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Yale-UN Oral History

Hans Blix

May 11, 2000

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YALE-UN ORAL HISTORY

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Interviewer: This is an interview with Hans Blix, Executive Chairman of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission.

Were you consulted on the wording of Section C of Resolution 687 as it pertains to the role of IAEA?

Hans Blix: Not at all. I've seen that Tim Trevan in his book about UNSCOM and the IAEA claims that the IAEA was furious that they had not been included in the provisional drafts of that resolution. However, we were not consulted at all, we had no idea about it. It may well be that there was a discussion in Washington about it between different people, some who wanted the IAEA to be involved and others who did not want it to be, but in Vienna, we were never asked.

INT: Did you favor the provisions of the resolution that assigned the nuclear disarmament responsibilities to the head of IAEA, rather than to the agency?

HB: Rather than to UNSCOM—it was assigned to IAEA rather than to UNSCOM. As I said, we were not asked about it. But once we were given this task by the Security Council, of course we accepted it.

INT: How did you organize your work and your staff to maintain the identity independently of the agency?

HB: We—I should say they, because I am not in IAEA any longer—IAEA had a large department for safeguards inspection under the nonproliferation treaty, and also outside that treaty, and we decided that for the purposes of Iraq, where we would operate under the Security Council resolution, we would establish a separate group, which we then termed the "action team." They were to have much more rights of inspection than our safeguard people would have. However, we recruited for that unit, for that action team, a former head of our department for research, Professor Zifferero, who was extremely knowledgeable. We also drew some people from the safeguards department. It was a relatively small group, and it was separate from the department.

INT: How did you recruit the experts needed to carry out your responsibilities under Resolution 687?

HB: It wasn't very difficult, actually, because we had experts on the nuclear theme—on enrichment of uranium, on reprocessing uranium to plutonium—so we could recruit largely inside the organization. UNSCOM was different; UNSCOM did not have any staff at all, and therefore they had to go to governments and say, "Please give us staff." We were very different.

INT: To what extent did the Iraqi nuclear arms program involve the diversion of fuel from nuclear installations subject to IAEA inspections?

HB: It didn't, really, in any significant way. Iraq had declared the fuel, the enriched uranium, which they had imported from France and from Russia, and that was inspected. They had not misused that. The big thing they did that was in violation of the Nonproliferation Treaty was that they were building up the whole industry from the production of yellow cake to enrichment, Hexafluoride production and enrichment of uranium with different methods—the most primitive being the so-called calutrons, and the most advanced being the research related to the use of centrifuges and of lasers. This was not declared; that was totally outside...



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INT: The import was declared?

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HB: The import was declared, yes. But they did not declare what they had done themselves. However, it was learned later on, in the inspections in Iraq, that Kamal, who was in charge of the military industrial side, that in 1990, when the Kuwaiti crisis was on, he had also planned to seize the nuclear material under safeguards, and make use of that, to produce at least one weapon. They didn't succeed in that. The bombing destroyed quite a few things, so they didn't succeed in that. So they never succeeded in utilizing for their weapons program the declared material under the peaceful program.

INT: Did you have intelligence sources separate from those available to UNSCOM?

HB: No. The idea of Resolution 687 was that UNSCOM should be the recipient of intelligence, and on the basis of that, they should determine which sites should be inspected. This is how it worked. Gradually, it was found practical that intelligence briefings were given not only to UNSCOM, but also to our people in Vienna, because if they were to go there with chief inspectors, et cetera, then they needed to know more directly the information of the intelligence people. So they did get briefings, and that has continued.

INT: So gradually, that increased?



HB: Yes, but under the resolution, it was still UNSCOM that would designate any new sites for inspection. That continues, and that was the construction of the resolution.

INT: To what extent did your staff work with UNSCOM in the analysis of intelligence and in planning of the inspection missions?

HB: Very little. UNSCOM's job was to analyze intelligence, decide where, what targets you should go to for inspection, and thereafter it was our job to do the inspections.

INT: So they handed it over to you, basically?

HB: Yes, the targets were handed over to us. However, the logistics was also UNSCOM—they were to assist the agency. They ran the office Baghdad, they had the airplanes, et cetera, and therefore a fair amount of cooperation, of course, was necessary.

