

Advance elements of the United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL) began arriving the next day. By the end of the month operational procedures had been established, and there were almost 100 observers in the country. Their method of observation was to establish a network of observation posts at critical border points, backed up by regular patrols using jeeps, donkeys or on foot. The Group also had two light helicopters, and four light aircraft had been promised. All of the posts and patrols were to be connected by radio. In practice, however, the Observers experienced some difficulty in gaining access to certain border areas, either for patrols or for observation posts. The problem lay with the rival factions at work in the country, many of whom initially suspected UNOGIL of being little more than a tool of the Government.

Under these circumstances the aerial reconnaissance capabilities of UNOGIL became the only means of patrolling certain segments of the country. The Akkar Plain, which extended north from Tripoli and east to the Syrian border, was one such area. Day-time aerial missions revealed little of interest in the countryside. At night, however, convoys of vehicles were observed, and they soon learned to take evasive action when it became clear that aerial patrols were underway.<sup>7</sup> There was no evidence that these convoys were smuggling weapons into Lebanon, however. Indeed, they may well have been the result of local precautions against air strikes which the Government had launched in the area. Unfortunately, there was no way to categorically state that this was the case, as ground patrols were not allowed into the area. Nevertheless, the Group did report that the ground patrols which were able to operate in Tripoli "...paid particularly close attention to the arms at the disposal of the opposition forces in the Tripoli area. They have observed no change in the general character of these forces."<sup>8</sup>

Where aircraft and ground observers were able to operate in conjunction, they were a formidable combination. When radios were added to the jeeps and observation posts, enabling them to communicate directly with the aircraft, the operation was particularly effective.<sup>9</sup> Despite the fact that the local tribes in certain areas occasionally mistook the UN aircraft for those of the government, resulting in many incidents of UN aircraft being fired upon and a few of their being hit, the use of aerial and

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<sup>7</sup> The cars dimmed their headlights, and a system of flashing lights was operated from hill tops whenever aircraft were in the region. See S/4069, Second report of UNOGIL, 30 July, 1958.

<sup>8</sup> ibid.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the glowing praise for this method in S/4085, Third Report of UNOGIL, 14 Aug., 1958, para. 7.