



Weapons of Mass Destruction

The issue is the likelihood of WMDs in Iraq in the weeks prior to U.S. military action in that country. From that perspective, fifteen years is a very *very* long time. More than enough time for Hussein's regime to destroy its stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons. I raise the issue, not as proof of a continuing WMD threat in Iraq, but to point out that Saddam Hussein has demonstrated both the willingness and capability to kill large numbers of people using Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Let's look at a more recent document. Here are a few lines from UNSCOM letter S/1999/94. Please note that the emphasis is mine, not that of the weapons inspectors.

“Iraq’s disclosure statements have never been complete; contrary to the requirement that destruction be conducted under international supervision, Iraq undertook extensive, unilateral and secret destruction of large quantities of proscribed weapons and items; it also pursued a practice of concealment of proscribed items, including weapons, and a cover up of its activities in contravention of Council resolutions.”

That's from an official report by the weapons inspectors. Here's another piece from the same report:

“The Commission has been very substantially misled by Iraq both in terms of its understanding of Iraq’s proscribed weapons programmes and the continuation of prohibited activities, even under the Commission’s monitoring.”

And another quote, also from the same report:

“In response to the Commission’s requests for relevant documents, Iraq has repeatedly claimed that they no longer exist or cannot be located, a claim which often has been shown to be false, either because inspection activities have in fact located precisely such documents or because Iraq has reversed its stated position and then produced relevant documents. In one aspect related to the destruction of BW warheads, the Commission, after consulting a group of international experts, assessed that Iraq’s declaration that 15 warheads had been destroyed simultaneously conflicted

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with physical evidence collected at the declared location of their unilateral destruction. This finding indicated that not all BW warheads had been destroyed at the same time as claimed by Iraq and that Iraq had retained some BW warheads...

In October of 2002, just five months before the start of the Iraq war, the CIA's official 2002 summary of Iraq's WMD program had this to say:

*"More than 10 years after the Gulf war, gaps in Iraqi accounting and current production capabilities strongly suggest that Iraq maintains a stockpile of chemical agents, probably VX, sarin, cyclosarin, and mustard. **Iraq has not accounted for 15,000 artillery rockets that in the past were its preferred means for delivering nerve agents, nor has it accounted for about 550 artillery shells filled with mustard agent.**"*

The CIA report also referenced Iraqi Air Force documents which indicate that Saddam Hussein's military deliberately overstated the number of chemical bombs expended during the Iran-Iraq war by at least 6,000. In other words, 6,000 chemical warfare bombs that had been reported to the UN as destroyed were — in fact — totally unaccounted for. Those 6,000 bombs remain unaccounted for to this day.

Experts from UN weapons inspection teams assessed that Baghdad's declarations vastly understated the production of biological agents. According to the estimates of the inspectors, Iraq actually produced two-to-four times the amount of agent that it acknowledged producing, including *Bacillus anthracis* (the causative agent of anthrax) and botulinum toxin.

Just six weeks prior to the Iraq war, Chief UN Weapons Inspector Hans Blix made his report to the UN Security Council on the progress of the inspection effort in Iraq. Mr. Blix spoke hopefully, and highlighted several recent advances in the inspection process. He also stated that *many proscribed weapons were not accounted for*. He specifically mentioned 1,000 tons of chemical agent that the Iraqi government could not (or would not) account for. He was careful to avoid jumping to the conclusion that the agents were missing. He left room for the possibility of some harmless error that might account for the loss of 1,000 tons of chemical weapons.

Mr. Blix's report also addressed the fact that Iraq was continuing to manufacture components of the al-Samud II missile system, in violation of UN Resolution 687 and the monitoring plan adopted by Resolution 715. He referenced the discovery of 380 missile engines, designed for use in the prohibited weapons system, and pointed out that Iraq had imported the engines in violation of the UN ban.

I could easily fill up sixty more pages with similar citations, but I've already subjected you to enough dry bureaucratic writing. Instead, I'll settle for a quick recap of what we've already seen. At the onset of U.S. military action in Iraq, 6,000 chemical warfare bombs were unaccounted for, along with over 500 chemical artillery shells, more than 15,000 artillery rockets designed for use with chemical weapons, 1,000 tons of an unidentified chemical warfare agent, and at least 15 biological warfare warheads. These are from only a handful of the available reports. There are many *many* more like them.



Do these documents constitute the proverbial *smoking gun*? Perhaps not. Are they incontrovertible *proof* of an ongoing WMD program in Iraq? No. But they are (and *were*) extremely powerful indications of Iraq's capabilities and intentions.

Bear in mind that I've presented only a fraction of the material available, and that a great deal of the remainder points in the same direction. Also remember that we are speaking of a regime *known* to have possessed and employed chemical weapons, as well as a frequently-demonstrated intent to deceive UN inspection teams.

All of this raises a simple question: Where are the Weapons of Mass Destruction? I can't answer that. At the moment, no one who *can* answer that question has come forward. Maybe the assessments were wrong. Maybe Saddam really had destroyed his stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons. If so, I have to wonder why he was continuing to play games with the inspection teams. I also have to wonder why he was actively importing banned weapons systems less than two months prior to the start of the war.

I don't think we can be certain yet that the WMDs are gone. Iraq is a large country, and we've only searched a portion of it. We know a lot of things are still hidden under the ground, because we're still stumbling across mass graves.

But I must admit that it's possible that our intelligence estimates were *wrong*. That doesn't make the President a liar. It means that our intelligence people read the signs wrong. I've read the documents, and I came to pretty much the same conclusions as the intelligence community. If it turns out that their assessment was wrong, then mine was wrong as well. That may turn out to be the case. But there's an ocean of difference between a faulty assessment, made in good conscience, and a deliberate deception.

As I've said, I don't kid myself into thinking that I can sway the minds of people who believe that the President lied about Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction. Instead, I invite you to review the evidence yourself. Not the sound bytes and cable news abstracts of the evidence, but the *actual documents* available prior to March 19, 2003. They're available to the public at no charge. Read them. Think about them. Try to mentally place them in the context of what we knew *before* the first U.S. tank rolled across the border into Iraq. And then make up your *own* mind about whether or not the President lied.

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