

More inspections needed by U.N. in Iraq

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now in place, barring exceptional circumstances and provided there is sustained proactive cooperation by Iraq, we should be able within the next few months to provide credible assurance that Iraq has no nuclear weapons program.

“These few months would be a valuable investment in peace because it could help avoid a war,” ElBaradei told the Security Council.

In a toughly-worded assessment of Iraq’s cooperation with 60 days of inspections, Blix, head of the U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, chided the Iraqis for failing to cooperate on substance “in order to bring the disarmament task to completion, through the peaceful process of inspection, and to bring the monitoring task on a firm course.”

So far, he said: “Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance, not even today, of the disarmament that was demanded of it.”

He did not specifically call for more time but made clear that his inspectors have only just begun their work.

Both Blix and ElBaradei complained that Iraqi scientists were not submitting to private interviews. But ElBaradei said the Iraqis were cooperating with his questions and said the process shouldn’t be hampered by deadlines.

Under Security Council Resolution 1441, crafted by Washington and adopted by an unanimous council in November, inspectors don’t need to prove Iraq is rearming.

Any false statements or omissions in Iraq’s arms declaration, coupled with a failure to comply with and cooperate fully in the implementation of the resolution, would place Baghdad in “material breach” of its obligations—a finding that could open the door for war.

Most of the Security Council believes that’s a determination they must make based on the inspectors’ assessments. The 15 members of the Security Council will reconvene

Wednesday, a day after President Bush delivers the State of the Union address, to discuss the inspectors’ reports and begin debate on Iraq. In the meantime, Blix and ElBaradei will update the council again on Feb. 14.

Blix said three questions remain unanswered:

—How much illicit weapons material might remain undeclared and intact from before the Persian Gulf War in 1991 and possible thereafter.

—What, if anything was illegally procured or produced.

—How the world can prevent any weapons of mass destruction from being produced or procured in the future.

He noted that Iraq’s 12,000 page arms declaration contained little more than old material in the areas of chemical and biological weapons and said his teams now believe Iraq’s claims that it was unsuccessful in producing the VX nerve agent, were untrue. “There are indications that the agent was

weaponized,” Blix said. Inspectors have also discovered a mustard gas precursor during recent inspections.

On biological weapons, Blix said Iraq had failed to produce “convincing evidence” that it unilaterally destroyed its anthrax stockpiles and that there are indications that Iraq could have had larger quantities than it reported to inspectors.

ElBaradei said his teams had concluded that aluminum tubes Iraq had tried to import were earmarked for missile programs and not for a nuclear program, as the Bush administration claimed last fall. But he said the investigation continued.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Sabri said that his nation has cooperated fully with weapons inspectors and he accused the United States and Britain of setting the stage for an unjustified attack.

He said accusations against Iraq by U.S. officials were “all lies to hide America’s true intentions” which he said were to take control of his nation’s oil resources and pro-

tect “America’s interests in Israel.”

Despite assurances from Iraq that it would encourage its scientists to submit to private interviews, no such interviews have taken place and Baghdad continues to block inspectors from using a U-2 reconnaissance plane that could be helpful in the hunt for weapons of mass destruction.

Blix noted that Iraq had provided new information “in the fields of missiles and biotechnology,” and said he would ask the Iraqis to stop tests of two types of missiles while inspectors determine their actual range and capabilities.

The 74-year-old Swedish disarmament expert also said thousands of documents found hidden in the home of an Iraqi scientist, plus an air force document supplied by the Iraqis “show that Iraq needs to make more effort to show that its declaration is currently accurate.”

Outside U.N. headquarters, more than 100 protesters demonstrated against a possible war in Iraq, chanting “people united stop the war.”

Earlier Monday, the inspectors won key support for continued inspections from U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

“They should be given the time to do their work and all of us, the council and the assembly, must realize that time will be necessary, a reasonable amount of time, I’m not saying forever, but they do need time to get their work done and I suspect the council will allow that to be done,” Annan told reporters.

Annan said he remained hopeful that Iraq could be disarmed peacefully and he praised Blix and ElBaradei, whom he called “determined and independent-minded.”

The White House reacted with skepticism.

“When people say give them more time, the more time they get the more time they get the run-around,” White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said.

In Brussels, Belgium, the European Union on Monday urged Baghdad to cooperate more fully with United Nations inspectors .

Israel tightens security before national elections

By the Associated Press
INTERNATIONAL

JERUSALEM—Israeli security forces today barred Palestinians from entering Israel in advance of national elections, while final opinion polls showed Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s hawkish party far ahead of its rivals heading into Tuesday’s ballot.

