

United Nations readies strike against Iraqi industry

by Joseph Brewda

Iraq and the U.N. Security Council are on a "collision course," U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering threatened after the address of Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz to a special session of the Security Council March 12. The session had been called over Iraq's alleged "non-compliance" with Security Council demands, especially those relating to the dismantling of Iraqi industry. Aziz reiterated that, while Iraq would comply with the resolutions, despite their manifest unfairness, Iraq took exception to the demand that it destroy its military industry rather than convert it to civilian use.

Aziz's refusal to budge on this issue was not unexpected. A few hours earlier, George Bush had told reporters at the White House that "if they don't comply, we will contemplate all alternatives," while Pickering told the NBC "Today" show that, with respect to military options against Iraq, "nothing is ruled out."

The session concluded March 13 with a unanimous Security Council condemnation of Iraq. According to the *New York Times*, the Security Council covertly threatened Iraq that it must produce an acceptable plan to destroy its industry by March 26 or face the consequences. As the diplomats debated in New York, the U.S. aircraft carrier *America* entered the Persian Gulf with two escorts. Bush seems to be contemplating some sort of "bold" military action over the coming weeks, timed with this spring's primaries, probably involving a "surgical strike" against Iraqi industrial and research facilities.

In his address to the Security Council, Aziz reported that all of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction had been destroyed, as demanded. Aziz insisted, however, that the demand of a specially appointed Security Council commission that Iraq destroy its military industry, and not be allowed to convert it to civilian use, was an infringement of Iraq's "sovereignty and dignity," as well as its national security. "We are not bargaining over our sovereignty," Deputy Prime Minister Aziz said. "We are not bargaining over our rights to live as a free and independent people." Aziz warned that the U.S. was conspiring to "deindustrialize" Iraq.

Aziz also noted that the special commission, headed by Swedish Ambassador to the U.N. Rolf Ekeus, was making decisions that should properly be made by the Security Council in negotiation with Iraq. "Preserving to the special commission alone the absolute power of issuing decisions," Aziz said, means that Iraqi sovereignty will be infringed upon by "a body

which does not exist in the U.N. charter." Ekeus is an intimate of U.S. National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, who, some U.N. diplomats privately charge, actually controls the commission.

On the Today show, Pickering stressed that "the critical point here is not whether facilities are capable of producing material for civilian use, but whether they are capable of being used for prohibited purposes." He said, "The council continues to support the proposition that the special commission, and not Iraq itself, must and will determine which facilities are required under Security Council resolutions to be destroyed."

Iraq had asked in February that the factories which had produced Scud missiles be converted into factories for the production of pressurized vessels for its oil industry and explosives for highway construction. But this is deemed unacceptable.

Ekeus's commission has instead ruled that the factories must be destroyed utterly—including the computers on site and even the buildings. On March 13, Ekeus told the Security Council that he is determined to see the factories completely destroyed. "The Iraqis will find a dual use for anything," he claimed.

Similarly, the United States is demanding that Iraq destroy an alleged "nuclear weapons plant" housed at a scientific research complex in al-Atheer, outside Baghdad. The International Atomic Energy Agency, a U.N.-linked body led by Swedish diplomat Hans Blix, has announced that it is working on plans for destroying the complex. Asked if any of the complex could be saved for civilian purposes, Blix sneered, "Only the cafeteria." Earlier, the IAEA had demanded that nuclear physics instruction and research be banned from Iraq in order to bring "peace" to the Middle East. The IAEA team that Blix had sent to Iraq to gather this data was led by former State Department official David Kay, who reported his "findings" directly to the U.S. National Security Council, bypassing the U.N., as even the Security Council has admitted.

Both Ekeus and Blix are sending new teams to Iraq "very soon," to set deadlines on destroying Scud missile and "nuclear weapons" sites. Both have said that if they encounter resistance, they will report that Iraq has failed to observe the cease-fire agreement, paving the way for a new attack on that battered country.

