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# Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on Iraq's Compliance With United Nations Security Council Resolutions

*May 8, 1997*

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)*

Consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102–1) and as part of my effort to keep the Congress fully informed, I am reporting on the status of efforts to obtain Iraq's compliance with the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This report covers the period from March 7 to the present.

Saddam Hussein remains a threat to his people and the region and the United States remains determined to contain the threat of Saddam's regime. Speaking on behalf of the Administration on March 26, 1997, in her first major foreign policy address, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright stated that the United States looks forward to the day when Iraq rejoins the family of nations as a responsible and law-abiding member and that, until then, containment must continue. Secretary Albright also made clear that Saddam's departure would make a difference and that, should a change in Iraq's government occur, the United States would stand ready to enter rapidly into a dialogue with the successor regime.

In terms of military operations, the United States and our coalition partners continue enforcement of the no-fly zones over northern Iraq under Operation Northern Watch, the successor mission to Operation Provide Comfort, and over southern Iraq through Operation Southern Watch. On April 22, 1997, Saddam Hussein announced that Iraqi military helicopters would be flown through the southern no-fly zone for the purpose of transporting Iraqi pilgrims from the vicinity of the Iraqi-Saudi border to various areas in Iraq, publicly disregarding the prohibition against operating Iraqi rotary and fixed wing aircraft south of the 33rd parallel. The next day, 10 helicopters crossed the southern no-fly zone and arrived at a ground staging base in western Iraq, just north of the Iraqi-Saudi border, to await the arrival of the pilgrims. Because of the possible danger to innocent Iraqi civilians, the non-threatening nature of these flights, and the religious sensitivity of the situation, the United States and our coalition partners agreed not to take military action to intercept the helicopters.

On April 25–27, the same Iraqi helicopters returned the pilgrims to their homes in various locations throughout Iraq, transiting the northern and southern no-fly zones in the process. Again, the United States and its coalition partners decided not to act against these flights for humanitarian and policy reasons. We have made clear to the Government of Iraq and to all other relevant parties, however, that the United States and its partners will continue to enforce both no-fly zones, and that we reserve the right to respond appropriately and decisively to further Iraqi provocations.

In addition to our air operations, we will continue to maintain a strong U.S. presence in the region in order to deter Saddam. United States force levels include land- and carrier-based aircraft, surface warships, a Marine amphibious task force, a Patriot missile battalion, and a mechanized battalion task force deployed in support of USCINCCENT operations. To enhance force protection throughout the region, additional military security personnel have been deployed for continuous rotation. USCINCCENT continues to closely monitor the security situation in the region to ensure adequate force protection is provided for all deployed forces.

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 949, adopted in October 1994, demands that Iraq not utilize its military or any other forces to threaten its neighbors or U.N. operations in Iraq and that it not redeploy troops or enhance its military capacity in southern Iraq. In view of Saddam's accumulating record of unreliability, it is prudent to retain a significant U.S. force presence in the region in order to maintain the capability to respond rapidly to possible Iraqi aggression or threats against its neighbors.

Since my last report, the Government of Iraq has continued to flout its obligations under UNSC resolutions in other ways. Under the terms of relevant UNSC resolutions, Iraq must grant the United Nations Special Commission

on Iraq (UNSCOM) inspectors immediate, unconditional, and unrestricted access to any location in Iraq they wish to examine, and access to any Iraqi official whom they wish to interview, so that UNSCOM may fully discharge its mandate to ensure that Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program has been eliminated. Iraq continues, as it has for the past 6 years, to fail to live up either to the letter or the spirit of this commitment. Of particular concern is UNSCOM's report to the Security Council of serious incidents involving repeated Iraqi threats to shoot down UNSCOM aircraft, an Iraqi escort helicopter flying dangerously close to the Commission's aircraft to force it to change direction, and Iraqi personnel aboard an UNSCOM helicopter attempting to wrest control of the aircraft.

On April 11, UNSCOM Chairman Rolf Ekeus reported to the Security Council that resolution of the remaining questions about Iraq's WMD programs would require a "major political decision" on the part of Iraq's leadership to "give up, once and for all, all capabilities and ambition to retain or acquire the proscribed weapons." The UNSCOM continues to believe that Iraq instead maintains significant numbers of operational SCUD missiles, possibly with CBW warheads. In early April, UNSCOM also asked Iraq to withdraw its "full, final, and complete declaration" regarding its biological weapons programs because it contained obvious inaccuracies and fabrications, and to submit a new one. As long as the Iraqi leadership refuses to cooperate fully with U.N. weapons inspectors, UNSCOM will be impeded in its efforts to fulfill its mandate. We will continue to fully support the mandate and the efforts of UNSCOM to obtain Iraqi compliance with all relevant U.N. resolutions.

