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INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

OFFICE OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES · BUREAU DES SERVICES DE CONTRÔLE INTERNE
INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION · DIVISION DE L'AUDIT INTERNE

TO: Major General Alberto Asarta Cuevas
A: Force Commander and Head of Mission
United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

DATE 1 September 2011

REFERENCE IAD: 11- 00550

FROM: Fatoumata Ndiaye, Director
DE: Internal Audit Division, OIOS



SUBJECT: **Assignment No. AP2011/672/08 – Audit of aviation safety in UNIFIL**

OBJET:

Overall results relating to the effective implementation and management of UNIFIL aviation safety programme were partially satisfactory

1. Attached please find the final report on the above-mentioned audit.
2. Annex-I shows the status of recommendations. Please note that OIOS will report on the progress made to implement its recommendations in its annual report to the General Assembly and to the Secretary-General, quarterly for critical recommendations and annually for important recommendations (Nos.1 to 3).
3. Please note that under General Assembly resolution 59/272, a Member State may request that the final report be made available. Also note that pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/263, OIOS has included the complete management response as an appendix to the present report.
4. We wish to express our appreciation to the Management and staff of UNIFIL and the Regional Aviation Safety Office in UNLB for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

Mr. Girish Sinha, Director of Mission Support, UNIFIL
Mr. Nabeel Arif, Director, Logistic Support Division, DFS
Mr. Ricardo Garcia, Regional Aviation Safety Officer, UNLB
Mr. Swatantra Goolsarran, Executive Secretary, UN Board of Auditors
Ms. Susanne Frueh, Executive Secretary, Joint Inspection Unit
Mr. Seth Adza, Audit Response Team, DFS
Mr. Moses Bamuwamye, Executive Secretary, IAAC
Mr. Zachary Ikiara, Chief, Oversight Support Unit, DM
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AUDIT REPORT

Audit of aviation safety in UNIFIL

BACKGROUND

Management of aviation safety programmes in field missions involves the identification of aviation hazards, evaluation of associated risks and implementation of appropriate risk mitigation measures. The Regional Aviation Safety Office at the United Nations Logistics Base (UNLB) in Brindisi is responsible for the aviation safety oversight of three missions in the region, including the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and is responsible for the development and implementation of the Mission's aviation safety programme. The Regional Aviation Safety Office had two authorized posts. At the time of the audit, only one Regional Aviation Safety Officer (RASO) was on board. The RASO reports administratively to the Chief of Mission Support of UNLB, and also has a reporting line to the Aviation Safety Section of the Logistics Support Division of DFS on technical matters. The Mission does not have an Aviation Safety Unit; however there is a military Aviation Safety Officer who reports to the Director of Mission Support and serves as a focal point for the RASO on aviation safety matters.

As of 30 April 2011, UNIFIL had a fleet of eight helicopters. Of the eight helicopters, one military helicopter was onboard a vessel of the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force

This audit was included in the 2011 OIOS' risk-based work plan due to the high risk nature of air operations in peacekeeping missions.

OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

The audit was conducted to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of UNIFIL's risk management, control and governance processes in providing reasonable assurance regarding the effective implementation and management of its aviation safety programme. The key controls tested for the audit included those related to: (a) risk management and strategic planning; and (b) oversight mechanisms. The audit covered UNIFIL's aviation safety activities related to these key controls for the period from 1 May 2009 to 30 April 2011.

AUDIT RESULTS

In OIOS' opinion, UNIFIL risk management, control and governance processes examined were **partially satisfactory** to provide reasonable assurance regarding the effective implementation and management of its aviation safety programme. UNIFIL's Mission Aviation Safety Council did not establish target dates for implementing its recommendations, affecting the timeliness of implementation. Also, its standard operating procedures for implementation of the aviation Operational Risk Management framework were not finalized, and a live exercise to test the Aviation Emergency Response Plan had not been done.

Mission Aviation Safety Council

The Mission Aviation Safety Council (MASC) meetings were generally conducted as intended. The Council deliberated aviation safety issues raised by the RASO and made decisions and assigned responsibilities to implement the recommendations made by the RASO. The Council however had not been enforcing its decisions due to lack of established target dates for implementation. In cases where timelines were indicated, they were often not complied with. Also, there was no follow-up or action taken when there was non-compliance with decisions made by the MASC or the Force Commander. As of

March 2011, there were 18 outstanding recommendations, including: (a) continued non-compliance with the Force Commander's directive prohibiting embarking and disembarking of passengers when aircraft rotors were running; (b) finalization of the Search and Rescue Plan; (c) finalization of the Aviation Section's standard operating procedures; and (d) confirmation of aircrew's qualifications. Nine of the 18 recommendations had been open for periods between six months to two years. However, there had been no aviation incidents due to the lack of implementation of these recommendations.

