Interview with Hans Blix, Executive Chairman of the UN Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC)

Hans Blix, outgoing Executive Chairman of the UN Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and former Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), shared his perspective on a number of Iraq disarmament issues during a June 16 interview with Arms Control Today editor, Miles Pomper, and ACA research analyst, Paul Kerr.

What follows is a transcript of the interview.

**ACT:** So let me just start with maybe the most general question, I'm sure one that you've heard before: Are you surprised that U.S. forces haven't found any weapons of mass destruction [WMD] yet?

**Blix:** No, I would not say I am surprised, but nor would I have been surprised if they had found something. Our position was always that there was a great deal that was unaccounted for, which means that it could have been there and the Iraqis had not explained what had happened to it, except to say in a general way that it was all destroyed in the summer of 1991.

We warned, and I warned specifically and explicitly, against equating "not accounted for" with "existing." And you'll find that we consistently said that Iraq must present any proscribed items or provide evidence of what has happened to them. And if they do not succeed in providing evidence, then the conclusion for us is that one cannot have confidence that these are gone and that therefore, at least in the past, in terms of the past resolutions, there was not a ground for lifting sanctions.

I am surprised, on the other hand, that it seems that so many of the U.S. military seemed to have been convinced that there would be lots of weapons of mass destruction, particularly chemical weapons, for them to take care of as soon as they went in and that they would practically stumble on these things. If anyone had cared, in the military circles, to study what UNSCOM [United Nations Special Commission] was saying for quite a number of years, and what we were saying, they should not have assumed that they would stumble on weapons.

**ACT:** What do you think accounts for the discrepancy between this assumption on the U.S. military side and what was in the UNSCOM reports and what you found in your investigations?

**Blix:** I think primarily little attention to the United Nations and what it does up in New York and more attention to the huge organization that is the U.S. military force.

**ACT:** It's not a question of different intelligence methods of gathering things or political pressures or other factors?

**Blix:** No--well, of course there was a lot of political feeling that Saddam was bad, which was true, and which I shared (laughter). But going from there to saying that "well it was a foregone conclusion that there was a lot" [of WMD] was not really tenable logic. It is true that he had the intention and he had these programs; we all know that. And, in popular thinking, maybe, if you have someone committing a crime once you are inclined to think there will be a second time. But if you are a
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lawyer, if you are in a court, you are not supposed to say that it is automatic that someone who is accused a second time is guilty because he was guilty the first time. I think the matters have to be looked at on the merits, and this is what we tried to do here and that we were being cautious.

**ACT:** What do you think the lack of prohibited weapons finds says about the effectiveness of the investigations that you carried out and that the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA] carried out? You got a lot of criticism at the time from the administration and other people about how effective they were and do you think that this shows you were more effective than they claim?

**Blix:** Let's distinguish between what is said at the official level with what is said at other levels. I mean, my relations with the U.S. mission here, with their representatives to the Security Council, with their representatives in the State Department, and Condoleezza Rice, the National Security Adviser, were--there was no criticism of what we were doing. On the contrary, there was support for it. And even at the time when the media were suggesting that we were withholding some evidence, there was no such suggestion made on the Security Council. These were spins that came at a lower level.

**ACT:** On the substance of the question, do you think that your investigations were more effective than perceived at the time, whatever the origin of the criticism?

**Blix:** I think our investigations were quite effective, but we never claimed that we could get into the last cave or corner in Iraq, and, when I was at the IAEA, [current IAEA Director-General Mohamed ElBaradei and I both said that there will always be a residue of uncertainty, however far you can get. Now I think that given the many things unaccounted for we were relatively far from hitting that residue, so we were never conclusive about it. There is only one case when we really got very close to asserting that there was something left, and that was with the anthrax, where I think we certainly had strong indications that everything hadn't been destroyed in 1991. But having gone through the evidence of that case with the particular scientists here, I came to the conclusion that the evidence was not compelling, so we stopped short of saying that it does exist.

Now, we too, of course, were aware that the Iraqis must have learned a lot about concealment in the years and knew a lot about the techniques of the inspectors. So, we could not be sure that there were not underground stores that exist. We in fact were looking for ways in which one could explore that particular area, but you can't look into every cave in a big country. We were also looking into the question of mobile transport of WMD, because it was alleged that they moved things around all the time. Which is hardly plausible for a whole stock of chemical weapons for a country, but there could have been some. And this was an area in which we were really looking at for things. So we didn't exclude that we could stumble upon something. And the question came then when, you remember, we found the chemical weapons warheads which were empty of any chemicals but we found 12 of them and then another four I think, and we asked ourselves, and I said to the Security Council: "Is this the tip of the iceberg? Or is it simply broken up pieces of an ice that has broken in the past?" And I wouldn't answer it at the time, kept both possibilities open. As I look at it today, perhaps I'm a little more inclined to think that it was debris from the past.

