

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION



INFORMATION AND PRESS DEPARTMENT

32/34 Smolenskaya-Sennaya pl., 119200, Moscow G-200; tel.: (095) 244 4119, fax: 244 4112
e-mail: dip@mid.ru, web-address: www.mid.ru

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Interview with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Yakovenko on the Iraq's Nuclear Dossier, Publishing in Rossiiskaya Gazeta, February 20, 2006

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Question: Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met with Demetrius Perricos, Acting Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC). During the meeting the parties discussed the situation around the Iraq file concerning mass destruction weapons in that country. Was not the file closed after it turned out that Iraq possessed no mass destructions weapons?

Alexander Yakovenko: The IAEA and UNMOVIC, on the basis of relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council and on the results of their work in Iraq, had to report on the availability of mass destruction weapons in that country. According to Dr. Hans Blix, who headed UNMOVIC at the time, several months were required to give the final answer. But we all know what followed. The United States and Britain decided to take a unilateral military action bypassing the UN Security Council.

Still, in formal terms, the Security Council has not closed the file. Therefore, it is now necessary to revisit the Iraq disarmament file in the Security Council's framework.

Question: The Americans looked for mass destruction weapons, yet they failed to find anything.

Alexander Yakovenko: Really a survey group led by Charles Duelfer worked in Iraq. After many months of searches, they prepared a relevant report. But, first, the document has not been published. Only some facts that leaked into the press are known. Besides, it is not certain that the information that has been published accurately reflects the survey group's findings and conclusions. Second, it is a report prepared by one country and that country is strongly involved in the Iraqi affairs. The UN Security Council cannot make its decisions on that basis. UNMOVIC and the IAEA have to analyze American materials yet again and submit conclusions to the Council.

Let me note that the American report strongly differs in structure terms from UNMOVIC's findings, which means that it will be necessary to collate and analyze the data. Besides, UNMOVIC and the IAEA could raise the issue of new onsite inspections, the need to discuss it with Iraq scholars and take other steps. For that to be done, it is necessary to get

the go-ahead from Iraq's new government to be formed on the results of the parliamentary election held in December, 2005.

I hope that the United States will show readiness to cooperate on the issue. Washington will then have to provide the findings of its survey group to the United Nations. Naturally, not all findings, but only those directly related to the competence of UNMOVIC and the IAEA. After those organizations provide reports and after potential inspections of Iraqi facilities are carried out, the Security Council should adopt a resolution that would sum up the results of UNMOVIC's and the IAEA's activities in Iraq and would fix the completion of the mandate of those organizations.

Question: What are the general criteria for Iraq's disarmament?

Alexander Yakovenko: Naturally, such criteria do exist. As for the goal of Iraq's disarmament, it is not limited to physical elimination of certain components of mass destruction weapons and delivery means. Plans call for exercising control over Iraqi facilities in the long run, which would allow preventing the implementation of programs related to designing, development and production of mass destruction weapons and would put related materials, technologies and equipment under control.

Under the current conditions, the problem of Iraq's mass destruction weapons has grown even more acute, especially with account of military political instability in Iraq, where elementary guarantees that those dangerous elements will not fall into the hands of terrorist organizations are lacking. Facts are well known when such components used to be moved out of Iraq as scrap metal.

Question: Are there restrictions in place for supplies of certain materials to Iraq?

Alexander Yakovenko: Such restrictions are fixed in the Security Council's relevant decisions. Along with materials, they concern technologies. But this is not enough. Iraq should adhere to the additional protocol to the IAEA Safeguards Agreement and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Talks on the issue are underway, but they have yet to yield results.