

The accountability of the natural uranium continued during IAEA 24 and 25. Apart from the already mentioned problems with filters and their relation to activities in different buildings, the Action Team was looking for about 2500 kg of uranium that was missing from the balance. Calculations suggested the deficit could be in uranium-bearing sludge in a waste tank, in kilns, bag houses, pipes, and drums at Al-Jazira. The waste system piping of the Al-Jazira UO₂ plant was dug up, cut open, and sampled. Possible uranium deposit in equipment at Al-Qaim, indicated by the Iraqi side, was investigated.¹¹

An episode occurred concerning uranium accountability which seems of interest because of its similarity to what would later, prior to the war of 2003, be described as Iraq's "desperate" attempts to resolve inconsistencies brought up by the inspectors. Iraqi technicians, in their desire to find the "lost" uranium, suggested to the Action Team that the amount of recovered waste material in the Al-Jazira evaporation tank might be higher than calculated by the IAEA. The heavy uranium-bearing component of the waste was fine particle-size material, which, over time, settled toward the bottom of the drums with the stored material. Since the inspectors had taken samples from the top of the drums, months after filling, they may have gotten a lower value for the uranium concentration. The inspectors willingly followed up with the suggestion of their Iraqi colleagues and took samples at a different depth in each of the 27 drums. But this did not produce the results hoped for by the Iraqis.¹²

Laser isotope separation

By August 1994, the IAEA was technically ready to implement the OMV plan. This resulted in the permanent presence of the IAEA in Baghdad, and dramatically changed the Action Team's work.¹³ During the first four months of the IAEA permanent presence, from August until the end of 1994, 16 inspectors visited a total of 118 sites. Specific on-site inspection trips to Iraq became less frequent and the organizational structure underwent a change. The classical investigation inspection, however, was later revived, when the Action Team had to follow up with the revelations made by Iraq subsequent to the defection of Hussein Kamel.

But IAEA 26 was a very special inspection.¹⁴ There were a number of routine activities carried out but the main objective was the investigation of an alleged Iraqi laser enrichment program!¹⁵ The rumor was that Iraq was running a full scale pilot laser enrichment plant, based on a so-called Octopus device, hidden in the underworld of Tuwaitha and producing significant amounts of enriched uranium.¹⁶ As was often the case with such stories in Iraq, this one had a small kernel of truth, but what had grown from it had nothing to do with reality.

In May 1994, the Agency received information from member states which indicated that Iraq had invested huge resources toward research in

uranium enrichment through Laser Isotope Separation (LIS), involving both Molecular (MLIS) and Atomic Vapor Isotope Separation (AVLIS) technologies.¹⁷ A former inspector said, in a background talk, that "somebody wishing to prolong Iraq's agony" came up with the story. According to David Albright, the member state which informed the IAEA was Israel.¹⁸ Dillon later identified the primary source as an Iraqi "defector," an individual who wanted to secure a visa for a Western country by forwarding allegedly hot information.¹⁹

Dillon's story is reproduced here because it illustrates well the quaint side of the Action Team's work. In December 1994, just before Christmas, he received a message through the British mission that an Iraqi man had contacted the British embassy in Kiev, saying that he had a wealth of information about the ongoing INP. Dillon travelled to Kiev immediately to meet the individual. He interviewed him thoroughly and came to the conclusion that his stories did not make any sense. He advised the man to provide him with at least one useful piece of information, which he, Dillon, could have verified within 24 hours, there being inspectors in Baghdad due to the permanent presence. This would prove that the man's allegations had some validity.

Dillon: "He said to me: 'Do you know about the plutonium under the gold plate of the mosque?' And I said to him: 'No, neither do you. Do you want to try again?'" It was useless. Dillon then ventured: "I am not the first person you are speaking to, right? Did you speak to a representative of a certain government about a laser enrichment plant?"²⁰

The man's embarrassment showed him that he was right. Nevertheless Dillon tried a few more times, then gave up on the man and returned to Vienna.²¹

The time of defectors who provided really useful information was long gone. But the informant about LIS – if it was the Kiev man or not – did not fudge the story completely. At Tuwaitha there was equipment similar enough in appearance to an "Octopus" assembly. The experimental setups described by him did not make technical sense in the details: they seemed a misinterpretation, misunderstanding or confusion of other experiments. The defector had also supplied an organizational chart. It was jumbled and contained gaps, but it was not totally made up. Also the Iraqis were aware of the existence of a possible defector with knowledge of their LIS program.²²

Already, prior to IAEA 26, the inspectors were skeptical about the information rumoring Iraq's success with laser enrichment, and the quality of that information was described by an American inspector as "confused and unreliable, unlikely to say the least."²³ As mentioned, the program was supposed to be fully-fledged and producing significant quantities of HEU. Experts who knew the Iraqi scientific and technical