We looked at the stash of documents which we found on the basis of a tip from an intelligence agency. And again this had been said from intelligence in the past that the Iraqis were farming out documents to farmhouses and individuals and did not have them in archives. So the find was fitted into that picture. Could it have been part of a more general behavior? We still don't know. But it could also have been an individual scientist who brought documents home, even though some were confidential. Both possibilities are open and we never found another one, but I don't exclude that it could have happened.

**ACT:** Can you speculate on why--

**Blix:** Ah, one point more. That is that, if you study our latest report, in the appendix we have information about when did UNSCOM, in particular, find things and when did they destroy things. And you'll find that, in the first place, UNSCOM hardly ever stumbled upon something or found something that really was concealed. It was declared--either the sites were declared or the weapons were declared. And they destroyed practically all--the vast majority was destroyed before the end of 1994.
After 1994, through their investigations and through the Kamel papers, they managed to identify that a number of things had been tainted, had been used, in installations, equipment had been used for the production of weapons-then they decided, this must be destroyed. So the little things were destroyed of that, but not weapons. And, I think that it is a detail now that the U.S. hasn't found anything and we didn't find anything. I think it's interesting to go back and see that, in fact, after 1994, not much was found and destroyed. That has escaped attention. I don't think we have called much attention to it either but it struck me, and so we brought that forward.

**ACT:** Let's talk a little about the Kamel papers. One of the criticisms that was made before was that the investigators didn't find things on their own, that they were basically relying on defector testimony. How would you rate [defector testimony] versus on-the-spot investigations in terms of their effectiveness of getting at weapons programs and what is there?

**Blix:** Well, of course, if you count Kamel as a defector, which he was, this was a very valuable source of documents. But, it did not lead anybody to a new weapon that was hidden. It demonstrated that they had weaponized biological weapons and, according to what the Iraqis said, then destroyed them. So, it was a very interesting piece of history. It showed that they'd been lying, but [defectors] didn't lead directly to any weapons. In the nuclear field, it revealed that the Iraqis had a crash program under Kamel from the end of 1990 and to some part of 1991, in order to make a nuclear weapon out of fissionable material, which were under safeguards, and that they just didn't have time to do it. However, it did not lead the IAEA to any more fissionable material. It had already been taken out of Iraq by the time they found the Kamel papers. So, it was very interesting historically, revealed something that the Iraqis had kept quiet about, but it did not lead the IAEA to any weapons.

And when it comes to comparison between the value of defectors and the value of other intelligence or what the inspectors found, I would say that the IAEA, for which I was responsible at the time, did a pretty good job, with the exception of these crash programs about which we knew nothing. However, it was in discussions with Professor Jaffar [Jaffar Dhai Jaffar, Deputy Chairman of the Iraqi Atomic Energy Commission] that the big revelations came about the program. And through very painstaking research by our team, led by Prof Zifferero [Maurizio Zifferero, former Deputy Director of the IAEA and head of the IAEA's Iraq Action Team] not by David Kay [chief inspector of a nuclear weapons inspection team in Iraq and now Special Advisor for Strategy in the WMD search in Iraq] he had no notion of their nuclear program. He was not a nuclear physicist. But Professor Zifferero, vilified by Mr. Milhollin [Gary Milhollin, director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control], he was the one who really traced the program and understood it.

**ACT:** You mentioned the mobile laboratories when we were talking a little bit earlier. If they were, as the Iraqis claim, not used for biological weapons but were actually producing hydrogen [for civilian purposes], why didn't they declare them? Doesn't it strike you as strange?

**Blix:** Yes, a little. I mean, we were the ones who said to the Security Council that we asked the Iraqis for the images or declarations of whatever could have been seen as mobile and they gave us a number of photographs and none of these really fit with the ones that have now been discovered. Maybe there is some explanation for it but we are not aware of it. And I agree, it is puzzling and not the only puzzling detail.

**ACT:** More broadly, let's say that the Iraqis have been telling the truth all along and that they don't have these weapons, why would they not show the evidence of that and avoid a war?

