

The Path towards Strengthened Safeguards: Experiences in Iraq, South Africa, and North Korea

This video series is a collection of dialogues centered on the immense role played by the IAEA, and in particular how the Agency supports nuclear nonproliferation through the practice of safeguards. This current update is a chronicle of events during the 1990s, Iraq, South Africa, and North Korea, that led to the development of the Additional Protocol.

7.9 Implementing Verification under UNSCR 687

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Laura: An incredibly large task. Talk to us about how the team was set up, how you structured the team, how did it operate. To have to map out and destroy a nuclear weapons program. Not something one does overnight.

Jacques: That is true, it took far more time than the SC had anticipated. The timescales were, and Laura you know that very well, because you were contributing to the drafting, the SC was talking about 15 days, 45 days, to draw a plan, to implement it, in terms of obtaining final declaration, or implementing destruction plan. Actually the order of magnitude had been more like 15 years, rather than 15 days. The challenge of having the right team was a big one. I would say the Agency started very well. I have to say even the DG of the agency, Hans Blix, who is the entity referred to in the SC, not the Agency as an organization, made the first great decision when he appointed Maurizio Zifferero¹ to be the director of the team.

Maurizio was a real expert in this area, and I think that he started that program of verification, with a very scientific approach, from which we benefited for the rest of the program, until 2003. He started drawing onto what I would call the top staff of the department at the time, Rich was one of them, and started to dig into understanding what the program could have done. Inspection teams were made of a significant proportion of Agency's inspectors, bringing into the verification the thoroughness, the rigor, of the traditional safeguards approach, but also made of outside experts, bringing abnormal competence to the team, and that in some ways how I started in the program, and as well there was a number of other contributors. You may remember at the time UNSCOM² was supposed to provide assistance and cooperation to the Agency, and UNSCOM staff were usually a few among the team. That is how it started.

There were regular inspections, they were numbered at the time, from IAEA 1 to IAEA 23 I think, going to Iraq once a month or more depending a little bit on the rate and the issues to address, and these lasted to the summer of 1994. By that time, not only did we have to continue to understand the remaining questions that were to regard the past program, but we also had to implement the ongoing monitoring and verification regime. And in that context, it was decided that the only way to make it effective was to have a permanent presence in Iraq. We ended up at HQ to have a team of dedicated people to the Iraq project, working a 100% working on the project, and a permanent presence in Iraq, with teams made of people on rotation. And still a leading team from the AT, at the time some assistance from inspectors in the Dept of SGs and additional external experts brought by member states with the aim to fill the gaps in terms of

¹ Former deputy director of IAEA, head of IAEA's Iraq Action Team

² United Nations Special Commission in Iraq <http://www.un.org/Depts/unscom/General/basicfacts.html>

competence. Again, the size of the team started small, we were when I joined the team full time in 94, something like 6 or 7 members, as our mandate developed through time, including in 2002 for instance, for the need for the Agency to contribute to the implementation of the old four foot program.

And review all contracts, and be sure there wouldn't be any diverted towards to a prohibited activity, the team ended up being over 20 at the time of the extensive inspection regime we implemented between November 2002 and 2003. But the key lesson learned for me has been the fact that having people work full time on it like that one is essential. You cannot, particularly when you want to go into deep analyses of very complicated issues like that one, presence or absence of the right cooperation from the country as it was as far of Iraq is concerned as late as summer of 1995. But also to make sure that follow up is done in the most timely manner. The Council, as well as the Iraqis were always extremely impatient to obtain results from the agency. So the permanent dedication of the team, and a team made of all the competence necessary to cover the whole program, mostly the members, but also the ability to draw on the unique competence dealing with the key areas has been a key factor of the success.