

# The Status of Nuclear Inspections in Iraq

by IAEA Director General Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei

For the past 60 days, the inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency have been engaged in the process of verifying the existence or absence of a nuclear weapons programme in Iraq. Today, pursuant to paragraph 5 of resolution 1441, I have submitted to the President of the Security Council an update report on our progress since we resumed our nuclear verification activities in Iraq - in terms of the approach we have adopted, the tools we have used, the specific results achieved, the degree of co-operation we have received, and finally our view on how we should proceed. Let me in this statement outline the key aspects of this report.

## Background: Understanding the Starting Point

To understand the approach of the IAEA's inspection over the past two months, it is important first to recall what was accomplished during our inspections from 1991 to 1998, in fulfilment of our Security Council mandate to eliminate Iraq's nuclear weapons programme. In September 1991, the IAEA seized documents in Iraq that demonstrated the extent of its nuclear weapons programme. By the end of 1992, we had largely destroyed, removed or rendered harmless all Iraqi facilities and equipment relevant to nuclear weapons production. We confiscated Iraq's nuclear-weapons-usable material - high enriched uranium and plutonium - and by early 1994 we had removed it from the country. By December 1998 - when the inspections were brought to a halt with a military strike imminent - we were confident that we had not missed any significant component of Iraq's nuclear programme.

While we did not claim absolute certainty, our conclusion at that time was that we had neutralized Iraq's nuclear weapons programme and that there were no indications that Iraq retained any physical capability to produce weapon usable nuclear material.

During the intervening four years of our absence from Iraq, we continued our analytical work to the best of our ability, using satellite imagery and other information. But no remote analysis can replace on-site inspection - and we were therefore not able to reach any conclusions about Iraq's compliance with its Security Council obligations in the nuclear field after December 1998.

## Conduct of Inspections to Date

Against this backdrop, when Iraq agreed last September to re-open its doors to inspection, and following the subsequent adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1441, which strengthened the IAEA's authority and the inspection process, the first goal of our inspection activities was "reconnaissance". In this phase, we sought to re-establish rapidly our knowledge base of Iraq's nuclear capabilities, to ensure that key facilities had not been re-opened, to verify the location of nuclear material and relevant non-nuclear material, and to identify and begin interviewing key Iraqi personnel.

Over these first two months of inspection, we have made good progress in our knowledge of Iraq's nuclear capabilities, with a total of 139 inspections at some 106 locations to date. The bulk of these inspections have taken place at State-run or private industrial facilities, research centres and universities - either at locations where Iraq's significant technical capabilities were known to have existed in the past, or at new locations suggested by remote monitoring and analysis. All inspection activities have been carried out without prior notification to Iraq, except where notification was needed to ensure the availability of required support. IAEA inspectors have taken - and will continue to take - full advantage of the inspection authority granted by resolution 1441. In doing so, the inspectors have been instructed to make every effort to conduct their activities with appropriate professionalism and sensitivity.

While we are continuing to some extent with this reconnaissance work, our inspections are now well into the "investigative" phase - with particular emphasis on determining what, if anything, has occurred in Iraq over the past four years relevant to the re-establishment of nuclear capabilities. These investigative inspections focus on areas of concern identified by other States, facilities identified through satellite imagery as having been modified or constructed since 1998, and other inspection leads identified independently by the IAEA.

In parallel with these inspection activities, the IAEA has been conducting exhaustive analysis of supporting information obtained from various sources. In this context, we have integrated the new information submitted by Iraq - including the declaration submitted on 7 December in response to resolution 1441 - with the records we had accumulated between 1991 and 1998 and the additional information we had compiled through remote monitoring since 1998. The Iraqi declaration was consistent with our existing understanding

of Iraq's pre-1991 nuclear programme; however, it did not provide any new information relevant to certain questions that have been outstanding since 1998 - in particular regarding Iraq's progress prior to 1991 related to weapons design and centrifuge development. While these questions do not constitute unresolved disarmament issues, they nevertheless need further clarification.