Implementation of UNSCR 1051 continues. It provides for a mechanism to monitor Iraq's effort to reacquire proscribed weapons capabilities by requiring that Iraq notify a joint unit of UNSCOM and the International Atomic Energy Agency in advance of any imports of dual-use items. Similarly, countries must provide timely notification of exports to Iraq of dual-use items.

Regarding northern Iraq, the United States continues to lead efforts to increase security and stability in the north and minimize opportunities for Baghdad or Tehran to threaten Iraqi citizens there. Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Welch led a U.S. delegation to northern Iraq on April 3 and 4, the first visit to the north by a U.S. official since Saddam's attack against the region in September 1996, and the first visit at this level in several years. Welch met with leaders of the two main Iraqi Kurd groups, Massoud Barzani of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talabani of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Both Iraqi Kurd leaders reaffirmed their support for U.S. policy and their commitment to cooperate with us through the Ankara reconciliation process. Welch also met with Iraqi Assyrian and Turkoman political leaders, PMF personnel, and U.N. officials.

Regarding the Ankara process to help the PUK and the KDP resolve their differences, we have facilitated three rounds of higher-level talks, along with our British and Turkish partners. Our immediate goals in the process are to focus on strengthening the U.S.-brokered cease-fire of October 23, 1996, which continues to hold, and on encouraging political reconciliation between the PUK and KDP.

The United States is providing political, financial, and logistical support for a neutral, indigenous Peace Monitoring Force (PMF) in northern Iraq that has demarcated the cease-fire line and monitors the cease-fire. Our support is being provided in the form of commodities and services in accordance with a drawdown I directed on December 11, 1996, and in the form of funds to be used to provide other non-lethal assistance in accordance with a separate determination made by former Secretary of State Christopher on November 10, 1996. The PMF began full deployment in mid-April, and has already succeeded in resolving several troublesome incidents in violation of the cease-fire.

The PMF has also helped the groups move forward on several other confidence-building measures, including a mutual release on April 14 of approximately 70 detainees from each Kurd group. The two Iraqi Kurd groups also continue to work on reconciliation efforts, including an initial meeting on March 12 of a joint Higher Coordination Committee to improve cooperation on civilian services such as electricity and health. Local representatives of the two Kurd groups, the three countries, and the PMF continue to meet biweekly in Ankara and move forward on other confidence-building measures.

Security conditions in northern Iraq nonetheless remain tenuous at best, with Iranian and

PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) activity adding to the ever-present threat from Baghdad. All our efforts under the Ankara process, like all our efforts concerning Iraq, maintain support for the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq.

Implementation of UNSCR 986 is proceeding. The oil-related provisions of UNSCR 986, which authorized Iraq to sell up to $2 billion of oil during an initial 180-day period (with the possibility of UNSC renewal of subsequent 180-day periods) went into effect on December 10, 1996. The first shipments of food and humanitarian goods purchased with Iraqi oil proceeds started to arrive in Iraq on March 20.

UNSCR 986 requires that the proceeds of this limited oil sale, all of which must be deposited in a U.N. escrow account, will be used to purchase food, medicine, and other materials and supplies for essential civilian needs for all Iraqi citizens and to fund vital U.N. activities regarding Iraq. Critical to the success of UNSCR 986 is Iraq's willingness to follow through on its commitments under 986 to allow the United Nations to monitor the distribution of food and medical supplies to the Iraqi people.

During the first 90 days since implementation, Iraq sold just over $1 billion worth of oil in accordance with the terms of UNSCR 986. Significant delays in implementing distribution of humanitarian goods—caused, in part, by Iraqi efforts to impose new restrictions on the freedom of access and movement of U.N. monitors—made it impossible for the U.N. Secretary General to report on the adequacy of distribution and monitoring procedures during the first 90 days. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Iraq continues to stall and obfuscate rather than work in good faith toward accounting for the hundreds of Kuwaitis and third-country nationals who disappeared at the hands of Iraqi authorities during the occupation. It has also failed to return all of the stolen Kuwaiti military equipment and the priceless Kuwaiti cultural and historical artifacts that were looted during the occupation.

The human rights situation throughout Iraq remains unchanged. Iraq's repression of its Shi'a population continues with policies that are destroying the Marsh Arabs' way of life in southern Iraq, as well as the ecology of the southern marshes. Saddam Hussein shows no signs of complying with UNSCR 688, which demands that Iraq cease the repression of its own people. On April 16, the U.N. Human Rights Commission passed a resolution strongly condemning the Baghdad regime's continued human rights abuses. That same day, the Administration announced support for an effort by various Iraqi opposition groups and non-governmental organizations to document Iraqi war crimes and other violations of international humanitarian law. This effort, known as INDICT, seeks ultimately to ensure that Saddam Hussein and other members of his regime are brought to justice before an international tribunal. We are in touch with organizers of INDICT and other parties to discuss the best means to move forward.