U.S. policy: Take Iraq back to pre-industrial age

On Feb. 28, the U.N. Security Council issued a new threat to Iraq over alleged non-compliance with Resolution 687 which demanded that Iraq destroy its industry. Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz commented on that statement to Republic of Iraq radio on March 1. Excerpts follow.

You know that the Security Council last April issued Resolution 687, which was unprecedented in history. . . . But on account of the threats that our country faced, we said that, despite our principled position on that resolution, we had no choice but to accept its provisions. So, the process of inspection began, and this is the subject of the last statement: the implementation of the portions relating to the destruction of weapons banned by Resolution 687 and related equipment, and the tasks of the inspection teams. Problems contrived by U.S. agents in the inspection teams—David Kay—cropped up; known stories, the facts of which have been presented to the people here in Iraq and around the world. In recent months, however, during July, August, and the months that followed, it had become increasingly clear that our procedures concerning the implementation are proceeding according to practical, systematic contexts. Inspection teams could not find pretexts through which they could trigger storms and fabricate crises.

As time passed . . . there began to appear in the international community clear calls for the easing of the economic embargo against Iraq. Some have demanded a complete lifting of the embargo because they believe the pretexts for maintaining it are no longer valid, and others call for easing of it. . . . The talk about the embargo and the need to lift or ease it began to grow in the Security Council and the U.N. corridors, and began to be raised by the world media and international organizations and figures. . . . In December and early January, we . . . thought about drafting a letter to be sent by the foreign minister to explain everything that had been implemented as part of Resolution 687, for the Americans and their allies in the U.N. Security Council and agents in the inspection teams and the special committee kept saying that Iraq is still not abiding by so and so and is still not implementing so and so.

The policy we followed was to implement, objectively and precisely, the measures that were imposed on us in order

to deprive the United States and its allies, and the tendentious quarters in the U.N. agencies, of any pretext for maintaining the embargo.

The foreign minister's letter encompassed everything that had been accomplished in terms of implementing the provisions of Resolution 687, and a great deal had been accomplished. At the end of the letter, the foreign minister said that this was what had been accomplished and that we ask the Security Council to send a team of workers to verify it.

United States enforces continuing embargo

When this Iraqi proposal was presented at the council, some council members considered it a legitimate, pioneering, logical, and practical proposal. When America and its allies realized that there was a growing call to lift the economic embargo on Iraq, and when they saw that there was a daily growing and widening understanding of Iraq's position before and after the aggression, they began to thwart the Iraqi initiative.

During this period . . . we heard on the news that [Swedish Ambassador to the U.N. Rolf] Ekeus, the head of the special committee supervising the destruction of weapons and the provision in Resolution 687 on weapons and equipment used to manufacture weapons . . . had met with [Brent] Scowcroft, the adviser to the U.S. President on national security affairs. . . . For no reason or any problem whatsoever, in February, the Security Council president [then Amb. Thomas Pickering], who is an American, asked Ekeus to present a report to the Security Council on the observations of the special committee. Ekeus went to the Security Council and presented a biased report. Everything that was accomplished between April and February was summed up in one line. He said that despite some progress, Iraq is this and that—a series of accusations, fabrications, and fallacies. . . .

As usual, what Ekeus said was repeated by the Americans and the British. Without any reason, they issued a U.N. Security Council statement on Feb. 19 which said that Iraq had not fulfilled its obligations under Resolutions 687 and 787 and on this basis Ekeus should be immediately sent to Baghdad to deliver a message to the Iraqi government.

Tariq Aziz's meeting with Ekeus

In the middle of February, Tariq Aziz flew to New York to meet with Ekeus on the alleged lack of implementation of the U.N. resolutions. At the meeting, Aziz reported the following exchange.

Resolution 687 imposes on Iraq the destruction of all the weapons that the resolution bans: the long-range missiles and chemical weapons. Were all these not destroyed? He [Ekeus] replied in the affirmative. He said, Well, there are accusations. I asked Ekeus, But you and the inspection team supervised the destruction of a long list of weapons that are banned. Have you communicated this to the U.N. Security Council?

