

Discussion

Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs

In April 1991, the UN Security Council enacted Resolution 687 requiring Iraq to declare, destroy, or render harmless its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) arsenal and production infrastructure under UN or International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) supervision. UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 687 also demanded that Iraq forgo the future development or acquisition of WMD.

Baghdad's determination to hold onto a sizeable remnant of its WMD arsenal, agents, equipment, and expertise has led to years of dissembling and obstruction of UN inspections. Elite Iraqi security services orchestrated an extensive concealment and deception campaign to hide incriminating documents and material that precluded resolution of key issues pertaining to its WMD programs.

- Iraqi obstructions prompted the Security Council to pass several subsequent resolutions demanding that Baghdad comply with its obligations to cooperate with the inspection process and to provide United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and IAEA officials immediate and unrestricted access to any site they wished to inspect.
- Although outwardly maintaining the facade of cooperation, Iraqi officials frequently denied or substantially delayed access to facilities, personnel, and documents in an effort to conceal critical information about Iraq's WMD programs.

Successive Iraqi declarations on Baghdad's pre-Gulf war WMD programs gradually became more accurate between 1991 and 1998, but only because of sustained pressure from UN sanctions, Coalition military force, and vigorous and robust inspections facilitated by information from cooperative countries. Nevertheless, **Iraq never has fully accounted for major gaps and inconsistencies in its declarations and has provided no credible proof that it has completely destroyed its weapons stockpiles and production infrastructure.**

- UNSCOM inspection activities and Coalition military strikes destroyed most of its prohibited ballistic missiles and some Gulf war-era chemical and biological munitions, but Iraq still has a small force of extended-range Scud-variant missiles, chemical precursors, biological seed stock, and thousands of munitions suitable for chemical and biological agents.
- Iraq has preserved and in some cases enhanced the infrastructure and expertise necessary for WMD production and has used that capability to maintain a stockpile of WMD and to increase its size and sophistication in some areas.