James S. Sutterlin: This is a Yale-UN interview with Scott Ritter on October the 27th 1998. The interview is in Larchmont, New York. The interviewer is Sutterlin.

JS: Mr. Ritter, I want to first express our appreciation for your participation in this Yale Oral History program relating to the United Nations. I’d like to begin by asking you to describe something of your own personal background at the time you joined UNSCOM.

Scott Ritter: I joined UNSCOM in September of 1991, and at that time I had just left active service with the Marine Corps. I was an intelligence officer with the Marine Corps, with an extensive background in intelligence operations, intelligence collection, analysis, and also arms control. I had served from 1988 to 1990 with the on-site inspection agency, implementing the provisions of the INF [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces] treaty in the former Soviet Union. I had also served as an intelligence officer during the Gulf War, and was involved in training counter-SCUD operations against Iraq. In September of 1991, I came into the Special Commission with an extensive background
in intelligence, and familiarity with arms control, treaty implementation, and with Iraq itself, having fought against them in the Gulf War.

JS: You actually had experience then with arms and arms inspections.

SR: Yes.

JS: When you joined UNSCOM, how did that come about? How were you selected?

SR: When the Special Commission was created in April of 1991, it was created along the lines of a conventional arms control organization, which would reflect the desire of the resolution that Iraq would submit a full declaration of its prescribed holdings, and then the Special Commission would serve as a verification organization, to verify the completeness of the Iraqi declaration, to insure that everything was disposed of properly. The summer of 1991 showed that Iraq had no intention, at that time, of providing a full declaration, in fact, was holding on to significant aspects of its prescribed holdings. So the Special Commission found itself poorly organized and poorly suited for carrying out the kind of inspection activity that would be required not only to verify Iraq’s declarations, but also to discover what Iraq was holding on to. One of the things that they were missing was the ability to collect information from a wide variety of sources, to collate this information, to assess this information, analyze this information and turn it into data that could be used by an inspection team to find hidden capabilities. So I was brought in to form what was called the Information Assessment Unit. I was recruited by
Colonel Doug Enlund, who was an army colonel; at that time he was the operations officer for the Special Commission, and he was my boss in Russia when I was doing arms control work there, so he was familiar with my background. And he called me up, knowing that I had left the Marine Corps, and that I was at that time unemployed, and asked if I would be interested in coming to the Special Commission and help him form up this unit. I indicated that I would be. It was supposed to be a temporary position—three months was the initial term, it got extended to six—and then the UN hired me full time to stay on and do this task.

JS: How would you describe the functions of the Information Assessment Unit?

SR: Originally, the functions were simply to serve as the entity responsible for receiving information from member governments, particularly the U-2 photography. The U-2 high-surveillance aircraft started its flights in August of 1991 and the Special Commission was starting to receive significant numbers of prints, aerial imagery prints, and they needed a system to receive these prints, safeguard these prints, organize these prints so that they could be useful to the personnel of the Special Commission. And to do rudimentary analysis of data that could be turned over to operations officers who would plan inspections. It was a very basic information receiving, collating, safeguarding and assessment unit. It was not envisioned to become an independent intelligence activity for the United Nations.

JS: Was this located in Bahrain?
SR: No, the Information Assessment Unit was located at the Secretariat building in the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

JS: Just to skip ahead in the subjects I sent to you, there was then later, though, an analysis unit in Bahrain, I believe?

SR: No, Bahrain was always a logistics and training base. We called it a field operations center. Bahrain was a place where we would dispatch inspectors for administrative preparation. Most of the inspectors we used flew straight from their countries of origin to Bahrain, where the UNSCOM field office would receive them. They would be processed, sign the appropriate paperwork that would obligate them to the United Nations, and then a chief inspector, who would be responsible for forming up an inspection team based upon specific requirements set forth by the chairman, would organize these groups of inspectors into a team and then train them on the technical and operational requirements of the inspection. The Information Assessment Unit would assist in this by sending an expert out who would provide technical briefings to the team.

There was also an entity in Bahrain that did not belong to the Special Commission, called Gateway. What Gateway was, was an organization put together by the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. These governments created this organization and they used it as a place where UNSCOM could have secure briefings, and receive sensitive information from these governments to help prepare them for the inspections. The term Gateway was derived from the INF treaty. In fact, when the
United States government set up Gateways in Frankfurt and Japan to receive INF inspection teams, organize and train them, and then send them on to the former Soviet Union to carry out their treaty inspections. So when the Special Commission was formed, the United States thought it would be a good idea to create a Gateway, a similar Gateway, in Bahrain. But because of the sensitivities of the information that was being provided, it had to remain under United States control. It was a service provided to the Special Commission, but it was very responsive to the needs and the desires and the requests and requirements of the Special Commission.

JS: That’s interesting. So it was really a processing unit, and an analytical unit, would you say?

SR: Gateway? Gateway did not do any analyses, per se, as Gateway. But they would facilitate the debriefing of an inspection team, and that information would go to the various governments, and then they would do analysis back in their capitol cities and then feed that analysis back to the Special Commission.

JS: Directly to the Special Commission?

SR: Yes. Through the Information Assessment Unit.
JS: The imagery information that came from the U-2s and from satellites—how was that processed? You dealt with that back here in New York, or was this dealt with in the Gateway channel?

SR: No, the U-2 was based at Taif, in Saudi Arabia. The U-2, itself, was run by the US Air Force 9th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, which again was subordinated to what was called the Joint Reconnaissance Center in Washington, DC. This was a Department of Defense activity run by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They would fly missions based upon requirements set forth by the Special Commission. The Information Assessment Unit was responsible for this. We would say, “We want you to fly the following targets on the following frequency. Because of safety concerns and economy of force, make sure you get the most out of each flight.” Each flight is fairly expensive.

They would take our targets and they would fly them as a package. We would submit twenty targets, and maybe ten of them were suitable for one flight because they were all in the same geographic area. The US would fly those ten on one day, and fly the other ten on another day. Unless we had a specific operational requirement—for instance, “I’m going to be at site X on Thursday at one o’clock and I want the U-2 to take pictures at ten o’clock, eleven o’clock, twelve o’clock, one o’clock, and two o’clock of that site on that day,”—unless we specified exactly that, the U-2 would fly the site when it could. We would submit the taskings, what we wanted; we would submit it through the State Department, the State Department would then give it to the Department of Defense, who would fly the mission. The film would be downloaded at Taif, and then flown to the United States to Washington, DC, where United States photo interpreters would process
the film and do the basic analysis, and then turn over to the United Nations hard-copy prints and text reports of what was seen on the ground.

That’s how it started. Later, the Information Assessment Unit became more involved. As the Special Commission’s requirements for information became more sophisticated and more self-determinate, we actually brought in our own photo interpreters from other countries and we requested that the United States, in addition to providing this service, would also provide us with the rolls of film, and we would do our own analysis, too. That was agreed upon, and we would store the film and the prints at the UN Headquarters. Even later on, in 1995, we weren’t satisfied with the nature of the analysis that was being provided by the United States. It was very strategically oriented—point targets looking only at this facility or this facility—it wasn’t looking at what we needed in order to find hidden weapons. A decision was taken by the Executive Chairman and approved by the United States that the Special Commission would go to Israel with rolls of film and the Israelis would provide photographic interpretation assistance and their considerable intelligence experience in looking for mobile hidden targets to assist the Special Commission in sending inspection teams to the right places. So the U-2 program evolved considerably from where it started in August 1991 to what it was when I left in August 1998.

JS: Let me just get this straight. The U-2 flights were really planned by UNSCOM.

SR: Yes.
JS: Were they paid for by the UN?

SR: No, they were paid for 100% by the United States, at considerable expense. We’re talking many millions of dollars. And that’s something that doesn’t get often reported about the contribution of the United States. Gateway was paid for by the United States. Literally every year, tens of millions of dollars in support provided by the United States that was not counted toward the US contribution to the United Nations. The US did it willingly to support the Special Commission.

JS: Was there a problem of distribution of this information because of classification?

SR: No, the U-2 imagery was classified as Secret, releasable UNSCOM and the IAEA. That was strictly a US means of trying to impress upon the United Nations that this was sensitive information that needed to be safeguarded. But the reality is that once the United States took the decision to release this imagery to the United Nations, it was declassifying it. It became unclassified imagery, because you can’t provide classified information to people who don’t have security clearances. When you’re giving it to UNSCOM, you’re giving it to the United Nations, which means anybody affiliated with UNSCOM can have access to this information. We would, in UNSCOM, be careful to protect the US sensitivities about how good the imagery was, so we would safeguard the prints and wouldn’t distribute it willy-nilly, and we would also, if we were taking photographs of an operational target for instance, a target that we planned on inspecting,
we would further compartmentalize so that that no one would have access to that specific site except the planners who were responsible for putting together the inspection.

But the U-2 actually was a fantastic resource, and we made good use of it. One of the problems was that we couldn’t take it into Iraq. The US would not allow us to take this film into Iraq, and so on complicated missions inspectors sometimes had to go in with maps that weren’t really up to the task, or line drawings, hand drawings that again, weren’t up to the task. I can say on many occasions, chief inspectors would violate this rule and say, “The hell with it, I’m taking this U-2 picture in because I need it to get to the site.” And I did that many times, and it proved to be invaluable on the ground—when you needed to have a reference point you could pull out the picture and it was there. It was good film.

JS: What were the distinctions between the satellite photography and the U-2 photography?

RS: Satellite photography didn’t belong to the United Nations. It would be provided by a member nation, there was really only one, the United States. They wouldn’t call it satellite photography, so it is really a presumption to say that it is satellite photography. Every once in a while we’d receive briefings where imagery that wasn’t from the U-2 would be provided. It would be provided on the basis of showing it to us, we could study it, look at the pictures, but everything had to be turned back to the US, and that was classified as Top Secret-Sensitive, not releasable. It was a US classification. But it was useful. The satellite imagery we would use in New York to help plan, use it for specific
briefings, it’s been briefed to the Security Council using satellite imagery on a number of occasions. Then in Bahrain, the Gateway facility would be able to, while a team was in country preparing to go into Iraq—let’s say a pass had been made, some imagery had been taken—they would be able to, through US systems, download an image and show it to us within hours after the pass so that we would get literally immediate updates before we went in. Satellite imagery proved to be extremely valuable to the inspection process, but we didn’t have as much flexibility with it as we did with the U-2, because that was US property.

JS: So who would have had access to it? Just the Americans?

SR: No, early on the United States was very crude in their approach. They limited access to Americans only, but one of the things I’m proudest of is being involved in the revolt that said, “No, you can’t do that. This is the United Nations, we’re independent, you can’t be directing us, we direct you. We’re in charge of this show, not you. If you want to play that, we’re going to shut Gateway down and we’re just going to do it ourselves. If you guys want to provide a service, it has to be a service to everybody.” And the US matured. Eventually, if they released satellite imagery, they would ask us to make sure that we only showed it to people who had a need to know. That is, planners who were going to do the inspection. It wasn’t meant for everybody in the Special Commission to look at, but the Special Commission determined who needed to know and then those people would see it. They oftentimes included Russians, French, people who wouldn’t normally have access to that kind of information.
JS: Was the existence of Gateway in some way considered very sensitive?

SR: It started out being, but became a joke because right across—literally—the lagoon from Gateway is the Iraqi Embassy, and the Iraqis know what’s there, they have all their resources focused on Gateway. We’d send Russians and French and Chinese inspectors through, and they’d report back to their governments, and their governments would report back to the Iraqis what’s going on. I think it was just one of those deals that—we didn’t talk about it too much—everybody knew what was going on. It was not a secret at all.

JS: The reason I ask is that one of other persons that I’ve interviewed was reluctant to talk about it at all.

SR: Again, I think that’s because of the perception of intelligence support to the Special Commission and the myth that’s created there. Of course we receive intelligence information. Of course we use it, because Iraq has created an extraordinarily difficult problem that requires extraordinarily innovative solutions to solve, and I think the United Nations and UNSCOM does an extreme disservice to not acknowledge this. Why do we have to say we’re playing the game that everything’s hunky-dory, that there are no special activities going on? That implies then that there’s no special problem. There is a special problem, and it needs special solutions. If Gateway were truly a secret entity, operating covertly, then of course I wouldn’t talk about it. But it’s not. Everybody knows about it.
So who are we hiding it from? Who are we fooling when we won't talk about it? I just find that extraordinarily naïve.