INT: But it was also said under the resolution that you were supposed to have a certain standard of cooperation, right?

HB: Yes.

INT: How could you characterize your relationship with the Executive Chairman of UNSCOM?



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HB: With two organizations acting in the same area, I think it was inevitable that there was some friction. I think on the whole UNSCOM felt that they should have a certain overall responsibility for all inspections and implementation of 687 in Iraq, where in the IAEA we felt that the agency had been given a separate and independent mandate with regard to the nuclear sector, and we did not appreciate when UNSCOM moved on to take steps that we felt belonged to our sphere. That led to some sparks, occasionally, but I couldn't say that it ever led to the reduced effectiveness of the operation. No, we kept it really under control.

INT: Were IAEA personnel frequently involved in joint missions with UNSCOM? We touched on that a little bit earlier.

HB: Later on, very much so. The inspection of so-called "capable sites" is something that has been undertaken in common. This is an operation in order to see that sites which could be used—they are so constructed or look in such a way that they could be used—for some weapons purposes, either for nuclear or for some other purpose; they are inspected by joint teams and done together [by IAEA and UNSCOM].

INT: At what point did you conclude that Iraq was seriously engaged in a program to build an atomic weapon and an effective delivery system?

HB: At the first inspection that took place in Iraq, it must have been in May or June 1991. They went to installations which had been bombed by the Americans, and there they could see how the Iraqis had "doctored" it, they had repainted the floors...

INT: Cleaned it.

HB: Yes, sanitized is another expression for it. Cleaned out what would be clear evidence of what they were doing. It was then, upon analysis, we found that what they did at this particular place was to have so-called calutrons, which is a rather old-fashioned method of enriching uranium. Very, very expensive, and not terribly effective. They had read somewhere in the books about it, and they had set it up. They had other

methods, but this was the first evidence that they [the inspectors] saw that yes, they are dealing with enrichment. In fact, the Americans knew it a little earlier than we, because you remember that there were hostages taken by the Iraqis, and the hostages were placed in various institutions, various places, and the idea was, from the Iraqis point of view, that they [the Americans] cannot bomb this if there were hostages there. There were a number of Americans which were placed in the Tuwaitha nuclear research establishment. They succeeded, eventually, in persuading the Iraqis to release the hostages, both the Americans and others. When the American hostages from this nuclear establishment came out, their clothes were taken by American research institutions, and they analyzed them, and they found tiny, tiny particles. And from these particles it was determined that the Iraqis are dealing with enrichment of uranium.



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INT: Incredible.

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HB: That was the first sign. Nuclear is unique in the sense that it leaves fingerprints. Anything that radiates leaves fingerprints, however small it is. And in this sense it is easier to look for nuclear programs than for biological or chemical.

INT: How did the Americans suspect...?

HB: They debriefed the people who had been hostages in the nuclear establishment, so I guess they asked routinely if there was anything, and there was.

INT: How serious was the Iraqi threat in your judgment at this time?

HB: It was serious, because our people estimated that if they had one more year, they could have had a weapon. So if they had not invaded Kuwait as they did, but had waited a year more, then they might have had a nuclear weapon.

INT: So close. How did you go about eliminating the Iraqi nuclear weapons program?

HB: First of all, a great deal of the facilities had been bombed to pieces by the war. Secondly, as we were able to map the whole of this program, we decided that the following installations had to be destroyed. And then the Iraqis were ordered to destroy these under IAEA supervision. We have beautiful videotapes of how these buildings are crumbling under the explosives.

INT: But not everything was destroyed under your supervision?

HB: We hope it was, yes, we hope there is nothing left.

INT: How certain do you feel that Iraq's nuclear weapon potential has been eliminated?

HB: In the Autumn of 1997, when I was still Director-General of the IAEA, we reported that we felt that we had a full understanding of the program from the beginning to the end, and we also expressed our conviction that no significant infrastructure was

left, that it was all destroyed. However, we pointed out at the same time that it is never possible in an inspection effort to be sure that you have got all tiny pieces of material or documentation—computer programs don't take any space, even some models of centrifuges don't take much space. You can never be sure about that. But I think all agreed with us, in the capitals, that there were very few question marks left in the nuclear program.

