

Transcript of Blix's U.N. presentation

(CNN) --Following is a transcript of chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix's March 7 presentation to the U.N. Security Council on the progress of the inspection effort in Iraq.

Blix: Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, for nearly three years, I've been coming to the Security Council presenting the quarterly reports of UNMOVIC [U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission]. They have described our many preparations for the resumption of inspections in Iraq.

The 12th quarterly report is the first that describes three months of inspection. They come after four years without inspections. The report was finalized 10 days ago, and a number of relevant events have taken place since then. Today's statement will supplement the circulated report on these points to bring the council up to date.

Inspections in Iraq resumed on the 27th of November 2002. In matters relating to process, notably prompt access to sites, we have faced relatively few difficulties, and certainly much less than those that were faced by UNSCOM [U.N. Special Commission] in the period 1991 to 1998. This may well be due to the strong outside pressure.

Some practical matters which were not settled by the talks Dr. [Mohamed] ElBaradei and I had with Iraqi side in Vienna prior to inspections or in Resolution 1441 have been resolved at meetings, which we have had in Baghdad.

Initial difficulties raised by the Iraqi side about helicopters and aerial surveillance planes operating in the "no-fly" zones were overcome.

This is not to say that the operation of inspections is free from frictions, but at this juncture we are able to perform professional, no-notice inspections all over Iraq and to increase aerial surveillance.

American U-2 and French Mirage surveillance aircraft already give us valuable imagery, supplementing satellite pictures, and we would expect soon to be able to add night-vision capability through an aircraft offered to us by the Russian Federation. We also expect to add low-level, close-area surveillance through drones provided by Germany.

We are grateful not only to the countries which place these valuable tools at our disposal but also the states, most recently Cyprus, which has agreed to the stationing of aircraft on their territory.

Mr. President, Iraq, with a highly developed administrative system, should be able to provide more documentary evidence about its proscribed weapons programs. Only a few new such documents have come to light so far and been handed over since we began inspections. It was a disappointment that Iraq's declaration of the 7th of December did not bring new documentary evidence.

I hope that efforts in this respect, including the appointment of a governmental commission, will give significant results.

When proscribed items are deemed unaccounted for, it is, above all, credible accounts that are needed, or the proscribed items if they exist.

Where authentic documents do not become available, interviews with persons who may have relevant knowledge and experience may be another way of obtaining evidence. UNMOVIC has names of such persons in its records, and they are among the people whom we seek to interview.

In the last month, Iraq has provided us with names of many persons who may be relevant sources of information, in particular persons who took part in various places of the unilateral destruction of biological and chemical weapons and proscribed missiles in 1991.

This provision of names prompts two reflections. The first is that with such detailed information existing regarding those who took part in the unilateral destruction, surely there must also remain records regarding the quantities and other data concerning the various items destroyed.

The second reflection is that, with relevant witnesses available, it becomes even more important to be able to conduct interviews in modes and locations which allow us to be confident that the testimony given is given without outside influence.

While the Iraqi side seems to have encouraged interviewees not to request the presence of Iraqi officials, local minders or the taping of the interviews, conditions ensuring the absence of undue influences are difficult to attain inside Iraq. Interviews outside the country might provide such assurance. It is our intention to request such interviews shortly.

Nevertheless, despite remaining shortcomings, interviews are useful. Since we started requesting interviews, 38 individuals were asked for private interviews, of which 10 accepted under our terms -- seven of these during the last week.

As I noted on the 14th of February, intelligence authorities have claimed that weapons of mass destruction are moved around Iraq by trucks, in particular that there are mobile production units for biological weapons. The Iraqi side states that such activities do not exist.

Several inspections have taken place at declared and undeclared sites in relation to mobile production facilities. Food-testing mobile laboratories and mobile workshops have been seen as well as large containers with seed-processing equipment. No evidence of proscribed activities have so far been found.

Iraq is expected to assist in the development of credible ways to conduct random checks of ground transportation.

