

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.

7.1 Introduction

Keywords: history, development of safeguards

Rich: These events in history happened nearly coincident in time – DPRK, South Africa, Iraq – and they all played really important, formative roles in the development of strengthened safeguards. You were a principle in all of these inspections. We would like to hear how you came to be involved, how you were briefed according to the mandate, how you were prepared, how you organized inspection teams, the incredibly complicated logistics, especially in Iraq in the early days.

Demetrius: It is related in part to the history that I had with the Agency. I started in 1972, and I started working in South and SE Asia areas, India, Vietnam, up to there, and the Far East, Korea and Japan at the time. The first inspections were in Pakistan and India systematically, and they were not very pleasant states at the time, there were health problems for the inspectors going there. But you could learn a lot at the time, you could learn to face difficulties, from solving problems of how to develop your surveillance films - you had to use the toilet, sit on the seat to have complete dark to have the film developed in the dark. You had to fight with scorpions and snakes – when you are staying in the areas near the reactors – but you learned a lot – how to negotiate with the people, how to discuss with them, they were not easy, but you had to be very careful.

Around 1980 or 81, there was a problem in Pakistan regarding the surveillance – access of the surveillance cameras over the top – it is not adequate – the C/S system we had. So there was a team formulated – head of the team, myself, Von Beckman, a few others, and we went over there and were doing things – being bad guys and good guys – and I had to be the bad guy, and we managed at that time to extend the surveillance, not because Pakistan wanted to accept it but they didn't want to have more problems accumulate at the Agency, with respect to the inadequacy of the subsidiary arrangements. So that was the first thing out of the ordinary arrangements and inspections.

Then Blix came, and then I started working with Blix on a number of issues that had come up. At this time, the very fundamental issues were the joining of Japan into the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) type of safeguards (SGs) agreement out of the 66 type. And of course, Euratom, with the European Union countries at the time, and with Euratom as the safeguards authority, they were not very accepting of everything coming up to Agency safeguards, and international pressures – the problems there, as with Japan, were with Subsidiary Arrangements. Now we're getting into an area where we're facing different beasts – not just research reactors, and fuel fabrication plants – now there were enrichment plants, Pu bearing facilities, MOX, reprocessing plants – opening up the NPT type safeguards, all these facilities dropped in.

It was not just to go and discuss – first you had to understand what it was all about, how to set up the system for safeguards at these facilities. There was a period of long negotiations and internal studies, and Blix was involved in these things, to understand and try to pressure politically with these things.

You remember, Rich, there were issues with coordinators in the Department of Safeguards and Directors. Coordinators were supposed to do operations, and Directors were supposed to do the political things – and there were conflicts. Within these conflicts – there were three people – Les Thorne, Sven Thorstenson, me (I was the young one) – we formulated a little group – we tried to coordinate things – so that if things are happening in one area, they happen also in another. So there was this assessment and discussion, and to the extent permissible by the different negotiation techniques, etc., to have more uniform approaches across the board. This is what I find missing now, there is not much discussion and coordination what is happening today, and I think this is one thing they should concentrate on.