

# Uncovering Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: Past Achievements, Current Challenges

Sep 8, 1998



## Brief Analysis

It is impossible to determine exactly what Iraq is concealing because Iraq has not accurately reported what it had to begin with. Therefore, it is not possible to produce a precise material balance of initial and current holdings. However, it is possible -- using data derived from Iraqi documents in UNSCOM's possession and reports provided by well-placed defectors -- to provide a general idea of what undeclared retained capabilities Iraq may possess.

**Nuclear weapons.** UNSCOM has received detailed information that Iraq retains and is hiding all the necessary components -- save the fissile material core -- for three implosion-type nuclear weapons. The intelligence includes detailed information on how Iraq was concealing these weapons and components from UNSCOM, including the names of the Special Security Organization officers involved, the type of trucks used for transportation, and where they are being hidden. UNSCOM has not been allowed to undertake inspections to find these weapons.

**Chemical weapons.** A recent UNSCOM inspection of Air Force headquarters uncovered a document which showed that in Iraq's presentation of the material balance for chemical weapons, it overdeclared the number of bombs dropped and the tonnage of chemical agent used during the Iran/Iraq War. As a result, several thousand bombs and seven hundred tons of chemical agent that were listed as expended may well still be in Iraq's possession.

There is also evidence that the Iraqi government may have been conducting chemical weapons activity outside Iraqi territory. UNSCOM has been interested for some months in Iraqi chemical weapons activity in Sudan. However, UNSCOM's options in this regard are limited because its mandate does not extend to Iraq's actions outside of its territorial boundaries.

**Biological weapons.** There is evidence which points to the possibility that Iraq tested biological weapons on live humans in 1995.

**Missiles.** Iraq will not talk about the ballistic missiles which it produced indigenously. Iraq claims that it has never produced an operational ballistic missile, yet Iraqi documents in UNSCOM's possession state that, following the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq unilaterally destroyed seven locally-produced al-Husayn missiles that had been on operational status. UNSCOM believes that Iraq still has an operational ballistic missile force of between five and twelve al-Husayn missiles which were partially disassembled in 1997 and dispersed to various hide sites but which can be reassembled on short notice. Iraq is also believed to possess various components for some 25 additional missiles.

Defector reports indicate that Iraq's leadership has devised a plan to produce operational al-Husayn ballistic missiles within six months of a decision to do so. Iraq is importing machines and tools necessary for such an effort and illegally modifying them after they have entered the country. With a few changes, these machines -- ostensibly acquired for other purposes -- can then be used to manufacture ballistic missile components. Iraq also refuses to discuss stocks of liquid propellant it retains used to fuel ballistic missiles. The issue of mobile launchers is an even more difficult issue. After his defection in 1995, Hussein Kamal advised that UNSCOM not waste its time looking for Iraq's mobile launchers, as these could be easily produced anytime.

## UNSCOM's Investigation of Iraqi Concealment

By 1995, UNSCOM investigations had uncovered many inconsistencies between Iraqi declarations concerning its WMD programs and the facts at hand. In response, UNSCOM shifted its emphasis from traditional inspections of suspected weapons sites to instead investigating the mechanism by which Iraq was concealing its retained weapons capabilities. UNSCOM determined that the President of Iraq decided in 1991 to conceal proscribed programs from UNSCOM and the IAEA. Under the direction of the Presidential Secretariat, Iraq has made a concerted effort to use the regime's four principal security organs --the Special Republican Guard, the Special Security Organization, the General Security Directorate, and the Intelligence Service -- to conceal its retained WMD and missile capabilities.

UNSCOM is not an intelligence agency with the means to collect intelligence on its own. It must rely on intelligence provided by UN member governments, which UNSCOM experts then independently analyze and evaluate before deciding how to proceed. As is appropriate, UNSCOM receives information from any UN member willing to provide it, including Israel. Any FBI investigation as to whether U.S. classified information was leaked by Ritter to Israel should be able to quickly determine that intelligence material was handled in accordance with instructions from UNSCOM's executive chairman.

Iraq changes its concealment mechanism every 30 days, which requires quick collection of information and quick action on that information. For instance, because the intelligence about the three Iraqi implosion-type nuclear weapons was highly perishable, it may no longer be possible to find these weapons. Given the short Iraqi decision-making cycle, any delays of the UNSCOM inspections can make the inspections futile, which then lets Iraq claim that there was nothing there to be found.

UNSCOM Executive Chairman Richard Butler is already being asked to cut corners and to compromise the Commission's integrity. There is pressure to close files prematurely by accepting false or incomplete Iraqi declarations as the baseline for future verification activities. There is also pressure to stop investigating the concealment mechanism, which is the only way to find out what Iraq is still hiding. Finally, UNSCOM is not receiving the consistent support from the United States that it needs to accomplish its mission. These factors were the main reasons behind Ritter's decision to resign from UNSCOM.

This Special Policy Forum Report was prepared by Adam Frey. ❖

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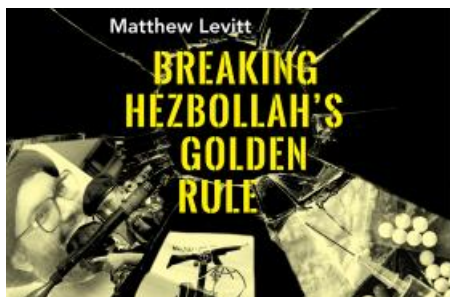
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