JS: As I understand it, some of the most valuable intelligence—can't even call it intelligence—information came from private companies in various countries in Western Europe, particularly, about sales to Iraq. Where would that information have been funneled? Would that go to your office in New York or to Gateway or where?

SR: That information is almost purely an UNSCOM initiative, where inspectors—the specialist-ballistic missile, chemical, biological—would develop personal liaison relationships with specific entities inside governments and the work was sensitive and it was very private, very compartmentalized, but the information would be channeled straight to New York to be used by an extremely limited number of people. The specifics of that are very sensitive.

JS: But Ambassador Ekéus himself was quite instrumental in that?

SR: Ambassador Ekéus was instrumental in this because he was a visionary who understood that if we were going to get this job done we had to undertake activities of that nature. He would use his good offices to intervene with governments and request the support, and then he would provide what I thought was a tremendous maturity in terms of allowing the experts to go off with minimal supervision and do the job. He had utter trust and confidence in the people that worked for him; he did not micro-manage; he allowed
us to go and do the job, but he effectively supervised what we were doing to make sure that we didn’t get carried away, we didn’t exceed our mandate, everybody reported back to him. He had a good grasp of the situation. He was very instrumental in that.

JS: What about the other members of the Commission? You don’t seem to hear that they were active at all. Did they have any role?

SR: The Deputy Executive Chairman is an American, and also a member of the Commission. He and the Executive Chairman were the only two full-time members who actively participate in the work of the Commission. I would say that the Deputy Executive Chairman was very active, but not because he was a commissioner but because he was a Deputy Executive Chairman. The other commissioners, how do I say this without being impolitic, the commission itself is a joke. Twenty-one members, expandable to twenty-five, who meet two times a year and sit around the table and pretend to be important. As somebody who was with the Commission from 1991 to 1998, I can tell you that other than early on, when the formed a chemical destruction advisory group—they provided advice to the inspectors who went to the field and then did whatever they wanted to do—they had no operational oversight, they had no real say in the matter.

Ambassador Ekéus really managed them quite effectively. He would bring them in, make them feel important for a couple of days while they had their plenary sessions, he’d receive their reports, and then put them in the waste bin where they belonged. We had a job to do and these guys who came in twice a year had no clue what we were about.
Sometimes they assisted—we’d present a problem that maybe their government could assist—so we’d use them an in to their government so that with the political weight of being a commissioner, they could bring that to bear on the problem and release some resources to us—but in terms of the day to day functions of the Special Commission, these people had no role whatsoever. Frankly speaking, we often thought the plenaries were just a big pain in the neck. We had to stop doing our disarmament work weeks in advance to prepare for these plenaries. When they came into town, the whole game stopped. We couldn’t do operations, we couldn’t do inspections, we couldn’t do anything, because these guys were around sticking their noses in everything.

JS: They met in New York?

SR: They met in New York.

JS: You mentioned resources—was money ever a problem, or was there adequate resources?

SR: We never shut down, we were always funded. I would say, though, that Ambassador Ekéus ran what we called Operation Tin Cup. He’d go around the world and shake the empty can and get money. Travel to the Gulf States and until the Oil for Food resolution came, funding was always problematic. It was clear that the United States would never let us down. They always said, “Don’t worry, we’ll ‘chip in’ in the end ultimately.” But the U.S. didn’t want to be the sole funder of the Special Commission.
That’s a United Nations organization; it’s United Nations’ responsibility. So the U.S. pushed Ekeus to travel around and raise money around the world. We got a lot of money from the Saudis, the Kuwaitis, we got money from the British, Japanese would kick in money.

JS: And when the Oil for Food program started, funds for that are used for inspection.

SR: Right. Once Oil for Food came, we were totally solvent, and have never had to worry about money since then.

JS: Now going back to something you said earlier about turning to the Israelis for the analysis of the U-2 photographs, who made that decision? And again, could you elaborate about why? Why were the Israelis needed for that?

SR: I guess I’ll go through the history of the Israeli contacts. In April of 1991, when the Special Commission was formed, the Executive Chairman put out a letter to, I believe, 185 countries asking for any information they had on Iraqi weapons programs. I think 35 responded. One of who was the Israelis, who provided a three-page memo, classified secret, that gave very rudimentary numbers of what they thought the Iraqis might have in different weapons categories. That was it. We never went back to them, they never came to us. What I found out later on was happening was that the Israelis would feed their information to the United States and ask the United States to provide it to UNSCOM. But the United States has rules and regulations about third party sharing of
intelligence. So if Israel provides the United States with intelligence, by law the United States can’t release it to the United Nations unless the United States can confirm that intelligence using their own sources. And since Israeli resources are different from American resources oftentimes, that’s not going to happen. So the Israelis were feeding data to the United States on the hopes that it would get to the United Nations, and it wasn’t. It was just piling up in Washington, DC, nothing was happening to it.

Meanwhile, I’m in New York, in 1991, 1992, 1993, I wrote letters to the Chairman saying, “We’ve got to go to the Israelis. We need intelligence, and these guys have got it. They have a vested interest in this problem. Why are we ignoring somebody who could add so much?” The reason was, according to the Chairman, ‘it’s too sensitive.’ Politically, we can’t sustain this. We just can’t get involved with the Israelis.

At the end of ’93-’94, there are a couple of stories. There’s the popular myth of Tim Trevan in the Delphi conference, where he stood up and confronted David Ivry and then they introduced him to Amidror. That’s true, but the actual matter is that Amidror had been fighting to get to UNSCOM long before Tim Trevan ever stood up at Delphi. Amidror had gone to the United States and said, “Look, the information we gave you isn’t getting to UNSCOM, we think we need to make a direct approach.” And the United States had approved it, so there was significant diplomatic activity between the United States and Israel prior to the legendary Delphi conference. But Trevan might have accelerated the process. He got in contact with Amidror, and then later on Amidror flew to New York in early 1994 to meet with Ekeus. Amidror was the Deputy Director of Military Intelligence Research. There’s the Director of Military Intelligence and there’s
two deputies—one is for intelligence operations and the other one’s for research. And he’s the head of research—does all the analysis, prepares the annual assessments.

But Amidror flew to New York and met with Ekeus and said, “Look, we want to help you.” The initial help occurred in April-May ’94 when a team of Israeli experts flew to New York and met with the UNSCOM counterparts. It was your typical meeting with a bunch of Israeli experts on one side of the table and a bunch of UNSCOM experts on the other side, very formal, passing papers across the table. Other than the fact that the Israelis wrote very good papers and had a lot of good information in them, you wouldn’t call it a cohesive exchange. It was very formal.

Another exchange occurred later in ’94, maybe in July-August ’94; a similar thing, an Israeli team flew over and did the exchange.

I had left the Special Commission in March of ’94 and went back on active duty at the Marine Corps, and the Special Commission, while I was in the Marine Corps, made an urgent request that I be brought back. They said, “We need Ritter to come in, only he can solve certain problems for us.” So it was agreed in September that I would go back for a period of four months. And when I came back—I’d been pushing for this Israeli initiative for years—I came back and I was surprised. I said, “My God, you guys did it, you met with the Israelis, congratulations.” And I said, “Well let me see what they gave you.” And we have a bunch of technical rocket-scientists and chemists, and they’re looking through, looking for chemical formulas and specific technologies useable to rocket-science. I’m looking through it, thinking, “Man, these guys are detailing how the Iraqis are hiding stuff from us. What are we doing about it?” They said, “Nothing.” I said, “Well we’ve got to follow up on this.”
So I went to Chairman Ekéus and I said, “Look, we need to send a special team to Israel. We need to go to Israel. Not them coming to us, we need to go to them, and we need to initiate a new kind of cooperation. Not this, handing papers across, but we’ve got to work with these guys to develop operational methodologies to defeat this concealment mechanism that they’ve identified; how the Iraqis are hiding stuff from us.” And the Chairman was leery of it. He said, “If this gets out, we’re dead.” I said, “But we’ve got to do it. You know we have to do it, because we’re not getting this kind of help from anybody.” So the Chairman approved it, and in October we sent a three-man team—myself, Nikita Smidovich, a Russian, and Norbert Reineke, a German. We flew to Israel, were met, and they whisked us off to a facility north of Tel Aviv, and we sat around a table, us on one side, them on the other side. And I said, “This isn’t going to work.” I went up to the colonel and said, “This is crap. This isn’t what we wanted. We’ll meet with you here, but we need to meet your boss. I’ve got to break through all this, I want a meeting with the Director of Military Intelligence.” He said, “About what?” I said, “Can’t tell you. I’m on a mission from Ambassador Ekéus, and I want a one-on-one. His ears only.” And I’ll give the Israelis credit. They could have told us to pound sand and get on the airplane and get out of there. But they said okay. And that night we were met at our hotel and whisked off to the Kirya, which is the Israeli IDF headquarters in the center of Tel Aviv, taken up in the building, entered, and there he is. Uri Saguy said, “All right, you got me. What do you want?”

I can’t tell you what we talked about, but I gave him the pitch from Ekéus on special cooperation, and his jaw dropped. I mean he just, boom! Looked over at the colonel and said, “Did you know he was going to say this?” And the colonel said, “No, I
had no idea.” And Saguy looked at us and he said, “Let me tell you that we’re going to think about it, but I’m here to tell you right now to go back to Ekéus and say, ‘God bless you, Ekéus, you’re a brave man.’ The fact that Ekéus had the courage to send this team here to meet with me and tell me this, he’s a brave man. We’re not guaranteeing anything. This is different. I don’t know if we’re ready for this, but the Ambassador Ekéus is a brave man. You tell him that. God bless him for having the courage to try and do this.”

They were really impressed. They were just flabbergasted that a bunch of United Nations geeks would fly in there and hit them with something like this. We met over the course of the next couple of days, and the decision was taken that they would have to consider what we had asked for, but no matter what, they wanted us to continue—I won’t call it relaxed, it was much more sensitive, highly sensitive, compartmentalized, but a working-level thing, not groups of people around the table and delegations, but a small group of dedicated people who would come to Israel and work with their experts on a very intimate level to try and solve this problem. And that was agreed to. What we would work on still had to be shaped out. The actual breakthrough into close cooperation was agreed to then.

We went back in December, and they reported back and Saguy said, “Look, a couple things you asked for, we can’t do. We think it will be dangerous for you, it would be dangerous for us. We normally only do these things for ourselves, we don’t share them with other people. We certainly appreciate your bringing it up. We’ll do our best to provide information of that nature to you that you can use, but what we’d like to do is get involved in more operational planning, to provide our expertise.” That’s one of things
I had asked for, I said, “Right now in Iraq there are trucks driving around with components. They’re hiding in villages, they’re hiding in farms, they’re hiding in places we just don’t know. They’re moving around. How can Israel take a helicopter, fly across the border into Lebanon as a convoy drives by, and pop the third vehicle of the convoy and kill the head of the Amal militia? Where do you get that intelligence? How do you do that? Because that’s what we want to do. We want to pick the car in a convoy and stop it, and get the equipment. I want to get in to your methodology. How do you do that? What do you need? How can UNSCOM learn from you?”

They said, “Okay, we’ll do that with you. We’ll help you.” In December when we talked about it, they said, “Look, we can’t just jump into that boat with you. That’s a tough one. We need an excuse, because politically we’re having a hard time selling it to our masters. We need an excuse. We need a mechanism of cooperation.” I said, “Well, imagery is going to be very important.” They said, “Yes, imagery is going to be very important.” I said, “I’ll tell you what. Why don’t we work on bringing U-2 imagery here, and letting your photo interpreters sit down and take a look at it with us, in cooperation. And based upon what they find, I can ask questions to you, and you can bring me your experts, and we can talk about it. But the mechanism will be this imagery. The same thing—your guys look at the picture and say, ‘UNSCOM needs to know that,’ and then you can release additional information to us. We’ll use this as the mechanism for an intelligence cooperation.”

