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Peacekeeping

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Peace Support Operations

V2

(NZDF, 2012b)

Middle East

There are currently eight NZDF personnel serving as part of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) in the Middle East. These personnel work as military observers and are based in Syria, Israel and Southern Lebanon.

The mandate given to each observer differs slightly but essentially they are there to ensure that peace agreements or cease fires are observed and any violations to peace or security in the region are reported.

The role of UNTSO

There are eight NZDF personnel serving with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO). They are based in following locations:

- Two in Syria, Damascus
- Two in Southern Lebanon (Tyre)
- Four in Israel (two in Tiberias, two in Jerusalem)



Shelling and rocket attacks on TYRE, Southern Lebanon, 25 kms north of the Israeli border.

What roles do they play?

The UNTSO area of operations covers five Middle Eastern countries including Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt. The UNTSO headquarters is based in Jerusalem, Israel. An UNTSO Observer Group (or outstation, as they are known) is based Within each of the countries (with the exception of Jordan).

Each of the Outstations has a slightly different mission statement but essentially they are there to ensure that peace agreements or cease fires are observed and to report any activities which violate these agreements or could threaten international peace and security in the region.

The UNTSO Outstations are as follows:

- Observer Group Golan (OGG-T)- Tiberias, Israel
- Observer Group Golan (OGG-D)- Damascus, Syria
- Observer Group Egypt (OGE)- Ismailia, Egypt
- Observer Group Lebanon (OGL)- Tyre, Lebanon

OGL's role is to observe and report any violations across the 'blue line' which borders primarily Israel and Lebanon.

Who do they report to?

UNTSO personnel answer to UN Headquarters in New York.

How long are they posted to a particular area for? How often are they rotated?

The posting length and rotation cycle varies dependant on the region that UNTSOs are based in. The New Zealanders deploy into the region as individuals, rather than a group.

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The UNTSO mission for NZDF is 12 months, this involves six months each in two countries. eg. six months in Southern Lebanon followed by six months in Syria.

History

In November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed a plan for the partition of Palestine, providing for the creation of an Arab State and a Jewish State, with Jerusalem to be placed under international status. The plan was not accepted by the Palestinian and Arab States. On 14 May 1948, the United Kingdom relinquished its mandate over Palestine and the State of Israel was proclaimed. On the following day, the Palestinian Arabs, assisted by Arab States, opened Hostilities against Israel.

The UN decided a truce should be supervised by the UN, which has become known as the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO). The first military observers arrived in the region in June 1948. UNTSO's activities have been and still are spread over territory within five States, and therefore it has relations with five host countries - Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syrian Arab Republic.

About Middle East - UNTSO - Background

This page was last reviewed on 7 May 2012, and is current.

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