



# Executive Memorandum

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## STAY THE COURSE ON DISARMING IRAQ

*JAMES PHILLIPS*

A critical decision point is fast approaching for U.S. Iraq policy. After ratcheting up international pressure on Iraq to disarm through the United Nations Security Council, the Bush Administration now must maintain the momentum toward that goal. Specifically, the United States must avoid being diverted into a diplomatic quagmire at the U.N., where some members of the Security Council seek to sidetrack U.S. policy through an ineffective inspections regime that provides the illusion of arms control.

Washington should maintain President Bush's zero tolerance for Iraqi cheating and stiffen the spine of the Security Council and U.N. inspectors in looking at the glaring deficiencies in Iraq's 12,000-page report on its weapons programs. Baghdad's continued cover-up of its prohibited military programs should trigger U.S. military action to disarm Iraq, with or without formal U.N. support.

**A Dangerous Charade.** Seven years of U.N. inspections failed to rid Iraq of its prohibited weapons before Baghdad pulled the plug in 1998. There is no reason to believe that inspections can achieve genuine disarmament now. Iraq's December 7 "full and complete" weapons declaration, which recycled past denials and contained little new information, has made it clear that Saddam Hussein will be no more accommodating than before.

The United States cannot afford to allow Iraq to return to its 1991–1998 charade of "cooperating" with U.N. arms inspections. This would allow Baghdad to buy time to develop and deploy more

dangerous weapons. As Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld warned on January 15, "We do know that Iraq has designed its programs in a way that they can proceed in an environment of inspections, and that they are skilled at denial and deception." It is unrealistic, moreover, to expect that fewer than 200 inspectors can find prohibited weapons, materials, or equipment that the Iraqis have had four years to hide in a country bigger than Texas. Iraq's delaying tactics also could prevent the United States from taking military action during the cooler winter months, which will be important if the threat of Iraqi chemical and biological weapons forces American troops to fight in cumbersome protective gear.

Hans Blix, director of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), is naively playing into Saddam's hands. Although Iraq's failure to divulge its weapons programs clearly violates Resolution 1441, Blix has indicated that his January 27 report to the Security Council will mark only "the beginning of the inspection process, not the end of it." He has unilaterally redefined his mission to be one of "contain-

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ment” of Iraq and has promised to continue inspections despite Iraq’s manifest failure to provide the required “full and complete” declaration.

To keep its Iraq policy on the right track, the Bush Administration should:

- **Keep the focus on disarming Iraq, not inspecting it.** Washington must insist that Baghdad rigorously comply with its obligations to disarm, not just go through the motions of cooperating with inspections. U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441, which threatened “serious consequences” if Iraq did not comply with its obligations, clearly puts the onus on Iraq to prove it has disarmed, not on the inspectors to prove that it has not.
- **Prevent Hans Blix from lowering the bar.** The Swedish diplomat was a poor choice to head UNMOVIC. Blix formerly led the International Atomic Energy Agency, which gave Iraq a clean bill of health on nuclear weapons issues before the 1991 Gulf War. Even after the IAEA’s failings were revealed by the postwar discovery of Iraq’s huge nuclear weapons program, the IAEA had to be prodded by U.N. inspectors to investigate suspected Iraqi nuclear sites, over Blix’s objections. Now he has unilaterally decided to continue inspections until at least March, despite Iraq’s obstinate refusal to disarm. Washington and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan should rein in Blix and remind him that his mandate is set by the Security Council.
- **Press the Security Council to declare Iraq to be in material breach of Resolution 1441.** Washington should demand that the Security Council declare Iraq to be in violation of Resolution 1441 based on such things as Baghdad’s repeated failure to account for missing weapons uncovered by U.N. inspectors before inspections ended in 1998 and its continued attacks on U.S. and British aircraft patrolling the no-fly zones. It

is not necessary for the inspectors to find a new “smoking gun.” Baghdad’s December 7 disclosure failed to account for many old “smoking guns” discovered before inspections ended in 1998, such as 550 artillery shells filled with mustard gas, 400 aerial bombs capable of carrying biological agents, nearly 30,000 empty munitions that could be filled with chemical agents, and huge quantities of anthrax and nerve gas that remain missing and unaccounted for by Baghdad. It also failed to account for 12 chemical warheads found by inspectors on January 16.

- **Challenge the U.N. Security Council to endorse military action to disarm Iraq but be prepared to go it alone.** The United States should publicly challenge the Security Council to enforce its own resolution on Iraq; but if the Security Council defaults on its commitment to Iraqi disarmament, the United States should lead a coalition of the willing to take military action, as it did in Kosovo in 1999, without formal U.N. approval.

**Conclusion.** The United States must refuse to be drawn into a replay of Saddam Hussein’s cynical game of hide-and-seek with the U.N. inspectors. The inspectors cannot disarm weapons that they cannot find. If the Security Council again fails to enforce its own resolutions, it risks becoming as irrelevant as the League of Nations, but the Bush Administration cannot afford to undermine U.S. credibility by defaulting on its own commitment to disarm Iraq. This would embolden Saddam Hussein, increase the potential threat his regime poses to the United States and its allies, and embolden other possible adversaries, such as North Korea.

—James Phillips is Research Fellow in Middle East Affairs in the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies at The Heritage Foundation.