They liked that, brought in Nikita, who agreed that it was a good idea, and Nikita said that he would go to the Chairman and brief him. So we did. The Chairman approved it. A key to this, both from Nikita’s point of view and the Israelis point of view,
was that I had to be in charge of the operation. They said, “We don’t trust anybody else. We trust you because you came here and had the guts to sit there and stare us in the face and ask for this crazy idea. So we trust you. But if you’re not doing it, we’re not going to do it.” And Nikita went to the Chairman and said, “There’s only one person in UNSCOM who has the experience and the knowledge and the capability to do it, and that’s Ritter. We’ve got to keep him.”

In December I had to go back to the Marine Corps. From December ’94 to June ‘95, there was a big fight with the U.S. government and the Marine Corps on releasing me. The Marine Corps didn’t want to release me. The U.S. government wouldn’t explain to the Marine Corps why I needed to be released. Ultimately, the Marine Corps said, “Look, he can resign, and then you can take over responsibility for funding him, but we’re not going to fund...” It was bureaucratic, “We’re not going to fund the billet in the United Nations.” I resigned, and the Department of Defense picked me up, and I was sent to the Special Commission in July, and that’s when we started the special cooperation in earnest.

JS: Paid by the Department of Defense, not by the UN.

SR: No, by the Department of Defense. I was paid by the UN from September of ’91 through the end of February ’94. I was a UN staff member. But when I came back from September to December, I was on active duty in the Marine Corps, and when I came back in July of ’95 I was paid for by the Department of Defense. It was always intended that the UN would pick up funding for me. But the UN needs a long lead-time, and we had
bureaucratic problems. There were new UN staffing regulations, the reforms, that made it impossible even though I was a P-4—the professional level of 4—that made it impossible for them to bring me on. So even though we tried to make me a UN staff member, they wouldn’t. And every six months we had to go back to the United States government and get an extension of my contract, a very ‘iffy’ thing.

JS: This arrangement was unique; there was no similar arrangement with any other country.

SR: We had extensive relationships with the United States, we had extensive relationships with the United Kingdom, extensive relationships with Germany, we had special relationships, on occasion, with Russia, with France, the Israeli relationship—our relationships were unique. You couldn’t compare the US one with the British one with the French one. The Israeli relationship was unique, it was different, but it wasn’t exclusive. We did similar intelligence cooperation with other governments. The Israeli one was very extensive and they provided a unique aspect and unique capabilities, and theirs was perhaps, in the end, perhaps the most valuable. The US was the most extensive, and we couldn’t have gotten anywhere without the United States support. By 1997, we had pretty much scraped the US wall dry. And yet, now we have this goody-bag of information in Israel. A large extent of what I did from 1996 to 1998 was driven by the cooperation with Israel.
JS: Could we go now to how the teams were actually formed that went out in the field. How was that done?

SR: Again it was an evolutionary process. In the beginning, the Special Commission formed teams of arms control experts that were for a large part nominated by the governments. The UNSCOM would say, “We want to do a ballistic missile inspection,” and the US would say, “Well here’s some of the experts.” We’d get French experts; we’d get Russian experts. They’d organize, go to Bahrain, get trained and equipped, flown into Baghdad, and they would do the inspection. Then as we got additional information in which we found the Iraqis were cheating, the US would provide information on their own. They’d say, “Hey, we’ve got satellite imagery that shows vehicles moving. The US would say we think you should go in with a team of sixteen, organized this way, trained,” and the US would be running the show, almost. When I came in, one of the things I fought for very forcefully was the independence of the Special Commission. Doug Englund agreed 100%. We said, “This is unacceptable, we have to be in charge.” So starting in 1992, UNSCOM took total responsibility for—we’d say, “You give us information, we’ll assess it, and then we’ll build a team, equip a team, and go in on our timetable.”

When we built a team, we would take a look at the problem, the physical size of the area that needed to be inspected, the duration of the inspection, the number of targets. Are there computers, do we need computer experts? Are there documents, will we need linguists? We need linguists anyway to translate, but we also need translators to look at a document and read it quickly. We need security people. People who can stand out there
with an imposing presence and block vehicles or at least observe vehicles moving and report back. Communicators to man satellite communications. Medics—it’s hot. There always the danger of unexploded ordinance. We need explosive ordinance disposal people who would go in and do a reconnaissance of the site to make sure there’s no bombs or land mines. We need experts so that when we finally find something, the translator can read it and we have an expert who can make sense of it. We need operations people, because this is an operation, we need a leader, a planner, an organizer. We’d identify all of these requirements and then we’d say, “Who’s the best in the world for doing this?” And unfortunately, most of the time it came down to an American and a Brit. Sometimes we had to accept second-best. We’d have to say, “We’ll take an American here, but we’re going to have to take a Frenchman here, because we have to diversify.” The bottom line is that as the inspections moved on, the important positions gravitated to America and the United Kingdom. Because A, they were willing to provide serious work, and B, they had the serious experts. No one else had serious experts like these guys. So important positions gravitated in that direction, less important positions were carved up and handed out to other governments.

JS: Did Ekeus try to include some geographical representative members in the teams?

SR: He tried. Again, we did do that, but the way we did it was farming those guys out to the less important positions. We had some disasters when we brought in people and arbitrarily said that the leader will be from Country X, and we brought him in and he couldn’t lead worth a damn. Then you had Americans and Brits stepping in and filling in
anyway, so why joke? Why not put our best man—forget nationality—the top positions will be defined by who’s the best in the world. That’s what we did. Once we did that, then we took a look at geographical distribution. UNSCOM picked the top people, and unfortunately, you had to go with primarily Brits and Americans. We had a lot of Frenchmen, we had a lot of Russians, Germans—Germans played a significant role—Australians.

JS: I judge the Indians did not, even though they had some expertise.

SR: The Indians didn’t want to play at all.

End of Side 1, Tape 1

JS: We were talking about the relationship between UNSCOM and IAEA. Starting at the beginning, as I understand it, it changed some. Could you describe that?

SR: The IAEA was always the little brother to UNSCOM. It had one specific goal, and that was to oversee the disposition of the nuclear material, the nuclear programs. UNSCOM was the only one who had the authority to designate sites in Iraq for inspection. The IAEA could not designate sites. The IAEA could not task the U-2 directly. The IAEA would have to channel all of its requirements through the Special Commission. UNSCOM also provided the logistical support, the administrative support in Bahrain, and in Baghdad to the IAEA. Early on, the IAEA teams worked pretty closely
with UNSCOM. David Kay’s team had a good relationship; we’d send our Deputy Executive Chairman Bob Galucci on their teams. But then as UNSCOM developed into a more mature organization with its own capabilities, UNSCOM started compartmentalizing away from the IAEA, keeping the IAEA out, building a wall.

One of the reasons was that the IAEA had a cavalier attitude, I would say, towards operational security and protecting sensitive information. Cavalier’s a little too flippant. The IAEA was an honest-to-God United Nations organization that believed in this thing called transparency: “We’re the UN, we can let anybody in. We got an Egyptian sitting here. We trust him as an Egyptian. His country is part of the IAEA, they sit on the board of governors. Therefore when he sits around with us, we can’t hide anything from him because we have no right to hide from our Egyptian brother.” Although your Egyptian brother is going to his Egyptian ambassador and reporting everything you say and he feeds it off to the Iraqis. UNSCOM said, “Wrong, we’re not going to do that. We will compartmentalize. The Chairman will designate. If he trusts somebody like Nikita Smidovich, a Russian, he’ll say, ‘I trust you. But I trust you because I know you’re not going to go to your government and feed the data. You’re going to work for me.’ So UNSCOM was very much a personality-dependent organization. Whereas the IAEA was more of a typical United Nations organization. A lot of mistrust developed there, so this wall…. The other problem, frankly speaking, is that Hans Blix, who was the Director-General of IAEA, and Rolf Ekéus hated each other—just utterly despised one another. I guess that went back years. That carried over into the relationship. Rolf felt that he could do the disarmament job ten times better than the IAEA. There’s always resentment to the IAEA that they screwed up. One reason why there was an Iraq’s nuclear problem was
that they didn’t do the safeguard program right. Zifferero was in there facilitating the provision of this material to Iraq, and Iraq used it under the noses of the IAEA to build a nuclear weapons program, and now Zifferero is the head of the action team going in and trying to disarm them. A lot of prejudice developed. In reality, Zifferero was a very capable man who was trying to do a job honestly. That’s my opinion.

There developed this really bad feeling between the IAEA and UNSCOM. In honesty, I have to say that IAEA behaved much more maturely and responsibly about this than UNSCOM. A lot of people in UNSCOM took it personally and behaved inappropriately towards the IAEA. Whereas the IAEA knew what was going on at UNSCOM. But still when I came in 1992 for support, they received me, they invited me in, they gave me access to everything, and actually, when you looked at what the IAEA did, it wasn’t as bad as we thought. They actually did a pretty darn good job. Security wasn’t that bad. Maurizio Zifferero ran that thing with an iron hand. Dimitri Pericos was a good, firm leader. They had a good Frenchman, Jacques Baute. They brought in Gary Dillon later on; these were good people, professionals who…. I was impressed with the IAEA. Every time I went over there I was really impressed. They have a political problem that they have to report to a board of governors that is very politicized. But operationally, the IAEA was always, other than concealment, I would say in terms of the technical inspections in Iraq, the only team that could compare to the IAEA was the ballistic missile team. That was the one that Nikita and I were running. The other teams were like Boy Scout troops, Boy Scout excursions compared to the IAEA. The IAEA was focused, professional, sound technically. I think the big problem was that Ekéus and
Blix hated each other, and that ran over, and then all these prejudices developed, and then ultimately there was just a lot of bad blood.

I would say that when Gary Dillon came in and became the Deputy to Maurizio Zifferero, and then when I started the concealment inspections, I said that we couldn’t do it without the IAEA support, Ekeus hated it. Didn’t want me to go over to the IAEA at all, viewed it as his program. But Ekeus was professional enough to say, “Okay, go over, don’t tell them everything, but you have to go over.” I went over and Gary Dillon received me, was professional, and Gary Dillon and I developed a really outstanding relationship. We also had a Frenchman, Didier Louis, who was one of our photo interpreters, who developed a very good imagery sharing relationship with the IAEA. Gary Dillon developed the concept of what we called “capable sites,” to be used in long term monitoring; sites that weren’t on the Iraqi lists, but through analysis of imagery we’d say, “These are capable of perhaps doing something, so we’ll inspect them to find out if they should be on the list.” That was Gary Dillon’s idea. It grew out of his concepts for improving safeguarding. And he worked with Didier Louis, the French photo interpreter, to use UNSCOM imagery to support that. We cut through the bad blood and we did have a pretty effective working relationship on the working level. It wasn’t universal throughout the Special Commission, but specific nodes in the Special Commission had a very good working relationship with the IAEA. It wasn’t as bad as everybody thinks it is.

JS: You actually eventually led teams into Iraq, right?

SR: Right.
JS: The Iraqis say that you led or were a member of twenty-eight inspection teams, and in none of these inspections was it determined that any weapons or weapon components had been hidden at any of the 475 sites inspected. What is your comment on that?

SR: I think I led or was a member of—I don’t know when that letter was written, but it probably needs to be updated, because the number is closer to forty right now. (Sutterlin hands Ritter the letter.) That’s September ’98.

JS: It’s the one they circulated in the Security Council.

SR: Right. The Iraqis oftentimes stopped our teams at gun-point from going into a site. So we didn’t find anything. Now if I go to a site and I have the world’s best intelligence that something’s hidden in that site, and I have an AK-47 pointed in my face by a Special Republican Guard soldier, and I’m not allowed access to, I guess that would be one of those sites. A, we didn’t inspect it, and B, we didn’t find anything because we weren’t allowed in.

