

Committee: Historical Security Council (HSC)

Issue: Addressing the Iraq disarmament crisis (July 1st)

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INTRODUCTION

The Iraq disarmament crisis is an ongoing dispute between the Republic of Iraq and the United Nations. Its origins can be found at the end of the Gulf War in February 1991 and the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 687 in early April of the same year. This resolution called for the unconditional removal and destruction of Iraqi chemical and biological weapons, as well as the halting of its nuclear program. A letter addressed to the president of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, was discovered a few hours ago. The letter state cooperation between the Iraqi armed forces and a terrorist group named Al-Qaeda, which allegedly received training and arms from the Iraqi republic. The letter, coupled with the fact that today, 10 years later, the Iraqi government has yet to fully comply with the restrictions and ban on weapons of mass destruction, and has actively sought to restrict UN weapons experts' access to the suspected weapons facilities and sites, mandates an immediate session of the Security Council.



The Gulf War broke out after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which was a two-day operation lasting from the 2nd of August 1990 to the 4th of the same month. Iraq's reasoning for the attack can be broken down to its inability of paying back war debt¹ to fund its invasion of Iran a decade earlier, as well as the steady and high production rate of Kuwaiti oil capturing the biggest section of the worldwide oil market, thus keeping Iraq's oil earnings low. The Iran-Iraq war that preceded the Gulf War is the core of the chemical and biological

¹ Kennedy, Hugh, and Majid Khadduri. ["The Persian Gulf War."](#) *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 9 May 2020, www.britannica.com/place/Iraq/The-Persian-Gulf-War.

disarmament crisis, seeing as weapons of this type were used against Iranian troops and citizens, as well as against Iraqi Kurds.

There have been multiple attempts since 1991, from violent bombings to peaceful lifting of sanctions, that all intend toward Iraqi cooperation. The fact of the matter is, however, that the disregard demonstrated by the Iraqi government regarding the Security Council's intentions and resolutions warrants an immediate assembly of the Security Council and the start of deliberations on the question of Iraqi possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs).

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Weapons of Mass Destruction

Weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) can be defined as every type of weapon designed with the aim of delivering great destructive power upon human life, infrastructure and the environment. These weapons are typically arranged under three main categories: Nuclear, Biological and Chemical. Conventional weapons such as bombs and grenades are subject to great controversy regarding their classification as Weapons of Mass Destruction among states, but are not classified as such by the UN. Thus, only chemical, biological and nuclear weapons are referred to as WMDs in this guide.

Shiite and Sunni Muslims

The Sunni and Shiite Muslims obey to the same general religion, Islam, albeit with some differences between each other. Followers of these two beliefs have, over the past century, clashed multiple times, with ever increasing violence involved. The vast majority of Shiite Muslims live in Iran, with the next largest country in terms of their population being Iraq. This distribution of population and religious groups is one of the main reasons leading to the Iran-Iraq war.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saddam Hussein

Saddam Hussein was the 5th president of Iraq since 15th July, 1979. He was the leader of the Ba'athist party which promoted an ideological mix of Arab nationalism and socialism. Hussein can be labeled as having strong anti-western sentiments after he showed strong support for the 14th July 1958 uprising, which succeeded in overthrowing the pro-

British monarch and established a government consisting of many Ba'ath party members. The new government proved to be extremely disliked after the Prime Minister, Abd-al Karim Qassim, who was a lieutenant colonel in the Iraqi army made questionable decisions against the people's will. Hussein, who also conspired Qassim's failed assassination in 1959, fled to Syria in fear of being caught and executed. After the 1968 revolution, the Ba'athist party took over command of Iraq, Saddam rose to power through the ranks of the party, eventually taking over the presidency. His actions were put under severe scrutiny for questionable and authoritarian decisions, like the silencing of critics of the regime and the pursuit of Kurds, which Hussein described as enemies of the state.

The Iran-Iraq war

Iran underwent a revolution from January 1978- February 1979, which saw the extremely disliked pro-western Shah (similar to a monarch) dethroned and exiled and the rise of Ayatollah (religious leader of the Shiite Muslims) Khomeini to power. Khomeini passed major reforms in Iran, undoing democratic practices and turning the nation into a theocratic Islamist republic with himself at its head.

Saddam Hussein relied on the support of the Sunni minority in Iraq and feared that the revolution in Iran (with a Shiite majority) might prompt unrest among the Shiite Muslims in his own country. He invaded the oil rich region of Khuzestan in Iran, aiming to dethrone Ayatollah Khomeini and reinstate the monarchy. The war that broke out lasted 8 years and resulted in a costly Iraqi victory, with estimates of losses in human life ranging from 1,000,000 to 1,500,000². The Iraqis received immense support from both Western and Eastern powers who sought to combat the spread of Islamic theocracy and extremism.

