

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.

7.4 Iraq

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Demetrius: But going back to the history, the issue of Iraq came up in 1990, August, the invasion of Kuwait. When everything in the war was finished in Feb 1991, I was asked by Blix with Mohammad Elbaradei, director of legal at that time, to go to New York, because some Americans were trying to put together a resolution (famous resolution 687), and Blix wanted to make sure from a technical and legal point of view, the Agency retained its rights.

We met Robert Galucci¹ at that time, who was leading this, had some discussions - some smooth, some not - Galucci is very sharp and capable person. We came up with the guarantee that the Agency would do the nuclear part, and there would not be too many interferences from the other part of the organization, which was the United Nations. And they undertook at that time, that they would cover logistical support for the Agency under Res 687. The whole thing finished around April, which you remember, both of you, because you were involved. At that time we said to Blix that we had to go fast.

So Blix created the Action Team in the Agency, and he wanted to have 3 people to start with. This was me, Zifferero, who was the DDG for research and isotope separation, and then he asked me to come in to direct operations, and then he asked David Kay to do the administration part, contact with different agencies, etc. We came in together, and I remember at that time Zifferero insisted that I move my office to the 28th floor, and I insisted that I would not, because at that time I felt that the basic principles of the inspection effort in Iraq would have to come out of the Department of Safeguards. Because the IAEA Dept of Safeguards had trained inspectors, trained, ready, knew how to work on a team, how to assess results from an inspection, to put it in perspective, how to measure nuclear material quite well. We had already the spirit and structure of a team right inside the house.

I felt if I stayed where I was, on the 19th floor, if I were there I would not be considered a foreign body, I would be part of the group that I would ask to come on inspection. We got Blix to agree that whoever we asked they would be given to us for inspection as a priority. And then we said we are ready in 2 weeks to go. Because we felt it would be the requirements there, and we started talking about logistics support, but it did not exist at that time, because UNSCOM was 3-4 people at that time. They had not capability to do, but they managed to get us a plane, and 1-2 people together to join us, and so we in mid-May, one month after the resolution, we got into the country, and I had to be there.

¹ In 1991, was the Deputy Executive Chairman of the UNSCOM for Iraq.