Other times, when we’d come to a site, they’d hold us out for six, seven, to eight hours while they cleaned it up inside. So when we got access to the site, nothing was there, so we found nothing. And other times, I can’t go into this because of some of the sensitive stuff we were doing, yes, we caught them dead. But we weren’t going to let them know that we caught them dead, because we were running an intelligence operation.
We were doing something, stimulating Iraqi response, they would respond, we would collect data on how they were responding, and then pull back and evaluate it. Say, “That’s what they were up to.” When you do a game like that, because the Iraqis had this concealment mechanism, we had to define it. So we would send teams in to stimulate Iraqi response. As I said, it was a new level of inspection. It wasn’t your traditional arms control inspection.

Sometimes we would stimulate activity at a site where we knew nothing was at, just to see how they responded. We had a body of data that we could compare with other, and we’d find where we had overlaps or where we had unique signatures. We would do that. The bottom line is, that our inspections produced results which exposed Iraqi lies, exposed the inconsistencies. A lot of times we didn’t find anything, but what we found was that they were lying. That they gave us a story, and when we investigated the story, we found that every point of data, every point of fact they set forth was contradicted by the reality on site. Did we find a weapon, no. We proved they were lying. We also proved that they were concealing, we proved how they were concealing, who was concealing, where they were concealing. And if we’d been given access on a number of occasions where we had good intelligence and were allowed to go in accordance with the original provision, we would have found the weapons. The Iraqis know it. How do I account for that? That’s typical Iraqi dribble designed to divert attention away from the reality that A, they haven’t provided a complete declaration, B, they never allowed the inspection teams to operate in the way they were originally intended. And C, they have no intention of allowing the inspection teams. They’ll focus on individuals, they’ll focus
on the inspections that threaten them the most, which are the ones which I was leading, they want to stop them, and they’ll come up with statistics that are very misleading.

JS: How would you define the relations with the Iraqis? How did you come in contact with the Iraqis? How did this work?

SR: We worked with the Iraqis on a number of levels. I was always a senior member of the team, so I would work with their technical experts. I was a ballistic missile expert, and I would work with their ballistic missile people.

JS: Now when you say you would work with them, what does that mean?

SR: We’d go in to investigate for instance, guidance and control development. So I would lead a team into a site, and I’d say, “Okay, explain the site to me.” And they would explain. The senior people would explain. I’d cross-examine them on the spot and say, “No, in this room this guy said this, and you’re saying this now. It doesn’t make any sense.”

JS: This would be in a ministry or someplace like that?

SR: In a factory. Through this process of technical cross-examination and investigation, the Iraqis developed an enormous respect for me. They didn’t like me; I would say, they didn’t like what I was doing. They liked me a lot, because they knew that
I didn’t b.s. them. I’d come in and say what I thought, I’d be brutally honest with them, I
didn’t hide anything from them. I told them from Day 1 when I came in: They asked,
“Who are you?” and I said, “I’m Scott Ritter and I’m an intelligence officer of the United
States Marine Corps, I fought against you in the Gulf War. I don’t work for the United
States right now, I work for Ekeus, but I used to work for the United States, used to be an
intelligence officer. I’m pretty good at what I do, I do ballistic missiles. I was in Russia
doing ballistic missile inspections.” And I told them whatever they wanted to know about
my background, because my philosophy was not to lie to these guys. Because if you lie to
them, they may expose the lie, and that will be a diversion away from the effort. They
will say, “What are you hiding?” I’m hiding nothing. I’m here on behalf of the United
Nations, I work for Rolf Ekeus, the Security Council has given me a mandate, and that’s
what I’m doing. And they respected that tremendously.

The relationship was very professional: a lot of respect on their part for me, and
later on when I did the more intrusive inspections, I always brought in very large, very
complicated teams. The Iraqis were amazed with the efficiency of the operations. They
were stunned, because other people would bring in teams, and it was just a goat-rope. It
was Girl Scout camp; it was Boy Scout camp. Guys couldn’t meet on time, they’d get
lost, and they couldn’t navigate to the site. When they got to the site they had no idea
what they were looking at. It was a joke. Our teams were always run like clockwork—
very military-type precision. The Iraqis really respected that. They didn’t like what we
were doing; I don’t want to mislead you there. They hated what we were doing. But in
terms of the efficiency of operation, the professionalism of the team, they loved us. They
really appreciated that. They almost viewed it as a sign of respect, the fact that we
respected them so much that we behaved in such a professional manner. They took pride in a Ritter inspection: “Wow, these guys are coming after us! Great!”

JS: How would you assess their skill, so to speak? How good were they at concealment?

SR: The fact that seven years later they still hold on to a large portion of what they wanted to keep shows they’re pretty good at it. It also shows that the United Nations has some inherent weaknesses that allow Iraq to be good. Iraq’s good because they control Iraq, they control the ground, and they have the weapons. You don’t have to be that good when in the end you make a mistake you can just point a gun at somebody and just get them to stop. We were good. We are better than they are. Many times we found what we wanted to go after. We knew exactly what was in the location, we went to it. There’s nothing you can do when a gun’s pointed at you. We’re not there to fight our way into a site. Iraq is supposed to let us in. They were clever, but they weren’t that clever. We beat them. We beat them hands down on a number of occasions. We beat them operationally. We lost when it came to the politics of the situation because we became such a secret, compartmentalized covert organization in the end, that we couldn’t even share our data with the Security Council. So when we had to go to the Security Council and explain why we were trying to get in to the intelligence and the Iraqis were stopping us, the Iraqis would say, “They’re just creating a provocation.” And the Security Council would say, “Well we know you have to go in anywhere you want to, UNSCOM.” And we would give a broad brush, “Well we’re looking at covert procurement.” “All right,
but can you tell us what exactly you’re looking at?” “No, we can’t.” Politically, that only
plays out so far. In the end the Iraqis would win. So they were clever politically, they
were clever operationally. UNSCOM actually was better than Iraq operationally—we had
great intelligence, we could organize teams efficiently, we could get to the site. But they
would stop us and then elevate it, kick into the politics, so we got beat.

JS: What you’re saying is that there was a security problem. That is, in revealing to
the Security Council, which ultimately had to be informed, just exactly what you were
doing.

SR: Yes, that’s absolutely true. One of the reasons was that the French and Russians
and Chinese sit on the Security Council. You only have to receive so many security
reports from the United States and the United Kingdom showing how France is funneling
information to Iraq, showing how Russia is providing intelligence support to the Iraqi
intelligence service on how to defeat UNSCOM, before you don’t trust the Russians and
the French. The bottom line is that the Russians, the French and the Chinese were not
playing the game straight. They created us, but they were working against us.

JS: Just to be clear on this, you spoke highly of the Russian member of the team,
Smidovich…

SR: And there’s some others, Igor Mitrokhin is another extremely professional person.
JS: So that if and when the information was channeled back to the Iraqis it was done at a different level.

SR: Absolutely. It wasn’t done by those people. The Russians would send inspectors on teams for the sole purpose of collecting information. These inspectors would debrief their Russian intelligence counterparts every step of the way while the team was training, while the team was in Iraq. There was a Russian embassy in Iraq, and Russian embassy officials were continuously coming to our headquarters, meeting with the Russian inspectors, debriefing them, and then they’d go in and brief Tariq Aziz.

JS: This is my next question. To what extent did members of UNSCOM teams maintain direct contact with their governments and provide information directly and not through UNSCOM to their governments?

SR: When a government provides somebody to the Special Commission, the inspectors sign what’s called a special service agreement, and that was an agreement that they work with the Special Commission, the information that they received was proprietary to the Special Commission and that they would not report back to their government without permission of the Executive Chairman. The reality is that if you go to the United States and get a ballistic missile expert, you know that he works for his government, and you know that he can’t not report back to his government. So Ekeus was responsible enough to say, “Look, as long as you’re up-front with me, I’ll approve it. That way you’re not breaking any rules. We want a relationship with the United States.”
Let me define the relationship and then you work within the framework of that relationship. That way you have my authority to do this, and you’re not violating the rules.” So any government that was mature enough to work in that manner—and there were many—the United Kingdom, Great Britain, and early on, Russia and France, even…. We developed the ability to where if France had a requirement, they would submit it and we would try to meet the requirement. That way nobody had to work behind the scenes.

I ought to say, though, that that was very naive thinking on the part of everybody, because it didn’t matter. All countries, when they submitted inspectors, those inspectors came back and provided sensitive debbriefings to their government only. Every inspector had that kind of relationship who was a government-provided inspector. And many civilians who weren’t government associated, for instance, academicians or people from industry, would also provide that kind of briefing to their governments. That’s just the reality. Once UNSCOM started becoming such a politically sensitive operation, every government wanted to know what was going on. And so they would have these special briefings. That’s just the nature of the beast. It happened throughout. But you didn’t mind it when the government’s on your side.

JS: One side question: you mentioned the Russian Smidovich. Is he the one who is still in the Secretariat in the UNSCOM office? He was a chemical….

SR: Yes.
JS: You have spoken several times about the skill of Ambassador Ekéus in handling such sensitive questions. How would describe the difference between Ambassador Ekéus’ handling of such situations and Ambassador Butler?

SR: What a loaded question! Butler created a lot of problems for himself coming in. One, Ekéus tried to have a one-month turnover period with Ambassador Butler to explain to him basically six years of work and the political sensitivities, what the traps were, what the pitfalls are, who the people are on your staff, who you can trust, who you can’t trust. Why you have to have a special relationship with America, the special relationship with Israel. Why we have to treat the French differently, and why we just have to be really cautious of the Russians, but how do we manage that all politically. Ekéus wanted to pass this all on to Butler, and Butler didn’t want it. Butler viewed himself coming in as the savior. He was the guy who was going to solve all the problems that Ekéus couldn’t solve. Butler was going to come in and everything was going to be fine. Ekéus was this demon, the Iraqis hated him, it was obviously Ekéus’ fault that the Commission wasn’t succeeding, and I, Richard Butler, am going to solve everything.

Another thing that Ekéus did was manage the Secretary-General very effectively. Ekéus basically told the Secretary-General to take a flying leap: “I don’t work for you, I work for the Security Council, I’ll keep you informed, I’ll be polite to you, but ultimately....” Ekéus has a way of listening to somebody and doing nothing. When the person leaves, he realizes that Ekéus doesn’t really give a flying leap what he thinks, but Ekéus never said that. Ekéus was very attentive.
JS: This was mainly Boutros-Ghali, right?

SR: Boutros-Ghali, yes. One reason Ekeus could do that was because Ekeus always had the Swedish government to fall back on. Ekeus was an employee of the Swedish government, an Ambassador, very high in their structure, and he could quit the Special Commission any time he wanted to. Butler was a controversial figure from the beginning. There were some problems with him coming on the Special Commission with who would pay for him. Ultimately, there was a misunderstanding where Kofi Annan thought the Australian government would pay for him, but the Australian government thought Kofi Annan would pay for him. Kofi Annan selected him, bypassing candidates such as Prakashah and Dhanapala, picking Richard Butler, only to find that he was going to be held with the responsibility for paying. There was an agreement brokered under which Australia did kick two years salary, but from the very beginning Butler always felt beholden to Kofi for this job, saying, “I’m an Under-Secretary-General, I want to be full-time one day. I need Kofi Annan, I need him to make me a full-time UN employee.” So he felt obligated to brief Kofi Annan on UNSCOM operations to the degree that Ekeus never would have dreamed of. That was a problem, because Kofi Annan’s people didn’t believe in the Special Commission’s mission. They didn’t believe in what the Commission was trying to do, and they were very anti-Special Commission. When you invite these inherently hostile elements to evaluate your work, you’re opening up a can of worms. Butler didn’t do this with any grace, or any diplomatic dexterity. He was very blunt, very direct in his approach, and again, he ran into a lot of problems because he would get way ahead of himself without the backup. For instance, he charged into Iraq
and told the Iraqis, “Everything will be fine, I’ll solve everything for you. I’m the new man on the block, you be honest with me, work with me, and we’ll get this thing finished quickly.” And his staff was sitting there saying, “Gosh, he can’t do that. We’ve got some serious problems here. What are you doing? We can’t just obviate all these years of discrepancies in the Iraqi’s story.” And then Butler woke up to the fact that the Iraqis are experts at being friendly and shaking hands and smiling and promising things, and then they wouldn’t deliver.

