

NEWS RELEASE

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Statement of

SCOTT RITTER

September 16, 1998

at

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Hearing of the Committee on National Security
Room 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC

Thank you very much for inviting me to appear before you to discuss important issues pertaining to U.S. policy toward Iraq.

I chose to resign from my position with the Special Commission in hope that in so doing I would precipitate a general debate concerning the direction of U.S. foreign policy toward Iraq, whether this stated policy furthered the goals of disarming Iraq in accordance with Security Council resolutions, and whether the policy toward Iraq as practiced matched those stated objectives.

Recently the U.S. policy goal toward Iraq was stated as seeking to deny Iraq the capacity ever again to threaten international peace and security. To achieve this end, the U.S. supported a two-pronged approach, with one prong seeking to support inspections by the United Nations Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency to carry out disarmament, monitoring and verification inspections in Iraq, and the other prong seeking to maintain economic sanctions, because such sanctions "create an incentive for Iraq to comply with weapons inspection and monitoring activities." This policy of the U.S. is praiseworthy — its implementation is inconsistent and ineffective.

As I speak to you today, Iraq has suspended cooperation with the inspectors of the Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency. As a result, there are today no meaningful inspections taking place in Iraq. Iraq is not being disarmed as required by the U.N. at the end of the Persian Gulf War.

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In response to this illegal Iraqi action, the Security Council —after more than one month of deliberation unanimously adopted a new resolution last week, No. 1194, condemning Iraq's actions, and suspending all sanction reviews until such time as Iraq rescinds its decision to suspend cooperation.

However, this resolution also contains language which offers Iraq a "light at the end of the tunnel" through the promise of a "comprehensive review" of Iraq's compliance with its disarmament obligations. Such a review, conducted under the auspices of the Secretary General, would result in the investigators becoming the investigated, all at the behest of Iraq. This is fundamentally wrong and provides a formula for continued compromise leading to the dangerous illusion of a disarmed Iraq.

Equally disturbing is the impression given by many in the U.S. national security team that this resolution has real teeth because of the suspension of sanctions review — despite its unspoken olive branch.

The reality is that Iraq is winning its bid to retain its prohibited weapons. Continuation of sanctions as a sole means of enforcing Security Council resolutions is a self-defeating policy. Iraq has demonstrated its resolve to survive and even prosper under sanctions. Combined with its ability to adapt to the rules of the "oil for food" exception, Iraq scoffs at the Security Council resolution suspending sanctions reviews as a mere continuation of a waiting game in which Iraq believes that time is on its side.

Iraq is not disarmed. Iraq still poses a real and meaningful threat to its neighbors, and nothing the Security Council or the United States is doing currently will change this fact.

I am concerned that it is the United States that has put itself into a strategic box, outwitted by an intransigent Iraq and those Security Council members whose objectives in Iraq are less than honorable. Something needs to be done to change the current course of affairs. I am ready to answer any questions you may have of me.

Thank you.