INT: To what extent was the Iraqi program dependent on imported elements, and where did they come from?

HB: There was a good deal of imports, and in technology terms, the most important came from Germany. That was through some German engineers who brought them drawings of how to build centrifuges, which are necessary for the enrichment of uranium. But they were also in contact with many other countries, and imports therefore were relatively significant.

INT: Did the regular IAEA inspections of Iraqi peaceful nuclear installations resume while you were still the head of the IAEA?

HB: No, they were resumed only before Christmas of last year, relatively recently. We estimated that when the Security Council had mandated us to undertake inspections of the far-reaching character that we have, then the inspections under the nonproliferation treaty, which are much more modest, would be sort of subsumed under this—they were

already carried out, you didn't need to have any special NPT (non-proliferation treaty) inspections. However, after the end of 1998, when the inspections under 687 disappeared, then the IAEA had the question, "Are we going to try to go in under the NPT safeguards and inspections?" Eventually they decided that they wanted to do that, and they carried out an inspection which did not find any diversion of any fissile material. However, the IAEA made it very clear, recently at the NPT conference, that they can only pronounce what they have seen there, and they are not able to fulfill their obligations under 687.

INT: This is actually part of that question: If so, were stricter inspection procedures successfully put in place?



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HB: Were effective inspections procedures [implemented] under 687?

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INT: Yes, stricter ones.

HB: Yes, I see what you mean. In the IAEA, in 1991, when we discovered that the Iraqis had been hiding things, concealing things, and we discovered that the safeguard system, as it existed in 1991, was insufficient, we decided this has to be changed. And also at that time, when member states realized that this was insufficient, they were ready to go along with that. Earlier, they would never have gone along with the strengthening of the system. I summarized it in 1991, in the Board of Governors of the IAEA, saying that "We need better access to sites, we need better access to information, and we need

access to the Security Council." And immediately set in motion modifications which we could undertake without any agreement by member states. All that we could move within our mandate and our competence, then we did, and then we said, "For the rest, we have to work out a new agreement which member states have to accept." And that agreement, the model agreement, was accepted in 1997 in the spring. So the safeguards system of the IAEA is now moving towards this strengthened system, but it still requires agreement by individual states, and they have perhaps thirty or forty states that have agreed, and so they have a long way to go until all have agreed to accept the stronger system.

INT: When you say that you wanted greater access to the Security Council, what do you mean by that?

HB: I mean that UNSCOM was a subsidiary organ of the Security Council, so they had frequent access to the Council. We did not have that practice, but I asked the Council, "Could we have a system under which I will report to the Council once a year on our efforts under the nonproliferation treaty?" They went along with that, so I saw them in '95, and '96, something like that. I went to the Security Council once a year, in New York, and reported on the question in New York. I also took occasion to report on North Korea and more generally on our work. So we had closer relations. There was no formal obligation, but it got us a closer relationship with the Security Council than we have had.

INT: Why was that so important to you?

HB: It was important I think both for us and for the Security Council. It was important for the Security Council to feel that this organization located in Vienna, belongs to us [the Security Council]. It has a function that is relevant to what we [the Security Council] are doing. It was also important for the IAEA to feel that yes, here is a Council that will back us up, whether it has regard in North Korea or Iraq. And I think it was a very good move. You see, at the time, there was also talk about setting up within the UN one verification system for everything. We felt that this was not a very wise thing—you have six hundred people in Vienna, you have several hundred people in The Hague, why should we have a duplication in New York? Wouldn't it be better that we report to the Security Council?

INT: So they meant that they wanted to set up another type of inspection team, but for Iraq as well?

HB: It was an idea that I think flowed out of the enthusiasm for UNSCOM. UNSCOM was doing biological, chemical, and missiles, why couldn't we have a UN organization that does the whole thing? It was never proposed by a government, but individuals came out with this idea. We didn't think it was a good idea, and it has not taken hold.

INT: Why did one decide to make a change, and create UNMOVIC instead of UNSCOM?