**Blix:** I agree with you, I think it is a little bizarre. Maybe they considered them to be not a dual-use item. If they were to produce hydrogen, as they say, for weather balloons, was that a dual-use item at all? Maybe it had not drifted up to Amin and to al Saadi [Hussam Mohammed Amin, head of the Iraqi National Monitoring Directorate and Amir Al Saadi, a senior adviser to then Iraqi President Saddam Hussein].

**Ewen Buchanan (UNMOVIC Public Information Officer):** Maybe they didn't bother to tell the others.

**Blix:** I do not immediately jump to the conclusion that it was a lie. It could be.
ACT: Not just on that particular program but in the general sense of all their--of all the things you were missing.

Blix: Why didn't they declare everything?

ACT: Yeah, why not come clean?

Blix: When it came to biological, clearly they were lying and they knew that. Now, why did they do that if they had no weapons left? I'm not sure that the logic and the emotions and psychology works exactly the same way as they might do here. Maybe they felt ashamed to admit weaponization? I mean one theory why they - if they had no weapons after '91, then of course there's a much bigger enigma than that, and that is why did they behave all along as they did during the whole 1990s? Because they suffered through sanctions all the way through. And I've been speculating about it and I think more people than I will speculate about it.

One speculation that's been made in the Washington Post, which may have been plausible is that, while on the one hand they would say to the Security Council, "We've done everything, now you lift sanctions." On the other hand, maybe they did not mind that people say, "Well maybe they have something"-a deliberate ambiguity. It's possible-the mystique of maybe having some biological weapons, maybe they're playing around. That is one possibility. Now, why should such a mystique - why should they pursue that until they are occupied? That seems a little peculiar. Maybe by the force of its own logic or by miscalculation, brinksmanship.

And I have one other speculation and that's regarding pride. I saw that the chief minder of the chemical sector --when he was asked this question-he talked about pride. And I think that goes fairly deeply into my view of how inspections should operate here, that the Iraqis are very proud, as are the Pashtuns in Pakistan, the Afghans are extremely proud people. And that [the Iraqis] felt that, okay, these resolutions are accepted by us. We will live by them, but not one inch longer, not more intrusion than is absolutely [necessary], and they were legalistic about this.

I find it very hard to understand some of their denials of access that they had otherwise, where they were quibbling about five inspectors or ten inspectors going in, and eventually going into a house that was totally empty. There must have been a strong element of pride, and that was why when I came here from the very outset, I said we are in Iraq for effective and correct inspections. We are not there for the purpose of humiliating them, harassing them, or provoking them. There were many other elements too that we differed from UNSCOM, but this was one and I still think that pride might have been an element and, while we had lots of frictions and difficulties with them, in any case, we had I think a less difficult relation than UNSCOM had. We had, in particular, never any denial of access, and we had a good deal of cooperation when it came to setting up the infrastructure. So did UNSCOM have cooperation, but they of course had many denials of access.

ACT: In your recent report, you said that Iraq was cooperative in terms of process but not equally cooperative in terms of substance, and that the long list of unresolved disarmament issues had not shortened. On the other hand, you also said that inspections contributed to a better understanding of previous weapons programs. Could you elaborate a little bit? How does the inspection produce a better understanding if no outstanding disarmament issues were resolved?

Blix: Well, I think that there are biologists that learned more about [the Iraqi] biological program. We were given access, for instance, to some binder of documents-a fairly extensive thing-which did give them a better understanding. But it did not explain or give evidence that 8,500 liters were all they had [the total anthrax production that the Iraqis had acknowledged to UNMOVIC] or that they'd all been destroyed.

In the chemical field, we were interested in explanations about VX and whether it was stabilized or not stabilized. I'm told, by the experts that they understood some things better, obviously.

Buchanan: If I could chime in. From the UNSCOM days, it is true, the better understanding often led to more questions rather than anything else.
Blix: That's true. Take the Air Force documents. I mean, they did give us the Air Force documents. The famous Air Force document was given to us and we examined it and everybody agreed it was authentic. And it raised new questions. There was one enigma gone and another one coming up.

But as to the first part of your question about the difference between cooperation on process and on substance: Yes, of course, from the outset they were cooperative on process, and this was a marked difference from the past. And we were also trying to be as professionally correct as we could, although they accused us of being spies from time to time and asked "why could you ask such questions, these are not legitimate questions." But at the same time we felt that on the substance, they were to be active-as the council resolution required-and the 12,000 pages that we received as the declaration we thought were not really containing much new, mostly repetition of old finally complete declarations from the past. This was almost arrogant--that was our view, maybe we were mistaken in this judgment, but that was how we saw it, and similarly when they gave us 400 names, we had more names ourselves. And, combined with their assertion that these are "so-called disarmament issues," it was a somewhat arrogant attitude - we perceived it as such.

