

# IDF to start withdrawal from Lebanon within five weeks

By DAVID LANDAU

Post Diplomatic Correspondent

Israel will withdraw its troops from Sidon and its environs within five weeks, as the first stage of a general withdrawal from south Lebanon announced by the cabinet yesterday.

Sixteen ministers voted for the withdrawal, with six Likud ministers opposing it. Vice Premier and Likud leader Yitzhak Shamir said Israel's enemies would regard the withdrawal plan as "a capitulation" and "a surrender."

Prime Minister Shimon Peres, in an emotional summation speech, declared: "We have been sitting in Lebanon for three years - and there are still some who ask, 'What's the hurry (to withdraw)?"

Peres warned that Israel's occupation was "turning Lebanon into a (hostile) Shi'ite country. And the longer we stay there - the more this is the case."

The withdrawal will be conducted in three stages. No time-frame has been determined for the second stage - a pullback on the eastern front - or for the final stage. But Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin said last night he hoped the withdrawal could be completed in a matter of months.

Rabin said the Israel Defence Forces would then pursue a "mobile, aggressive" strategy of defending the north of the country from behind the international border. It would not hesitate, he said, to "go back in

and destroy any terrorist cells" that might form there after the withdrawal.

The cabinet decision specified that after the final withdrawal, Israel would "maintain" a security zone across the border, policed by local militias in close coordination with the IDF.

Rabin stressed that Israel would seek a diplomatic accord before the first-stage pullback, whereby the Lebanese army and/or Unifil would

take over Sidon and the surrounding areas after they are vacated by the IDF. The defence minister is to meet this morning with the UN Undersecretary-General Brian Urquhart, who flew in last night for a shutting attempt at mediation. Urquhart will go to Beirut and Damascus, returning to Jerusalem at the end of the week.

Rabin said the five-weeks before the first pullback would be a "test" of Lebanon's oft-stated claim that its own armed forces are capable of keeping the peace in any areas vacated by Israel.

"The people of Israel, and the entire world, will know that we have given ample time and opportunity for the area to be taken over...in an orderly way", Rabin said, "without unrest, bloodshed and violence... We will propose that the UN take it over. We will propose both to Unifil and to Lebanon that they deploy to take over the area."

But, the defence minister emphasized, Israel's withdrawal decision was not conditional upon the success of these diplomatic efforts. The IDF would pull out in five weeks, according to the cabinet decision. It would then take stock of the results and ramifications of its move before recommending to the cabinet the timing of the second-stage withdrawal.

Yesterday's cabinet decision followed a day of efforts by Likud ministers to evolve a formulation that could satisfy both moderates and hardliners in the cabinet. Justice Minister Moshe Nissim suggested that the cabinet decide only on the first-stage pullback, leaving the future moves to be discussed and decided in light of this initial step. Nissim's proposal would also not have mentioned specifically the ultimate aim of retiring behind the international border.

But Peres and Rabin would not accept this deliberate vagueness. "We should have learned from the past," Rabin explained later on television, "not to take decisions that do not project where we are going two or three steps farther along the

road." It would be "wrong to take a decision that was not shaped by a comprehensive strategic approach," Rabin added.

Likud-Herut Deputy Prime Minister, David Levy, whose ardent support for the defence establishment's withdrawal plan ensured its approval by a large majority of the cabinet, said after the meeting that the issue had not been resolved along party-political lines. It would have been unfortunate, he added, had the cabinet split into two blocs on an issue that was essentially one of defence policy.

Labour's deputy premier, Yitzhak Navon, observed during the cabinet session that both Labour and Likud had their fears: Labour feared the political fallout if Katyushas should again land on Kiryat Shmona, and Likud feared that the public would deduce from the withdrawal that the Lebanon war had been unnecessary. Both blocs, Navon said, "must overcome their fears."

Shas's Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz said the Lebanon war had "harmed the souls of Israel's youth." He raised his hand in favour of the defence minister's plan, as did Morasha's Yosef Shapira and Ometz's Yigael Hurvitz.

A second Likud man (besides Levy) who supported the proposal was Science Minister Gideon Patt (Liberal). All the Labour ministers lined up behind Peres and Rabin, and they were joined by Ezer Weizman (Alignment-Yahad), Yosef Burg (NRP), and Amnon Rubinstein (Shinui).

Finance Minister Yitzhak Moda'i (Likud-Liberal) left before the vote. Industry Minister Ariel Sharon (Likud-Herut) and Economics Minister Gad Yaacobi (Alignment-Labour) are abroad.

The Chief of General Staff and the OC Northern Command will meet this morning with the heads of northern border settlements to discuss the government's decision and the implications it will have for the continued quiet in the region.

The community leaders are demanding that the premier consult them before each pullback to new lines in Lebanon.

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## Cabinet communique on withdrawal

At the special cabinet meeting yesterday the cabinet resolved that:

A) The Israel Defence Forces will redeploy along Israel's northern border. The government will do everything required to guarantee the security of the Galilee.

B) The redeployment will be implemented in three major phases:

Phase 1 - in the western sector of Lebanon, the IDF will withdraw from the Sidon area and deploy in the Litani-Nabatiya region.

Phase 2 - in the eastern sector of Lebanon, the IDF will deploy in the Hasbaya region.

Phase 3 - the IDF will deploy along the Israeli-Lebanese international border while maintaining a zone in southern Lebanon where local forces (SLA) will operate with IDF backing.

C) Phase 1 will be carried out within five weeks of this decision. An announcement on the timetable will be submitted in advance to the Lebanese government and the UN Secretariat in order to permit them to organize and deploy forces in the area the IDF will vacate.

Timetables for each additional phase will be decided by the cabinet. Throughout all the phases, efforts to reach diplomatic agreements will continue.

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## Two IDF soldiers killed, 7 hurt in Lebanon

By MENAHEM HOROWITZ

Jerusalem Post Reporter

**METULLA.** - Two Israeli soldiers were killed yesterday and seven injured when two large charges were detonated two hours apart near a-Ghazi, four kilometres east of the Kassemiye Bridge and just north of the Litani River.

Four South Lebanese were also injured in the explosions. Of the Israeli wounded, one is in serious condition, one is in moderate condition, and five were wounded lightly.

The blast took place in the region where the Israel Defence Forces are to redeploy in the first phase of the withdrawal.

Reserve Captain Yosef Marmelstein, 25, of Ramat Gan and another soldier, whose name has not yet been released, were killed by the explosion of the first 20-kilogram charge, at 11 a.m. just as Marmelstein told his patrol that a roadside charge planted at the same site had

been safely dismantled 2½ weeks earlier. Two other soldiers on the patrol, which consisted of a jeep and a command-car, were injured, as were two local residents passing through the area on a motorscooter. The patrol's jeep overturned when the bomb went off.

Israel Defence Forces troops called to the area clamped a curfew on surrounding villages and conducted searches, during which a second 20-kg charge was detonated 10 metres from the first. Five soldiers, including an officer, and two local civilians were injured in the second explosion.

Israel Air Force helicopters brought medics to the site, and the IDF injured and one South Lebanese were transferred to Rambam hospital in Haifa after receiving emergency treatment on the spot. The three other injured residents were taken to local clinics.

IDF sources note that the region where the bombs went off had been quiet in recent months.

Investigation revealed that the two charges were well-disguised and activated by radio. Sources believe the attacks were perpetrated by Shi'ite extremists.