(1) UNIFIL should ensure that the Mission Aviation Safety Council's decisions/recommendations are assigned reasonable target dates for implementation and additional steps are taken to ensure the Council and Mission directives on aviation safety issues are complied with.

UNIFIL accepted recommendation 1 and stated that starting July 2011 reasonable target dates for the implementation of corrective actions/recommendations will be established. Also, Mission Management will ensure that when required, additional steps to enforce the implementation of the Mission's directives on aviation safety matters are adopted. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of evidence that target dates for implementation of MASC decisions/recommendations are established and have been subsequently implemented in a timely manner.

Aviation Operational Risk Management framework

The Mission had integrated the principles of aviation Operational Risk Management (ORM) in its planning and execution of its aviation operations. However, UNIFIL had not formalized the process, although draft standard operating procedures were in place. The delays in formalizing procedures were a result of unresolved issues regarding the reporting lines for military personnel in the Air Operations Centre. In order to follow the military chain of command, these military personnel reported to the Joint Operations Centre and not the Chief Aviation Officer. Consequently, the Chief Aviation Officer had no authority over planning and executing aviation operations and therefore, did not supervise the ORM process as required by the ORM policy. There was a need to ensure formal guidelines and procedures were in place to direct personnel responsible for the ORM process and to ensure ORM is consistently applied. Also, considering troop rotations, regular training on ORM is necessary to ensure staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

(2) UNIFIL should finalize and issue standard operating procedures for aviation Operational Risk Management, and provide training to aviation personnel on Operational Risk Management to ensure it is applied correctly and consistently.

UNIFIL accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the draft aviation ORM standard operating procedures will be amended in accordance with the recently approved Aviation Section standard operating procedures and will be submitted for approval and further dissemination. In addition, aviation ORM training will be provided to the relevant aviation personnel to ensure proper application of ORM principles. Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of a copy of the approved ORM standard operating procedures and confirmation that ORM training has been conducted.

Aviation Emergency Response Plan

UNIFIL had an approved Aviation Emergency Response Plan (AERP). A desk-top exercise was conducted in October 2010, however a full exercise, in coordination with the local airports and civil aviation authorities had not been done. Also, following the desk-top exercise, the AERP had not been updated to incorporate the weaknesses and lessons learned identified during the exercise.

Additionally, the AERP made references to the Search and Rescue Plan and the Helipad Emergency Plan on actions to be taken in the event of a missing aircraft or an accident. However, reports made by the RASO indicated that the Search and Rescue Plan did not conform to the requirements of the United Nations Aviation Manual and there was no approved Helipad Emergency Plan.

- (3) UNIFIL, with the assistance of the Regional Aviation Safety Officer, should: (i) conduct a live exercise of its Aviation Emergency Response Plan (AERP) and revise the AERP based on the results of these exercises; and (ii) revise and finalize its Search and Rescue Plan and Helipad Emergency Plan to ensure compliance with the United Nations Aviation Manual and completeness of its AERP.**

UNIFIL accepted recommendation 3 and stated that a plan for enhancing the AERP was developed by the RASO and provided to the Military Aviation Officer and the Chief Aviation Officer in 10 June 2011. A live exercise to test the “immediate emergency response actions” in case of an aircraft accident in Naqoura heliport was conducted on 28 June 2011 and another AERP exercise, on a larger scale, will be conducted at the end of July 2011. Based on the results of both exercises, the AERP will be amended, if required. The Search and Rescue Plan, which is part of the recently approved Aviation Section’s standard operating procedures will be tested during the planned July 2011 AERP exercise. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of copies of the updated and approved AERP and Search and Rescue Plan and Helipad Emergency Plan, as well as reports of the live exercises conducted in 2011.

Oversight by the Regional Aviation Safety Officer

In general the RASO was fulfilling his functions, and during the audit period conducted seven ASAVs, made 51 recommendations, participated in the seven meetings of the MASC, conducted a three-day workshop on ORM and completed five quarterly risk assessment reports. Also, the RASO had developed the aviation safety programme and the AERP. However, due to competing priorities and due to lack of resources (there was only one RASO instead of the budgeted two), the RASO could only schedule three of the required four visits to UNIFIL per year. Also, the Director of Mission Support informed OIOS that additional support from the RASO was required to provide more timely assistance on aviation safety matters. A review of the role of RASOs is being reviewed as part of OIOS’ audit of aviation safety oversight of field missions by DFS.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the Management and staff of UNIFIL and the Regional Aviation Safety Officer for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.