And that was the background for my statement in January, that they were not of substance, and that statement shook them. When I came back the next time, they were--[Iraqi Vice President Taha] Ramadan was indignant about it. It shook them clearly. And then it seemed to me that they changed very much, and they suggested all kinds of methods. They also zeroed in on the points which they knew that we were particularly interested in: on the VX, and on the anthrax, and on the SCUD missiles. So from that time, they became proactive, not just active but proactive. And we welcomed that.

However, we had to look at everything with cold eyes and examine [these efforts, which] didn't really solve anything. And in that respect, I warned the council that it may not, and eventually as we analyzed and submitted our thirteenth report, no we don't think that it really solved any of the issues of the past. As an example, we talked about the idea they had that we should take soil in places where they had poured anthrax into the ground, examine the soil, and look at the products that were there and see whether we could draw some conclusions about the quantities of anthrax that had been poured into there. Well our scientists were skeptical about it, but we were willing to go along and try the experiment. And so there was an effort, but whether this was an attempt to throw more dust in our eyes, or whether it was a genuine desperation on their part, that they had no other evidence, we don't know. We simply had to conclude that we did not have more evidence.

We also said in the discussion of interviews that, if you don't have any documents, then clearly interviews become even more important. They gave us lots of names of people who had taken part in the transport of missiles and the destruction of anthrax and the destruction of VX, and this was the most interesting avenue we would have pursued if we had remained, with all the handicaps that you have, in pursuing interviews in a totalitarian country. And I still feel a little puzzled that they could have detailed lists about even who transported what in 1991 without keeping any records of how much they transported. That's mystifying to me, though I do not exclude that there could be some natural explanation that they could destroy all the stuff, they could destroy all of the documents, but they couldn't destroy all the people, even in a country like Iraq.

ACT: As you said, they seemed to be getting a little more cooperative, at least giving you the semblance of cooperation, toward the end, if the inspections had continued, do you think you would have been able to get more substantive cooperation out of them or was it bogged down in this difficult process?

Blix: Well, it seems to me that the interview process would have been the most promising of them. Maybe they would have found some further documents, occasionally found some, but not very many. We thought that after we had found this stash of documents, that when they appointed [former Minister of Oil, General Amer] Rashid, and it was the [Rashid] Commission that could get the documents all over the country. I thought that if they had them-now this is a moment for them to do it [turn over the documents] without loss of face-they would find themselves in the right. I applauded their department officials. The same way with the commission they appointed after we had found the 12 warheads. It is far better-this now could be done without loss of face. But nothing came of it.
Now what would have happened then, if we had not been able to clear up and give really solid evidence, was that there would have been more indications of cooperation in substance yes, but still a lot of things would have - might have - remained unaccounted for, which wouldn't have been very satisfactory. And we don't know where we would have gone, maybe the U.S. would have said, "Well we are waiting for two months, this is it, that's the end of it." And others would have said, "They are really cooperating now, there are no problems." What we really are in now is continued containment. Now that was not a welcomed word in Washington, they didn't like the idea of containment, they wanted something decisive. And, well, their patience was not even enough for us going until March, so at what time point would they have lost patience? I don't know.

I'm not opposed to containment, and I said so at the time. I agree that containment has its drawbacks. In particular, and I think I mentioned it publicly that, there could be a fatigue in the Security Council, that the guard will be let down. I understand that also. So, it has some shortcomings. At the same time, I think one must be-then see what shortcomings has the other solution. All of the lives lost, all of the destruction, and we haven't seen all the other drawbacks that may come from it, nor have we seen all the benefits that could have come from it. They'll be on there - the balance of that particular account is not finished. But I was not personally against aerial containment actually that we had for a long time.

And in particular when you look at the most important-I mean, we-you and me talk about WMD as if it were one homogenous area, which of course it is not. I mean, the nuclear is vastly more important and there's a question of whether we really want to call chemical weapons "weapons of mass destruction." Biological [weapons are] more like terror weapons than weapons of mass destruction. However, in the nuclear field, I think that it was clear that it would have taken quite some time before they were up and running again because the whole infrastructure was destroyed. They could have, I agree they could have, succeeded in importing 18 kilograms of plutonium. They might have had the expertise to make a bomb, yes, but even that would have required some infrastructure, so the matter of intervention to prevent further development in the nuclear field was probably the weakest; it was the most important area, I agree, but it was the weakest.

**ACT:** When you had to leave Iraq, what were the disarmament tasks that were the most pressing, the issues you really wanted to get resolved?

