

**Press Conference by the Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC, Dr. Hans Blix, and the
Director General of the IAEA, Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, in Baghdad, Iraq
9 February 2003
(Near Verbatim Transcript)**

BLIX: Our starting point is that the Security Council to which we report would want to be reassured that no WMD or long-range missiles are in Iraq. Much was destroyed up to '98, but the Security Council noted in 99 that there are unresolved disarmament issues and asked Iraq and us UNMOVIC and the IAEA to resolve them. These unresolved issues do not necessarily mean that there are weapons; it means we don't know, we'd like to know that they don't now exist. Inspections are the means to be used for this purpose and since November 27 last year we have been engaged in accelerated exercise of inspections here and you know it's a fairly muscular force today, with 8 helicopters, etc.

Iraq has been helpful on process. We distinguish between cooperation on process and cooperation on substance. We have noted repeatedly that access has been given to all sites we've wanted to see and this has been prompt in all cases. Not only not just opening doors but also answering, a lot of explaining etc at sites. The general statement would be that cooperation on process has been good.

Cooperation on substance - the resolution of remaining disarmament issues in my view has been less good. And there's a reference recently in a letter from Iraq to the Security Council on what they call "so-called" pending issues and they were referred to as not being of any material significance and that is what the Security Council and the world are interested in.

During these 2 days where we've had talks with Iraqi colleagues I hope I have seen in those days the beginning of taking these remaining disarm issues more seriously.

There are some good developments which I'd like to note from these two days: we have been given, I'm talking for my group (UNMOVIC), a number of papers on specific high profile unresolved issues in response to points that were made at our last visit here that Iraq was ready to amplify and to explain further what they stated in their declaration of December. These papers relate to anthrax issues, missile issues, notably to the al-Fatah and to the al-Samoud, and I should mention in that context that we will have a meeting of experts in New York tomorrow and on Tuesday which will look at these 2 issues, the al-Fatah and the al-Samoud.

We have also had papers submitted to us on VX, the potent chemical nerve agent; these were given to us yesterday and our experts got to work on them through until 2 am this morning and they met with Iraqi counterparts during our morning session today and they have clarified further points and there will be more study.

There have been proposals on the Iraqi side and I think they are constructive. It is to undertake physical tests to measure weapons that they have declared destroyed and have poured into the ground like chorine, anthrax and VX. They were then destroyed and

disappeared years ago and the Iraqi side have suggested methods by which you could detect not only if they are qualitatively if they are there, but also have some idea of how much quantity. It remains to be examined how helpful these matters are.

You recall that when we were here last time there had been a finding of 12 empty chemical warheads of 122 mm and a Commission of Inquiry was appointed by Gen. Mohamed Shaker as chairman and they found almost immediately four more warheads. I should comment in the margin that when we made a statement about this we did say that we believed they were stored in new bunkers and therefore we must conclude that they were moved there after 1991. After further study we should correct that statement that where they were stored was not new. I'd like to stand corrected on behalf of my Commission in that regard.

This commission that handled the 122 mm chemical warheads has had its mandate broadened and it has been given authority to look for any proscribed weapons, whether chemical and biological or any other spheres. And we welcome that. I should also say today one of our teams found one more 122 mm empty chemical warhead at Taji and this will evidently contribute to the work of commission that has been appointed here (end of recording).

A new Iraqi Commission has been appointed on finding more documents. We have always requested more docs and evidence. Headed by former minister of oil General Amir Rashid. And it is also authorized to look all over Iraq for docs that may be relevant. We welcome that.

We discussed the list of personnel when we were last here and we were not satisfied and Iraq promised it would be supplemented. We've discussed that today and more particularly what categories we'd like to have. It should be relevant categories.

It was also confirmed as per our joint statement last time that persons asked for interviews here will be encouraged by Iraq authorities. The experience we've had is a mixed bag. Some have insisted on having Iraqi representatives present, others may have insisted on having a tape recorder and there have been those who have accepted being alone with us and without any recorders. We hope this practice will develop into something more relaxed.

Regarding U2 planes; we have discussed our need for aerial surveillance. As you know we receive commercial satellite images as well as some from member states. This is a running operation and we also have discussed with the Iraqi authorities that we will have German drones that will assist us in the field and the Germans are already here. In any case there's no difficulty raised by Iraqi side on the drones. However we'll be discussing we'd like to arrange to have U2 planes for the highest layer and Mirage planes. We'd also like to have a Russian Antonov plane with night vision. That has been discussed with the Iraqi side and we are promised a reply by Friday. Also discussed was legislation implementing the Security Council's resolution and we hope for response from the Iraqi Government. But we have no date for that.

