# Inspections in Iraq:

## A Test for Saddam, Not a Good Solution for WMD

by **Patrick Clawson (/experts/patrick-clawson)**

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Brief Analysis

Like that of its predecessor, the Bush administration's policy toward Iraq appears to focus on the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the hands of Saddam Husayn's regime. Some suggest that U.S. policy should emphasize the resumption of inspections, suspended since 1998. However, there are strong reasons to doubt that inspections would reduce the threat of Iraqi WMD.

Why Raise the Issue of Inspections?

The main rationale for raising the inspection issue is the broad international consensus that Iraq's refusal to allow inspections violates its obligations under UN Security Council resolutions. Even those eager to cultivate Saddam's friendship, such as Russia and France, are opposed to Iraq possessing WMD. While they may disagree profoundly with the U.S. approach to solving the Iraqi WMD threat, they at least acknowledge the problem. If these countries are unable to devise a solution, then the United States is in a favorable position to elicit their non-objection to any proposed forceful measures.

Dangers in raising the inspection issue. Some have argued that having inspections under imperfect conditions are better than no inspections -- on the theory that inspectors would detect any gross weapons violations. However, there is a real danger that imperfect inspections will create a false sense of security without producing useful information about Iraq's WMD programs. This was the experience with the pre-1990 inspections of Iraq's nuclear program by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which utterly failed to uncover Iraq's multibillion-dollar nuclear weapons program. This was, of course, well known to Hans Blix -- then the IAEA director, now the head of the UN Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), the successor agency to the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) which has never been able to start inspections in Iraq.

The danger in even posing the idea of renewing inspections is that Saddam's allies will press the United States to agree to a watered-down inspections regime, on the theory that softened procedures will guarantee Saddam's willingness to let inspectors do their jobs. That reasoning puts the cart before the horse: the issue is how to ensure that Iraq has no WMD, not how to secure Saddam's approval for an inspection procedure.

Prospects that Saddam could be induced to accept inspections. Some have argued that Saddam might agree to

inspections were he provided a "light at the end of the tunnel" -- a promise that sanctions would be lifted if the inspectors gave Iraq a clean bill of health. This theory was put to test in the December 1999 UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1284, which provides that sanctions will be suspended 120 days after inspectors certify that Iraq has cooperated with inspections. Despite the offer, Saddam said no to inspectors; he may reason that sanctions are eroding anyway. That is one way to read the November 29, 2001, UNSCR 1382, in which the Security Council declared its intention by May 30, 2002, to replace the current sanctions with a much-reduced list of dual-use and military items that Iraq will be forbidden to import.

Return to the original concept of inspections. The United States has every reason to be highly skeptical about inspections. Post-September 11, this skepticism should be complemented by the heightened awareness of the dangers that the United States faces from WMD. In an anthrax-wary environment, it is not acceptable merely to be confident that Iraq does not have substantial quantities of WMD, as advocated by former Iraqi arms inspector Scott Ritter. After all, in recent weeks Americans have discovered that less than a cup of anthrax can disrupt the lives of millions, causing billions of dollars in damages and loss of life as well.

Operationally, skepticism of inspections should lead the United States to reverse the policy slide of recent years and return to insisting that Iraq provide convincing evidence it is totally disarmed of WMD. That is the requirement embodied in the original ceasefire resolution, UNSCR 687, which in theory remains the "governing standard of Iraqi compliance" (to quote UNSCR 1284). In practice, though, the international community has not been willing to enforce that standard.

Given that the United States is more concerned than ever before about disarming Iraq of WMD, the administration should consider giving Saddam more reason to cooperate. That means offering a bigger carrot if he accepts the package and threatening him with a bigger stick if he does not. The carrot would be a newly explicit offer to respond to Iraqi compliance with a move to a U.S. policy of deterrence and containment -- that is, living with Saddam's odious regime so long as he does not engage in external aggression. The stick would be to respond to Iraq's decision not to fulfill a key provision of the 1991 ceasefire with a U.S. decision that it is no longer bound by the ceasefire itself.

Making Inspections Work

Regardless of the problems that it will pose for diplomacy, the U.S. stance on inspections should be designed with an eye toward what works, not what Saddam will accept or what will gain support at the Security Council. The basic principle is that the obligation is on Saddam to prove he does not have WMD, not on the inspectors to prove he does. The minimal requirements for inspections include:

Saddam has to provide a full, final, complete disclosure (FFCD), including a list of "all research, development, support, and manufacturing facilities related" to WMD, to quote what UNSCR 687 said he had to provide by April 18, 1991. Inspectors should only be relied on to monitor what Iraq has declared; they cannot be expected to ferret out Iraqi misdeeds. So the inspections should start only when international experts determine that Iraq has provided a convincing FFCD.

Inspectors have to have full access. The requirement as laid out in UNSCR 1284 -- which established UNMOVIC, a looser inspection process than the previous UNSCOM system -- is, "Iraq shall allow UNMOVIC teams immediate, unconditional, and unrestricted access to any and all areas, facilities, equipment, records, and means of transport which they wish to inspect in accordance with the mandate of UNMOVIC, as well as all officials and other persons under the authority of the Iraqi government whom UNMOVIC wishes to interview." The November 2001 UNSCR 1382 says that the Security Council will discuss "any clarification necessary for the implementation of resolution 1284" -- which provides the United States an opportunity to insist on following that resolution to the letter: that is, no area in Iraq can be off-limits to inspectors.

The prospect that Saddam will accept all these procedures is dim, and partial acceptance -- or promises without quick implementation -- should be rejected. It is likely that some on the UN Security Council will accuse the United States of being bellicose. However, as Washington has become newly sensitive to the risks of WMD and to the potential for surprise catastrophic attacks on America, its main concern must be to return to the original principle decreed by the Gulf War ceasefire: i.e., that Saddam prove he is WMD-free. With skillful diplomacy, the United States should be able to achieve a begrudging acceptance in Europe that it intends to ensure by one means or another that Iraq has no WMD.

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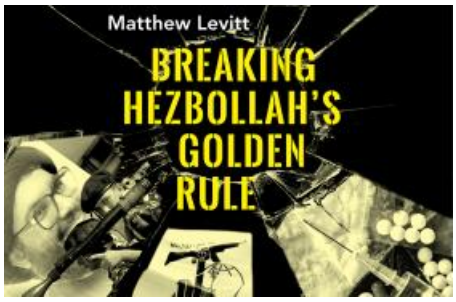


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