Concerned about possible Palestinian attacks during the election period, security forces stepped up already tight travel restrictions on Palestinians. The army did lift curfews in several West Bank cities, allowing residents to come out of their homes and permitting shops to open, but the curfew remained in force in Nablus and Bethlehem.

Meanwhile, opinion polls published in newspapers today showed Sharon’s Likud party holding a comfortable lead.

Likud is projected to win at least 32 seats in the 120-member parliament, compared to about 18 for the dovish Labor Party and 15 for the centrist Shinui, according to Maariv newspaper. The poll questioned

around the world

1,109 people and had a margin of error of 3.2 percentage points.

While the election itself is not expected to produce surprises, Sharon could face difficulties in forming the kind of broad-based, national unity government he wants.

DAVOS, Switzerland — Global business leaders reported progress on making cheaper AIDS drugs available to poor nations as Microsoft founder Bill Gates made another contribution to health in the developing world — announcing a \$200 million grant to fund medical research.

Meeting at an exclusive Alpine resort, delegates to the World Economic Forum held talks on how to ensure access for poor countries to affordable copies of vital drugs while respecting the patent rights of pharmaceutical companies.

Those talks produced some progress, the World Trade

Organization’s director general, Supachai Panitchpakdi, said Sunday.

“In the last few days I thought (drug companies) have shown the kind of understanding that really we aren’t that far apart and we should still be looking for a possible solution,” Supachai said.

The Gates grant was intended to encourage research into the “grand challenges in global health” that the private sector has little financial incentive to tackle.

Under the program announced at the annual World Economic Forum, a panel of top scientists will draft a list of critical problems whose solution could lead to important advances for the developing world.

NATIONAL

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The U.S. Coast Guard found wreckage of a twin-engine plane reported overdue floating in the Atlantic off Fernandina Beach.

The Cessna, owned by a com-

pany called Environmental Services, was on a whale monitoring mission when it was reported overdue Sunday at 6:30 p.m., Coast Guard officials said.

“We found a backpack, some life jackets and some papers,” said Petty Officer Mitchell Sutherland. The Coast Guard found the plane’s locator beacon at about 9:30 p.m., some eight miles east of Fernandina Beach.

It was unclear how many people were aboard the plane, officials said.

A helicopter and two boats were searching the debris field early Monday.

NEWARK, N.J. — A 12-year-old boy was strangled when his clothing apparently got caught in a washing machine at his apartment complex.

Deshaw Young was found in the building’s laundry room Sunday afternoon by his mother, who went to check on him after he went to put clothes in a machine and failed to return.

Lt. Derek Glenn, a Newark police spokesman, said it appeared that Young got a piece of clothing caught in the machine and was suffocated. He was taken to University Hospital in Newark, where he was pronounced dead.

Glenn said the death appeared to be accidental but would be investigated by the department’s homicide squad. An autopsy will be performed to determine the cause of death.

NEW YORK — Domesticity maven Martha Stewart estimates she has lost \$400 million because of the federal investigation into her ImClone stock trade, she told The New Yorker magazine.

The story by writer Jeffrey Toobin, which reaches newsstands today, is based on Stewart’s first lengthy media interview on the subject since news broke last June that federal prosecutors were investigating her sale of ImClone System Inc. shares.

She told Toobin that the losses have been mostly in the decline in

value of her more than 30 million shares in her multimedia company, but also in legal fees and lost business opportunities.

Stewart noted that her image has suffered and said she’s “puzzled by the public’s delight” in her troubles.

“My business is about homemaking,” she said. “And that I have been turned into or vilified openly as something other than what I really am has been really confusing.”

She added, “It’s sort of the American way to go up and down the ladder, maybe several times in a lifetime. And I’ve had a real long up ... And now I’ve had a long way down.”

NEW YORK — Seven families of people killed in the World Trade Center attack have sued the head of the federal Sept. 11 Victim Compensation Fund, accusing him of acting unfairly in calculating awards for victims’ relatives.

The lawsuit alleges that Kenneth Feinberg, who is special master of the fund, has used illegal formulas to compute the monetary awards.

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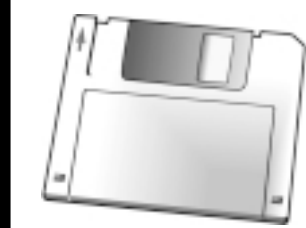
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