ElBaradei: We came here to this meeting with three basic objectives. The first is to ensure that we are able to make use of full authority provided in the Security Council resolution. We explained to our Iraqi counterpart that the more intrusive our inspections are, the better assurance we can create for them. The second objective was to ensure fuller Iraqi cooperation. I have been saying that Iraq should show full and active cooperation. I have been saying we should see Iraqis eager to comply and not be dragged into compliance. The third objective was to see to it that there is some movement on the remaining issues, chemical, biological and missile areas. ...As Hans just mentioned, large quantities have been destroyed since '98. There remain some outstanding issues and those have to be taken seriously and brought to closure. So there are the three objectives: full Iraqi cooperation, full inspection, more cooperation on remaining disarmament issues. Though much was destroyed, more still remains. I think we made good progress in all these issues. I am seeing a beginning of a change of heart on the part of Iraq. We have seen eagerness by them to move on these issues.

If I speak on the nuclear side, which is my responsibility, we had a good technical meeting today, where we discussed a number of issues relevant to our work. We start from the premise that in '98 we eliminated Iraq's nuclear program. In the nuclear area we wanted to see what happened in the intervening four years. We have been looking into reports, which came to our knowledge with regard to the importation of aluminum tubes, use of high explosives, import of magnets and reports again of possible effort to import uranium. These are issues we have discussed today during the technical meeting. I think we are moving on these issues and hope we will continue to move forward on these issues.

Our task is analogous to four horses. We have four files with different timelines: the nuclear, the chemical, the biological, and the missile. We have to move on all at the same time. One may cross the finish line before the other, but all should be moving in that direction. Within the nuclear field we have different techniques to move forward. (It) also depends on Iraqi cooperation. (It) also depends on a full and intrusive inspection system, and on that, we had an important issue of interviews, the ability to do private interviews. We had two interviews, private, yesterday and today, in nuclear. I hope this pattern will continue--to do free interviews both inside and outside Iraq. That, I think, is an important element of creating confidence, (so) that we have a full and comprehensive picture on Iraqi nuclear activities. I think Dr. Blix mentioned the question of surveillance. UNMOVIC provides logistics but we also make use of such equipment, and it is very important to us. On this, Hans mentioned we are getting help from other States. We told Iraq that at this crucial time we need 100 per cent Iraqi cooperation, (and that they need) to come forward on all demands required by the Security Council and by us, as agents of the Security Council.

The final question is the enactment of a law (prohibiting weapons of mass destruction). They assured us this is moving. The two important remaining issues for us are the interviews and the surveillance. We are moving on one, the interviews, and we hope by Friday to move on the question of surveillance planes, again to show the Security Council that full cooperation and transparent system are in place.

I see a beginning of a change of heart and a beginning of a different attitude. We will be testing this new attitude in the next few days and weeks. And we hope we get what we have been asking for and will be able to satisfy the Security Council that inspections work, that our inspection are making progress, and that inspections can be in fact an alternative to war, which is something we both believe in.

Q&A - excerpts

Q: Have you seen any drastic change in the Iraqi attitude?

Blix: We have registered the beginning of a new attitude, but there remains a good deal to do. We were given further papers. It was high time that this happened.

Q: Will inspectors' work continue?

ElBaradei: We are going to continue to operate. I would like to see quick progress. Something spectacular must happen, in all areas in the next few days.

Blix: Different clocks are ticking under Council resolutions 1284 and 1441. We have asked for immediate action and hope to have as much cooperation from Iraq as possible. I would much prefer to see inspections to resume than some other evolution. It will be tragic indeed if we don't succeed. So, we are doing our best.

ElBaradei: As long as good cooperation is registered, the Security Council may be willing to give us more time.

Q: Did you see a drastic change, a breakthrough? Do you have plans to meet the President?

Blix: I wouldn't call it a breakthrough. We are more cautious in our assessments. We are beginning to see some positive elements. We welcome this. But "breakthrough" is too strong a word to use.

Elbaradei: On your second question, we have met today with Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan. We did not meet with the President. We made it very clear that it is very important that clear guidance from the top leadership to all Iraqi national citizens go with clear instruction that full cooperation, full transparency is necessary. Because, as I said, the more Iraq cooperates, the more credibility we can generate through inspections and the quicker result. Interview is a clear indication. That is an area we would like Iraq

to encourage the scientists. Tell them that it is in Iraq's national interest to come forward for free private interviews to satisfy us that nothing is being hidden, to corroborate information we have.

