

## U.S. Set to Withhold \$105M in Security Aid to Lebanon



Bryan Denton, NY Times

Elias Yousif, Security Assistance Monitor, November 2019

### What's At Issue

The Trump administration is reportedly withholding \$105M in U.S. security assistance to Lebanon, including substantial aid to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF).

The surprise suspension runs counter to longstanding U.S. policy to support the LAF as "the sole legitimate defense arm of the Government of Lebanon." State Department officials have struggled to explain the apparent policy reversal, or to provide explanation as to the rationale behind the decision.

### Overview of U.S. Support to the Lebanese Armed Forces

The U.S. government has praised the improvements in the strength, capabilities, and professionalism of the LAF, noting the role of the military in defeating the Islamic State in Lebanon, securing the border with Syria, providing a counter-balance to Hezbollah, and supporting UN peacekeeping operations in the country's south.

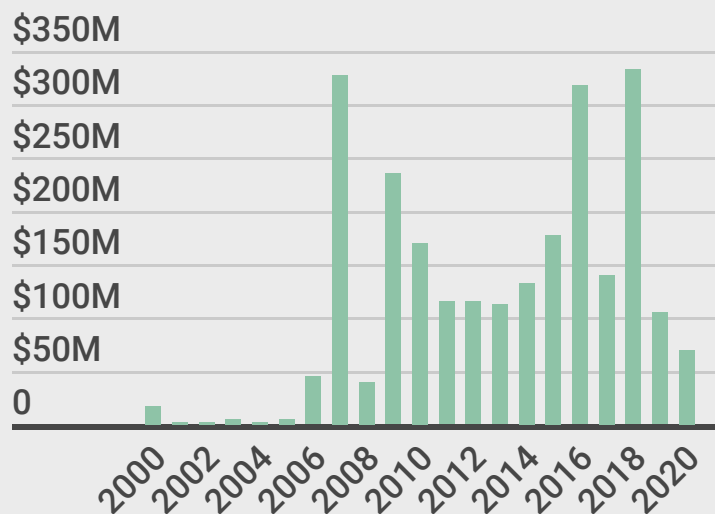
The LAF has often been touted as a strong success story in U.S. security assistance. <sup>(1)</sup> The State Department has gone as far as to say "Lebanon's state security institutions, particularly the LAF, have historically served as pillars of stability in a country facing extraordinary challenges" and that U.S. assistance is a key component of U.S. efforts to "reinforce Lebanon's sovereignty and secure its borders, counter internal threats, and build up its legitimate state institutions." <sup>(2)</sup>

Statements from the U.S. government following the announcement seem to raise even more questions as to the strategy behind the aid suspension, as officials from across the Executive Branch go out of their way to express commitment to standing U.S. policy, including support to the LAF.

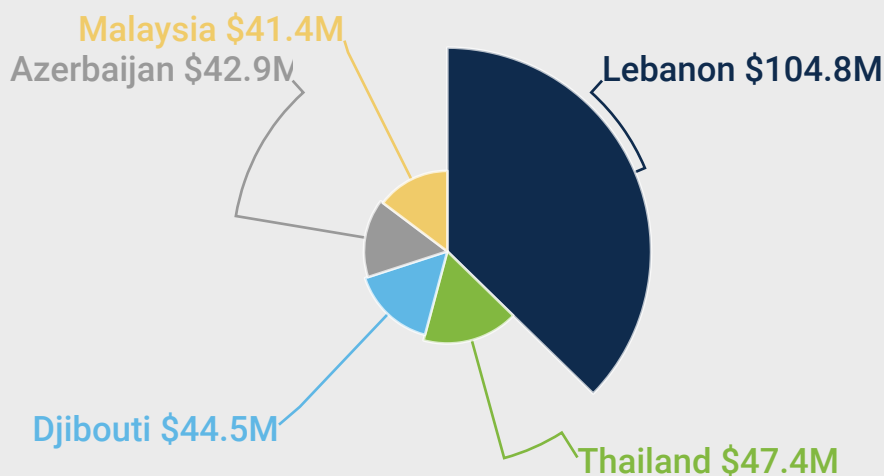
### Lebanon's Security Assistance in Context

Since FY2011, Lebanon has been one of the primary U.S. security assistance recipients, with \$1.6B in aid. Lebanon has also been one of the largest recipients of the Defense Department's (DoD) main train and equip program, Section 333. In FY19, Lebanon was the largest country recipient through DoD's Section 333, totaling over \$104M.

