

Notes for the briefing of the Security Council on the thirteenth quarterly report
of UNMOVIC

5 June 2003

By Hans Blix, Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC

The thirteenth quarterly report of UNMOVIC (document S/2003/580) is before the Council. It covers the period 1 March – 31 May. The Commission carried out inspections in Iraq up to and including Monday 17 March. The day thereafter, Tuesday 18 March, all international staff was withdrawn and the armed action commenced on 19 March.

We are gratified that the withdrawal took place in good order and with full cooperation from the Iraqi side.

I think the UNMOVIC report speaks for itself. It is a bit longer than usual, because we thought it might be useful for the Council to get a fuller perspective on some of the questions.

Let me highlight some points:

The first point, made in paragraph 8 of the report, is that the Commission has not at any time during the inspections in Iraq found evidence of the continuation or resumption of programmes of weapons of mass destruction or significant quantities of proscribed items – whether from pre-1991 or later. I leave aside the Al Samoud 2 missile system, which we concluded was proscribed.

As I have noted before, this does not necessarily mean that such items could not exist. They might – there remain long lists of items unaccounted for – but it is not justified to jump to the conclusion that something exists just because it is unaccounted for.

In paragraph 11, we note that the long list of proscribed items unaccounted for has not been shortened by inspections or Iraqi declarations, explanations or documentation. It was the task of the Iraqi side to present items unaccounted

for, if they existed, or to present evidence – records, documents or other – convincing the inspectors that the items do not exist. If – for whatever reason – this is not done, the international community cannot have confidence that past programmes or any remaining parts of them have been terminated. However, an effective presence of international inspectors will serve as a deterrent against efforts aimed at reactivating or developing new programmes of weapons of mass destruction.

Although during the last month and a half of our inspections, the Iraqi side made considerable efforts to provide explanations, to begin inquiries and to undertake exploration and excavations, these efforts did not bring the answers needed before we withdrew. We did not have time to interview more than a handful of the large number of persons who were said by Iraq to have participated in the unilateral destruction of biological and chemical weapons in 1991. Such interviews might have helped towards the resolution of some outstanding issues, although one must be aware that the totalitarian regime in Iraq continued to cast a shadow on the credibility of all interviews.

The report before you gives details of the Commission's supervision of the destruction of 50 Al Samoud 2 missiles out of the 75 declared deployed and of other items in the missile sphere. As you can see from the table in paragraph 114 of the report, the programme of destruction was not completed when the inspectors were withdrawn. Fifty per cent of the declared warheads and 98% of the missile engines remained intact. Also, there was no time to assess whether the Al Fatah missile programme stayed within the range allowed by Security Council resolutions.

In the context of destruction of proscribed items, I should like also to draw the attention of the Council to the information provided in Appendix I. It shows that the weapons that were destroyed before inspectors left in 1998, were in almost all cases declared by Iraq and that the destruction occurred before 1993 in the case of missiles, and before 1994 in the case of chemical weapons.

The existence and scope of the biological weapons programme was uncovered by UNSCOM in 1995 despite Iraq's denials and concealment efforts. As to items, only a few remnants of the biological weapons programme were

subsequently found. A great deal – Iraq asserts all – was unilaterally destroyed in 1991.

Thus, in the main, UNSCOM supervised destruction of actual weapons and agents took place during the early years of the Commission, and had regard mainly to items declared by Iraq or, at least, found at sites declared by Iraq. Subsequent UNSCOM disarmament activities dealt almost exclusively with the destruction of equipment and facilities for the production of weapons connected to past programmes. In addition, of course, UNSCOM was able, with great skill, to map large parts of Iraq's WMD programmes.

While we are all aware of the large amounts of proscribed items, which still remain unaccounted for, we should perhaps take note of the fact that for many years neither UNSCOM nor UNMOVIC made significant finds of weapons. The lack of finds could be because the items were unilaterally destroyed by the Iraqi authorities or else because they were effectively concealed by them. I trust that in the new environment in Iraq, in which there is full access and cooperation, and in which knowledgeable witnesses should no longer be inhibited to reveal what they know, it should be possible to establish the truth we all want to know.

Let me further make some brief comments on mobile facilities, as there is currently much media attention devoted to this issue. Even before UNMOVIC began its inspections in November 2002, the Commission had received information about such facilities and our inspectors were looking for sites where such mobile units could be hooked up for support services. Upon our request, the Iraqi side presented some information about mobile systems they possessed. As you can see from our report, neither the information presented nor pictures given to us by the Iraqi side, match the description that has recently been made available to us, as well as to the media, by the United States. At UNMOVIC we cannot, of course, make a proper evaluation of the depicted vehicles on the basis of published material alone.

In resolution 1483 (2003), the Security Council declared its intention to revisit the mandate of UNMOVIC. The Council will be aware that UNMOVIC remains ready to resume work in Iraq as an independent verifier or to conduct long-term monitoring, should the Council so decide. In paragraph 16 of the

introduction and in Chapter VIII of the report, there are some comments on UNMOVIC's readiness to resume work in the field.

Some reduction of UNMOVIC staff will take place. However, the core expertise and experience available within UNMOVIC remain a valuable asset, which the Security Council could use where the services of an independent body would be required for verification or monitoring. This might be of particular value in the field of biological weapons and missiles for which there exists no international verification organization.

As this is likely to be my last briefing of the Security Council as Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC, I would like to take the opportunity to thank each and every Member of the Council, for the valuable guidance and support offered to UNMOVIC and myself. I would also like warmly to thank the Secretary-General personally and the UN Secretariat for the excellent cooperation since the creation of UNMOVIC.

I have had the opportunity to thank UNMOVIC's College of Commissioners for the advice that it has provided. It has been of great help throughout our existence. I trust that the Council has noted the excellent working relationship that has prevailed between Dr. El Baradei of the IAEA and myself. We formed a good team of long-standing friendship, in which his knowledge of Arabic proved more directly useful than my knowledge of Swedish.

I want to end my statement by noting the strong commitment among nations, both within and outside of the Security Council, to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction – to terrorists as well as to states – and to eventually achieve the elimination of these weapons. The case of Iraq has been a major factor in forging this commitment. The wide support that UNMOVIC has received from Governments and the public is further testimony to the strong wish to reduce the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction and to the continued importance of inspection.

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