The Iraqi army and air force made use of multiple chemical weapons, unleashing them on Iranian soldiers and civilians, as well as their own Kurdish civilians. It was estimated by the UN specialist teams that over 40,000 Iranian civilians and troops died directly because of the chemical attacks, with another 50,000 deaths in the next 50 years caused by the long-term effects of poisoning, whilst over 80,000 people regularly seek medication and visit hospitals because of injuries sustained to this day³. The international community was quick to cover

² ["Iran and Iraq Remember War That Cost More than a Million Lives."](#) *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 23 Sept. 2010, www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/23/iran-iraq-war-anniversary.

³ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. ["Iran-Iraq War."](#) *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 16 May 2020, www.britannica.com/event/Iran-Iraq-War.

and back up the Iraqis, seeing as they had either supported the use of chemical weapons in order for Iran to be defeated, as was the case with the US, or they had directly provided the weapons and resources needed to launch the attacks, as was the case with the Netherlands, West Germany, France and others.

The UN Security Council adopted resolutions 612 and 620, in 1988, condemning the use of chemicals. This was ignored by Hussein's Government. Chemical weapons were also implemented in COIN (Counter Insurgency) operations against Iraqi Kurds who rebelled against Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, during which they were denied basic human rights. It is estimated by the Human Rights Watch (HRW) that at least 50,000 Kurds (civilians and combatants) ⁴were massacred during the Anfal campaign, most of them by chemical weapons.

Once again, the use of chemical weapons was either denied or deflected upon the Iranians by nations that had interest in appeasing the Iraqi government. The end of the Iran-Iraq war found the Security Council to be aware of the chemical weapons used by the Iraqi armed forces, in gross violation and disregard of the Geneva Protocol on Biological and Chemical weapons of 1925.



Image 2: Iranian troops march in Tehran. Note the portrait of the Ayatollah in the top right corner, as well as the soldiers wearing gas masks, in case of a surprise Iraqi chemical attack

Invasion of Kuwait and the Gulf war

The Iraqi economy, having barely recovered from the Iran-Iraq war two years earlier, was struggling to pay off the United States for the money they had borrowed during the war. The kingdom of Kuwait was selling much more oil than it was allowed by the OPEC (Organization of the Oil Exporting Countries) quota, keeping Iraq's oil sales low, thus

⁴ [Wong, Edward. "Hussein Charged with Genocide in 50,000 Deaths." *The New York Times*, *The New York Times*, 5 Apr. 2006, www.nytimes.com/2006/04/05/world/middleeast/hussein-charged-with-genocide-in-50000-deaths.html.](https://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/05/world/middleeast/hussein-charged-with-genocide-in-50000-deaths.html)

reducing its oil revenue. The Iraqi oil ministry requested the lowering of oil sales back in 1988, so as to help them sell oil for a greater price, but the request was not fulfilled, and Kuwait kept on selling more oil than it was allocated. This was seen as an act of aggression by Iraq, who promptly proceeded to accuse Kuwait of slant drilling and stealing Iraqi oil in the Rumaila field. The allegations were firmly and correctly denied by Kuwait, which was used as a justification for an invasion of the kingdom by Iraq. The operation lasted only two days and attracted immediate heavy condemnation by the international community and the Security Council with Resolution 660 (August 1990), prompting the implementation of embargos and the issue of an ultimatum by the United States of America, demanding the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait by mid-January 1991.

In the months that followed, a series of resolutions were passed by the Security Council, eventually culminating in resolution 678, which called for, once again, the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait by January 15th 1991, as well as the urging states to make use of “all necessary means” to liberate Kuwait after the deadlines’ expiration. The US President George W. Bush, fearing the consequences of Saudi Arabian oil falling into Iraqi control, spearheaded the attempt to form a multinational coalition, consisted of 34 member states of the UN, which would undertake the tasks of organizing the defense of Saudi Arabia (Operation Desert Shield) and forcing Iraq out of Kuwait (Operation Desert storm). Operation 'Desert Shield' was launched on the 28th of August 1990, and succeeded in bringing in about 200,000 coalition forces to Saudi Arabia. The coalition then launched Operation 'Desert Storm' on the 16th of January 1991, with a grand scale aerial campaign followed by the liberation of Kuwait and the invasion of Iraq.

