved face-to-face interviews with an average of 1,100 individuals living in the AO in South Lebanon for each survey.

14. The Mission periodically analyzed the responses to survey questions and the PIO used these results to adjust its products. For example, 'Journey through UNIFIL' video was produced after the survey indicated that the local population lacked a basic understanding of the Mission's activities. Also, 'Discover UNIFIL' video campaign had been ongoing since 2009 to address a similar lack of public understanding. These video campaigns have been complemented by outreach magazines and other literature as shown above. However, there were still indicators from survey results that the local population did not always have a clear understanding of UNIFIL's mandate. Therefore, there was a need to continue to monitor the perception of the public and revise PIO activities accordingly.

15. OIOS was informed that the survey, which was sponsored by a Member State as a contribution-in-kind, was discontinued in September 2010 due to funding constraints and the lack of trained staff members to analyze the survey. Without the survey, or other tools to measure the effectiveness and impact of UNIFIL's public information services, the Mission will not be able to monitor the understanding of the local population of UNIFIL's mandate, and take corrective action if required.

16. The HoM acknowledged the need for the continuation of the surveys and the Director of Mission Support indicated that appropriate funding requirements for the survey can be included in the Mission's budget.

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## **Recommendation 2**

**(2) The UNIFIL Public Information Office should continue to conduct the survey or introduce other mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of its public information services.**

17. *UNIFIL accepted recommendation 2 and stated that public opinion surveys have hitherto been conducted by the Mission's Civil Affairs Section through external funding. In the absence of external funding PIO may undertake this on smaller scale within the scope of the budget provisions.* Recommendation 2 remains open pending confirmation that a mechanism has been established to evaluate, and up-date when necessary, the effectiveness of UNIFIL's public information services.

### Clearance of public information materials

18. In accordance with the Policy, the HoM had established procedures for the clearance of public information materials. According to these procedures, media messages and public information materials must be approved by the HoM. Through interviews with PI personnel and from the review of a sample of 117 materials and activities including press releases, media lines, interviews/media visits, magazine articles, video and radio programmes, OIOS noted that the controls for clearance of PI materials in the Mission were adequate and functioning as intended.

### Coordination of public information activities

19. Prior to 3 August 2010, the Mission used its Theatre Information Operations Coordination Board (TICB) to coordinate its communication strategy including the public information strategy with various components of the Mission including the Civil Military Coordination Unit (CIMIC), Civil and Political Affairs Sections, Observer Group Lebanon (OGL), the Military Information Office and Planning Coordination (J-2) and the Military Operations Branch (J-3). The TICB was chaired by the Director of DPCA or by the CPIO on his behalf, and its members included the various military and civilian components that interact with the local population in the normal course of their activities having a bearing on the public's perception of UNIFIL. Between 1 August 2010 and 28 February 2011, the activities of TICB were suspended pending the review of the entire coordination mechanism of public information in the Mission. The PIO however continued to maintain close contacts with the other sections and is in receipt of the information and reports from these sections. Consequently, there was no adverse effect on the public information activities due to the suspension of TICB.

### Distribution of public information materials by the Military Public Information Officers (MPIO)

20. The Policy emphasizes the importance of structured dissemination of information for successful public information campaigns. The PIO distributes its

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materials in the AO through contingents on the ground. OIOS visited eight contingents' locations in the AO and noted undistributed PI materials in storage. For example, the 7th (May 2010) and 8th (October 2010) editions of the Al Janoub magazines were still not distributed by the Indonesian contingent in January 2011. The MPIO acknowledged that there was no proper handover or instructions on how and when to distribute some of the materials. MPIOs at other locations also indicated the need for further guidance in handling these materials. The CPIO stated that feedback from contingents on distribution of PI materials was not consistent or comprehensive to the extent desired.

### **Recommendation 3**

**(3) The UNIFIL Public Information Office should: (i) provide additional guidance for the distribution of public information materials by the Military Public Information Officers; and (ii) improve the feedback mechanisms with the parties involved in the distribution of its materials.**

21. *UNIFIL accepted recommendation 3 and stated that the distribution guidance already issued had been reemphasized to all MPIOs and a new feedback mechanism had been implemented to ensure more accurate feedback on distribution of public information materials undertaken by the contingents. Based on the action taken, recommendation 3 has been closed.*

## C. Management of resources

### Effective use of funds

22. The MCOU was the Mission's main outreach unit to disseminate information to the public on UNIFIL activities in order to gain support from the local population. The MCOU was not fully effective due to the frequent rotation of military personnel, and lack of adequate hand-over between production teams. Consequently, MCOU could not produce frequent videos to meet the daily broadcasting demand for two 60 second television spots on contracted stations. As a result, the TV spots reserved for MCOU had been limited to broadcasting reruns of old videos of UNIFIL activities. These reruns were at a cost of about \$94,500, which may have not been the most effective use of funds. The DPCA, however, stated that repeating videos had its usefulness of reemphasizing messages.

23. In accordance with paragraphs 174 to 176 of the Policy, media monitoring is normally the responsibility of the media monitoring sub-unit in PIO. In UNIFIL however, five sections including the PIO, the Security Section, the Joint Mission Analysis Centre, J-2 and MCOU were conducting media monitoring and analysis at a cost of approximately \$526,840 per annum to meet their respective operational needs. This occurred because the media monitoring needs of various Mission components were not harmonized to ensure better use of resources. As a result, all five sections were analyzing the same media reports in English although the level of details, urgency and perspective of analyses

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differed. Of the five sections, PIO media monitoring have the broadest source of media reports in English, Arabic and Hebrew.

**Recommendation 4**

**(4) The Mission's Management should form a working group to assess the Mission's media monitoring needs with the view to consolidate its activities to ensure better use of resources.**

24. *UNIFIL accepted recommendation 4 and stated that media monitoring is a core function of PIO and therefore the working group comprising relevant Mission components will be convened and chaired by PIO. The working group will assess any specific additional needs of particular Mission components that are not met by the media monitoring reports currently produced by PIO and make recommendations on the most cost-effective way to address any additional requirements identified. Additional/reallocation of staff to the Media Monitoring Unit will have to be considered. Recommendation 4 remains open pending the receipt of a copy of the results of the review by the working group on of resources for media monitoring activities in order to ensure better use of resources.*

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

25. We wish to express our appreciation to the Management and staff of UNIFIL for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

## STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Risk category	Risk rating	C/O <sup>1</sup>	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date <sup>2</sup>
1	The UNIFIL Head of Mission should ensure that a public information concept of operations is developed in compliance with the Policy on Public Information in United Nations Peacekeeping Missions and align its strategy, work plans and budget for public information activities accordingly.	Governance	Medium	O	Receipt an approved PI CONOPs	31 July 2011
2	The UNIFIL Public Information Office should continue to conduct the surveys or introduce other mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of its public information services.	Governance	Medium	O	Confirmation that a mechanism has been established to evaluate, and up-date when necessary, the effectiveness of UNIFIL's public information services.	June 2011
3	The UNIFIL Public Information Office should: (i) provide additional guidance for the distribution of public information materials by the Military Public Information Officers; and (ii) improve the feedback mechanisms with the parties involved in the distribution of its materials.	Operational	Medium	C	Action taken	Implemented
4	The Mission's Management should form a working group to assess the Mission's media monitoring needs with the view to consolidate its activities to ensure better use of resources.	Financial	Medium	O	Receipt of a copy of the results of the review by the working group on of resources for media monitoring activities in order to ensure better use of resources.	31 August 2011

1. C = closed, O = open

2. Date provided by UNIFIL in response to recommendations.