In addition to onsite inspection and offsite analysis, IAEA inspectors have employed a variety of tools to accomplish their mission. Taking advantage of the "signature" of radioactive materials, we have resumed the monitoring of Iraq's rivers, canals and lakes to detect the presence of certain radioisotopes. A broad variety of environmental samples and surface swipe samples have been collected from locations across Iraq and taken to IAEA laboratories for analysis. And we have re-instituted routine car-borne and hand-held gamma surveys for the detection of undeclared nuclear material.

The inspectors have also conducted a great number of interviews of Iraqi scientists, managers and technicians - primarily in the workplace in the course of unannounced inspections - as a valuable source of information about past and present programmes and activities. The information gained has been helpful in assessing the completeness and accuracy of Iraq's declarations.

Resolution 1441 also clearly gave to the IAEA and UNMOVIC the authority to determine the modalities and venues for conducting interviews with Iraqi officials and other persons. The first two individuals whom the IAEA requested to see privately declined to be interviewed without the presence of an Iraqi Government representative. This has been a restricting factor. Although the Iraqi Government recently committed itself to encouraging Iraqi officials and other personnel to be interviewed in private when requested, regrettably the third request, two days ago, for a private interview was again turned down by the interviewee.

The IAEA will continue to determine the modalities and locations of the interviews, including the possibility of interviewing Iraqi personnel abroad. We will continue to report to the Security Council on our efforts to conduct interviews according to our preferred modalities and venues, and our degree of success in that regard.

#### **Findings of Inspections to Date**

Let me summarize briefly a number of the findings that have resulted from our inspection activities thus far.

First, we have inspected all of those buildings and facilities that were identified, through satellite imagery, as having been modified or constructed over the past four years. IAEA inspectors have been able to gain ready access and to clarify the nature of the activities currently being conducted in these facilities. No prohibited nuclear activities have been identified during these inspections.

A particular issue of focus has been the attempted procurement by Iraq of high strength aluminium tubes, and the question of whether these tubes, if acquired, could be used for the manufacture of nuclear centrifuges. Iraqi authorities have indicated that their unsuccessful attempts to procure the aluminium tubes related to a programme to reverse engineer conventional rockets. To verify this information, IAEA inspectors have inspected the relevant rocket production and storage sites, taken tube samples, interviewed relevant Iraqi personnel, and reviewed procurement contracts and related documents. From our analysis to date it appears that the aluminium tubes would be consistent with the purpose stated by Iraq and, unless modified, would not be suitable for manufacturing centrifuges; however, we are still investigating this issue. It is clear, however, that the attempt to acquire such tubes is prohibited under Security Council resolution 687.

Another area of focus has been to determine how certain other "dual use" materials have been relocated or used - that is, materials that could be used in nuclear weapons production but also have other legitimate uses. A good example is the Iraqi declaration concerning the high explosive "HMX" - which states that, out of the HMX under IAEA seals in Iraq at the end of 1998, some had been supplied to cement plants as an industrial explosive for mining. The whereabouts and final use of the removed material are matters that will require further investigation - although it will be difficult to verify the disposition of the HMX that is declared to have been used.

A fourth focal point has been the investigation of reports of Iraqi efforts to import uranium after 1991. The Iraqi authorities have denied any such attempts. The IAEA will continue to pursue this issue. At this stage, however, we do not have enough information, and we would appreciate receiving more.

We are also making progress on a number of other issues related, for example, to the attempted importation of a magnet production facility.

## **Moving Forward**

### ***Need for Continued Unified Support from the Security Council***

In addition to the new authorities granted by resolution 1441, I believe that the unified resolve of the Council to support the inspection process has been a vital ingredient, and must remain so, if we are to achieve a peaceful resolution of the situation in Iraq. I trust that the Council would continue its unified and unequivocal support for the inspection process in Iraq.