It has been confirmed that Iraqi forces made tactical use of chemical weapons, such as mustard gas and Tabun. The coalition forces discovered multiple facilities for the manufacture and storage of chemical weapons, which were put under the microscope by the UN after the war. The Iraqis also made use of Soviet-manufactured Scud ballistic missiles, launching 88 of them against civilian and military targets in Israel and Saudi Arabia. Despite the minimal damage caused to military installations, scud missiles succeeded in killing hundreds of civilians and injuring thousands, as well as causing immense damage to civilian infrastructure in Israel. By the war's end, on the 28th of February 1991, the coalition had already imposed a number of economic sanctions on Iraq with UN Security Council Resolution 661, including a complete trade embargo (except for humanitarian supplies), but they also proceeded to the establishment of two no-fly zones over Iraq, one in the north, for

the protection of Kurdish civilians, and one in the south, for the protection of Iraqi Shiite Muslims. It is noteworthy that these no-fly zones remain enforced today. Finally, the UN gave the newly formed United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) free and unrestricted movement in Iraq.

The United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM)

Security Council Resolution 687 was passed unanimously on 3rd April 1991. One of the most extensive resolutions of the conflict, it was mainly concerned with disarmament affairs on the Iraqi WMD armory. The resolution called for Iraq to submit a report detailing all its WMDs and their corresponding facilities, as well as to agree upon immediate on-site inspections within fifteen days of the resolution passing. The resolution also empowered the newly formed United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), its mandate being to carry out all immediate on-site inspections, as well as to destruct, incapacitate or render harmless all WMDs and ballistic missiles with a range greater than 150km in Iraqi possession. The UNSCOM was put under the presidency of Rolf Ekéus, and the Deputy-Presidency of Richard Butler.



Despite Iraq agreeing upon the resolution, problems immediately emerged, the biggest of them being severe lack of Iraqi cooperation and false claims.

A good case study can be made through observations of the comments made by UN inspectors visiting the facilities at al-Hakam. There they were met by microbiologist Dr. Rihab Tahab, who claimed the factory they were visiting was a chicken-feed plant, when it actually was a germ warfare centre. The inspectors noted the unusual presence of anti-aircraft guns around the facilities, thus making it either the heaviest protected chicken-feed factory in the world, or an undercover chemical and biological weapons plant.

Iraq also failed to publish the complete and full report on chemical and biological weapons facilities in the deadline set by Resolution 687, instead publishing the report in late 1991. The report was proven to be false in 1992, when inspectors uncovered the al-Hakam facilities and chemical weapons that were not listed in the report. UNSCOM inspectors

found immense amounts of chemicals used for boosting germs lifespan and growth rate, and they were able to successfully link these to germ production at the alleged chicken-feed factory in al-Hakam. After a week of searching for weapons involving these biological agents, they found 157 bombs and 16 missile warheads filled with botulinum toxin (a toxin causing paralysis of major organs), as well as 50 bombs and 5 missile warheads filled with Anthrax. The plant at al-Hakam was blown up by UNSCOM staff in 1996. The commission was criticized by many Iraqi officials for housing CIA spies, allegations proven to be correct some years later, albeit unbeknownst to UNSCOM staff. ⁵

In 1997, the presidency of the commission went to Richard Butler, after Rolf Ekéus' term had expired. Butler was one of the suspects in the investigation regarding the CIA having infiltrated the UNSCOM, and Iraqi cooperation was significantly reduced after he took over. In the December 15th 1998 report, Butler testified that Iraqi officials had concealed a number of facilities, or even restricted inspectors' access to buildings in order to clear up any evidence suggesting weapon developing programs. UNSCOM inspectors were pulled out of the country immediately (Image 1), after which Operation Desert Fox took place. US and UK forces started a four-day bombardment of military targets, which they justified as a penalty for Iraq disobeying and hindering Resolution 687. The UNSCOM was broken up a year later, facing mounting evidence of CIA intelligence activities being carried out within its investigator groups.

It is important to note that spying activity had been carried out secretly by some inspectors, and that the UNSCOM was actively trying to fight its prevalence. Having existed for over 8 years, the United Nations Special Commission's work can be labelled as quite successful, with the termination of the Iraqi chemical weapons program, the uncovering of a grand secret scheme involving biological weapons and the elimination of Iraqi ballistic missiles being some of the biggest successes of the organization.



Image 5: project Babylon, a 355mm super-gun intended to shoot shells with chemical and biological warheads into enemy territory. The gun was never completed, but is sheer size amazed UNSCOM inspectors, who then proceeded to dismantle it

⁵ [The Washington Post, WP Company, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/daily/march99/unscom2.htm](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/daily/march99/unscom2.htm).