JS: He came to realize that.

SR: Very soon he came to realize that. He felt personally insulted, but now the Iraqis had him politically. Because they said, “Wait a minute, you promised you’d help us. Where’s Richard Butler, you liar! You’re a tool of the Americans. You said you’d come in and lift sanctions, but here you are now, you’re violating what you said. You said you wouldn’t do this, and yet you’re doing it. What’s going on, Richard?” He fell into the Iraqi trap. And then the Iraqis could go to the Secretary-General, who Richard Butler brought in to the problem. Richard Butler said that the Secretary-General has to be a player here. Well he didn’t have to be a player, he never was a player. You made him a player. Now that he’s a player, the Iraqis would come to him, because they had a receptive audience in the staff of Kofi Annan.

JS: Would that include, in particular, Shashi Tharoor, or others of the Secretariat?
SR: The two worst ones were Rolf Knutsson and Iqbal Riza. Those are the two by far who were the worst. I would say that Richard Butler took something that Rolf Ekeus created carefully and destroyed it. And we’re paying that price today. Having said all this, I have total sympathy for Richard Butler. He’s trying to do a good job, he’s a man who wants to do a good job. Most of the problems he faces are self-created. He’s created a lot of the problems that he faces. The fact that we have a Secretary-General so heavily engaged is the sole fault of Richard Butler and no one else.

JS: That leads to the next question, because when Kofi Annan did in fact make the trip to Baghdad, was he advised directly by Butler, or did UNSCOM have any role at all in that mission to Baghdad?

SR: There was a preliminary aspect to his mission. First he went February 23rd. We didn’t play a role in that at all. He was very standoffish toward us, Kofi Annan. He went in, he cut his deal, he was working with the Security Council on that one, at the behest of the Security Council, and he cut his deal. He cut his deal without any input from the Special Commission. We offered to send experts. You have to go back even further. You’ll remember in November, Kofi sent what we call the three wise men to Baghdad. This was an Argentinean, a Swedish ambassador, Johann Molander, and then Lakhdar Brahimi, the Algerian foreign minister. They went there and we offered to send our expert with them to advise them. We said, “We have a lot of experience with these guys.” They didn’t take anything. We provided some briefings to the three people, but they weren’t interested. They went in working for Kofi Annan. So right from the start,
when Kofi got involved in November sending his three special envoys, from the start the Secretary-General was saying, “I’m here to mediate a dispute between two warring factions.” It’s the typical peacekeeping role. “I have two warring factions.” Kofi Annan didn’t give UNSCOM a higher rate because we’re the United Nations organization, operating under a Security Council mandate, we’re doing the law and Iraq is violating it. Kofi provided the Iraqis with an equal footing, and I think that was a fatal mistake. And that’s how he approached it in February. Again, as a man mediating a dispute between two equal parties, the Iraqis have an equal say in this matter. A fatal flaw, because that’s giving Iraq more weight than they deserve at the table. Iraq’s in violation of international law and should be held accountable. The Secretary-General should be reinforcing that point, but instead he goes in and says, “No, what are your grievances? Let me hear your grievances. Yes, so the UNSCOM is horrible. Yes, I understand, but we have to live with them.” And he worked out a political solution with Tariq Aziz. I viewed what Kofi Annan was doing in February as basically the good offices of the Secretary-General working against UNSCOM at the behest of Iraq.

JS: After that agreement was reached with Tariq Aziz and with Saddam Hussein, theoretically it was to be possible to inspect the so-called presidential palaces. Otherwise, was there any period then when there was a kind of return to status quo anti, where the inspections could be carried out in general the way they had been before?

SR: No. In February we were stopped from doing inspection. My team was stopped, wasn’t allowed. You had the build-up of military force, the build-up of pressure. The
Iraqis had over a month and a half pre-warning that we were coming in on sites. And the sites were very carefully defined, the categories of sites: presidential sites, sites where Iraq had not let us in before. When Kofi found out we were going to do … There are two operative paragraphs, I think, four and five. Paragraph four deals with the presidential site inspections—this was the twenty-three February memorandum of understanding. Paragraph five deals with all other inspections. Kofi wanted us to do the presidential site inspections first, and then move on to the other ones. We said, “No, we’re going to do the other ones first, establish that Iraq will commit to certain modalities of inspection, and then we’ll do the presidential site inspections.” So you have to understand what happened in March wasn’t necessarily a real inspection. It was an inspection of sites that the Iraqis had sanitized completely. They had a month and a half to do this. And we had imagery showing trucks just pouring out of these sites. And when we got in the sites were empty. But there was a test of Iraq; it was defining what Iraq would be willing to do. How many inspectors they would allow into a site, how quickly they would allow an inspection team into the site. And so we basically boxed Iraq into a trap. We did this inspection, and that was the purpose of the inspection. We did it, and we said, “Okay, what are you going to commit to? Instant access? Great. Twenty people in a site? Fantastic. We can go anywhere we want? Thank you. Checked all the little blocks off, pulled the team out, and then we came in and did Kofi Annan’s joke inspection: presidential sites. No one ever wanted to go to presidential palaces. No one wanted to go to a presidential palace. But the way the Iraqis had defined presidential palaces, you have the actual palace structure, and then you have tens of square kilometers around it full of facilities, some of which we definitely wanted to go to. But now you have this new
modality where we basically give them so much advance warning of the site, we have to have these diplomatic observers with us—it makes the inspection totally useless. Iraq has a fifteen-minute standard operating procedure for evacuation of material. We’re giving them at least two days notice. Nothing’s going to be there. So the presidential sites basically created sanctuaries for Iraq and everybody viewed it as a joke.

We went and did it, and again, Iraq basically complied. But one thing not too many people were aware of is that the same day that the 23 February MOU was signed, as Kofi Annan was getting out of his airplane Tariq Aziz handed him another letter. And the letter said, “As we discussed…” and listed down additional concerns of the Iraqis that Kofi had apparently agreed to. One was that presidential site inspections be one-time only. That we do it and we never do them again. Now Kofi says that’s just a letter he received, he didn’t agree to that. It’s clear that there was a dialogue between the two of them. Kofi wasn’t playing straight from the start. But you can’t call the March inspection and the April presidential site inspection a return to status quo anti. They were unique events, they weren’t serious arms control inspections. They were political events. The return to status quo anti came later when we tried to resume our inspections in June, July, August and the Iraqis reverted to their standard practice of stopping teams, not letting teams in, delaying teams. There was never a return to status quo anti. It was always this political charade that was being played.

JS: And ultimately, as the situation is now, they stopped all field inspections, right?
SR: All intrusive, no-notice inspections. Anything that’s not defined by Iraq as an inspectable site.

JS: I wanted to ask you in that connection, was there ever such a thing as a no-notice inspection?

SR: Yes. I ran hundreds of them.

JS: How did that work in terms of the Iraqis? What did they do when you showed up at the border, so to speak?

SR: We would fly into Iraq as part of an inspection…

JS: Into Baghdad?

SR: Into Baghdad. So they knew Ritter was here with his team, so they’re all ready on alert. But again, that was part of my stimulate-and-observe routine—we’d fly in, the Iraqis would go on alert. We’d observe how they alerted. I would meet with them the night I flew in, and say, “Look, I’m here, I’m here to do another one of those inspections, I’m not telling you where I’m going.” I’d introduce key people on the team, and I’d say, “I want you ready to go tomorrow at 8:00 outside the BNBC. We’re going to be organized in three groups—six vehicles per group, eighteen people per group.” They would ask, “Where are you going,” and I’d say, “I can’t tell you.” “Are you going to
spend the night?” “I can’t tell you.” They’d ask questions and I’d say, “I’m not telling you anything. Just be there tomorrow.” I’d show up in the morning, they’d have the Iraqis there, we’d go and organize into a convoy, and I’d have my men leading. We’d go, drive how we had trained. Nobody on the team but me and maybe one or two others knew where we were going. I would even keep that from the team. I’d train the team on how to do an inspection, but when we got in that convoy I gave them an envelope that we had been holding. And when they were driving, they’d unseal that envelope and that would be when they would learn where we were going. But even then they didn’t know what we were looking for, they just knew physically where we were going. We’d guide them in to the site, they’d secure it, the instruction would tell them where to go with the vehicles, they’d surround the site. Then we would go around and brief them specifically on what they’re going to do once they get in the site. That’s how we did no-notice inspections.

JS: Would the Iraqis have followed you?

SR: They follow us when we come to a site. As we turned into a site, they’d panic. They would zip in front of us and put their vehicles in front of us. They would come out, soldiers with guns would come out looking at us, stop our movement. They were panicked when we did this. Then I’d sit there and try to calm them down, take control of the situation, and tell them, “Okay, we want to get in.” And that’s when the negotiation process would start.
JS: You needed interpreters for this job. Where did you find them? Did you have to rely on Iraqi nationals?

SR: No, we didn’t use Iraqi nationals. Most of the Iraqis spoke English. Most of them were educated engineers. We would bring in interpreters from everywhere. In the end, we would bring in a mix of interpreters from supporting governments, usually military interpreters from different governments, and then we’d use United Nations interpreters. We’d go to the Secretariat and say we need three or four people from language services. So we did a mix of people.

JS: In particular, I wanted to ask, when you would go into a factory or a ministry—and there are some pictures of this, taking out large quantities of files—how could you identify which files were sensitive? Because clearly, you didn’t have time while you were there, to look at all those files.

SR: One other part is, as chief inspector, you’ve got to know what you’re looking for—and you have to know everything about what you’re looking for. When you go through a file, you evaluate the file itself—what is it? What are the years? What are the organizations? And if you’re looking for a specific organization and you flip through the file and they’re not there, that fails screening.

JS: An Iraqi-speaker would have to be there.
SR: A linguist would be there. My guy would be reading it to me. I would say, “Read this to me, what does this say?” I became pretty good at documents—I could recognize letterhead, signatures, and I knew what I wanted. “Read me the title. Okay, what’s that paragraph say, next, next....” And we’d sort through it that way, because you had to because there are millions of pages and you just don’t have the time. And I’m sure that we threw away files that contained information that was relevant. But we were looking for very specific.... And we had a good methodology. Believe me, not too much got by us. We gathered a lot. And a lot of times we would be reading it and we wouldn’t want the Iraqis to know that we were on to something. So I’d read it and throw it aside, but I’d remember it. Later on, we’d do a no-notice inspection after we’d confronted them with a lie. I’d remember what that said, I’d go to another site, and say, “What about this problem?” And they would give me a response, and I’d say, “Oh, that’s very interesting. Are you sure about that? Positive? Okay, good. Thank you. Do you have any documents that can back that up?” They’d say yes, and bring me this document, a nice document. “Thank you very much.” And then we’d go back, I’d pull that file, pull out the document, and say, “How do you explain this? This document directly contradicts the one you presented me. This one was in a file, it’s real. Did you forge that document? Did you make that up? Are you guys lying to us again?” That’s how we’d work. Each chief inspector had to do it differently. I had my way of working it, and it worked very effectively. I caught them in lies continuously. Other chief inspectors had their ways, which were also effective. Some people had totally ineffective procedures. The vast majority of our teams were, I told you, like Boy Scout excursions. Too much trust of the
Iraqis. They would ask, “Which documents are relevant to our problem?” The Iraqis would say, “This one is. These aren’t.”

JS: So they would do the selection.

SR: Yes, on some inspection teams the Iraqis would do the selection.

JS: When you took this one UN film that shows carrying out file cabinets full of documents, where did you take these documents? Where was the analysis actually done of the documents?

SR: The first thing that would happen was that you’d go to the Baghdad Monitoring Verification Center in Baghdad. They would get sorted. Some people would go through and just do organization. It was like triage. They’d sit there and say, “Okay, these are highest priority documents, we’ll do them right now.” Other ones would get sorted, boxed, and shipped to Bahrain, where we had more teams, and again, do secondary triage, prioritize them. Then we would distribute them. We would send a certain bundle of them to France, and France would agree to translate. We’d send a certain group to Russia, a certain group to Englund, a certain group to the United States. The really sensitive stuff we took back to UNSCOM and we only translated using hand-picked translators that we trusted.

