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Cc: NY - UKMIS Iraq Kuwait; Iraq Policy (conf)
Subject: RESTRICTED: IRAQ: BLIX

Importance: High
Summary

Blix lunched with EU Heads of Mission on 28 February. France and Germany did not get the answers they wanted on substance. On process, Blix was moving towards delivering the UNMOVIC work programme and key remaining tasks earlier than 27 March. He expects to surface the clusters document, but not the work programme and list of key remaining tasks, in time for a 7 March Council meeting. He wants the second resolution to specify the withdrawal of inspectors.

Substance

Lunch took place before the UNMOVIC quarterly report had issued. But Blix referred to its contents several times. He spoke at length and then answered questions.

Blix said that the Iraqis had not actively cooperated until recently. They were now producing documents, a list of participants in 1991 destruction activities and the digging up of R-400 bombs. But how much of this activity was really active disarmament? The Iraqis had not started to disarm. The picture on interviews was disappointing. The flow of documents was limited.

Blix said that he shared the US view: it was for Iraq to declare its WMD holdings and show how it was disarming. UNMOVIC was not a detective agency. There was plenty Iraq could do to address the allegations, which were well known to Baghdad (e.g. checkpoints for trucks; an inventory of underground facilities).

Iraq could have done all this earlier. Iraq was not cooperating fully and actively. Full cooperation should not take a long time. If UNMOVIC secured that full cooperation, verification would take neither years nor weeks but months.

But there had been no change of Iraqi heart, just more activity. Iraq had attempted to conceal things (c.f. the history of UNSCOM). "The Iraqi instinct is cheating us as much as possible". Blix thought that the debate was somewhat over-focused on the outstanding questions identified by UNSCOM. What about the period 1998-2002? It was true that you could never completely prove the negative that (as it claimed) Iraq had not resumed any WMD programmes in that period. But Iraq could certainly make the negative plausible (e.g. producing documents; opening underground facilities). And, certainly, it was less hard for Iraq than for UNMOVIC and the IAEA to make the negative plausible. On interviews, for example, Iraq could certainly do more.

Blix understood that it could be hard for Saddam to admit to lying. That was why Blix and El Baradei had thought that the two Iraqi Commissions could be helpful as a way for Baghdad to climb down. But the Commissions had not come up with much yet. Sabliere asked about the Iraqi letter on anthrax. Blix said it was detailed. UNMOVIC experts would have to assess it. This would have been done before Blix met the Security Council next week.

Process

Blix thought that there was increasing acceptance in the Council that he should circulate UNMOVIC's clusters of unresolved questions. He agreed with those who thought that UNMOVIC should not "grade" Iraqi cooperation. That would place too much of a burden on UNMOVIC. It was the responsibility of the Council. Producing the clusters should facilitate Iraq's task. So maybe he would let the clusters document surface.

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As for the 1284 work programme, Blix did not think he was bound to deliver it only on 27 March. How urgently he needed to produce it, however, was a judgement for the Security Council. It would be fairly short, since it did not attempt to identify phases of work given all the uncertainties. So it would not take too long to draft. But the Commissioners still had to reach a view on it.

On key remaining tasks, Blix agreed with Pleuger that it would make sense for UNMOVIC to identify some priorities among the 30 clusters. Off the top of his head, his top three would be VX, anthrax and SCUD missiles. But more of a list could be useful.

The fate of inspections

Blix thought that just three months of inspections was "not fully satisfactory" as a decent amount of time to give the inspections effort. But this was a Council decision.

If the Council voted for war, Blix hoped that their resolution would specify how to withdraw inspectors. Obviously the Council would not want inspectors in Iraq during hostilities. But Blix thought the US did not rule out a return of UNMOVIC after conflict. There was a long-term monitoring requirement that Blix assumed would be based on the Amorim recommendations for a reinforced system of monitoring and verification. It would be for the Council to decide whether UNMOVIC should go back and on what terms.

Vassilakis (Greece) asked about the risks of Iraqi WMD being bombed in a conflict. Blix said that if the coalition forces knew where Iraqi WMD was, he wished that he could be told.

The future of the international non-proliferation regime

Blix went off at a tangent to speculate on an adaptation of an idea that he attributed to Ekeus. In a post-conflict Iraq, he thought that nuclear and chemical monitoring should be done by the IAEA and the OPCW respectively, given their heavyweight expertise. But other arrangements would be needed for monitoring/verifying BW and missiles. UNMOVIC had the greatest standing expertise.

Moreover, UNMOVIC could provide to the Council a total view, synthesising the situation across the board on Iraqi WMD. This prompted the thought that UNMOVIC might remain a standing Security Council instrument for continuous monitoring and analysis world-wide of non-proliferation questions, including the mounting of ad hoc inspections.

The Canadian Proposal

As a parting shot, at the end of lunch, Blix asked the EU where the Canadian proposal now stood. He commented that proposals rejected by both sides always seemed promising.

Comment

What Blix says to the EU is one thing, what he says under pressure in the Council is another. But over lunch he was sufficiently helpful to our case on Iraqi non-compliance that I did not intervene except to knock down a Pleuger point about UK/US bombing in 1998.

Postscript

At a separate event later I spoke to Blix and Cunningham. Blix was clearer about the clusters document: he could and would make it available to the Council for Friday 7 March. Preparation of the work programme and key remaining tasks would not be ready by then. Cunningham said to me afterwards that he wanted to be even clearer about Blix's intentions and would speak to him over the weekend. But Cunningham was not opposed to surfacing the clusters documents by 7 March provided it was not accompanied by the list of key remaining tasks.

Blix urged the Council's moral responsibility to specify the withdrawal of the

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inspectors in the draft resolution. Cunningham (no doubt partly for the benefit of Wehbe, who joined us at this point) said the US had been much debating this. The resolution was intended to maximise the chances of peaceful disarmament, for which there was still an opportunity after the resolution passed. So there was a case for the inspectors remaining. And to specify their withdrawal would complicate the resolution. On the other hand, requiring the inspectors' withdrawal would certainly send a further powerful signal.

Cunningham agreed that, after any conflict, US forces should certainly be accompanied by UNMOVIC inspectors to witness the uncovering of Iraqi WMD and missiles. But there was Pentagon resistance to this and, if the resolution failed to pass, giving UNMOVIC a role could be a difficult argument.

Adam

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