Chemical and Biological Weapons Non-Proliferation

Introduction

Although UNSCOM has been functioning for over seven years, there has thus far been relatively little published analysis of the work of UNSCOM and what this means for non-proliferation. In the early years it would have been premature to jump to conclusions – and indeed, it is now apparent that it is only since 1995 that a fuller appreciation of the extent of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction programmes have become clearer. Another factor that may have contributed to the absence of analysis was the importance in the early years of maintaining confidentiality in the face of Iraqi non-cooperation when it was vitally important to maintain pressure on Iraq to make full, final and complete disclosures (FFCDs) of its proscribed programmes. More recently, UNSCOM has taken the initiative to make presentations to Iraq at the political level of what the Commission’s appreciation is of the proscribed programmes in an attempt through the fusion of the political dialogue and technical expert work to expedite the completion of the Commission’s work. Technical evaluation meetings have been held between international specialists and Iraqi specialists to address outstanding issues.

There has also been an apparent and regrettable reluctance in some of the international arms control negotiations to draw upon the UNSCOM experience. For example, although the past eight years has seen continued negotiations to strengthen the BTWC, first through the VEREX process and, following the Special Conference in 1994, the AHG process, there has been little opportunity for UNSCOM to make direct inputs into that process. Even at the Fourth Review Conference of the BTWC in November/December 1996, the UNSCOM contribution\(^1\) was not listed as an official Review Conference document nor was it presented to the conference. Indeed the record\(^2\) of the Review Conference makes no reference to the UNSCOM contribution – in contrast to the mention in the summary record of the statements made in the Plenary Sessions by States Parties and Signatories even though those statements are not official Review Conference documents.
Such publications as there have been, have frequently provided reports of what UNSCOM has been or is doing with relatively few addressing the implications for the broader scene. Certainly the continued efforts of the Executive Chairman of UNSCOM to keep the international community informed are greatly appreciated. Of particular value have been the contributions made by UNSCOM to the Fourth International Symposium on Protection Against Chemical Warfare Agents held in Stockholm in June 1992, to the Seminar on CBW Verification held in Stockholm in conjunction with the Fifth International Symposium on Protection Against Chemical and Biological Warfare Agents in June 1995, and to the CBW Protection Symposium Pre-Meeting held in Stockholm in conjunction with the Sixth International Symposium on Protection Against Chemical and Biological Warfare Agents in May 1998, as have been the annual contributions to the SIPRI Year Book. External analyses have been less frequent; these include some books and more recently the proceedings of a symposium of UNSCOM biological weapons inspectors published in Politics and Life Sciences.

Now, almost eight years after UNSCOM was established, it has gained a very significant experience of both inspections (over 250 inspection missions have been mounted from outside Iraq) and on-going monitoring and verification (some thousands of monitoring inspections have been made) in each of the areas of the proscribed programmes and the export/import mechanism has started to function. It is therefore indeed timely to examine the lessons learnt from the UNSCOM experience.

It is particularly important that such lessons are available for the broader non-proliferation scene so that they can be taken into account in the ever-strengthening web of deterrence against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction – and so contribute to the enhancement of the prospects for improved international security, trade and prosperity. In this chapter consideration is given first to the lessons learnt from the UNSCOM experience and then to their implications for the strengthening of the web of deterrence.

Lessons from UNSCOM experience

Overall lessons

Transparency in building confidence. A particularly outstanding lesson that emerges from the UNSCOM experience is the importance of transparency in building confidence. The overall confidence in the information provided by Iraq is built up from material from a wide variety of sources and its consistency, both internally and externally. The elements of this web of information are the Iraqi full, final and complete disclosures (FFCDs), which have grown significantly over time – for example, the chemical FFCD has grown from 88 pages in 1992 to 440 pages on 22 June 1996, the