JS: In New York.
SR: In New York.

JS: They would have been UN translators?

SR: No, they would be people provided by governments who we trusted.

JS: What about internal sources of intelligence? We’ve talked about the external sources. Were they of value? I’ll make one exception. Later I’ll come to the question of the president’s sons-in-law. But other than that, were there valuable internal sources?

SR: The thing that UNSCOM brought to the table was our ability to make sense out of information. In the end, we were the experts—we were the world’s experts. There was no one as good as us. So we could take information that was useless to other people and we could turn it into useful information. In one way, you could call that an internal source of information. We were really good at that.

JS: You developed an Iraqi mentality.

SR: That’s right, and we could provide mutual contexts for information. We could tell what was relevant, what was not relevant. We did that with imagery—again, the U-2 imagery could be looked at by an American photo interpreter but he wouldn’t see what we saw when we looked at it. We had the helicopter imagery that we would use—that
was useful if applied right. One of our problems was that the Information Assessment Unit was turned over to a British girl named Rachel Davies, who wasn’t up to the task. This was in New York. She was in Bahrain at Gateway, and then she came to New York and took over from a Canadian, Jeff St. John. She just wasn’t up to the task, and things languished. U-2 as a system, as a program, became a joke—plodding, taking pictures and no one’s looking at them. The only people who would use it were specialized people like myself, and Nikita. We would task it properly. That was by exception, but the rule was that the U-2 just became this plodding thing that just spit out imagery that no one was looking at. The helicopters, they were just taking pictures—no one was looking at them. They’d generate these reports, and no one was looking at them. Every once in a while, people would come in like myself, and we would use it for very a specific purpose.

End of Side 2, Tape 1

Start Side 1, Tape 2

JS: Let me go ahead, then, to the time when the sons-in-law of Saddam Hussein defected temporarily. From other interviews, I would judge that what they provided was extremely valuable. Can you comment on that?

SR: Their defection broke the back of the Iraqi concealment mechanism. It forced Iraq to admit that they were concealing material. It took the Iraqis by surprise, it basically shook up the whole situation. In that alone, it was very, very valuable. The actual
technical details provided by Hussein Kamal were limited. It wasn’t the intelligence bonanza that maybe people had come to believe it was. He gave us some good information, but the Iraqis quickly negated his value by taking Ambassador Ekéus to the Haidar chicken farm—the chicken farm where 1.5 million pages were turned over to the Special Commission. These pages basically took the sting out of Hussein Kamal’s bite. What he said wasn’t relevant, because we had better information with these documents.

One of the problems, too, with Hussein Kamal, was that I don’t think he was managed properly. Ekéus met him, Mr. Zifferero, and managed to go out and meet him, but the experts didn’t meet with Hussein Kamal. The CIA, when they debriefed him, brought in this huge team that just alienated Hussein Kamal. He just didn’t want to deal with that many Americans. The Brits sent in one guy, who established a wonderful rapport with Hussein Kamal, but again, wasn’t able to follow through. There was a very mixed debrief. He had UNSCOM, he had the U.S., he had the U.K., he had the Jordanians, who were debriefing him. And Hussein Kamal, he just wasn’t managed properly. Whatever message he had just got fragmented, he got confused, and in the end he went insane.

He became delusional, the world didn’t rise up and greet him with open arms, the world was trying to suck him dry for the information. Nobody wanted him to go back and be the head of Iraq because he’s a guy covered in blood—he’s a killer, a murderer. And he just became increasingly isolated, delusional, as I said, and he went nuts to the point where he was threatening to commit suicide, he was threatening to kill his wife. The Jordanians viewed him as a nightmare and were very happy to get him back into Iraq in the end.
His defection, though, as I said, changed the whole situation. It proved in a way that UNSCOM could not at that time prove that there was concealment. UNSCOM was on the case, as I said, we were on the case in 1994, that there was concealment, and we actually started our special cooperation with Israel to break the secrets of concealment in July. He didn’t defect until August. But what he did is he provided information and a situation that could be used in the Security Council to illustrate UNSCOM’s concerns. I think what he did, his defection was extremely valuable, very timely.

JS: There was nothing else comparable from the Iraqi side?

SR: Of that level, no. We have had other defectors—we had lots of defectors. Some have been very valuable—Wafiq Samarai, the former deputy director of military intelligence, defected. He was extremely valuable. But again, he was mismanaged. I mean, the Americans debriefed him and said this guy’s blowing smoke—we don’t trust him. They didn’t trust anything he said. Wafiq came out and told us that Iraq had biological weapons and chemical weapons and ballistic missiles. Everybody scoffed at him. Later on, as we started to get more information out of the Iraqis, we found everything Wafiq said was true. Wafiq had almost a photographic memory. He could reconstruct a document—how it was set out, which pages. He reconstructed a five-page document once, and I think we got page three of it, and when we looked at page three, it was exactly as Wafiq said it was. And we were like, wait a minute, if this is right, we have to pay attention to what he said was on pages one, two, four and five. It says Iraq has VX. It says Iraq has a biological weapons program, dried anthrax. And everything he
said turned out to be true, so Wafiq was probably one of the, I think, he’s not as well known as Hussein Kamal. There are others whom I can’t mention, who were very, very valuable.

What I have to say about the defectors from an UNSCOM perspective, they only become useable if UNSCOM gets to meet with them, because what I found, even with Wafiq, was that the government that was controlling Wafiq said, “We’ll let you meet with him, but we’ve been talking to him for years now and we’re not getting anything.” And I said, “Well let me try.” They had a high-level guy sitting in with me, and I’m sitting there talking with Wafiq and walking through the problem with him and asking him questions. I ended up with a whole folder full of information, and the guy walked out and went, “My God, you asked the right questions. We never would have thought to ask those questions. We would never have thought to approach it from that stand-point.” These people only became useful if UNSCOM experts got access to them, because UNSCOM, frankly speaking, was the only one who knew the problem well enough to ask the question in a way which would get a useable response. We were the inspectors; we knew what we needed to do in an inspection. We developed pretty good capabilities that way.

JS: You have spoken a couple times, in this connection, of the Iraqi concealment mechanism. What does that mean, exactly?

SR: What we call the concealment mechanism is the systematic methodologies used by Iraq to hide prohibited capabilities from the Special Commission. This was something
that was directed by the president, and tasked to the presidential security organizations. The special security organization, the intelligence service, and the Special Republican Guard were such organizations. The man who was more or less the generalisimo of concealment activities was the presidential secretary, Abed Hamid Mahmoud. He would be able to task all these resources, and he formed these cells of highly trusted—it was like terrorist cells—he’d form a three-man cell and say, “You’re responsible for hiding this program. You can task the Special Republican Guard to provide you with vehicles, with manpower, whatever you want. They don’t know what you’re hiding, but they’ll provide you the support. And this is my personal secretary, and he will fund you. He will give you the money.” And he formed these cells. These cells didn’t know each other existed, so that’s how they’re running these cells. That’s what the concealment mechanism is. It’s like a terrorist organization—organized like a terrorist organization, funded covertly, and hiding this material from the Special Commission. They have an intelligence section whose responsibility it is to look at the Special Commission and figure out what we’re going to do.

JS: When did you realize that such a mechanism existed, that was organized in this way?

SR: We always knew the Iraqis were lying to us, and hiding things from us from Day One. It was more or less this nebulous cloud of concealment. We didn’t know how to define it. It wasn’t until the Israelis provided information in 1994 that suddenly this cloud became structured, and we could start identifying organizations and personalities.
Then we continued to investigate and assess, and do inspections to do cause and effect analysis. In the end, I would say by the time I left in August, I knew how it was organized, where it was, who was involved, how they worked, how they were hiding things, where they were hiding things.

JS: And there were ways of testing it?

SR: Yes, and they were tested very effectively.

JS: In this connection, I think in one of the interviews you gave you referred to ‘breaking a code’ in which apparently the Israelis were involved.

SR: It was the Haaretz interview.

JS: What did that mean?

SR: Well it didn’t mean what it says. That was taken out of context. What I told the person was that the Israelis helped us solve the problem to untie the Gordian knot to put the puzzle together, to break the code. I was using all these figures of speech.

JS: Metaphorically.
SR: Right, so it’s metaphorically breaking the code. When we looked at the concealment mechanism, we looked at it from an all-source intelligence perspective. And again, I can’t get into sources and methods that we used, but no one single source stood alone. You had to bring all the information together and assess it in the UNSCOM context. Only somebody who was on the ground... We tasked the teams with recording, observing everything that took place in front of them. Everything—vehicle license plate numbers, times vehicles passed by, who was in the vehicle, when somebody picked up a radio. We had teams spread out, and we picked where we wanted them to be looking, and then we would gather all that data, lay it out, assess it. So that if this guy picked up a phone here, and this guy answered here at the same time, these two were in communication. Why are they communicating? This guy is a senior missile guy, and this team at this time was doing something here.... So we would get a cause and effect relationship. Then we’d layer on to that all the other intelligence that we got from every source available. We’d put together a very complete picture of what was happening on the ground. It wasn’t a single thing. What I meant by breaking the code is that the Israelis—this is the methodology that is used to take out a terrorist. And this is the Israeli methodology. The Israelis provided this methodology, provided assistance that allowed us to break the code of concealment.

JS: And to perceive what the pattern of concealment was.

SR: Right.
JS: So there was never a question of a cryptographic code.

SR: Not in the context of what I said there. I can’t get into sources and methods that were used by the Special Commission. We used what was called ‘all-source information,’ which means anything a government wanted to provide us, they’d provide us. But in the specific relationship with the Israeli context that was made there, there was no cryptographic reference.

JS: No matter of breaking a code.

SR: No.

JS: I wanted to go into a technical area now. I think that UNSCOM had a legal advisor.

SR: John Scott.

JS: Right, whom I’ve known for many years. Were you concerned about the legal basis, or the legal legitimacy of the actions that you took in seizing documents, for example, or in entering places where entry was prohibited? And if so, what was the legal basis?
SR: I’m not a lawyer, I don’t pretend to be a lawyer. I’m a foot soldier for Rolf Ekeus and Richard Butler. I was legally covered when I received an instruction from the Executive Chairman. Now I’m also not a Nazi, and I would read Security Council resolutions and for a large part I defined my work. I said, “I need to go after this, and this is my justification.” Ekeus would meet with John Scott, and John Scott would say, “Yes, this is supportable under the resolution.” Both Ekeus and Butler used—Ekeus more—I have to again say that Richard Butler screwed up so many times because John Scott would provide advice, and Richard Butler would ignore it. Richard Butler wouldn’t go to him for advice. But Ekeus always went to Scott, Scott was a very trusted advisor to Rolf Ekeus, and everything that Rolf Ekeus approved and authorized was covered legally by John Scott in terms of his finding, legal finding, based on Security Council resolutions. Butler was a little bit looser on that, but again, I always covered myself by insuring that everything I did was approved by Richard Butler. Everything. I didn’t do anything that wasn’t approved by Richard Butler, so from my perspective, I was covered. And the team that I went in with was covered. And I felt comfortable—again, I’m not a lawyer—so my judgment is just my judgment. I was comfortable that everything I was doing was permitted within the context of the provisions of Security Council resolutions.

JS: And John Scott remained the legal advisor from the beginning, and he’s still there?

SR: He’s still there.
JS: And he’s still there, so you can feel fairly secure in that respect.

SR: I do. Again, the relationship between John Scott and Richard Butler was not the relationship between John Scott and Rolf Ekéus.

JS: I want to go to a little different area, and that is tangential information. As you I’m sure know, the Iraqis listed a whole series of things that allegedly the inspectors looked at, including the movement of Iraqi troops and such things. To what extent could one, in these inspections, observe such matters as the deployment of Iraqi troops, the capacity of the president, the Republican Guard, and so forth?