U.S. Security Aid to Lebanon, FY2001-FY2020



Top 5 Section 333 Train and Equip Assistance in FY2019

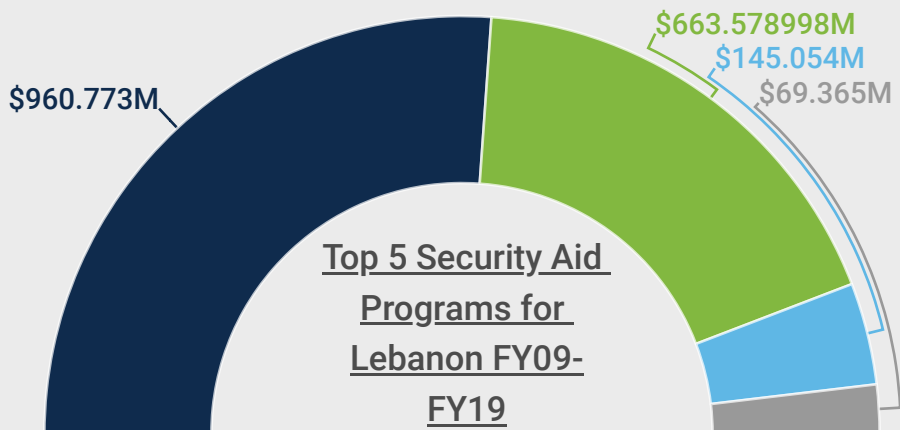


# Issue Brief U.S. Set to Withhold \$105M in Security Aid to Lebanon

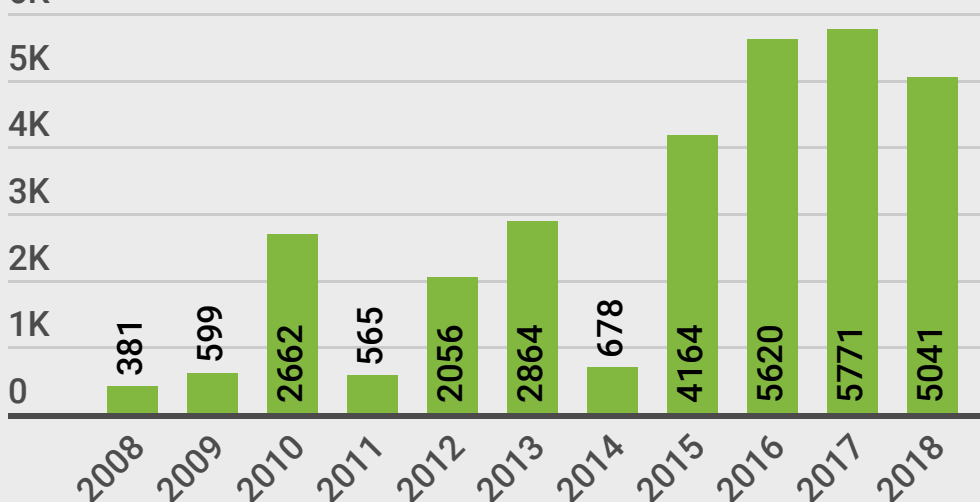
## Snapshots of FY19 Security Assistance to LAF Units

In FY19, Lebanon was set to be the single largest recipient of the DoD's main train and equip program, Section 333, meant to build the capacity of national and national level security forces of partner nations. The Security Assistance Monitor has profiled assistance to two elite units of the LAF, the 4th Land Border Regiment, and the Counter Sabotage Regiment with outlining justification and equipment details. <sup>(3)</sup> Additional info on Lebanon's Security Aid relationship with the U.S. can be found below.

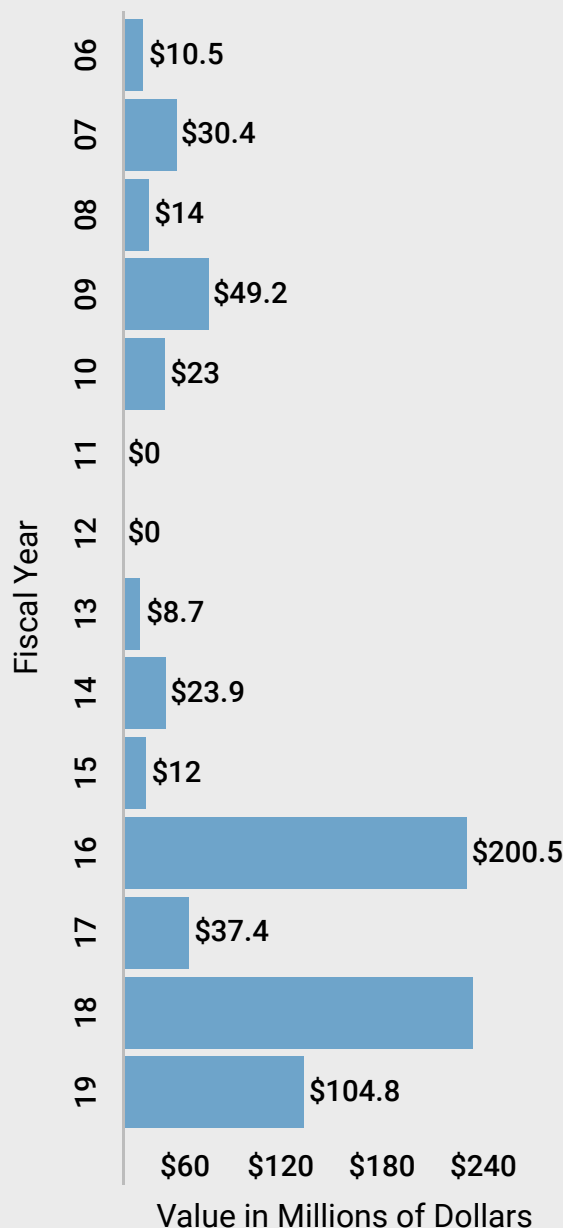
- Foreing Military Financing
- DoD's Train and Equip Program\*
- International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement
- Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs



6K **Number of U.S. Trained Lebanese Troops By Fiscal Year**



**DoD Train and Equip Funding to Lebanon, FY2006 - FY2019**



Sources: [1] CAP Report, "Playing the Long Game: U.S. Counterterrorism Assistance for Lebanon" - <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2017/08/30/437853/playing-long-game/> [2] U.S. integrated country strategy for Lebanon, U.S. Department of State [3] DoD reports on Section 333 delivered to Congress. \*DoD's Train and Equip program was under section 1206 from 2006-2016, and subsequently under 333 from 2017 onwards