Notes

- 1 4–11 February 1994, 17 participants from 12 nations, 41 sites, chief inspector Dillon. S/1994/355.
- 2 S/22872.
- 3 S/1994/355.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 11–22 April 1994; 15 participants from 11 nations, chief inspector Dillon. S/1994/650.
- 6 22 June to 1 July 1994, 12 participants from 11 nations, chief inspector Dillon. S/1994/1001.
- 7 Interview with Garry Dillon, *IAEA Iraq Action Team Leader (1997–1999)*; 8 May 2005 (Bourton-on-the-Water, UK).
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Background talk with an Israeli analyst.
- 10 Ibid. The Israeli analyst spoke on condition of anonymity.
- 11 Interview with Dillon, op. cit.
- 12 Action Team Archive.
- 13 Interview with Dillon, op. cit.
- 14 22 August 2 September 1994, 18 participants from 11 countries, chief inspector Dillon. S/1994/1206.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Interview with Dillon, op. cit.
- 17 S/1994/1206.
- 18 Interview with David Albright, *President of the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS)*; 2 June 2005 (Washington).
- 19 This is not to say that this individual was a total impostor: he may very well have been a bona fide political refugee.
- 20 Interview with Dillon, op. cit.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Action Team archive.
- 24 Interview with Dillon, op. cit.
- 25 Action Team archive.
- 26 Interview with Dillon, op. cit.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 S/1994/1206.
- 29 Letter of Hajjaj to Perricos, 23 October 1991. Action Team archive.
- 30 Action Team archive.
- 31 S/1994/1206.
- 32 Interview with Dillon, op. cit.
- 33 S/1994/1206.
- 34 Interview with Dillon, op. cit.
- 35 Action Team archive.
- 36 S/1994/1206.
- 37 Ibid. Quenton (Australia) and Oxford Lasers (UK) had both refused to provide 40W Copper Vapor Laser Systems (CVL) to Iraq.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 S/1997/779.
- 40 Interview with Dillon, op. cit.
- 41 He earned his Ph.D. at Florida State University in 1968, available online at www.isis-online.org/publications/iraq/cvhamza.html

- November 2002, available online at www.mindfully.org/Nucs/2002/Khidhir-Hamza-Lies27nov02.htm I. Khadduri (2002b), "Who is Khidhir Hamza?" *Yellow Times*, 27 November 2002, available online at www.mindfully.org/Nucs/2002/Khidhir-Hamza-Lies27nov02.htm Khadduri made this public accusation in 2002 and has yet to be corrected or sued by Hamza. Interview with Imad Khadduri, *Member of the former Iraqi Nuclear Program*, 10 July 2005 (Canada, telephone interview).
- 43 J. G. Prather (2003), "Hamza's War," *WorldNetDaily*, available online at www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=35147 James Gordon Prather is a nuclear physicist who worked at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and later for the US administration.
- 44 This means: after the fantastic story about his own role in the nuclear program.
- 45 Khadduri (2002b), op. cit.
- 46 D. Albright and K. O'Neill (1999), "Iraq's Efforts to Acquire Information about Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear-Related Technologies from the United States," Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), available online at www.isis-online.org/publications/iraq/infogather.html#return5
- 47 Khadduri (2002b), op. cit.
- 48 S. Gossett, "Saddam's Bombmaker Hit in Assassination Attempt. Hamza Touted as Authoritative Source on Nuclear Programme," *WorldNetDaily.com*, 25 December 2003. Albright confirmed his revised assessment of Hamza: Interview with Albright, op. cit.
- 49 Khadduri speaks about 150 million US dollars. I. Khadduri (2003a), "The Bogus Intelligence Source," *YellowTimes*, 18 October 2003, available online at www.dissidentvoice.org/Articles8/Khadduri_Hamza.htm
- 50 For example in Europe a 2003 Arte TV production which was even awarded a prestigious TV prize.
- 51 Interview with Robert Einhorn, *Deputy Assistant Secretary for Non-Proliferation in the State Department's Political-Military Bureau (1992–1999)*; 2 June 2005 (Washington). See also K.M. Pollack (2004), "Spies, Lies and Weapons: What Went Wrong," *The Atlantic Monthly*, January/February 2004.
- 52 Dillon taped the conversation. Interview with Dillon, op. cit.
- 53 M. Hibbs (1995), "Suspected Informer Was Physicist in Iraq's Uranium Enrichment Program," *Nuclear Fuel*, 24 April 1995.
- 54 The newspaper ignored the Agency's opinion that the report was doubtful. Khadduri (2002b), op. cit.
- 55 Interview with Dillon, op. cit.
- 56 K. Hamza (2000), with J. Stein, *Saddam's Bombmaker: The Terrifying Inside Story of the Iraqi Nuclear and Biological Weapons Agenda*, New York, p. 316.
- 57 In his book, Hamza says Dillon's visit to the family happened prior to Hamza's call to the Agency, which does not seem logical.
- 58 Specifically by the CIA agent Rick Francona, author of "Ally to Adversary. An Eyewitness Account of Iraq's Fall from Grace" (1999). Telephone interview by the author with Francona in January 2001.
- 59 J. D. Jafar with N. S. Al-Niaimi (2004), Unpublished English manuscript, based on Jafar Dhia Jafar and Numan Saadaldin Al-Niaimi: *Al'Iraq al-akhir: haqiqat al-barnamaj al-nawawi al-iraqi* (2005), (The last confession: The truth about the Iraqi Nuclear Program), Beirut: Markaz Dirasat Al-Wahdah Al-Arabiya, p. 166.
- 60 "the documents reveal error in construction, suggesting poor adaptation of authentic Iraqi documents." S/1995/604, 21 July 1995. Follow-up to the Agency's 7th OMOV report. Interview with Dillon, op. cit. Jafar, however, criticizes the Agency for taking so long to declare the report a forgery.
- 61 S/1995/604. Jafar, op. cit., p. 166.
- 62 Interview with Dillon, op. cit.

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