

# THE U.S. & THE LEBANESE ARMED FORCES



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# Origins of the Assistance

- Bush Administration Post 9/11 'Freedom' Agenda
- War On Terrorism (GWOT)
- Push back on Assad regime post-2003
- Rafic Hariri assassination in 2005; Cedar Revolution
- Capacity building after decades of Syrian Occupation



# Bush Administration Conceptions of the Aid

## National Security Council:

- LAF as a counterweight to Hezbollah
- A strong LAF could undermine Hezbollah's raison d'être
- A capable LAF could constrain Hezbollah activity



## Department of Defense:

- LAF as a domestic CT force targeting SUNNI terrorists
- A positive model of functioning, non-sectarian "state" institution
- Role in border security and public order



# Dramatic Growth

- 2005: \$1.5 million in IMET
- 2006: \$70 million FMF
- 2009: \$160 million FMF
- 2020: \$216 million in FMF, IMET & DOD authorized funding
- Plus Direct Commercial Sales and EDA transfers
- NO leakage of equipment/end use restriction violations



# 'Success' Stories

- Nahr el Bared 2007
- Arsal (Fajr al Joroud) 2017?



The LAF is innovative, professional, and have proven their capabilities to protect the Lebanese people from internal and external threats through successful counter VEO operations.

Gen. Joseph Votel  
Commander, CENTCOM  
Testimony Before the Senate Armed Services Committee  
February 5, 2019



# Critiques in Washington

- Center around links to Hezbollah:
  - Hezbollah infiltration of LAF
  - LAF collaboration with Hezbollah
  - LAF de-confliction with Hezbollah
  - Concerns about intel sharing



“The resistance’s arms are not contrary to the state project; otherwise we could have not tolerated it.  
**It is an essential part of Lebanon’s defense.”**

Michel Aoun,  
President of the Republic  
February 12, 2017





# LAF Doctrine and Hezbollah

- From the LAF Orientation manual (Al Kirras al tawjihi)

## الكراس التوجيهي

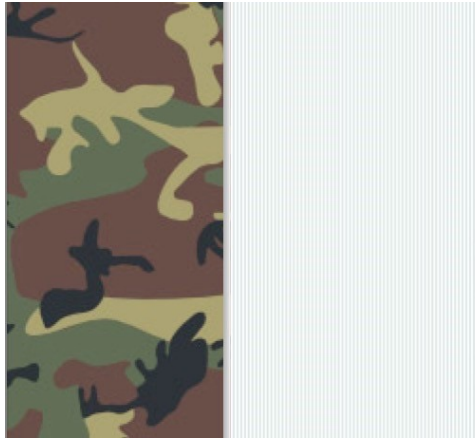
الفصل الأول: ثوابت السياسة التوجيهية التي يعتمدها الجيش على الصعيد الوطني:

### مقدمة:

- 1- الولاء للبنان وطناً نهائياً لأبنائه المقيمين والمغتربين.
- 2- الإيمان بوحدة الارض والشعب والنظام كخيار وحيد لديمومة الوطن.
- 3- الإيمان بالقيم العليا للمجتمع اللبناني و الدفاع عنها.
- 4- لبنان بلد عربي وعضو فاعل في جامعة الدول العربية وجمعية الامم المتحدة.
- 5- العلاقة الاخوية والمميزة بين لبنان وسوريا.
- 6- تحديد ومواجهة الاخطار الرئيسية المحدقة بلبنان.
- 7- التمسك بالسلام العادل والشامل كحل وحيد للصراع العربي-الاسرائيلي.
- 8- دعم المقاومة.
- 9- توثيق العلاقة والتفاعل بين الجيش والمواطنين.