HB: First of all, the UNSCOM inspectors were excluded, and withdrawn from the end of 1998. Secondly, UNSCOM had become discredited in several ways. There was the revelation that there had been a very close cooperation with Israel on the intelligence side, which in itself was not prohibited, so UNSCOM could deal with any intelligence organization. But in the middle-East context, cooperation with Israel was of course a sensitive thing. Above all, there were allegations, I wouldn't say there was proof, but there were allegations that UNSCOM had been used by member states to milk secrets, information about Iraq—not necessarily relating to the weapons of mass destruction—it had been piggy-backed, that is the expression. Whether this is true or not, I don't know. I have not dug into it; I have not made an investigation into it. But this, together with the Scott Ritter's personal crusades, gave UNSCOM a bad name and they were, in the eyes of many of the members of the Security Council, no longer a viable mechanism. Therefore, it lapsed, and they felt that they needed a new one, which would be under stricter UN control, and following a UN style.

INT: How does your position of Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC differ from the Executive Chairman of UNSCOM?

HB: Not much, really, except that we are running this, asked to do this as a UN identity. This is a subtle difference, but I see that my friend Ekéus does not really feel that there is much different, but I think that there is a difference if all the staff is on the UN payroll, rather than on the member states' payrolls. And there will also be a much

more firm organization. We have drawn up an organizational plan for us, something that UNSCOM never had. We will see to it that intelligence is not flowing in various corners; there will be a strict procedure for that. But as regards to the task of inspection in Iraq, it has not changed. As regards the prerogatives, the competence, the rights we have, these are not changed. So in this sense, we are inheriting.

INT: So it is actually just the way the information gets to you, and how your personnel has been paid or where they come from.

HB: No, there is also this important change: that the suspension of sanctions is a possibility, in addition to the other. Also, the merging of ongoing monitoring on the one hand, and inspections and investigations of past weapons of mass destruction stores – in that sense they are different. They will have an impact upon how we pursue our inspections, so yes, there will be some important changes.

INT: How does the structure of UNMOVIC differ from UNSCOM? We touched on that, actually.

We said briefly how you were going to get your staff. How are you basically going to get it? You said that it would be under the UN, but how are you going to get them?

HB: How do we go about getting the personnel? Already before the organizational plan was adopted by the Security Council, we sent to all missions in the UN system here

in New York, a letter in which we told them that we shall need experts on biological and chemical weapons and missiles, and we asked them to look around in their own countries, and tell us whether they have some suitable names for it. And we have got a great deal of names from Russia, from China, from France, Italy, many, many countries. We are now in the process of interviewing lots of these people. Although the positions are not yet clearly defined, but we know that there need to be experts on, say, chemical weapons, and what level of salary, well, that's not quite clear yet. It's tentative: they have expressed an interest in coming here, we will interview those who we think are suitable, and then we will hire people.

INT: Will there be a possibility that people from UNSCOM [will be involved], or will there be completely new ones?



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HB: This is a somewhat controversial issue. The Resolution 1284 does not say anything at all about it. They say simply that we should have a good geographical balance, and while they don't say gender balance, we think there should be more women in the organization. And there are some members in the Security Council that feel we should start afresh—get new personnel, don't have any personnel left from the old time. And there are others that say, "Look, the old personnel have a lot of knowledge they have accumulated, and a lot of experience. If you throw out these people, then you'll have to start from scratch, it will take much longer time before you really can be effective." What I am doing is really to be pragmatic and say, "I think both fresh eyes and people

with experience." I'd like to retain some people with experience, and then have the possibility for them to pass on knowledge to the new staff.

INT: Sounds very wise. What was the background of your selection to head UNMOVIC? Why did you agree to take the position?

HB: The background was that I was a known quantity. They had seen me operating in the IAEA for sixteen years, and I feel I'm happy about those sixteen years of work at the IAEA; after that I still have the confidence of all the members of the Security Council. It's harder to explain why I accepted it, because I was in retirement, I was very happy in Stockholm, being able to live with my wife again, after being separated for a long time because of my job. But I felt, first of all, if the Security Council tells you that your name seems to be the only one that they have come up with in a couple of months that is acceptable to everybody, it is very difficult to say no. It's an important mission, and I've spent much of my life dealing with weapons of mass destruction. That was very hard to...if they feel that you can play a role, [it is hard to] say no, I don't want to. It was certainly nicer to live in Stockholm than to live here, but now I'm here, and I'm going full-speed ahead.

