



Transcript of ElBaradei's U.N. presentation

03/07/03

(CNN) --Following is a transcript of International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Mohamed ElBaradei's March 7 presentation to the U.N. Security Council on the progress of the inspection effort in Iraq.

ElBaradei: Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, my report to the council today is an update on the status of the International Atomic Energy Agency's nuclear verification activities in Iraq pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1441 and other relevant resolutions.

When I reported last to the council on February 14, I explained that the agency's inspection activities has moved well beyond the reconnaissance phase -- that is, re-establishing our knowledge base regarding Iraq nuclear capabilities -- into the investigative phase, which focuses on the central question before the IAEA relevant to disarmament -- whether Iraq has revived or attempted to revive its defunct nuclear weapons program over the last four years.

At the outset, let me state on general observation, namely that during the past four years at the majority of Iraqi sites industrial capacity has deteriorated substantially due to the departure of the foreign support that was often present in the late '80s, the departure of large numbers of skilled Iraqi personnel in the past decade and the lack of consistent maintenance by Iraq of sophisticated equipment.

At only a few inspected sites involved in industrial research, development and manufacturing have the facilities been improved and new personnel been taken on.

This overall deterioration in industrial capacity is naturally of direct relevance to Iraq's capability for resuming a nuclear weapons program.

The IAEA has now conducted a total of 218 nuclear inspections at 141 sites, including 21 that have not been inspected before. In addition, the agency experts have taken part in many joint UNMOVIC [U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission]-IAEA inspections.

Technical support for nuclear inspections has continued to expand. The three operational air samplers have collected from key locations in Iraq weekly air particulate samples that are being sent to laboratories for analysis. Additional results of water, sediment, vegetation and material sample analysis have been received from the relevant laboratories.

Our vehicle-borne radiation survey team has covered some 2,000 kilometers over the past three weeks. Survey access has been gained to over 75 facilities, including military garrisons and camps, weapons factories, truck parks and manufacturing facilities and residential areas.

Interviews have continued with relevant Iraqi personnel, at times with individuals and groups in the workplace during the course of unannounced inspections, and on other occasions in pre-arranged meetings with key scientists and other specialists known to have been involved with Iraq's past nuclear program.

The IAEA has continued to conduct interviews, even when the conditions were not in accordance with the IAEA-preferred modalities, with a view to gaining as much information as possible -- information that could be cross-checked for validity with other sources and which could be helpful in our assessment of areas under investigation.

As you may recall, when we first began to request private, unescorted interviews, the Iraqi interviewees insisted on taping the interviews and keeping the recorded tapes. Recently, upon our insistence, individuals have been consenting to being interviewed without escort and without a taped record. The IAEA has conducted two such private interviews in the last 10 days, and hope that its ability to conduct private interviews will continue unhindered, including possibly interviews outside Iraq.

I should add that we are looking into further refining the modalities for conducting interviews to ensure that they are conducted freely and to alleviate concerns that interviews are being listened to by other Iraqi parties. In our view, interviews outside Iraq may be the best way to ensure that interviews are free, and we intend therefore to request such interviews shortly.

We are also asking other states to enable us to conduct interviews with former Iraqi scientists that now reside in those states.

Mr. President, in the last few weeks, Iraq has provided a considerable volume of documentation relevant to the issues I reported earlier as being of particular concern, including Iraq's efforts to procure aluminum tubes, its attempted procurement of magnets and magnets-production capabilities and its reported attempt to import uranium.

I will touch briefly on the progress made on each of these issues.

Since my last update to the council, the primary technical focus of IAEA field activities in Iraq has been on resolving several outstanding issues related to the possible resumption of efforts by Iraq to enrich uranium through the use of centrifuge. For that purpose, the IAEA assembled a specially qualified team of international centrifuge manufacturing experts.

With regard to the aluminum tubes, the IAEA has conducted a thorough investigation of Iraq's attempt to purchase large quantities of high-strength aluminum tubes. As

previously reported, Iraq has maintained that these aluminum tubes were sold for rocket production.

Extensive field investigation and document analysis have failed to uncover any evidence that Iraq intended to use these 81-millimeter tubes for any project other than the reverse engineering of rockets.

The Iraqi decision-making process with regard to the design of these rockets was well-documented. Iraq has provided copies of design documents, procurement records, minutes of committee meetings and supporting data and samples.

A thorough analysis of this information, together with information gathered from interviews with Iraqi personnel, has allowed the IAEA to develop a coherent picture of attempted purchase and intended usage of the 81-millimeter aluminum tubes as well as the rationale behind the changes in the tolerance.

Drawing on this information, the IAEA has learned that the original tolerance for the 81-millimeter tubes were set prior to 1987 and were based on physical measurements taken from a small number of imported rockets in Iraq's possession.

Initial attempts to reverse-engineer the rockets met with little success. Tolerance were adjusted during the following years as part of ongoing efforts to revitalize a project and improve operational efficiency. The project language for a long period during this time became the subject of several committees, which resulted in the specification and tolerance changes on each occasion.

Based on available evidence, the IAEA team has concluded that Iraq efforts to import these aluminum tubes were not likely to have been related to the manufacture of centrifuge, and moreover that it was highly unlikely that Iraq could have achieved the considerable redesign needed to use them in a revived centrifuge program.

However, this issue will continue to be scrutinized and investigated.