What is the objective?

Regarding equipment used to manufacture weapons, Aziz reported that he told Ekeus the following.

Over the past year there has not been an establishment which they have not visited more than once—surprise visits—and they marked every piece of equipment they inspected and claimed had been used or could be used to produce weapons. Some of these have been destroyed, and what remains has been marked and is inoperative. . . . On the basis of this reality, the U.N. Security Council must lift the economic embargo on Iraq because U.N. Security Council Resolution 687 stipulates this.

Ekeus said, We want to ascertain that Iraq will not be able to produce such weapons. . . . We the special committee should have complete power over all that the committee believes necessary. Every piece of equipment we decide has been or will be used to produce weapons.

I told him that when I met [Secretary of State James] Baker in Geneva [in January 1991], he threatened that they would take Iraq back to the pre-industrial age. I asked him, Does the Security Council seek to prevent Iraq from producing that type of weapon?

I said, Is the aim of the Security Council to make Iraq a deindustrialized country, in line with the Baker plan? Or is your task to prevent Iraq from producing the banned weapons and to verify that Iraq is following the U.N. Security Council resolution? If your objective is to verify that Iraq is not producing the weapons banned by the U.N. Security Council, then we have no objection because we abided by that resolution, and there are practical and technical means to enable you to do so. But there is a difference between this and destroying Iraqi industry.

So I told Ekeus that they could come and verify if this equipment is used for civilian or military purposes, or for military purposes not banned by the U.N. Security Council resolution. I said that if you want to eliminate Iraq's industry in order to achieve the objective stated by Baker in Geneva, then this is a different matter all together. This can never be accepted by a sovereign state or by people who have a legitimate right to have civilian and unbanned military industries to protect themselves and their national security.

A deindustrialization policy

At that point in time . . . an inspection team was present in Iraq. The team had routine tasks, but it also had a list of equipment which it told Iraqi officials that it wanted destroyed. We told Ekeus, That is a strange and bizarre list because it includes buildings, barrels, and computers. We asked him, Why should the buildings be destroyed?

He said, Because the building housed a factory to manufacture missiles. We said fine, the factory to manufacture the missiles is gone and this building is no longer used to manufacture missiles; it is finished. Then why do you want to destroy the walls and ceiling? We can use this building for another

purpose; we can use it as a warehouse to store wheat. Why do you want to destroy the computer? This computer can now be used for children's games, to keep bank accounts, and for other, various purposes, so why do you want to destroy it?

We also told Ekeus, For 10 months now you have been making a complete inventory of Iraq's industry and you have visited all Iraqi installations. So give us a complete list of what you want to destroy. . . . Does the destruction, or the control, actually seek to prevent Iraq from producing such

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weapons, or is the aim to destroy Iraq's industry? The complete list will clarify the desired objective. He declined to do so. He said, We now have this list and we want to destroy what is on it.

We told him, This means that at all times, every two weeks, or every month, one of the inspection teams can come and say that this is a list and this is another, a third, a fourth, a tenth list, thereby leaving the people with not a single piece of equipment with which they can produce milk, clothes, or any other civilian goods that we have the right to produce, not to mention military production which is not banned by the U.N. Security Council. . . .

We are implementing the obligations with all responsibility. Yes, these obligations are unfair, unprecedented, and unjust, and this is known and a fact which every fair man in the world knows. But our feeling[s] of responsibility dictate that we spare our people any harm. But if they want to place Iraq under the hammer of constant threats, the 6,000-year-old Iraqi people can protect themselves against aggression, injustice, and tyranny.

The Security Council destroyed all weapons that Iraq possessed. Of course, all other states in the region—Israel and Iran—possess similar weapons, but despite this Iraq's weapons were destroyed. It also prevented Iraq from producing such weapons. Some of the equipment used to manufacture these weapons was destroyed during the aggression. What was spared of this equipment we can use for civilian purposes. Now it wants to destroy whatever it wishes, now or in a month, in two months, or in six months, until it liquidates Iraq's industry altogether.