INT: The Iraqis know you already. Could that be a help for you?

HB: No, I don't think so. I think they probably dislike the IAEA less.

INT: But they accepted you.

HB: But they certainly like neither IAEA nor UNSCOM. I think they disliked UNSCOM more, perhaps because they had more frictions over the years with UNSCOM. They sort of, you know [in Swedish]. The friction goes on, year after year, and with UNSCOM they had many conflicts. There were fewer conflicts with the IAEA, and maybe also the more-correct UN style that we applied was less antagonistic. But I don't think they are enthusiastic about any inspection.

INT: Maybe they see you as a boomerang: they throw you away and you come back another way.



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HB: Maybe.

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INT: What do you expect your relationship with the Secretary-General to be, over the Security Council?

HB: With the Secretary-General, I have excellent relations. I respect him, I have great regard for his talent, his dedication, and I also have a personal liking for him. I think he is a warm person; he has a lot of empathy for the world. However, he is not my boss. The Security Council is my boss, and it is to them that I report. In this process, as political problems turn up, however, I want to keep in close touch with Kofi Annan, and

with his disarmament deputy, Mr. Danaphala, and otherwise, because they are experienced, they are intelligent people, and we think very much alike.

INT: In what ways, do you think, do you differ from Rolf Ekéus, and from Richard Butler? Does your way of working differ from their methods of operation?

HB: It's very hard to say, and perhaps I should not characterize that, but I am not.... I think at least Butler has been characterized very much as someone who liked the media, and media exposure. I am not so keen on that. It's not that I say no to interviews, but I'm not so keen on them.



INT: Will your way of working differ a lot from their methods of operation?

HB: In some ways, yes, I think that in Ekéus' time, perhaps for historical reasons, he started a very small apparatus, and it was very direct to him. If an inspector was in the field and he had some problems, he'd phone the Executive Chairman immediately. I think for a larger and longer term of organization, you cannot have that as a standard. I think you must have lines of communication that go to headquarters but everything will not go up to the Executive Chairman immediately. I will have heads of divisions here, and I think they will be the first line. Also, I think that the person heading the office in Baghdad should also be someone who can give advice to the people in the field. I think we will have a more structured operation than there was in the past.

INT: How will you organize your inspection teams? When will you start your work? Have you had contact with Iraqi representatives in your new capacity?

HB: We have not had any contact at all with the Iraqis on a person-to-person basis, and their attitude is to not have anything to do with Resolution 1284; it would not be consistent with that attitude on their part to meet me. They would simply rebut and say we are not welcome. So why should we ask, if we know that? However, evidently there is a discussion, because there is a public discussion. You have interviews with Tariq Aziz, you have interviews with other Iraqis, you have interviews with me, and you have interviews with Americans. So there is a public discussion going on, and we can read that in the media. Secondly, of course, there is the diplomatic talk—secretaries, counselors, ambassadors—and they talk to each other and they thereby feel what's going on, what the attitudes are, if they are changing. So this is the first point: this is the type of contact that goes on, and the present attitude of Iraq is to not cooperate with us and, I think, in the hope that the sanctions or the embargos to which they are subjected will collapse by themselves, and that they will not need to accept any further inspections of the kind that are foreseen under 1284.

INT: When will you start work?

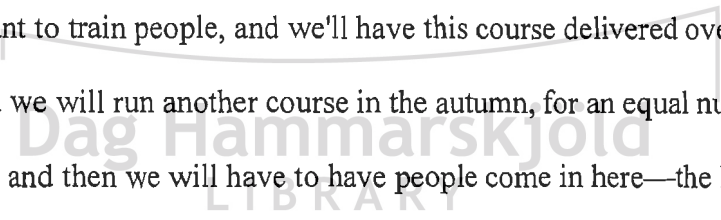
HB: We really cannot start until Iraq allows an inspection team to come in, but we could not go in if they said yes today. We could not go in because we don't have the people. We will have a training course for about forty people, or over forty people in the

summer, and in the best case I think we would be able to send inspections at the end of August, or September [2000]. Before that, it is not very likely that we could do it. But it all presupposes that they say okay, and we don't know when that will come.