**Blix:** I think that mobile business was. That and the underground [facilities for concealing prohibited weapons and related equipment]. And we had taken it up with the Iraqis, both of these items, and we were discussing concepts for how to approach the mobile business with the Iraqis and with others. We talked about having checks at the roads with Iraqi staff and us having helicopters, dashing in here and there, taking samples of these random checks and so forth. We never got to that, it wouldn't have been easy. None of the police forces we talked with gave us a really good model for it, but we were working on that.

And this goes back-the mobile thing went back to my experience in the IAEA in 1991. After all, the calutrons were on trucks, and they were, it was an IAEA team headed by Mr. Kay, who helped to take pictures of it. So we had experience that the Iraqis did move things around on trucks, but whether they were live things or debris, that was another matter. In any case, they had the habit of moving things by trucks in the big country, so that was not implausible. This was one experience from the past. But as Al-Saadi said to me when we talked about moving biological stuff around, he shook his and said merely the collision risk of all this stuff on the highways would have deterred him. I didn't write it off because of his remark, but I understood him.

**ACT:** I just have a couple of questions about the inspections, the process, getting into the weeds a little more. I have heard some say that there is no such thing as no-notice inspections, and he asserted that even during UNMOVIC's time in Iraq that the Iraqis had advance notice, that it was routine practice to give the Iraqis advance notice of inspections. Is that accurate? If it's not, was there any evidence that you noticed that the Iraqis knew you were coming?

**Blix:** No, we have heard people say that UNSCOM was penetrated and for that reason, the Iraqis would have known and, in some cases at any rate, that we were coming. We know that when our
inspectors set out from the Canal hotel, Iraq would watch in what direction they were going and I know there were some cases our people sort of went around Baghdad so they alerted them all around the country. But once, of course, you are on the road, well then, they will observe that and the minders will inform those who maybe are in the direction they are coming and could prepare. However, we do not believe we were penetrated by the Iraqis here or in the Canal hotel. We do not think that any of these [Iraqis] actually knew where we were coming, until we were setting out on the road and they could start guessing it.

Now, added to that, I think there was a common misunderstanding. Just because the Iraqis went out with us didn't mean to say they knew where we were going. People say, "why do you take them along with you?" They just followed, quite literally. And, yes, it's true, we would say to the chemical minder, "We want to meet you tomorrow in the morning at 8 o'clock because we're going out again." We just say the chemical team is going out at 8 in the morning but not where. There were some of these commentators that we talk of, yes and tomorrow we want you to take us to al-Qa'qa.

Buchanan: I think there was a common misunderstanding. Just because the Iraqis went out with us didn't mean to say they knew where we were going. People say, "why do you take them along with you?" They just followed, quite literally. And, yes, it's true, we would say to the chemical minder, "We want to meet you tomorrow in the morning at 8 o'clock because we're going out again." We just say the chemical team is going out at 8 in the morning but not where. There were some of these commentators that we talk of, yes and tomorrow we want you to take us to al-Qa'qa.

Blix: The only cases where we or the IAEA actually told them were in cases where we needed equipment to do something in particular, but they were very few cases. So I don't think this is really tenable.

ACT: I was going to ask you about a comment that [President Bush's national security adviser] Condoleezza Rice made during a March 9 interview when she said that "the IAEA missed--"

Blix: Yeah, thank you, wonderful. I've been looking for that. What date was it?

ACT: March 9th.

Blix: Nine. Nine of March. Good. (laughter) I'd like to see the evidence for that. (laughter) I'm sure she didn't find that evidence herself.

ACT: But my question was--

Blix: She refers to 1991, '95, and '98.

ACT: Right, and I was asking if you could comment on the accuracy of that statement.

Blix: Well, I've been intrigued by this statement, and [Secretary of State] Colin Powell also referred to, I think 1991, and I've seen [Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul] Wolfowitz says that we were ready to close the nuclear weapons chapter before--when?

ACT: Three months after the end of the Gulf War.

Blix: I don't frankly understand. I'd love to see what evidence they have, in fact I love evidence in general (laughter). But I'd love in particular to see this since I was responsible for the IAEA at the time. Now, what we can say and I have said to [all this] is that, before the Gulf War, the IAEA had a safeguard system that was constructed by august member states, and which we operated to the full satisfaction of the said august member states. (laughter) And that this system was inadequate to discover undeclared installations and it was even asked to go to strategic points, to stretch its limitations to see what it could do within it. And the said august states woke up to the necessity of beefing up the system when it was discovered that Iraq had a great deal that was not declared. It would not have been politically possible to move in that direction before this disaster. And I am part of the disaster, yes. But neither did the CIA nor even Mossad to my knowledge know that the Iraqis had undeclared installations. Well we were in good company and I do not see why the IAEA alone should bear the burden for that.
We did take steps to beef it up when they came to fruition in 1997, the additional protocols which have not yet been ratified by-there are lots of people, states that have not done it. But nevertheless they are on the way and this is an interesting and promising development.