Inspectors are also engaged in examining Iraq's programs for remotely piloted vehicles. A number of sites have been inspected with data being collected to assess their range and other capabilities of the various models found, and inspections are continuing in this area.

There have been reports, denied from the Iraqi side, that proscribed activities are conducted underground. Iraq should provide information on any underground structure suitable for the production or storage of weapons of mass destruction.

During inspections of declared or undeclared facilities, inspection teams have examined building structures for any possible underground facilities. In addition, ground-penetrating radar equipment was used in several specific locations. No underground facilities for chemical or biological production or storage were found so far.

I should add that, both for the monitoring of ground transportation and for the inspection of underground facilities, we would need to increase our staff in Iraq. I'm not talking about a doubling of the staff. I would rather have twice the amount of high-quality information about sites to inspect than twice the number of expert inspectors to send.

On 14 February, I reported to the council that the Iraqi side had become more active in taking and proposing steps which potentially might shed new light on unresolved disarmament issues. Even a week ago, when the current quarterly report was finalized, there were still relatively little tangible progress to note. Hence, the cautious formulations in the report before you. As of today, there is more.

While during our meetings in Baghdad, the Iraqi side tried to persuade us that the Al Samoud 2 missiles they have declared fall within the permissible range set by the Security Council. The calculations of an international panel of experts led us to the opposite conclusion. Iraq has since accepted that these missiles and associated items be destroyed and has started the process of destruction under our supervision.

The destruction undertaken constitutes a substantial measure of disarmament, indeed the first since the middle of the 1990s. We are not watching the breaking of toothpicks; lethal weapons are being destroyed.

However, I must add that the report I have today tells me that no destruction work has continued today. I hope this is a temporary break.

Until today, 34 Al Samoud 2 missiles, including four training missiles, two combat warheads, one launcher and five engines, have been destroyed under UNMOVIC's supervision. Work is continuing to identify and inventory the parts and equipment associated with the Al Samoud 2 program.

Two reconstituted casting chambers used in the production of solid propellant missiles have been destroyed, and the remnants melted or encased in concrete.

The legality of the Al Fatah missile is still under review, pending further investigation and measurement of various parameters of that missile.

More papers on anthrax, VX and missiles have recently been provided. Many have been found to restate what Iraq already has declared, and some will require further study and discussion.

There is a significant Iraqi effort under way to clarify a major source of uncertainty as to the quantities of biological and chemical weapons which were unilaterally destroyed in 1991. A part of this effort concerns a disposal site, which was deemed too dangerous for full investigation in the past. It is now being re-excavated.

To date, Iraq has unearthed eight complete bombs, comprising two liquid-filled intact R-400 bombs and six other complete bombs. Bomb fragments are also found. Samples have been taken.

The investigation of the destruction site could, in the best case, allow the determination of the number of bombs destroyed at that site. It should be followed by serious and credible effort to determine the separate issue of how many R-400-type bombs were produced.

In this, as in other matters, the inspection work is moving on and may yield results.

Iraq proposed an investigation using advanced technology to quantify the amount of unilaterally destroyed anthrax dumped at a site. However, even if the use of advanced technology could quantify the amount of anthrax said to be dumped at the site, the results will still be open to interpretation. Defining the quantity of anthrax destroyed must of course be followed by efforts to establish what quantity was actually produced.

With respect to VX, Iraq has recently suggested a similar method to quantify VX precursors stated to have been unilaterally destroyed in the summer of 1991.

Iraq has also recently informed us that following the adoption of the presidential decree prohibiting private individuals and mixed companies from engaging in work relating to weapons of mass destruction, further legislation on the subject is to be enacted.

This appears to be in response to a letter from UNMOVIC requesting clarification of the issue.

Mr. President, what are we to make of these activities?

One can hardly avoid the impression that after a period of somewhat reluctant cooperation, there's been an acceleration of initiatives from the Iraqi side since the end of January. This is welcome. But the value of these measures must be soberly judged by how many question marks they actually succeed in straightening out.

This is not yet clear.