INT: What I read now is the reason why they don't want to get in personal contact with you is because they don't want the public to think that they do agree to 1284. Correct?

HB: Yes, I think so. They say they won't have anything to do with 1284, and therefore they cannot touch us at all.

INT: You'll organize your inspection teams after the tasks?



HB: First we want to train people, and we'll have this course delivered over four weeks in the summer, and we will run another course in the autumn, for an equal number of people, at any rate, and then we will have to have people come in here—the head of the division dealing with planning of inspections—and they will have to go through all of the documentation and decide what are the places they want to inspect. They used to go to a great many places for monitoring them, and this will have to be done again. They have to compare them, [determine if] an evolution has occurred in these factories or whatever. The inspector's term is to "reestablish new baselines": where is Iraq today, and that will be an important part. We will also have to identify what Resolution 1284 calls "remaining disarmaments, unresolved disarmament issues." Those are questions where they are still unsure of whether there is something left of the weapons of mass destruction

from the past. We are asked by the Security Council to define these unresolved disarmament issues, and then to identify among those which are the important ones, or the key disarmament issues. And thereafter we will have to establish what we should inspect. So, it is a very delicate process that is ahead of us to decide what we will inspect.

INT: Do you feel that you have full support from the Security Council, especially the Permanent Members?

HB: Yes, I think there is a strong support. It took a long time for the Security Council to work out that resolution. There are tensions between some of them as to how they interpret it; in principle, I think the support is strong, but the tensions ultimately lead to problems. I hope not.

INT: What do you think the current situation in Iraq is in terms of illegal weapons? I know it is very hard to say, but...

HB: The consensus is that as of 1998, there could not be any nuclear weapons, and the general belief is that there were a few missiles left that were unreported; and that in the chemical field there may well be some left; and that the biological field is the least well-known, and they have suspected that there is a fair amount left. However, all of this is subject to analysis here, and to information and intelligence, and we will have to make a fresh assessment of it.

INT: It's so hard, since chemical and biological weapons are so easy to hide and so easy to produce, it's hard to know. Has it changed a lot, since UNSCOM was active? If so, in what way?

HB: We are losing time; time has passed since the end of 1998, and many things could have occurred in factories and installations in Iraq, so we have been sliding backward rather than improving the knowledge we have.

INT: Would it be possible to reactivate the monitoring equipment put in place by UNSCOM?



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HB: We don't know. There were cameras, there were sensors, and other equipment, and that will have to be examined, whether they still function. Batteries have run out, of course. So that will have to be established, whether we can use it. Some equipment will probably have to be taken out altogether, and new equipment put in.

INT: How do you envision a permanent monitoring system for Iraq?

HB: They had come a long way, both from the nuclear side and on the UNSCOM side, in designing this monitoring system, and that will consist of inspectors, to be sure, who would go to the sites. But it would also consist of sensors that are placed in strategic situations: cameras, for taking pictures, samplings taken from the air or from water, and

analysis of that. The modern means of analysis are fairly advanced and developing all the time, so I think that these means make it less and less difficult to have a permanent monitoring system. It is easiest in the nuclear sphere; perhaps most difficult is the chemical sphere.

INT: Do you expect to have access to the same intelligence sources as UNSCOM, including the U-2 flights and satellite imagery?

HB: Yes.

INT: How do you envision the cooperation between UNMOVIC and IAEA?

HB: Given that I come from IAEA...the staff engaged in the nuclear inspections are staff whom I appointed and whom I know very well. I think the relationship should be very good.

INT: They will get back at you! Just kidding...

HB: [laughing] No, I think we should do very well. There may be frictions in the future, as there were in the past, you know.

INT: What kind of involvement would you like the UN Secretariat to have?

HB: Well I want to have their advice, from the Secretary-General, and the whole administrative apparatus here, from payment of salaries, the premises in which we are lodged, et cetera—the infrastructure in which we operate, plus the political advice at the top level.