Now so much for '91. We did not see evidence of a nuclear weapon at the first inspection, but I think almost very shortly after the first inspection. We were there before UNSCOM- we could see that they had a program of enrichment, the calutrons were discovered there relatively early and identified. We did not jump from that conclusion that they have the bomb, nor would it have been permissible to do so. However, we asked - we certainly did not say or conclude that they have it. And it was relatively soon - or soon enough that they came with a drawing of the weapon. And so, I don't understand what the critics have mention in 1991. (It's true that in the safeguards report, that came in early 1991, the safeguards department probably reported that it had not seen any diversion of any fissible material under safeguards but it didn't pronounce itself about anything that was not placed under safeguards.

So, that's 1991. For 1995, the critics have in mind the Kamel papers that revealed the crash program that Iraq had in 1990 and 1991. We didn't know about that. Well, the program failed, but we couldn't fail. This was nothing that went on in 1995; it was going on in 1990. And for 1998, I had no idea what the critics referred to.

So I think it would be very interesting if these criticisms that were never made at the time, by the United States or anybody else, at the IAEA--that this be substantiated. I've seen Mr. Milhollin and others say this - that doesn't surprise me the slightest - but I was taken aback when it came from Condoleezza Rice. I know she didn't do the research herself; I'm sure it would have been more solid then. But I would be very interested to know what was that basis of it.

**ACT:** How would you describe-since you're talking about Dr. Rice-how would you describe the U.S. participation and commitment to the inspection process before the war? Was the United States doing all it could do to enable your inspections to succeed? Were other countries, such as France and Russia, doing all they could do to support the inspections?

**Blix:** Well, in the early stages, there was not so much intelligence, and we asked for it from Colin Powell and others-Condoleezza Rice-and we were sure that we would get it. I would say that after 1441, the resolution, was adopted, and after the president had met Mr. ElBaradei and myself, there was more intelligence given, and at no time did we really complain about lack of support-lack of intelligence yes, but lack of support no. No, they helped us to run courses here, offered us equipment, etc. We were not complaining about that.

And, as of January-some time around January, I guess-I did not also complain about the number of sites intelligence that we were getting. The problem was rather that the U.S. or elsewhere-I don't want to distinguish between the various intelligence agencies-that they did not lead us to interesting sites. As I have said publicly several times, we went to a lot of sites given to us by intelligence from around the world and in only three cases did we find anything and in none of these cases did it relate to weapons of mass destruction. Now, at this stage, in the middle of June, when the U.S. inspectors have been there for quite some time and I think have probably gone to all of the rest of the sites and they haven't found them very helpful either. So should anyone be surprised then, in retrospect, that we did not?

Now where did [the information about] these sites come from? Some came from satellites, and it's not so easy to see everything and conclude the right things from satellites, and many came from defectors. So, while I by no means want to belittle the value of defectors' information, I think I like the more experienced - the professionals in the intelligence [community] - are very cautious about the information they get from defectors, and I think the whole case of the Iraqi affair bears out that you have to treat such affairs with prudence.

**ACT:** U.S. officials were reportedly frustrated with some of your reports to the Security Council. Is that accurate, and how would you respond to that?
Blix: If they are, I think they ought to be more articulate. My boss was the Security Council. I take my instructions from them, I read every ounce of criticism that came from the council. I do not see any criticism there.

ACT: *So these were, as you said, certain lower level people?*

Blix: Well, maybe that's a technique that you give spins on something at a lower level and you read in the newspapers what some people feel there at the official level. This might be suppressed, I don't know, but in any case at no time did I feel any criticism from the Security Council. On the contrary, I think I felt support and appreciation.

I read about, of course, the most flagrant cases, where allegations to the newspapers that we had suppressed information about the drones and about the cluster bombs probably. But we felt both cases were areas where we were exploring, where we were not ready to say that these are violations. And I have not seen that the U.S. has come out to say that these were violations, that these were smoking guns. So, I don't think that we were so wrong. If they had still felt that way, I assume they would not have been all that tight-lipped about it.