The Iraqi nuclear weapons program

Iraq was confirmed to be in possession of chemical weapons, while it had an active biological weapons program by 1991. The fact of the matter is, however, that Saddam Hussein had also started a nuclear weapons initiative along with the other two programs. The project never really amounted to anything though, after Israeli special forces blew up the only Iraqi nuclear reactor, which was still under construction near Baghdad during operation 'Opera' in 1981. The Iraqis never attempted to continue the program and complied fully with the nuclear part of Resolution 687, which tasked the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with ensuring Iraq's nuclear capabilities were eliminated.

Disarmament disputes and emergence of the crisis

There have been no investigations into Iraqi possession of WMDs, nor their neutralization since 1998. Scott Ritter, a chief weapons inspector with the UNSCOM, remarked in December of 1998, that Iraq might "reconstitute chemical biological weapons, long-range ballistic missiles to deliver these weapons, and even certain aspects of their nuclear weaponization program" ⁶ in absence of proper monitoring. 'The Telegraph', a British newspaper, also published an article on the 28th of January 2001, with information supposedly given by Iraqi defectors who worked in the bomb program, claiming that they had already developed two nuclear weapons⁷. Now that there has indeed been an absence of monitoring in Iraq for the past three years, and it is the Security Council's duty to consider the possibility of the Iraqi armed forces having reacquired WMDs. The possibility of a power in possession of WMDs in the unstable and conflict-prone region of the Middle East is too dangerous to be accepted by the international community. The ramifications of a future conflict in the region could be catastrophic, especially given the recent political events in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

⁶ [Lehrer, NewsHour with Jim. *Online NewsHour: Scott Ritter -- August 31, 1998, 31 Aug. 1998,*](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/july-dec98/ritter_8-31.html)

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⁷ [Overview of IAEA Nuclear Inspections in Iraq,](http://www.nci.org/new/iraq-ib.htm) [www.nci.org/new/iraq-ib.htm.](http://www.nci.org/new/iraq-ib.htm)

The July 1st letter

In the morning hours of July 1st, a handwritten letter addressing Saddam Hussein was intercepted by coalition forces stationed in Baghdad. The letter states the arrival of Mohamed Atta, an Egyptian citizen, who is a known collaborator of Al-Qaeda, to an Iraqi training camp, as well as his solid commitment to the “destruction of targets already agreed upon”. The letter also mentions the arrival of shipments of Uranium from Niger, thus giving base to the January 28th Telegraph article claiming the existence of two nuclear bombs, perhaps even more at this moment. Collaboration of any member state with terrorist organizations is unacceptable and poses a major danger to security all across the world.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Iraq

The Republic of Iraq has been the main country involved in the crisis, after it has repeatedly made use of WMDs, thus breaching the 1925 Geneva Protocol. Iraq has also failed to fulfill points set by Security Council Resolution 687, consequently allowing other Member States, like the United States, to claim that the Republic is in possession of WMDs.

United States of America

The United States of America has also played a major role in the issue, after it, in conjugation with the Security Council, planned the 1991 invasion of Iraq, which allowed the UN to put inspectors on the field and destroy Iraqi chemical weapons, as well as to neutralize the Iraqi biological weapons program and the ballistic missile threat. The United States of America blames Iraq for still being in possession of WMDs, despite Iraq firmly denying this.

The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom holds a key role in Iraqi history, after they founded the nation following the Ottoman empire's downfall in 1920. The United Kingdom had installed the pro-British Hashemite dynasty in Iraq, which saw a rather abrupt ending in the 14th July 1958 uprising. The United Kingdom has since then played the same role as the United States, aiding in the Gulf War and in Operation Desert Fox. British press also aired a highly controversial interview, where in Iraqi defectors claimed that Hussein's government was in

possession of two nuclear bombs, thus further boosting disputes regarding Iraqi disarmament.

Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran was the main victim of Iraqi aggression in 1980, when Iraq invaded. The heavy use of chemicals made by the Iraqi armed forces found Iranian troops and citizens as victims.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
22 September 1980-20 August 1988	The Iraq-Iran war takes place. The Iraqi armed forces make heavy use of chemical weapons, killing over 90,000 Iranian soldiers and leaving 80,000 seriously wounded.
March 12 1986-June 7 1989	The Anfal Massacre takes place. The Iraqi armed forces gas thousands of Kurdish villages, killing over 100,000 Iraqi Kurds.
August 2 1990	Iraq invades Kuwait, prompting the formation of the coalition and the start of operation desert shield. The United Nations Special Commission is formed (UNSCOM).
1991	The coalition liberates Kuwait and invades Iraq. The Security Council passes 16 resolutions calling for disarmament, sanctions and reparations.
April 3 1991- June 1997	UNSCOM investigators find and neutralize all Iraqi ballistic missiles and chemical weapons. They also uncovered the biological weapons program in al-Hakam, shutting down the facilities.
June 1997	UNSCOM presidency is handed over to Richard Butler, Iraqi cooperation is dramatically reduced.
December 16 1998	UNSCOM inspectors leave Iraq, operation 'Desert Fox' (bombing of Iraq) commences.
December 17 1999	UNSCOM is broken up and replaced by United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC).
January 28 2001	The telegraph publishes an article claiming that Iraq is in possession of two nuclear weapons, while it is also developing more of such kind.

July 1 2001	A handwritten letter addressed to Saddam Hussein is found, mentioning collaboration with Al-Qaeda and the delivery of components necessary for the construction of nuclear weapons.
January 28 2001- July 1 2001	Serious doubts over Iraqi cooperation with disarmament practices erupt. These doubts, combined with the July 1st letter culminate in the Iraqi disarmament crisis.

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

United Nation Special Commission (UNSCOM)

The United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) was formed shortly after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, but given specific tasks and a mandate on the 3rd of April 1991, after the Gulf War. Its mission was to carry out all immediate on-site inspections, as well as to destruct, incapacitate or render harmless all WMDs and ballistic missiles with a range greater than 150km in Iraqi possession. The Commission has to be commended for the successful fulfillment of its mission and has to be viewed as a role model for future similar cases.

The United Nations Monitoring, verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC)

After the United Nations Special Commission was broken up in December 1999, another organization was needed to replace the UNSCOM. This organization was formed in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1284 and was called the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC). This commission has however yet to prove itself, since the sanctions and limitations put on Iraq in 1991 were lifted soon after December 1999, and so disarmament inspections have been halted.

- S/RES/660/1990: The United Nations Security Council passed this resolution unanimously, condemning the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and demands Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait;
- S/RES/661/1990: Resolution 661 ordered a boycott of Iraqi products, as well as the placement of sanctions;
- S/RES/678/1990: Resolution 678 urged the formation of the coalition to liberate Kuwait;

- S/RES/687/1991: Resolution 687 ordered Iraq to submit a report detailing all its WMDs and their corresponding facilities, as well as to agree upon immediate on-site inspections within fifteen days of the resolution passing;
- S/RES/1284/1999: Resolution 1284 ordered the forming of the UNMOVIC to replace UNSCOM;

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Even though the crisis is quite a recent event, the UN's attempts at disarmament after the Gulf War were aimed to solve a very similar problem. With this observation in mind, we can devise a plan of action based on the tried and tested methods employed by the Security Council and UNSCOM. The two main components of this plan are investigations and decisions taken upon the findings of these investigations.

Investigations

The United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) should be deployed again on Iraqi territory. The Iraqi government should be asked to comply under the same rules and requirements that were set under the Security Council resolution 687. Should any WMDs be discovered, UNMOVIC officials will be required to dispose of said weapon in an orderly fashion. The UNMOVIC should be advised to meet with the Security Council twice a year, where officials will be testifying on Iraqi cooperation and WMD presence. A second investigation is required to shed light upon the July 1st letter, its authenticity and its consequences. A special UN body, adjacent to the UNMOVIC, could help clarify the issue. This body would need to have unobscured access to any facility and archives it requests, as well as a military escort made up of already present coalition troops.

Decisions and actions

The Council will decide, based on the UNMOVIC reports, on a course of action. If the reports are positive and Iraq is fully compliant, the Council may decide to ease the restrictions. In case of lack of cooperation, heavy economic sanctions can be implemented, as was the case in 1991. A report indicating the authenticity of the July 1st letter would bring heavy consequences, which would be discussed and voted upon in the Security Council.

Conclusion

The United Nations Special Commission proved that disarmament and control of WMDs is possible. It is the Security Council's task to ensure Iraqi compliance with international law and past rulings. Consequently the UNMOVIC can take upon itself the duty of continuation of UNSCOM tasks and, in conjunction with the Security Council, ensure Iraqi disarmament and safety in the region. The aforementioned special UN body would play a crucial role in the Security Council's final decision, after it confirms or denies Iraqi collaboration with Al-Qaeda and their reception of Uranium from Niger.

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