

# OpenVoiceNews U.S.

Transparent. Unbiased. Yours.

## US Envoy Presses for Hezbollah Disarmament Amid Tensions in Lebanon

July 21, 2025

– Categories: General News



U.S. Special Envoy Tom Barrack has returned to Beirut for a second diplomatic visit in two weeks, continuing high-stakes discussions with Lebanese leaders over the disarmament of Hezbollah. The visit highlights Washington’s intensified efforts to promote state control over armed factions in Lebanon, reinforcing its broader strategy for regional stability in the Middle East.

Mr. Barrack, who also serves as the United States Ambassador to Turkey and Special Envoy for Syria, met with President Joseph Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam as part of

ongoing talks aimed at securing a framework under which all armed groups in Lebanon would come under the full authority of the Lebanese state. Central to these negotiations is the future of Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed Shiite political and militant organization, which the U.S. classifies as a terrorist group.

According to U.S. officials, the discussions involve a proposal in which Hezbollah's weapons, particularly in the country's south, would be handed over to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), a move seen by Washington as essential for ensuring Lebanon's sovereignty and averting further escalation with neighboring Israel. The Lebanese government has responded by submitting a seven-page proposal outlining conditions for a broader settlement, including full Israeli withdrawal from disputed territories such as Shebaa Farms and the restoration of state control over all armed forces.

However, Hezbollah leadership remains defiant. In a fiery video statement, Naim Qassem, the group's Secretary General, accused Mr. Barrack of attempting to push the Lebanese army into a confrontation with Hezbollah. "We will not surrender or give up to Israel; Israel will not take our weapons away from us," Qassem said during a ceremony honoring a Hezbollah commander killed in the prior year's conflict.

Hezbollah's refusal to disarm reflects its longstanding justification as Lebanon's primary defense against Israeli aggression. But critics argue that the group's autonomous military wing undermines Lebanese sovereignty, weakens national unity, and exposes the country to the consequences of regional conflicts, particularly with Iran and Israel.

In a recent interview with *The National*, Mr. Barrack emphasized the urgency of reaching an agreement, warning that Lebanon risks falling behind amid shifting power dynamics in the region. "If Lebanon doesn't move, it's going to be *Bilad al-Sham* again," he said, referencing the historical term for Greater Syria. Though interpreted by some as a warning of Lebanon's potential absorption into Syrian influence, Barrack later clarified that his remarks were meant to highlight Syria's rapid post-war developments and the opportunity for cooperative prosperity.

"The United States is committed to supporting the sovereignty of both Lebanon and Syria," Barack wrote on X (formerly Twitter). "Syria's leaders only want coexistence and mutual prosperity with Lebanon."

Still, skeptics in Lebanon remain cautious of American intentions, particularly amid ongoing Israeli airstrikes and the occupation of five strategic points in southern Lebanon. Lebanese officials continue to demand that Israel halt its operations and vacate contested areas as part of any disarmament roadmap.

As tensions simmer, Barrack's visit reflects a renewed U.S. push for a pragmatic solution, one that restores central authority without tipping Lebanon into internal conflict. For Washington, promoting disarmament and reinforcing state institutions is not only a question of foreign policy but also of preventing Lebanon from becoming a deeper proxy battleground in the region's ongoing rivalries.