

TESTIMONY

BY

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FOR

**THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON THE ARMED SERVICES**

**HEARING ON THE REPORT ON WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION
FINDINGS IN IRAQ**

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Mr. Chairman and distinguished members, I am honored to be called before you today to give testimony and answer your questions.

I am the Director and President of the Board of Directors of the International Council for the Life Sciences (ICLS). Previously I was with the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), a leading independent international institute with its headquarters in London, as the President and Executive Director of IISS-US in Washington DC. I have substantial experience in international security policy matters as a UK government official (both military and diplomatic) and for the United Nations both in the field and at UN Headquarters. My experience is related to both military field operations and to the development and implementation of policies in relation to arms control and non-proliferation treaties and agreements for both conventional and weapons of mass destruction and the law of armed conflict. I was a career officer in the British Army with experience in many parts of the world including UN peacekeeping and counter-terrorism operations. Most relevant to this committee's considerations today is that I was one of the Commissioners to the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) on Iraq (1993-1995), and as such, had oversight of UNSCOM's inspection activities in relation to Iraq's nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and missile programs. As part of my responsibilities as a Commissioner I was a member of the sub-committee that dealt with chemical and biological weapons. I also acted as one of the Chief Inspectors for UNSCOM conducting inspections in Iraq in the period from 1993 to 1997.

I would like to make clear to the committee that the views that I express in the following testimony are personal and should not be attributed to any of the organization with which I have been associated.

With regard to committee's deliberations, I believe it is important that the recent report on the discovery of about 500 chemical weapons munitions in Iraq since Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 is put into the context of the scale and scope of the Iraqi chemical weapons program. When UNSCOM began its work in 1991, the Iraqi chemical weapons program was the best known of that country's weapons of mass destruction activities. The Iraqis had extensively used these weapons in the Iran-Iraq war (1980 to 1988) both against Iranian forces and Iraq's own population for internal security purposes. The last use was thought to be in 1991 against Iraq's Shiite population in the Basra region in suppressing the uprising that followed the coalition operation to recapture Kuwait.

UNSCOM and other organizations involved in inspections in Iraq have estimated that at least 100,000 munitions were used in the field by Iraqi forces during the decade to 1991. UNSCOM and later inspection organizations found that the Iraqis had an extensive chemical weapons program that included nerve and mustard agents delivered by Al Hussein missiles, 500 lb free fall bombs, 122mm artillery rockets and 155mm artillery rounds. Given the extremely large quantity and variety of weapons, it was incredibly difficult to make a very precise assessment of the total quantity of weapons and bulk chemical warfare agents produced, deployed and used by the Iraqis. In its operations UNSCOM directly destroyed approximately 40,050 chemical weapons munitions and verified remnants of close to 20,000 destroyed munitions. The Iraqis declared to

UNSCOM that they had some 56,397 munitions at the end of the 1991 Gulf War and had unilaterally destroyed 27,537 of those by the end of 1991. The chemical warfare agents used in these weapons included mustard agent and the nerve agents tabun, sarin and cyclosarin. A small quantity of the more advanced nerve agent known as VX was produced and might have been used in small quantities against Iranian forces in 1988.

Given the large quantity and variety of chemical weapons produced and deployed by Iraq, it is understandably difficult to offer an accurate assessment of the remaining chemical weapons following an armed conflict. In Europe and elsewhere chemical weapons of World War I and World War II vintage are still being discovered in former storage sites and places where they had been abandoned in the aftermath of the conflicts. Often records were not properly kept or were destroyed during the wars. Iraqi reporting contained inaccuracies no doubt for similar reasons rather than through deliberate attempts at obfuscation. That is not to say that, in my experience, the Iraqis did not mislead the inspectors. However, this was most often aimed at concealing the level of technical development of their chemical weapons program rather than the quantities of munitions involved.

Are the weapons that have been discovered dangerous? The US military would be in the best position to assess the state of these munitions from the technical point of view. I will confine myself to some general observations. The danger they present would depend on the conditions under which they were stored or positioned. All chemical agents degrade over time. Mustard agent is the most persistent over many years and could cause serious blistering of the skin and of the airways if vapor is inhaled. Nerve agents, while potentially the most lethal, are less persistent and stable over time. It is important to be aware that the munitions concerned were designed to be delivered in salvos for tactical effect and individual munitions do not present a widespread danger. As mentioned in the report, you are considering one of the dangers to be that insurgents might incorporate these weapons in an improvised explosive device (IED). Used in this way it would complicate casualty handling, treatment of wounds and cleaning up the scene of an incident. It would be unlikely to cause a greater number of casualties. This is particularly so as the weapon would not be used in the way it was designed to operate. From the perspective of an insurgent these chemical munitions would be more difficult to handle as many would probably be leaking and the results would be less certain than with a purely high explosive device.

I am grateful for this opportunity to appear before you and would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.