INT: That's about it?

HB: Yes.

INT: Where does your funding come from? Any financial aid from the UN, and if so, will it decrease your independence and flexibility?

HB: No, there is a new element, in that we are getting point eight percent [0.8%] of the Oil for Food money, so we have now an independent source of income, and that is a vast improvement over the situation of UNSCOM, where they sometimes had great difficulty in getting money. We are fairly well established, and well-equipped in terms of economy.

INT: And also that your inspectors will be paid from the UN.

HB: Yes, they will be paid, then, from this money.

INT: From that money, okay.

HB: There is nothing on the UN budget for our secretariat. This is a separate budget.

INT: So it is only from the old...

HB: What we get from the UN are the premises, the offices. That is given by the UN.

INT: The administration.

HB: Yes.



INT: How important is an independent UNMOVIC to you?

HB: I think it is fundamental, because if we are going to act on behalf of the world community then we cannot be an appendix of any one of the Member States. The respect and the reputation of the organization, I think, is very important for the credibility, and I will do my best to uphold that.

INT: To what extent did you expect to act independently from the College Commissioners that the Secretary-General will appoint? Have you had a role in their selection?

HB: Yes, there is something called the College of Commissioners, consisting of about eighteen members. Under the resolution, they will give me professional advice and guidance, and I will try to make use of that to maximum extent. However, if they are not agreed between themselves, then I will have to make up my mind. There is no voting in that College of Commissioners. However, I think that it may be a great advantage to have discussions there, because some things on which there are different views among members in the Security Council, we might discover that already in the College of Commissioners, and maybe then be able to take some steps to achieve a rapprochement between them, and thereby reduce the number of things on which they might be disagreed in the Security Council.



INT: You mean that if there is any disagreement, it will occur earlier.

HB: Yes.

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INT: Have you had a role in their selection?

HB: Yes. Under the resolution, the Secretary-General consults me, and he did, and so I had a role in it.

INT: What are your experiences with Iraq? We touched a little bit on IAEA, but are there any others? And what is your relationship with the Iraqis?

HB: I was responsible for the IAEA's operations there from 1991 until '97, so I have some experience; I sometimes met with Tariq Aziz and other members of the Iraqi government. I was sent down to Iraq by the Security Council, together with Ekéus and Akashi in '91, when the Iraqis had been shooting at some of IAEA's inspectors. But for the rest, I have not had any direct personal contact with them.

INT: For how many years do you expect to work with UNMOVIC? Do you expect an end of this Iraqi problem within a certain period of time?

HB: I would hope that my own engagement will not be beyond one or two years, I wouldn't want that; I think that if things become more settled that it should also be less difficult to find a successor to me. The mission in Iraq is not one that is to end very soon, because the monitoring is going to last for a long time. Even if we manage to clear up everything about the past, the monitoring will go on. Actually the resolution really envisages that the operations in Iraq will be seen as stepping-stones towards a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. I think monitoring might well remain, and we can have personnel for a long time.

INT: One last question, and that is that I have been doing a lot of background reading on this subject, and I've also done other interviews. It is sort of surprising to me that I always seem to get back to the same information. Even if I get new information from the interviews, I stumble over the information somewhere else in readings, in loose paper readings, different reports and so on. There's nothing really new, and I know it is a very

hard subject, and right now not much is going on because of the situation, because Iraqis won't let UNMOVIC as an organization into their country. But why do you think that is so, that I don't really find anything? I've been trying to come with questions so I'll get new information, but I get back to the original [information].

HB: Many others have put questions before you, and perhaps it is not so easy to dig up new questions. But the reality is one in the same, and you have people in all parts of the world looking at the same reality, and they are coming up with similar questions. But of course, there are many points we have not touched upon, which are maybe problematic, such as how we should go about inspections. We do not know ourselves how these things will play out. But my advice would be read, read, read. That's what I do all the time, and I think I'm learning a lot. It does not make for sensational evenings...but new aspects, so much is being written and much of it, hopefully, will be the same.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

Yale-UN Oral History

Hans Blix

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