

SPECIAL TWO PART EDITION

THE BLUE BERET



Part I Monday, May 24 at 8pm on ABC1

Part II Monday, May 31 at 8pm on ABC1

Australian Story also airs online www.abc.net.au/iview and Saturdays at 12.30pm on ABC1

This exploration of an ill-fated UN operation invites the question: who is there to protect the protectors?



“Any reasonable person looking at the circumstances that the UN observers were in could well have concluded that the UN was putting lives at risk. The peacekeepers were there to observe a truce. There was no truce to report on. They were reporting on a war. That wasn’t their job.” – DR BOB BREEN, Academic Military Historian, ANU

In 2006, distinguished Army Major (then Captain) Matina Jewell was undertaking her fifth overseas mission, stationed on the disputed Lebanon–Israeli border as an unarmed UN peacekeeper, to observe and report any truce violations by Israel or the Hezbollah.

Three weeks before she was due to complete her Middle East mission at the remote and poorly equipped Patrol Base Khiam, a ferocious military exchange erupted between Israel and the Hezbollah, which became known as the 34-day Lebanon War.

During the first week of the war, Capt. Jewell and her close-knit comrades witnessed at close range hundreds of violations of the peace agreements, over fifty near-misses and two direct hits to their UN base.

On day six of the war, Capt. Jewell embarked on a dangerous UN-sanctioned military transit from the patrol base back to the UN rear headquarters in the coastal port of Tyre.

The usual two-hour journey became a two-day, highly volatile undertaking, and just ten minutes from her destination, Capt. Jewell suffered career-ending injuries when a civilian vehicle swerved in front of her armoured vehicle and she was thrown into the windscreen.

The days that followed and the response of the UN - and later the Australian Defence Force - were a watershed in her 15 year military career.

This edition charts the remarkable in-combat experiences of a highly decorated female soldier, but raises serious concerns about the conditions she faced when wearing the blue beret as a UN peacekeeper.

Producer: Helen Grasswill

Executive Producer: Deborah Fleming

For script highlights, interviews and images please contact:

Kate Brody, Australian Story Publicist - T (07) 3377 5423 | M 0409 885 858 | E brody.kate@abc.net.au