Q: Do the documents Iraq handed over go as far as to answer all questions on unaccounted weapons?

Blix: They do not go that far. We have to study them more carefully. Experts see a good sign but require more documents.

ElBaradei: They showed cooperation on documents. I hope they will be comprehensive.

Q: How much documents did you receive? Why now?

Blix: These papers were written now to amplify their positions and are not evidence. These are not original but one. Interviews become more important.

Q: Are you going to find a smoking gun for drastic change?

Blix: Smoking gun is different from drastic change. We have seen positive signs. We are not asserting that there are weapons of mass destruction. We are also not excluding that there are not such weapons.

ElBaradei: Change of heart is a process.

Blix: My inspectors will not stand on smoking guns if they are found.

Q: How do you assess US Secretary of State Colin Powell's presentation?

Blix: We will assess it. Some are known; some are not known. We are not here to address his presentation in detail.

ElBaradei: This is an important part of our work. Supply of information from Member States is important.

Blix: Intelligence, "actionable" intelligence, is useful. We can send our inspectors anywhere. But we are interested in sites. We cannot do analysis of telephone conversations.

Q: Is the change of heart genuine?

Blix: We need a political declaration at the highest political level.

ElBaradei: Political statements must be translated into action.

Q: When are you going to take Iraqi scientists out of Iraq?

Blix: This is part of the question of private interviews. We may welcome some small interviews. We want Iraq to encourage such interviews.

Q: Are you making arrangements to take a family out?

Blix: We are authorized to take out families under Security Council resolution 1441.

Q: Is the game over, as UN President Bush said?

Blix: We are still in the game.

Q (in Arabic)

ElBaradei: (answer in Arabic). We hope we can solve through inspections. We need actionable information. The more we have such information, the better.

Q: Regarding the Powell presentation, have you seen deceptions? Have you discussed the presentation with Iraqis?

Blix: Not at the conference table, but discussed the telephone conversation section. We can judge with satellite images and by visiting sites. We have had discussions with American colleagues. No comments were made public. I have asked New York people to analyze. It is too early to make comments.

Q: U-2 flights?

Blix: Iraq expressed various reasons against our flights, including No-Fly-Zones. We simply stated that resolution 1441 allows us to operate these flights under conditions similar to those of UNSCOM days...

Q: Are you going to call for an end to US and British bombings in the No -Fly-Zones?

Blix: We have nothing to do with No-Fly-Zones.

Q: Did Colin Powell violate the Council resolution by not informing you?

Blix: Member States are recommended to provide information. We understand why some Member States are reluctant to provide intelligence and concerned about leakage. We do not believe our information leaks.

Q: Do you feel you should give more time to Iraqis on anthrax, VX and missiles? On Friday, you report to the Security Council. Do you support the game to continue?

Blix: Inspections can be undertaken with full Iraqi cooperation. We can finish (our work) under 1284 within a year. I believe that is still the case. If not, we cannot.

Q: Do you support the French-German proposal to deploy a peacekeeping operation?

Blix: This is a rumor.

Q: Are you now more optimistic?

ElBaradei: We are leaving with a sense of more cautious optimism.

Blix: I am also cautious. The proof of pudding is in eating.

Q: How do you assess the Iraqi leadership's cooperation?

ElBaradei: The Vice-President assured us Iraq would fully cooperate.

ElBaradei: There is no deadline in *Security Council Resolutions*. However, we are aware the international community is impatient. I would like to see quick progress. Something spectacular has to happen and we would like to see this in the next days and weeks.

Blix: Regarding resolutions, we have different timeframes under different resolutions. My organization (UNMOVIC) falls under resolution 1284 of '99 that tells us to submit work programme to the Security Council and identify key remaining disarmament issues 60 days after we start work. Under that, we report on the first of March and at the end of March. 1441 has a more impatient pace. It may be that we get a new resolution.

ElBaradei: The ball is in Iraq's court. If we see quick action, then we will be given time we need. As long as we register good progress, the Security Council will continue to allow inspections. We are not looking for a smoking gun. What we are looking for is a sustained pattern of cooperation on the part of Iraq, by which we can credibly report to the Security Council that there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Again the change of heart is not an overnight thing. And what we have seen today hopefully represents the twilight of that process and we would like to test it and see as we go forward. It's three parts of a triangle: intrusive inspections; Iraqi cooperation, and as much as intelligence that can get from Member States.