With respect to reports about Iraq efforts to import high-strength permanent magnets or to achieve the capability for producing such magnets for use in a centrifuge enrichment program, I should note that since 1998 Iraq has purchased high-strength magnets for various uses.

Iraq has declared inventories of magnets of 12 different designs. The IAEA has verified that previously acquired magnets have been used for missile guidance systems, industrial machinery, electricity meters and field telephones.

Through visits to research and production sites, review of engineering drawings and analysis of sample magnets, the IAEA experts familiar with the use of such magnets in centrifuge enrichment have verified that none of the magnets that Iraq has declared could be used directly for centrifuge magnetic bearings.

In June 2001, Iraq signed a contract for a new magnet production line for delivery and installation in 2003. The delivery has not yet occurred, and Iraqi documentations and interviews of Iraqi personnel indicate that this contract will not be executed.

However, they have concluded that the replacement of foreign procurement with domestic magnet production seems reasonable from an economic point of view.

In addition, the training and experience acquired by Iraq in pre-1991 period make it likely that Iraq possesses the expertise to manufacture high-strength permanent magnets suitable for use in enrichment centrifuges. The IAEA will continue, therefore, to monitor and inspect equipment and materials that could be used to make magnets for enrichment centrifuges.

With regard to uranium acquisition, the IAEA has made progress in its investigation into reports that Iraq sought to buy uranium from Niger in recent years. The investigation was centered on documents provided by a number of states that pointed to an agreement between Niger and Iraq for the sale of uranium between 1999 and 2001.

The IAEA has discussed these reports with the governments of Iraq and Israel, both of which have denied that any such activity took place.

For its part, Iraq has provided the IAEA with a comprehensive explanation of its relations with Niger and has described a visit by an Iraqi official to a number of African countries, including Niger in February 1999, which Iraq thought might have given rise to the reports.

The IAEA was able to review correspondence coming from various bodies of the government of Niger and to compare the form, format, contents and signature of that correspondence with those of the alleged procurement-related documentation.

Based on thorough analysis, the IAEA has concluded with the concurrence of outside experts that these documents which formed the basis for the report of recent uranium transaction between Iraq and Niger are in fact not authentic. We have therefore concluded that these specific allegations are unfounded. However, we will continue to follow up any additional evidence if it emerges relevant to efforts by Iraq to illicitly import nuclear materials.

Many concerns regarding Iraq's possible intention to resume its nuclear program have arisen from Iraq's procurement efforts reported by a number of states. In addition, many of Iraq's efforts to procure commodities and products, including magnets and aluminum tubes, have been conducted in contravention of the sanctions specified under Security Council Resolution 661 and other relevant resolutions.

The issue of procurement efforts remains under thorough investigation, and further verification will be forthcoming. In fact, an IAEA team of technical experts is currently in Iraq, composed of custom investigators and computer forensics specialists, to conduct a -- which is conducting a series of investigations [through] inspection of trading

companies and commercial organizations aimed at understanding Iraq's pattern of procurement.

Mr. President, in conclusion, I am able to report today that in the area of nuclear weapons, the most lethal weapons of mass destruction, inspections in Iraq are moving forward.

Since the resumption of inspection a little over three months ago, and particularly during the three weeks since my last ordered report to the council, the IAEA has made important progress in identifying what nuclear-related capabilities remain in Iraq and in its assessment of whether Iraq has made any effort to revive its past nuclear program during the intervening four years since inspections were brought to a halt.

At this stage, the following can be stated:

One, there is no indication of resumed nuclear activities in those buildings that were identified through the use of satellite imagery as being reconstructed or newly erected since 1998, nor any indication of nuclear-related prohibited activities at any inspected sites.

Second, there is no indication that Iraq has attempted to import uranium since 1990.

Three, there is no indication that Iraq has attempted to import aluminum tubes for use in centrifuge enrichment. Moreover, even had Iraq pursued such a plan, it would have encountered practical difficulties in manufacturing centrifuge out of the aluminum tubes in question.

Fourth, although we are still reviewing issues related to magnets and magnet-production, there is no indication to date that Iraq imported magnets for use in centrifuge enrichment program.

As I stated above, the IAEA will naturally continue further to scrutinize and investigate all of the above issues.

After three months of intrusive inspections, we have to date found no evidence or plausible indication of the revival of a nuclear weapon program in Iraq.

We intend to continue our inspection activities, making use of all additional rights granted to us by Resolution 1441 and all additional tools that might be available to us, including reconnaissance platforms and all relevant technologies.

We also hope to continue to receive from states actionable information relevant to our mandate.

I should note that in the past three weeks, possibly as a result of ever-increasing pressure by the international community, Iraq has been forthcoming in its cooperation, particularly with regard to the conduct of private interviews and in making available evidence that

could contribute to the resolution of matters of IAEA concern. I do hope that Iraq will continue to expand the scope and accelerate the pace of its cooperation.

The detailed knowledge of Iraq capabilities that IAEA experts have accumulated since 1991, combined with the extended rights provided by Resolution 1441, the active commitment by all states to help us fulfill our mandate and the recently increased level of Iraqi cooperation should enable us in the near future to provide the Security Council with an objective and thorough assessment of Iraq's nuclear-related capabilities.

However, credible this assessment may be, we will endeavor, in view of the inherent uncertainties associated with any verification process, and particularly in the light of Iraq past record of cooperation, to evaluate Iraq capabilities on a continuous basis as part of our long-term monitoring and verification program in order to provide the international community with ongoing and real-time assurances.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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