# LAF Doctrine and Hezbollah (2)

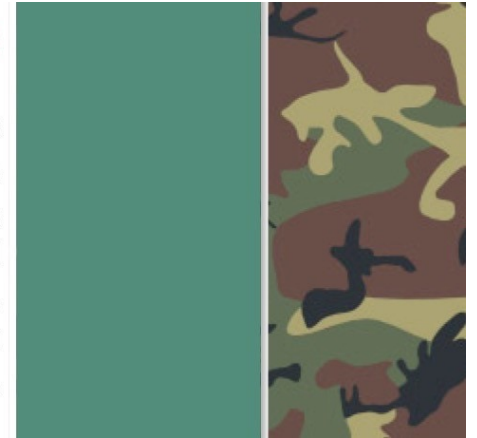
- From the LAF Orientation manual (Al Kirras al tawjihi)



8- دعم المقاومة باعتبارها حقاً مشروعاً للبنانيين حتى زوال الاحتلال ونتائجها:

تقر المواثيق واعلانات الحقوق الدولية لجميع الشعوب حقها في مقاومة الاحتلال والعدوان والدفاع عن النفس بكل الوسائل والامكانيات التي تتيح لها البقاء. وفي هذا السياق تعتبر مقاومة اللبنانيين للاحتلال الاسرائيلي في الاراضي اللبنانية المحتلة حقاً مشروعاً الى ان يتم زوال الاحتلال.

وقد ادت هذه المقاومة التي لقيت دعماً من الدولة والجيش والمواطنين الى اندحار العدو مهزوماً من معظم الاراضي اللبنانية. غير ان العدو ما يزال متمركزاً في مواقع لها اهمية كبرى استراتيجياً واقتصادياً لذلك فإن من حق اللبنانيين مقاومته حتى انسحابه من مزارع شبعا.





# Collusion with Hezbollah

- Examples:
  - 2007 Hezbollah land-to-sea missile/LAF naval radars
  - 2008 Hezbollah invasion of West Beirut
  - 2013 Raid on Sheikh al Assir in Sidon
  - 2017 155mm artillery support of Hezbollah ground operations in Aarsal
    - Reportedly also Armed Caravan (Hellfires) and M142 HIMARS
- Other ongoing examples:
  - Operating jointly manned checkpoints
  - Continuing de-confliction with Hezbollah along eastern border
  - Prosecuting critics with military tribunals
  - Obstructing UNIFIL operations in Southern Lebanon
    - Removing hardware from launch sites prior to investigation



# Human Rights Issues?

- “Bodies of Syrian detainees in Arsal show signs of torture,” *Al Arabiya News*, July 6, 2017. <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2017/07/06/What-is-the-role-of-Hezbollah-militias-in-the-torture-and-killing-of-Arsal>
- “Lebanon: Military forces must end arbitrary arrests and torture of protesters,” Amnesty International, Nov 29, 2019. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/11/lebanon-military-forces-must-end-arbitrary-arrests-and-torture-of-protesters/>
- “In Lebanon, army courts target anti-government protestors,” *Associated Press*, Nov 22, 2020. <https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-lebanon-coronavirus-pandemic-beirut-michel-aoun-60a752b9015dc3446c2b5e8797a44b57>
- “Lebanon: Tripoli Detainees Allege Torture, Forced Disappearance,” *Human Rights Watch*, Mar 30, 2021. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/30/lebanon-tripoli-detainees-allege-torture-forced-disappearance>

<https://fb.watch/ctoUo5ybAF/>

# Lead Critics of U.S. Assistance to the LAF

- Tony Badran, Research Fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies
  - Accuses the LAF of “running interference” for Hezbollah
  - Human Rights abuses of demonstrators
- Omri Ceren, National Security Advisor for US Senator Ted Cruz
  - References recent border skirmishes with Israel as evidence of LAF lack of control
  - LAF complicity in Amer Fakhoury case
- Nicholas Noe, co-founder of Mideastwire.com
  - US should create parity between LAF and IDF to de-legitimize “the resistance”
    - End Israel’s QME
- Robert Greenway and Victoria Coates, former Senior Directors for the Middle East, Trump Administration NSC
  - LAF=Hezbollah



# Future of U.S. Assistance to the LAF

- Salaries payments?
- Viability of the State?
- LAF's approach to the next war between Hezbollah and Israel
- Congressional approach to violation of US laws
- Level of frustration of LAF role in scuttling maritime border delineation
- Pivot to Asia
- Future orientation of Lebanon
- LAF and PGM program

