

## U.S. fears weapons sent to Lebanese military could be reaching Hizbullah

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WASHINGTON &mdash; Lebanon's president has appealed to President George W. Bush for additional military assistance amid U.S. concerns that Beirut is increasingly controlled by Hizbullah and its sponsors in Iran.

Officials said Lebanese President Michel Suleiman, a former chief of staff, has relayed a request to the Bush administration for hundreds of millions of dollars in weapons and military equipment. They said Lebanon has sought helicopters, armored personnel carriers, communications and other systems for border and internal security.

Officials said the administration has been concerned over the Hizbullah domination of the government of Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora. They said Hizbullah has infiltrated the Lebanese Army and military and was preventing a response to Syrian infiltration of Lebanon.

"The concern is that any weapons given to the army could be transferred to Hizbullah," the official said. "The truth is that Hizbullah has full control over the army and much of the security forces. We can't ignore that."

On Sept. 25, Suleiman met President George Bush in Washington and urged the United States to expand military and security cooperation. Suleiman said Lebanon was faced with internal and external threats.

"Mr. President, we are also here to affirm the need to liberate all Lebanese territories and also to make it clear that the future of Palestinian refugees is in their homeland, not in Lebanon," Suleiman said.

In 2008, the United States approved more than \$230 million military and security aid to Lebanon. The administration has pledged to continue the aid despite the Hizbullah takeover of the Siniora government but has not committed to additional aid.

"Your statements impressed me and we're most impressed by the national dialogue that you're holding in an attempt to seek reconciliation," Bush said. "The United States is proud to stand by your side. Our mission is your mission: a country that is strong and capable, a country where people can make a peace."

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