



# US Leadership Can Dislodge Iran from Lebanon

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With Iran's regional power projection at a point of acute vulnerability, a strategic opening to dislodge it from Lebanon has emerged that the US cannot afford to miss. By dragging Lebanon into war in service of Iran, Hizballah has undermined its local legitimacy and prompted the Lebanese government to [outlaw](#) its military and security activities. Lebanon's moment now hinges on Lebanese enforcement. Sustained US leadership and support for the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) could result in real disarmament, eliminating Hizballah as an Iranian proxy, and dealing Tehran another massive defeat that could further undermine the regime and its regional proxy network.

the Lebanese group inspired and establish a lasting precedent: Legitimate states, not Iranian-backed militias, will determine security in the emerging regional order.

## Policy Considerations

### Why It Matters for the US

- **A focused US investment in Lebanon today could stabilize a critical front, capitalizing on the narrow window open for Lebanon's leaders to reclaim their country from Hizballah's influence and make Tehran's losses permanent.** Hizballah's degradation in the 2024 war with Israel enabled the election of a president and prime minister free of its influence. Now, Iran and Hizballah's turning of Lebanon into a front for regional war expanded the space for its government to act. This window will close without sustained US support pairing clear expectations with targeted political, economic, and security assistance to disarm Hizballah and implement the reforms needed to restore the credibility of Lebanon's state and the prosperity of its economy.
- **Only US leadership can help Lebanon overcome its reluctance to directly confront Hizballah and offer a credible path that avoids the current cycle of escalation.** Victory in Lebanon is possible. The majority of Lebanese, including growing numbers of Shi'a, now want to see Hizballah disarmed and Iran evicted. With the right engagement from Washington, Lebanon's political leaders can be persuaded to lead the charge. However, the LAF is vulnerable to Hizballah penetration, and its officers fear the group will retaliate against them. They need to believe that the US will back them, including militarily, to take on Hizballah. Israel is rejected by too many Lebanese to produce the durable political changes needed. Only a sovereign Lebanese state with a monopoly on force can ultimately negotiate and uphold an end to conflict with Israel, integrate its economy into the regional market, and resolve a recurring source of regional crisis.
- **Securing a sovereign Lebanon would destroy the crown jewel of Iran's regional strategy and further undermine the Islamic Republic.** Iran built Hizballah as the centerpiece of its regional network, creating a model of proxy warfare and state capture exported to Iraq, Yemen, and beyond. Dismantling Hizballah, as part of a broader US strategy, could in turn weaken every proxy

- **Strategic clarity:** Demonstrate US resolve to securing a sovereign, stable, and prosperous Lebanon.
- **Verifiable, time-bound disarmament:** Build on the [US-led monitoring mechanism](#) established after the November 2024 cease-fire by establishing a combined intelligence center bringing US and European partners to set clear, measurable objectives and time-bound metrics that enhance credibility, coherence, and transparency in the disarmament process.
- **Targeted, results-oriented support:** Work with France, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Egypt to provide urgent financial and security assistance to support the rapid deployment of 15,000 fully equipped LAF troops. Future assistance should follow a results-driven model designed to shift the LAF's focus from obstacles to solutions, align support with operational needs, and deliver tangible outcomes. This would accelerate deployment, empower the LAF to complete the mission, and deepen its partnership with the US.
- **Strategic coordination and operational guidance:** Drawing on CENTCOM's experience in [Operation Inherent Resolve](#), provide the LAF with US special forces to serve as trainers and combat advisors, fire-support coordinators, and intelligence providers. Strengthened Lebanese intelligence capabilities through further US support will be essential to fostering a more assertive mindset, enhancing LAF integrity, dismantling Hizballah's arsenal, and safeguarding against reprisals.
- **Leverage US military presence:** Take advantage of the US posture in the region to deter spoilers, reinforce the LAF, and enable Lebanese authorities to seize the momentum created by Hizballah and Iran's setbacks.
- **Clarity on LAF leadership:** While the LAF remains capable, success requires leadership fully aligned with the mission. Any ambiguity at the commander level should be urgently resolved, and US assistance should be calibrated to reinforce dependable leadership committed to asserting Lebanon's monopoly on force.
- **Capitalize on Iran's economic and ideological losses:** Leverage US diplomatic, political, and economic influence to enable Lebanese institutions to consolidate state authority, advance regional integration, dismantle the shadow economy, and uphold the rule of law.

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