ACT: *If you had to assess your own tenure there, how successful were you? How would you sum it up?*

Blix: I would say that we have - we showed something that was not a foregone conclusion. Namely, that it was possible to create an international inspection mechanism that was effective, that worked under the Security Council, and that was independent of intelligence agencies but cooperated with them and had assistance from them. And I think that this is a valuable experience for the future because I think that there may yet be a need for international inspections.

Inspections under international organizations have greater acceptability in the world and I think they have also greater credibility than national inspections. Thereby, I don't say that national inspections have no credibility. If the inspectors who are in Iraq now come up with 100 tons of chemical weapons, well that's it. But we have seen how they have been jumping somewhat to conclusions on the mobiles. And I can see the pressure they're under but nevertheless one has to be cautious about that. So, I think there may be use in the future for this and that the experience is valuable and it's my reading of the Security Council that this is also the view of the council. I have not heard the U.S. dissent from it. Sure, the U.S. is a big country and there are many people in Washington, and I understand-as well as you-I understand there are some people there who are deeply skeptical about it and also people who would like to see it under their own control, rather than under of some more-or-less anonymous, international civil servants. This I understand, but there are arguments against this and that is both the credibility and the acceptability of it.

Now this is intriguing because we have different kinds of inspections in the world, and I remember saying at the State Department when we discussed Resolution 1441 that you could have had another one - that the Security Council could have asked the United States to set up the inspections from the beginning, just as it asked the U.S. to lead them in the Korean War. But that was not what they did. In resolution 1284, they said we should set up an inspection that was independent and where the inspectors were international civil servants, as contrasted to the inspectors under UNSCOM who remained civil servants and had per diems and travel expenses from the United Nations. Now there was a signal in this that we were to have a geographical distribution as in the United Nations system, that it was to be an international inspectorate and not any kind of adjunct to western intelligence.

ACT: *You were saying something about this permanent body and lessons for the future. You wrote a piece in the Wall Street Journal a few months ago about inspections everywhere.*

Blix: Well, the headline was theirs, don't you know. The headlines are always yours, I take no responsibilities for headlines. *(laugh)*

ACT: *Yes, but could you elaborate more on what your notion of this organization and how this would function?*
Blix: Well, we read now about the North Korean situation that the U.S. and others say that it must be irreversible and it must be verifiable, so I ask myself now what kind of verification are they planning for North Korea? Are they planning bilateral American inspections? Or are they still looking at the IAEA, or do they want to have inspection system under NATO, or what? I don't know. But the IAEA has the safeguards agreement with the operator, and to my knowledge the U.S. is supporting the safeguards system, even to the extent of asking for more funds for it. Although I haven't seen that they do the same thing for the OPCW [Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-the international organization that carries out inspections under the Chemical Weapons Convention]. Maybe they did, I haven't seen it.

So I think the U.S. is also not throwing out inspections but it's natural for some people who have command of an area that they would like to have it all under their control. Well, I understand these guys, but there are some things you can gain by being together with others. You may have to give something, but you also gain something. Therefore, I think there may yet be opportunities for it.

I can go back to the early days of the nuclear sphere, when the U.S. sold technology and hardware to other countries, and they had bilateral American inspections. There were American inspectors going to the countries to check that what they had sold was used only for peaceful purposes. Now that was transferred to the IAEA, through explicit agreements, transferred to be multilateralized and institutionalized. And there were several reasons behind that. I think that's what both UNSCOM and UNMOVIC have shown is that we can have very effective inspections under an international system. In Iraq, maybe with the exception of something that will come up, we have not been accused of not having been effective. They were both correct and effective.

Now things might have been different if the Iraqis had stonewalled, but then you report [that]. I mean, the chances that inspectors will catch anybody red-handed are not very great. A country that is about to act in such a way would rather deny access, but then you would have smoke. Rather than a smoking gun, you have smoke. And that is interesting enough because that sets in motion the alarm bells and sets in motion the diplomatic, economic, and other measures that the government can take.

This is what happened in the case of North Korea. We didn't find a smoking gun-in fact, we don't know how much more plutonium they had than they declared. But they were not - it was not an honest report that they had. They had reprocessed more than once, [although North Korea declared that they had only reprocessed once] so they must have had more plutonium now. This was smoke. The Pentagon and the CIA came to the conclusion later that they had one or two bombs. Well, the IAEA has never said that. It's possible, because they might have reprocessed the whole batch. It's conceivable, but it's the worst case scenario, as it were. It's legitimate for them to play with that.