SR: There’s no doubt about it that we gained access to a lot of information that had nothing to do with our arms control work. One of the reasons is that the Iraqis used, for instance, the Special Republican Guard to provide resources for concealment. And there’s indisputable proof of that. So in order to investigate that, we had to investigate the Special Republican Guard. The Iraqis wouldn’t admit it so, when we came in, we had to define what the Special Republican Guard is, define what their normal mission is, and then we’d look for spikes of abnormal activity. We’d say, “Okay, why are these taking place? This is taking place at the same time when documents are being moved. Are you providing it? We have information that you provided three trucks and fifteen soldiers. Let’s see the logbooks. Yes, you did. Okay, so the Special Republican Guard was involved.” But in order to get to that point of arms control-related activity, we had to do forensic police-type investigation. So we gained access to information that had nothing
to do with the Special Commission’s work. That is true, there’s no disputing that. But we didn’t do it because we were trying to spy on the Special Republican Guard. I didn’t give a damn about the Special Republican Guard; I only cared about them because Iraq made a decision to use them to move prohibitive material illegally. Same thing with the Republican Guard—they would use military bases. So we would do these investigations but again, we would limit the specialized information to very few people. It was highly compartmentalized and no reports were written. I got in a lot of trouble in New York. People would say, “We want your inspection reports.” And I’d say, “No, I’m not putting it on file.” “Why?” “It’s my report to the Chairman, if the Chairman wants to see it, I’ll give it to him. He can read it, and I’ll go over it with the Chairman.” But the report details everything I saw, and a large part of that has nothing to do with Security Council resolutions, so I’m not giving it to the rest of the team. It’s none of their damn business. They can have the stuff that is related, that deals with my compartment, which deals with concealment. So I’m not going to tell you anyway, because you’ll blow it, you’re Frenchmen—you’ll go to France and tell your guys what I’m doing. And Ekeus agreed to that. We were very careful not to disseminate this kind of information.

JS: And that kind of information would not have gone back to any governments, then?

SR: You can’t say that, because in doing my work, for instance, figuring out about the Special Republican Guard in doing analysis, I would go to Israel and work with their experts on that. I would go to the United States and work with their experts. I would go
to Britain and work with their experts on that. So it got to the governments that the Executive Chairman authorized me to work with. But it would not go to governments who the Executive Chairman didn’t authorize.

JS: And this information would have been of value to these governments?

SR: No doubt about it. You’d be extremely naïve to say otherwise. But again, Iraq created the problem by making a special situation—concealment, hiding prohibited material. They defined the problem, they forced us to come up with extraordinary means to solve this problem, and those extraordinary means were beyond those inherent to the Special Commission by itself. We had to go elsewhere for support, and we did.

JS: You’ve probably seen what they list.

SR: I haven’t.

JS: They list “examining maps relating to unit movements…

SR: …examining the encipherment methods in use, examining telecommunications networks, examining correspondence in the files of security and intelligence officers, examining weapon and placement files.” Well, that’s obviously your duty, “examining
order sequence and inter-unit liaison files, examining the duty files of military units 
entrusted with special tasks, identifying the functions of buildings at a particular site in 
accordance with image maps drawn on a basis of intelligence sources, examining 
documents in the confidential section of the Iraqi intelligence service at military 
intelligence and at the leaders of special protection unit, examining munitions stores and 
weapons racks.” That’s what they list. Some of those seem to be a pretty good definition 
of what you were supposed to do.

SR: I did everything they said there. Of course I did, and I did more. When I went 
into Iraq, I took that country apart piece by piece by piece, because I was putting together 
a puzzle. They had taken their weapons, divided them into a jigsaw puzzle, and threw the 
pieces all over the country. And they hid them. It was like a giant Easter egg hunt. I had 
to go out and find these pieces. And they hid them everywhere. The only way to find a 
piece is to take every site that I went to apart piece by piece by piece. But again, that only 
tells half the story. It doesn’t talk about the professionalism displayed by my team when 
we went in there, the fact that we had the Iraqis with us and we would work with them 
about the sensitivity of a site. If a file came up and they said it dealt with the protection 
of the president, I would work out special methodologies agreeable to the Iraqis on how 
we would approach this file so that I got what I needed but that we protected what they 
wanted to protect.

JS: That’s very interesting you did that.
SR: Of course I did that. Everything I did very carefully out of respect to the national security of Iraq, to make sure that I couldn’t be accused of trying to kill the president of Iraq, or do intelligence operations. I explained every step of what I was doing in accordance with the mandate given to me. Why am asking this question? I would explain, “You lied to me here, here, here, here, this guy’s name appeared here, he’s in your file here, I want to know about him. Why is he in this file? This was a guy who was hiding stuff. Why is he here now?” And I explained everything to them. So the Iraqis, again, by making this list, it’s a diversion. Every one of these things is true, but it’s taken totally out of context, and it fails to detail the absolute steps taken by the Special Commission to ensure that in the process of doing everything they’ve accused us of doing here, we did it not only in total conformity with the mandate given to us by the Security Council, but in a real honest effort to respect the legitimate national security interests of Iraq.

JS: I think that’s very important, because as you know, all the resolutions start out by saying that the Iraqi sovereignty should be respected, and what you’re saying is that this in fact was done to the extent possible in the way that the inspections were carried out.

SR: Even more to the extent. I got in trouble with UNSCOM sometimes for going, what they viewed, too far to respect Iraqi sensitivities. I can give you a couple of examples. One, in June of 1997 Tariq Aziz was very concerned about the inspection team that I led in there, and Amer Rashid, the minister of oil, asked me to come to his office. He said, “What are you doing? What are you up to? Tariq Aziz wants to know
what's going on, what is the purpose of your inspection?” And up to that point, we had not directly confronted the Iraqis about concealment that we thought they were lying. It was being done very diplomatically. But Amer Rashid said, “You need to tell me why you’re doing what you’re doing.” So I had a very detailed conversation with him about concealment; what I was investigating, what I thought they were lying on. I listed how many missiles I thought they had, how many chemical weapons. I gave away a lot of intelligence out of an effort to be transparent enough to these guys to explain to them why I’m going into the sensitive sites. The bottom line is that Amer Rashid put forward a very coherent case—I don’t agree with it, I’d love to spend hours with you explaining why it’s wrong. I’m off--I’ve got to go tell Tariq Aziz. That’s total transparency, and that shows a respect for the national security interests of Iraq that no one else showed in the Special Commission. Everybody else came in there like a bunch of damn cowboys kicking down the doors. Of course no one was going to the sites that I was going to. But a lot of people came in there very rudely, and I was always polite to them.

In January of 1998 I went to the Directorate of General Security, and I went in, and I was going to go to the minister’s office because there was a safe there, I wanted to open the safe and go through these documents because I was told that there were certain documents in there. They said, “My God, if you do that, that’s an insult. This is one of the most powerful men in Iraq, and if you go into his office, you’re insulting him. Scott, think about what you’re doing.” I have to be sensitive to this, I mean, these guys were serious. They brought in some heavy-hitters and were like, “We’re scared to death. You’re going to get us killed if you do this. We are nervous.” So I sat down and worked the problem through. I explained in great detail what I needed, what I wanted to do, how
I wanted to get it accomplished. And they came up with an alternative, a solution. They said, “Well look, if you want to go there, we’ll go here.” And I knew I was getting suckered, but again, I had to be careful. I have these French and Russians on my team who are reporting home about how Ritter’s behaving. Okay, I’ve got to make a compromise here. I’m going to go through the motions of being respectful. I’ll give them an opportunity to play the game straight. I told them, “If you don’t, I’ll come back, then I’m going to take this place apart brick, by brick, by brick. I know nothing will be here, because you’ll have removed it already, but I’m still going to take it apart brick, by brick. I’m going to be in here all month. You will regret the day you deceived me.” “Oh no, Mr. Ritter, we’ll tell you the truth.” Well, that night they stopped cooperating with the inspection team. But again, that’s because I was being respectful to the national security interests of Iraq.

In March ’98, when we were going through the ministry of defense, the Iraqis came up and they said, “Of course there are areas that your team can’t go into.” And this is Amer Rashid. I blew up at him—“The hell there aren’t. You tell me that one more time, and the team is out of here. I’m not going to put up with that. You can’t set preconditions. I can go anywhere I want. I want you to tell me right now, I can go anywhere I want.” (Rashid said) “You can go anywhere you want.” “I can put as many people anywhere I want.” (Rashid said) “You can put as many people anywhere you want.” And I dictated to him what he had to say. This is the minister of war. He said what I wanted him to say. I said, “Now, Amer Rashid, you and me are going to go on a tour of this facility. You’re going to show me everything that’s sensitive to you. Then we’ll talk about it, and I’ll determine whether or not I need to have special inspections. Before I do
that, I want to make sure I can do anything I want. If I want to put forty people into this site, I can do it.” (Rashid said) “Yes.” So we went up there, we worked it out, we set up special areas. I saw everything, I inspected this. But the minister of defense’s office—I agreed that I would not send the inspectors in there. I agreed that I wouldn’t send inspectors to the chief of staff of the ministry of defense. I agreed that I would only send three inspectors to one place. And I did it out of a need to be respectful to the national security interests of Iraq, and the sovereignty—the dignity and sovereignty. That comes into play—the dignity of the minister of defense, a big man. So I treated him with respect and the dignity due to him. That’s not reflected in this paper. It’s total garbage. The Iraqis knew that when I left, they were hurting, because they lost a guy who played the game straight.

JS: That was the next question. Why do you think they singled you out?

SR: They were scared to death of what I was occurring. They knew I was on the right track. Because I was so honest with them, they knew exactly what I was going after. I told them they were liars to their faces. I said, “You’re lying. You’re hiding stuff. I’m going to keep coming at you; I’m never going to stop, never going to stop. Until you tell the truth, I’m going to keep coming at you.”

JS: Was there an inclination in UNSCOM to take you off the teams for a while?
SR: Yes, there was. I have to say that Ekeus—after the June inspection, Ekeus called me and said, “Scott, you’re profile’s way high. Way high—you’re doing all of this really sensitive work for us, and you’re too exposed. The Iraqis are going to come after you. I want to pull you back.” But he was doing it strategically thinking. Butler, on the other hand, again disregarded Ekeus’ advice and kept me on the task, where I continued to get exposed. Then when Butler came under political attack…. Ekeus’ vision was to bring someone else in who I would train, so there would be two people and he could rotate them out, so no one person got singled out. But by January of 1998, I was the only person there, and there was no one who was remotely close to being able to step in and take over this task. When Butler came under attack from Kofi Annan and the French, the Russians, and the Iraqis, Butler tried to pull me off the team. We had a revolt of the inspectors. The inspectors revolted and said, “There’s no one else who can do it. You’re not going to put us in that job. We can’t do it and we don’t know how to do it. And plus, this is what the Iraqis want; the Iraqis are winning if you do this.” There was significant pressure from the State Department—Madeleine Albright and Sandy Berger—and also from Kofi Annan, to pull me off the team. One reason is that the Iraqis keep publishing nice documents like that.

JS: Right now I realize that intrusive inspections are not possible. But even if they were, would UNSCOM be equipped to do them?

SR: Everybody likes to believe they’re irreplaceable, and that they play such an important role, and all that. Reality is that in the end you’re like a fist stuck into a pail of
water, and when you pull you hand out the hole is not there anymore. UNSCOM will
find a way to move on. I brought a unique perspective, a unique background, a unique
capability to the problem, and they’ll never be able to replicate that directly, but there are
good people there. I left a legacy—I left the data, I left specific relationships with
governments that were producing and being productive—and somebody will be able to
step in and do that if given proper leadership, if given the proper support. Somebody will
be able to do the job that Scott Ritter did, there’s no doubt in my mind.

JS: Now this is actually a personal question. Ambassador Butler has gotten into a lot
of trouble, not just with the Iraqis, but also with headquarters in New York. Is he, in your
opinion, capable of carrying on the leadership of UNSCOM in the future period?