The Multinational Interception Force (MIF) is facing an increased challenge from smugglers and Iran. As I have noted in previous reports, these smugglers use the territorial waters of Iran to avoid the MIF inspection in the Northern Gulf. With the help of the Iranian government, which profits from these activities by charging protection fees, these smugglers are able to export over 70,000 metric tons of gas oil through the Gulf each month. This represents a significant increase from the amount included in my last report. We are working closely with our allies in the Gulf and with our MIF partners to develop new strategies to curb these violations of the sanctions regime.

Although MIF exchanges with the regular Iranian naval units have been professional and courteous, Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps naval units have been much more aggressive in confronting the MIF and are actively involved in aiding the smugglers. The MIF is acting with good judgment and caution in its encounters with Iran. Our objective is to enforce sanctions—not to engage in unproductive encounters with Iran.

We regularly provide detailed briefings regarding developments in MIF sanctions enforcement to our MIF partners and Gulf Cooperation Council allies. We also are working closely through our mission in New York with the U.N. Sanctions Committee and like-minded allies on our approach toward Iran and sanctions violators, generally.

The MIF continues to process the maritime traffic involved in lifting oil from the Mina Al Bakr offshore terminal and the delivery of much-needed humanitarian supplies to Umm Qasr in Iraq. So far, those operations are proceeding smoothly. The smuggling trade, however, continues to force the MIF to devote

scarce resources to sanctions enforcement. This has resulted in fewer ships available to process the legal humanitarian shipments that bring food and other supplies to Iraq under UNSCR 986.

The United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC), established pursuant to UNSCR 687, continues to resolve claims against Iraq arising from Iraq's unlawful invasion and occupation of Kuwait. The UNCC has issued over 1 million awards worth approximately $5.2 billion. With the advent of oil sales under UNSCR 986, 30 percent of the proceeds are being allocated to the Compensation Fund to pay awards and finance operations of the UNCC. Initial payments out of the Compensation Fund are currently being made on awards in the order in which the UNCC has approved them, in installments of $2,500.00. In January 1997, the United States Government submitted claims totaling approximately $8.8 million for expenses incurred in the efforts to assess and respond to environmental damage in the Persian Gulf region caused by Iraq's unlawful invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

To conclude, Iraq remains a serious threat to regional peace and stability. I remain determined to see Iraq comply fully with all of its obligations under U.N. Security Council resolutions. My Administration will continue to oppose any relaxation of sanctions until Iraq demonstrates its peaceful intentions through such compliance.

I appreciate the support of the Congress for our efforts and shall continue to keep the Congress informed about this important issue.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate.

## Remarks at the Central American Summit Dinner in San Jose

*May 8, 1997*

President Reina, President and Mrs. Figueres, to my colleagues and friends at this table, and to all of you at this wonderful dinner: The day has been long and the hour is late, and most of what needs to be said has been said. I would like to begin briefly by simply thanking President and Mrs. Figueres and all the people of Costa Rica for their wonderful reception, including the magnificent music we heard this evening. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

I think you could tell by the remarks of President Reina and President Figueres that there was a wonderful spirit in our meeting today, a real desire to meet each other on terms of equality and respect, an understanding that we should seize the future together. And it left us all feeling larger and better than we came. I believe in Costa Rica you say that is *pura vida.* [*Laughter*]

As we rejoice tonight in the new hope and opportunity that is sweeping across the Americas, it would be wrong of us not to also remember and applaud the brave struggles of countless Central Americans in forging the peace we now celebrate. Because of the price they paid, today we find former guerrillas and ex-officers sitting side by side in legislatures. Central America's jaguars are second only to Asia's tigers in their rates of growth. Our nations are working together no longer to strip and exploit the land but instead to use our resources wisely, with future generations in mind.

Tonight I would like to especially salute President Arzu for all he has done to end four decades of conflict in Guatemala.

We are among the 34 democracies that committed in Miami 3 years ago to build a free trade area of the Americas by the year 2005. Today we issued the San Jose Declaration in that same spirit. Both are based on a fundamental conviction that we cannot build the future we seek unless we build it together.

I also want all of you to know that we resolve to actually work together to make these words real. We have had specific discussions about what we do next to expand trade, what we do next to improve education, what we do next to advance the environmental agenda. And just before I left the hotel to come here tonight, when Hillary and I were talking about the