

## Bolton refutes PM account of the end of Lebanon War

Contributed by Haaretz  
Sunday, 20 January 2008

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Last update - 19:43 20/01/2008

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John Bolton, the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, rejected Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's account of the incidents preceding the last Israel Defense Forces ground operation of the Second Lebanon War.

Bolton told Haaretz that the final IDF operation, during which soldiers were ordered to proceed and take up positions along the Litani River, did not factor into the discussions finalizing UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which brought an end to the fighting.

Bolton, who is currently in Israel as a participant of the Herzliya Conference on policy and strategy, said that a U.S.-French draft resolution drawn up on August 5, 2006 - six days before the final UN resolution was passed - was better for Israel, but required amending in order to secure the agreement of the Lebanese government.

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The wording of the final agreement, Bolton said, was reached following constant deliberations, which lasted a week. The former envoy rejected Olmert's claim that Israel was displeased by the resolution that preceded the final draft, which Jerusalem received on the morning of August 11. In fact, Bolton said, the last week of the war saw a gradual retreat from a draft less amenable to Israel.

Bolton said that the United Nations negotiations in New York were not affected by the events on the ground. Olmert and former defense minister Amir Peretz justified the final ground offensive, which claimed the lives of 33 IDF soldiers, on the basis of the claim of major differences between the various versions of UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

Bolton also said that the United States changed its position due the shifting opinions of U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. He said that after the Israel Air Force strike on the Lebanese town of Qana, which killed dozens of civilians, Rice retreated from her intention to reach a decision that would markedly alter the status quo in the region, and instead pursued a decision that would only secure a ceasefire.

The former envoy also said that portions of resolution 1701 still have not been implemented, and that Hezbollah still constitutes a threat to Israel and to the government of Lebanon.