Against this background, the question is now asked whether Iraq has cooperated, "immediately, unconditionally and actively," with UNMOVIC, as is required under Paragraph 9 of Resolution 1441. The answers can be seen from the factor descriptions that I have provided.

However, if more direct answers are desired, I would say the following: The Iraqi side has tried on occasion to attach conditions, as it did regarding helicopters and U-2 planes. It has not, however, so far persisted in this or other conditions for the exercise of any of our inspection rights. If it did, we would report it.

It is obvious that while the numerous initiatives which are now taken by the Iraqi side with a view to resolving some longstanding, open disarmament issues can be seen as active or even proactive, these initiatives three to four months into the new resolution cannot be said to constitute immediate cooperation. Nor do they necessarily cover all areas of relevance. They are, nevertheless, welcome. And UNMOVIC is responding to them in the hope of solving presently unresolved disarmament issues.

Mr. President, members of the council may relate most of what I have said to Resolution 1441, but UNMOVIC is performing work under several resolutions of the Security Council. The quarterly report before you is submitted in accordance with Resolution 1284, which not only created UNMOVIC but also continues to guide much of our work.

Under the timelines set by that resolution, the results of some of this work is reported to the council before the end of this month.

Let me be more specific. Resolution 1284 instructs UNMOVIC to, I quote, "address unresolved disarmament issues," and to identify "key remaining disarmament tasks." And the latter are to be submitted for approval by the council in the context of a work program. UNMOVIC will be ready to submit a draft work program this month as required.

UNMOVIC, UNSCOM and the Amorim Panel did valuable work to identify the disarmament issues which were still open at the end of 1998. UNMOVIC has used this material as starting points but analyzed the data behind it and data and document post-1998 up to the present time to compile its own list of unresolved disarmament issues, or rather clustered issues.

It is the answers to these issues which we seek through our inspection activities. And it is also from the list of these clustered issues that UNMOVIC will identify the key remaining disarmament tasks. As noted in the report before you, this list of clustered issues is ready.

UNMOVIC is only required to submit the work program with the key remaining [issues] to the council. As I understand, several council members are interested in the working document with a complete cluster of disarmament issues. And we have declassified it and are ready to make it available to members of the council on request.

In this working document, which may still be adjusted in the light of new information, members will get a more up-to-date review of the outstanding issues than in the documents of 1999, which members usually refer to.

Each cluster in the working document ends with a number of points indicating what Iraq could do to solve the issue. Hence, Iraq's cooperation could be measured against a successful resolution of issues.

I should note that the working document contains much information and discussion about the issues which existed at the end of 1998, including information which has come to light after '98. It contains much less information and discussion about the period after 1998, primarily because of paucity of information.

Nevertheless, intelligence agencies have expressed the view that proscribed programs have continued or restarted in this period. It is further contended that proscribed programs and items are located in underground facilities, as I mentioned, and that proscribed items are being moved around Iraq. The working document does contain suggestions on how these concerns may be tackled.

Mr. President, let me conclude by telling you that UNMOVIC is currently drafting the work program which Resolution 1284 requires us to submit this month.

It will obviously contain our proposed list of key remaining disarmament tasks. It will describe the reinforced system of ongoing monitoring and verification that the council has asked us to implement.

It will also describe the various subsystems which constitute the program; for instance, for aerial surveillance, for information from governments and suppliers, for sampling, for the checking of road traffic, etc.

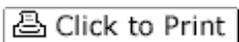
How much time would it take to resolve the key remaining disarmament tasks? While cooperation can -- cooperation can and is to be immediate, disarmament, and at any rate verification of it, cannot be instant. Even with a proactive Iraqi attitude induced by continued outside pressure, it will still take some time to verify sites and items, analyze documents, interview relevant persons and draw conclusions. It will not take years, nor weeks, but months.

Neither governments nor inspectors would want disarmament inspection to go on forever. However, it must be remembered that in accordance with the governing resolutions, a sustained inspection and monitoring system is to remain in place after verified disarmament to give confidence and to strike an alarm if signs were seen of the revival of any proscribed weapons programs.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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