But what the IAEA achieved then was getting the smoke coming up, setting in motion the whole procedure with the Security Council and the formidable [Robert Gallucci, lead U.S. negotiator on the 1994 Agreed Framework that attempted to freeze North Korea's nuclear weapons program] who came to an Agreed Framework, which I think probably was the best-or least bad-we could do at the time. I've never felt any criticism here.

ACT: There is speculation that Iraq destroyed prohibited weapons pretty recently before the U.S. invasion. Do you think this is possible, given UNMOVIC and IAEA's presence, that they could have destroyed the weapons without your knowledge?

Blix: This is not the only explanation we heard. One explanation is that they took things to Syria. Another one was that they dug it down so deep that they didn't have time to dig it up. The third one would be that they have already given it to terrorists. And the fourth one is they destroyed it just before the U.S. came or just before the inspectors came. Well, I see these explanations with increasing, accelerating interest and curiosity, but I'd like to see evidence of any one of them.

But to your precise question, I think it would have been difficult for them to hide the destruction of rather large stashes of chemical weapons under the noses of the inspectors. I don't exclude anything in this world.
**ACT:** Do you think any chemical or biological weapons that are still there would still be viable?

**Blix:** It varies. Any biological weapons that were dried, like dried anthrax, that would be viable. Even slurry might--might not be. A lot of the chemicals would not be viable.

Buchanan: A lot depends on the agent. Botulinum toxin has a very short life.

**Blix:** And the precursors might be there.

**ACT:** Now that you're moving on, in terms of UNMOVIC, at this point, what role can and should UNMOVIC play?

**Blix:** Well, it's entirely up to the Security Council. We are its humble servants.

**ACT:** Presumably, they might take your advice.

**Blix:** I'm not so sure. Well, maybe some of them *(laughter)*. No I think there are two things that could be in the future. One is the verification of disarmament. A report by the inspectors who are there now would have greater international credibility if they were examined and if the reality were examined by international inspectors. Whether they are interested in that, I don't know.

The second is long-term monitoring. Will they want to have long-term monitoring in Iraq? That's still not rescinded from the resolutions. It was in all the resolutions and the resolutions also talk about this future zone free of weapons of mass destruction. I think there's something a little paradoxical about reducing the institutionalized transparency by doing away with something that was there, especially if we are looking for an enhanced verification for the region at some stage, including the Additional Protocol [an agreement designed to provide for more rigorous IAEA inspections]. And you would do away then with any verification [that Iraq does not possess biological weapons]. So you would have inspectors presumably on safeguards and the NPT [nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty] and chemicals maybe. But they would be a step backwards on inspections. So for the long-term it's a possibility, and I think that would be better in the hands of international inspectors than national ones.

But for the rest, the UN Security Council had in UNSCOM's and UNMOVIC's archives and personnel a unique, elite trained force. Especially the roster of inspectors is a practical and inexpensive way of holding an inspectorate ready. Valuable particularly regarding missiles, a priority for which you have no international organization. I do not think that the council wants to send ad hoc inspections every week, but it could be from time-to-time, and it would not need to have a very big stable force here. We would organize the training forces and organize the roster and the readiness.

For the rest, I think that they should write up the experiences here in some sort of digest because if they do not retain UNMOVIC then maybe they will set up something in the future and the document has experiences from both [UNSCOM and UNMOVIC] which are valuable.

**ACT:** For some sort of institutional memory ?

**Blix:** We have ourselves some of that already. We have the handbook that we worked out and which was not made public but which was used and made available to our College of Commissioners that might not be applicable in the same way to another situation because it was somewhat tailored to the resolutions, of course. Nevertheless, there is a lot to be learned, I think we can learn for the future. We have tried to commit to paper some of these experiences.

**NOTES**

1. Hussein Kamel, Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, who directed Iraq's illicit weapons programs, defected in 1995. Shortly after, Iraq provided inspectors with papers from Kamel's farm detailing their offensive biological weapons program.
2. A document indicating that Iraq had used fewer chemical munitions during the Iran-Iraq war than it had previously stated.

3. Excerpt from "This Week with George Stephanopoulos," ABC TV, March 9, 2003:

Condoleezza Rice: It's extremely important not to draw conclusions too early about who is making progress on a nuclear program. I was a little concerned that IAEA remarks about the Iraqi nuclear program the other day seemed to draw certain conclusions.

George Stephanopoulos (Off Camera): It said they hadn't revived the nuclear program.

Condoleezza Rice: Right, and the IAEA of course missed the program in '91, missed it in '95, missed it in '98. We need to be careful about drawing those conclusions particularly in a totalitarian state like Iraq.

- Iraq

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