

UNMOVIC/IAEA Press Briefing in Baghdad
30 November 2002

Opening Statement

by Hiro Ueki, Spokesman for UNMOVIC and the IAEA in Baghdad

The UNMOVIC team inspected today the Balad Chemical Defence Battalion, a site about 90 km north of Baghdad. This site, which reports to the Chemical Corps Directorate of the Ministry of Defence, conducts training activities in the area of chemical, biological and radiological defense, for military personnel and was considered by Iraq as one of the sensitive sites. It had been inspected before 1998. The inspection team arrived unannounced at the site and had immediate access. The team was able to perform all the activities in the inspection plan.

The IAEA inspection team, comprising 8 inspectors and support staff, completed two inspections at two sites, about 40 km south of Baghdad. These sites are: Um Al Maarik Company, a facility known for its dual use capabilities, and Al Meelad Company, where the former Al Furat centrifuge facility was located.

In addition, by going to Al Qa Qaa Company, a team of two inspectors completed the removal of the last of four air samplers previously installed and planned to be refurbished, upgraded and reinstalled in the near future.

The IAEA inspection team was able to conduct the inspection activities, as it had planned and did not face any difficulty with access to the sites and locations inside. The inspection allowed to verify the accuracy of Iraq's declarations related to these two sites and to update the knowledge of the Agency on the activities carried out and the capabilities existing at these sites.

Asked about the objective of the UNMOVIC team's inspection, the Spokesman said that their objective was to determine what were the activities at the site since 1998 and if there was any evidence of prohibited chemical weapons (CW) and biological weapons (BW) agents present or new equipment.

Asked about arrival of helicopters, the Spokesman said that the first of helicopters to be used by weapons inspectors was expected to arrive on board the UN aircraft on 1 December in the form of a cargo. (The flight was cancelled on 1 December.)

The Spokesman added the following information after the press briefing:

Um Al Maarik Company, which the IAEA team visited today was notified by the IAEA team in advance that two of their technicians would review the status of the remaining video surveillance. Al Qa Qaa Company, which the IAEA team visited was also requested on Thursday afternoon to provide assistance to facilitate removal of sampler. This type of advance notification is sometimes given to facilitate their work on monitoring equipment. It happened to the above two cases. Except for these types of cases, our inspection teams do not provide advance warning to the Iraqi side, as we have emphasized time and again.