
Lebanon to Be Among the First Beneficiaries of New Department of Defense Funding Authority

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Department of Defense (DoD) officials hope to use new authorities to help other countries fight terrorism to buy spare parts for the Lebanese military. The “1206 funding,” named for the section of the *2006 National Defense Authorization Act* that authorizes it, is designed to help other countries build capacity within their national military forces, Bryan Whitman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, told Pentagon reporters. The authority allows DoD, in consultation with the Department of State, to spend up to \$200 million a year to help other countries become stronger partners in the Global War on Terror (GWOT), Whitman explained.

The Department of Defense had requested the 1206 authority for years, but received the authorization in the 2006 defense budget. Since then, DoD has been working with the DoS to determine the best way to use the new authority. President Bush approved the program in early May 2006, before the onset of violence between Israel and Lebanese Hezbollah militia forces, and the department notified Congress of the decisions earlier this week. Congress now had until August 16, 2006 to raise any objections. In addition to Lebanon, Pakistan, Thailand, Yemen, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Trans-Saharan Africa, the Gulf of Guinea and the Caribbean Basin are slated to receive between \$5 million and \$27 million in 1206 funding, Whitman said. These funds will address specific needs in those countries and regions, from upgrading sensors and communication equipment, to improving surveillance sites to providing night-vision goggles for tactical forces. In the case of Lebanon, DoD plans to spend \$10 million to buy spare parts for vehicles, armored personnel carriers, helicopters and commercial utility cargo vehicles for the Lebanese military.

Although DoD is taking steps to buy the spare parts, Whitman emphasized that actually handing them over to Lebanon will be based on two conditions. These conditions, agreed to by the Defense and State departments, are that the Lebanese army be in a position to assert further control over its territory and that equipment provided by the program is used to help reduce Hezbollah’s operational space, DoD officials said. The 1206 funding for Lebanon’s military would be just one of many United States efforts, most under the purview of the DoS and in cooperation with the international community, to help stabilize the situation there.

Whitman stated the following:

It is a tool in the toolbox, so to speak. We see it as something that you can apply with some degree of flexibility and sometimes it doesn’t take a lot to have a significant impact in some countries. The payback and the outcomes and the results can be significant for a rather modest investment. And it prevents the United State forces from having to deal with the situation.

Marine General James Jones, commander of U.S. European Command, emphasized the importance of the new 1206 authority during an early April 2006 testimony before the House Armed Services Committee.

It is much more cost effective to prevent conflicts than to stop one once it is started I cannot overstate the importance of our theater security cooperation programs as the centerpiece to securing our homeland from irregular and catastrophic threats of the 21st century.

Jones called the new 1206 authority a paradigm shift that represents a critical first step in security cooperation reform. “The authority provided in Section 1206 is an important tool in our efforts to implement a strategy that recognizes the changed security landscape.”