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## Lebanon's military expenditures: \$1.2 billion per year

The size of Lebanon's military force and its cost is a subject of political debate. Those opposed to military spending at the current levels argue that the public debt could be greatly reduced by slashing military expenditures. However, proponents point to the high interest paid on the debt, saying that from 1993–2003, it has reached 80% of the net public debt, and that should be the focus of cut-backs.

Military expenditures, which are detailed in annual budget laws, reached LL 1,156.3 billion (\$767 million) in 2003. Furthermore, the cost of retirement salaries and end-of-service indemnities added another LL 692 billion, or \$459 million (excluding the parliamentary police).

Therefore, the cost of the military totaled LL 1,848.3 billion (\$1.2 billion), or 21.5% of Lebanon's total estimated budget expenditures in 2003.

The 2004 budget (LL 8,600 billion or \$5.7 billion) estimates military expenditures at LL 1,908 billion, or \$1.26 billion.

### Ministry of Defense expenditures

Ministry of Defense expenditures, as estimated in the 2003 budget law, are approximately LL 781 billion (\$518 million), representing 9.1% of national expenditures.

The largest portion of those expenditures, LL 558.4 billion (\$370.5 million), is on wages and benefits, or 71.5% of Ministry of Defense expenditures. The ministry's other major expenditures are as follows:

- LL 64 billion (\$42.5) in education allowances
- LL 45 billion (\$29.8 million) in hospitalization

- LL 16.2 billion (\$10.7 million) in nutrition
- LL 9.7 billion (\$6.4 million) in transportation vehicles
- LL 8.5 billion (\$5.6 million) in medicines and laboratory materials
- LL 3.3 billion (\$2.2 million) in secret expenditures
- LL 3 billion (\$2 million) in maternity and sickness allowances.

### Expenditures of the General Directorate of Internal Security Forces (ISF)

The estimated 2003 expenditures of this directorate reached around LL 282.5 billion (\$187 million), representing 3.3% of the country's overall expenditures. The largest portion of that amount, or 65%, goes to wages and benefits, reaching LL 183.8 billion (\$122 million). The other major expenditures are:

- LL 22.5 billion (\$14.9 million) in education allowances
- LL 21.8 billion (\$14.4 million) in hospitalization
- LL 6.5 billion (\$4.3 million) in transportation vehicles
- LL 5.5 billion (\$3.6 million) in maternity and sickness allowances
- LL 4.2 billion (\$2.8 million) in medicines and laboratory materials
- LL 1.5 billion (\$995,000) in expenditures on prisoners' hospitalization in private hospitals
- LL 855 million (\$567,000) in secret expenditures, out of which LL 450 million (\$299,000) is allocated to undercover informants on drug dealers.

### Expenditures of the General Directorate of Public Security

The expenditures of this directorate are estimated at around LL 65.1 billion (\$43.1 million), representing 0.75% of the overall national budget.

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