Over the next several months, inspections will focus ever more closely on follow-up of specific concerns, as we continue to conduct visits to sites and interviews with key Iraqi personnel. We have begun helicopter operations, which increase the inspectors' mobility and their ability to respond rapidly to new information, and allow wide-scale radiation detection surveys. Laboratory analysis of environmental samples is continuing, and we will be re-installing air samplers for wide-area environmental monitoring. We also will re-introduce surveillance systems with video cameras in key locations to allow near-real-time remote monitoring of dual-use equipment.

### ***Need for Actionable Information from Other States***

By its very nature, the inspection process, both in Iraq and elsewhere, is not based on "trust", but on a thorough process of fact finding, supported by access to all available information. Where applicable, this should include information available to States that may be relevant to the purpose of the inspection. We have begun in the last few weeks to receive more actionable information from States - that is, information of direct and current value for inspection follow-up. I would continue to call on States that have access to such information to provide it to the inspecting organizations, so that the inspection process can be accelerated and additional assurances can be generated.

### ***Need for Additional Co-operation by Iraq***

Finally, we have urged Iraq once again to increase the degree of its co-operation with the inspection process. In support of the IAEA inspections to date, the Iraqi authorities have provided access to all facilities visited - including presidential compounds and private residences - without conditions and without delay. The Iraqi authorities also have been co-operative in making available additional original documentation, in response to requests by IAEA inspectors.

In our discussions with Iraqi officials last week in Baghdad, we emphasized the need to shift from passive support - that is, responding as needed to inspectors' requests - to proactive support - that is, voluntarily assisting inspectors by providing documentation, people and other evidence that will assist in filling in the remaining gaps in our information.

One example of how Iraq could be more proactive was illustrated by the inspection of a private residence just two weeks ago, which resulted in the retrieval of a sizeable number of documents, some of which were classified, and related, in part, to Iraq's pre-1991 efforts to use laser technology for enriching uranium. While these documents do not appear to reflect new or current activity related to nuclear weapons in Iraq, they may enhance our detailed understanding of certain aspects of Iraq's pre-1991 nuclear programme. It is urgent and essential therefore that Iraq, on its own initiative, identify and provide any additional evidence that would assist the inspectors in carrying out their mandate.

This proactive engagement on the part of Iraq would be in its own best interest and is a window of opportunity that may not remain open for very much longer. Iraq should make every effort to be fully transparent - with a demonstrated willingness to resolve issues rather than requiring pressure to do so. The international community will not be satisfied when questions remain open with regard to Iraq's weapons of mass destruction; the world is asking for a high level of assurance that Iraq is completely free from all such weapons, and is already impatient to receive it. The sooner such assurance can be provided by the inspecting organizations, the sooner the prospects of a peaceful resolution will translate into a plausible reality.

### ***The Value of Inspections***

Inspections are time consuming but, if successful, can ensure disarmament through peaceful means. It is worth recalling that, in our past experience in Iraq, the elimination of its nuclear weapons programme was mostly accomplished through intrusive inspections. It is also worth recalling that the presence of international inspectors in Iraq today continues to serve as an effective deterrent to and insurance against resumption of programmes to develop weapons of mass destruction, even as we continue to look for possible past activities.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude: we have to date found no evidence that Iraq has revived its nuclear weapons programme since the elimination of the programme in the 1990s. However, our work is steadily progressing and should be allowed to run its natural course. With our verification system now in place, barring exceptional circumstances, and provided there is sustained proactive cooperation by Iraq, we should be able within the next few months to provide credible assurance that Iraq has no nuclear weapons programme. These few months would be a valuable investment in peace because they could help us avoid a war. We trust that we will continue to have your support as we make every effort to verify Iraq's nuclear disarmament through peaceful means, and to demonstrate that the inspection process can and does work, as a central feature of the international nuclear arms control regime.