SR: If I answer this question, this question has to be held until he leaves, because I
don’t want to do anything that undermines his authority to work at the Commission.
Butler’s destroying the Special Commission. Butler has lost the total trust and confidence
of the inspectors. I like Richard Butler, he’s a great man—a human being. He’s very
human. He’s so much more approachable than Rolf Ekeus was. Ekeus was a tough man
to work for. He was a humorless man, in many ways. Richard Butler’s a man of great
humor. Great human being. I’d drink a beer with him any day. I’d go to a rugby game
with him. I’d do almost anything, except do inspections in Iraq, because the man can’t
lead. The man can’t organize. I’m not going to call him dishonest, I’ll just say that he’s
incapable of sticking with a decision. He is so fickle—we have a saying, “You want to be
the last person to get a hold of Richard Butler, because that’ll be what position he has.”
You can go in the morning and brief him, and he’ll agree with something and sign-off on papers, and by the afternoon someone else will have gone in and he’ll change his mind one hundred percent. He has no foundation in what he’s doing. He is incompetent—he’s technically unsound, his diplomatic skills are non-existent. He can speak great—he’s a man who has made his reputation because he is a man who is a master of the sound-bite. Get on TV and say the perfect statement. Can’t back it up. He’s a man who speaks big, acts small, and ultimately has created so many contradictions, so many false initiatives, that nobody trusts him anymore—the Iraqis don’t trust him, the Secretary-General doesn’t trust him, the Security Council doesn’t trust him, his big supporters don’t trust him, his staff doesn’t trust him. He’s totally isolated himself, so that unless something dramatically changes, he’s in a lot of trouble.

I talked with Richard Butler before I resigned. I spent a lot of time talking with him. He was in total agreement with my resignation. In fact, he viewed it as a way of helping him, because by me leaving, I could speak out and say things that he couldn’t say, and then I could liberate him in many ways. I’d like to believe that I created a situation that might allow Richard Butler to recover somewhat. This ongoing VX saga is doing that. But Richard Butler is going to have to effectively address this issue. He is going to have to admit that Iraq is lying, admit that there is concealment, and admit that he was doing extraordinary things to defeat the concealment mechanism, and he will continue to do extraordinary things. Because if you gut the inspection process to meet the political dictate of Iraq, there will be no inspection process. Right now, Butler has an opportunity. I don’t give him much hope, because I don’t think he is capable of effectively leading the Special Commission through this extremely difficult problem. He’s got too many
enemies. He has no friends. And that’s too bad because again, he’s a man, he’s a husband, he’s a father. And as a human being, you never, ever want someone to get in that situation. I feel really, really bad, but everybody digs their own grave and I think he’s dug it.

JS: In some of the indications you gave, one of the things that surprised me is that Butler would become, in a sense, so vulnerable to advice or instructions from the United States. How could that happen? I don’t believe that ever happened in the case of Ambassador Ekéus.

SR: No, Ekéus would throw the Americans out, in fact. Beginning with the U-2, Ekéus went to the Americans a couple times and said, “I’m going to shut the whole thing down. If you don’t do it the way I want it, it’s going down.” Ekéus would go down to Washington and dictate to them what he needed. But Butler felt that without Madeleine Albright’s support, Kofi Annan would fire him. Kofi Annan would get rid of him. And therefore, he allowed himself to become a tool of the United States in a way that nobody else, that Ekéus never did. When Kofi Annan signed this 23 February agreement, Butler hated him, hated him. He was upstairs, storming around, just livid with anger, as was everybody on the staff. We couldn’t believe it; we thought we had been sold out. What we didn’t know at the time was that Madeleine had secretly arranged with Kofi Annan to do this, and that in a large part, she was the architect of this agreement. And the agreements had come under attack by Trent Lott. So Madeleine calls up Richard, says, “Richard, I need you to help me on this one. We’re coming under attack by the
Republicans. I need you to give a press conference, and you have to endorse this, you have to embrace this, you have to say this is a good deal. I really need this.” That’s unheard of, and Richard did it. He immediately, that day, went down and called a press conference and got up there, and that’s where he gave this, “This is a good agreement. This is a sound agreement. The Secretary-General has said that this is. It’s not the fine print but the thumb print.” Another Richard Butler…. That’s where the staff lost a lot of respect for him, because we all sat there and said, “Wait a minute, he was just telling us this was the world’s worst agreement. Now he’s up there endorsing it.” He comes back and says, “I had to do it because Madeleine asked me to do it.”

Another time Madeleine asked him to call up Abe Rosenthal and give background information that was detrimental to the Secretary-General. And Rosenthal ran a piece. Butler did it. And then when Madeleine called up and said, “You’ve got to take Ritter off the team,” Butler did it. It was amazing. Madeleine would call up and say, “You’ve got to stop this inspection.” Butler did it. Now Butler says, “I’m the Executive Chairman, and I make decisions.” Yes, you’re right, boss, you are. But let me tell you what: twenty-four hours previously you signed a document, talked with me on the phone, told me I was cleared hired on a target. That you, the Executive Chairman, believed in this mission. Now you receive a phone call from the United States and you change your mind? You can’t tell me there’s not a cause and effect relationship there. Yes, you made the decision, and you’re held accountable for it. It was Madeleine that put the pressure on. And Ekéus never fell for that kind of pressure, ever. Butler gets that kind of pressure from everybody, the Russians, they call up and he’ll jump to Sergey Lavrov; the French, he jumps the French. Now Kofi Annan. Butler gets summoned, I mean, it was
embarrassing at one point during the comprehensive review. I would call up and guys would say, “You won’t believe what’s happening. Butler’s just running up and down the stairs between the 31st and 38th floors like Kofi’s lap dog. Kofi’s staff is just calling him up, summoning him up, treating him like a servant.” It’s humiliating, yet Butler’s doing it. Ekeus would never allow that to happen.

JS: You mentioned Tariq Aziz. Was it the general impression, your impression—Ekeus has mentioned it, Butler has—that Tariq Aziz, next to Saddam Hussein, was the most important person on the Iraqi side, also in this field?

SR: No, Tariq Aziz is a mouthpiece. Tariq Aziz is useful to Saddam because he is a skillful diplomat, speaks good English, and is recognized as an honest-to-goodness diplomatic expert. But Abed Hamid Mahmoud is the real power. Abed will kill Tariq—Abed could pull out a pistol and blow his brains out and never be held accountable. Tariq Aziz is nothing. He’s a dead piece of meat as far as the Iraqi leadership is concerned. He’s being used by the Iraqis; he has no power; no authority, nothing. Tariq Aziz can agree to nothing unless it’s approved by Abed. Tariq Aziz is not a technical person; he has no grasp of the technical information. The technical person is Amer Sa’adi. Tariq Aziz has no control of the economy. So the person who controls the economy right now is Amer Rashid. That’s the power-base—Abed Hamim Makmoul, Amer Sa’adi, Amer Rashid. That’s it. The foreign minister, Saffa, again—kill him today and he’d be replaced. Tariq Aziz—Hitler had his Ribbentrop, Stalin had his Molotov—these sophisticated people who would go out and present a dictatorship, an ugly dictatorship, in
a positive light. Saddam Hussein has his Tariq Aziz. Tariq Aziz is nothing, he has no power, he’s a figurehead, pure and simple. And that’s just the reality of the situation.

JS: Now I’d like to go to Scott Ritter, personally, a little bit. I read all of the testimony before Congress, but in your own words, could you just say what really brought you to the decision not just to resign, but to go public, and your reasons?

SR: Everybody focuses on the frustrations of the job, and there’s no doubt the job was extremely frustrating. But when I go to the United States and ask for assistance and I’m told, “Scott, do the right thing.” I’m not given any guidance, I try and do the right thing. But I was getting more and more out on a limb all by myself, and so many hands back there sawing at the limb. It was frustrating, it was scary from the perspective of—I’ve got a wife and kids that I have to worry about, it was life-endangering going into Iraq and getting loaded guns pointed in your face threatening to kill you if you do something, and knowing the Security Council’s not going to back you up—those are called the frustrations of the job. But I didn’t quit because of that, I mean, that’s been happening for years, and you just have to accept that’s the reality of doing business with Iraq in the framework of the United Nations.

JS: But for most of that period, you felt that the U.S. government, your own government, was supporting what you were doing in behalf of UNSCOM.
SR: Largely, I’ve always been, always been at odds with my government, because I’ve been fighting really hard for an independent UNOSCOM, and my government sometimes didn’t like that. Some policy people liked it, but ultimately, the U.S. government wants to be in charge of the operation because they’re the enforcers, and they don’t want the trigger in the hands of UNOSCOM. But UNOSCOM doesn’t want to be used by anybody. So there was always this struggle going on. But ultimately, I always believed in the end that my government wanted me to find these weapons, and wanted me to do what was necessary to get these weapons.

What happened in the Summer of 1998, culminating in August, was that it became clear that my government was no longer supportive of what I was doing, the sacrifices I was making, the sacrifices my team was making, the risks we were taking. They weren’t supporting that; they didn’t want us to do what it took to find the weapons because in the end, they would be held accountable. They had to then do something if we got…. The Secretary-General had this wonderful agreement, and the Security Council endorsed it. The President of the United States said that Iraq would be held accountable, the severest consequences if they don’t. UNOSCOM went forward to try to do the job, and we got pulled back. Why? Don’t want to show the world that the Emperor has no clothes. This agreement’s crap. Kofi Annan’s agreement can be thrown in the garbage right now, it’s not going to work. The Security Council doesn’t back what you’re doing, it’s fractured. You’ll never get a 15-0 vote to hold Iraq accountable. And America is not willing to do what it takes to enforce this law. So pull back.

I’ve been pulled back before, so that alone didn’t make me resign. I was very frustrated, but it’s only when the Secretary-General came in with this comprehensive
review and Richard Butler sat down with me and said, “Scott, we’ve got to redefine our objectives.” I said, “Boss...?” And he sat there with the whole group, “We have to redefine our objectives.” And people were saying, “Well, how do you want us to do it? What is your guideline?” And then ballistic missiles it came down to ‘does Iraq have any operational ballistic missile sites?’ I said, “But that’s not what the resolution says.” And he said, “But it’s a political issue.” I said, “Well, I haven’t spoken publicly in front of people, I’m going to do it right now, boss. I showed you a piece of highly sensitive information from 1996 showing that Iraq had a cadre of ballistic missile officers who once a year exercise an operational force of ballistic missiles.” “Scott, we can’t talk about this.” “I’m talking about it now, boss. You know it exists. What are you going to do about it? How are you going to address that in the framework of the comprehensive review?” “Uh, uh, uh.” And I gave him a couple of other pieces of information. He said, “Well Scott, we can’t use it in front of the Security Council.” I said, “It doesn’t matter. You know it.” He said, “It’s not useful unless I can use it on the Security Council.” I said, “No, boss, you know what the truth is. So you can’t allow this redefinition to take place. You’re the boss.” And he came back to me and said, “Scott, you put me in a tough position.” I said, “Well, you have to make a decision. UNSCOM, in order to do the right job, can’t exist. The world won’t let UNSCOM do its job in accordance with the law. You have to make a decision. Are you going to stick to principle...?”

End of Side 1, Tape 2
SR: We were talking about compromises. The issue was, in order to save the Commission, to save the viability of the Security Council, to save the arms control process, basically then you will have to make compromises in order to do that. You’ll have to put aside information when you know it’s right, when you know it’s correct, and you’ll have to give Iraq a clean bill of health when they don’t deserve it, when the truth is the opposite.

He said, “Well, that’s the direction we’re headed.” I said, “I can’t do that. That’s where I have to draw the line. I will not be part of a charade. I will not lie.” He said, “Well Scott, that’s the big picture.” I said, “Okay, if it’s part of the big picture, I can’t be involved in it.” And so I let him know that I was going to walk. Now he went to the United States and said, “Ritter’s walking.” They panicked, “Oh my God, you can’t walk, this will be devastating.” They called me up, I won’t say who, but they called me up and said, “You can’t resign, you’ve got to stay.” I said no. They said, “Maybe you don’t understand our policy.” I said, “No, I understand your policy very clear. I was there when you did it.” They said, “We’d like to call you down to Washington and talk it out.” I said, “Well before I waste your time going down to Washington, answer a couple questions. Are you going to let us continue to do concealment investigations?” “Only if you get hard intelligence.” “Okay, when we get hard intelligence, as we have, are you going to let us investigate?” “We can’t right now, it’s not a good time.” I said, “Well when is going to be a good time?” “We’ve got problems with the Security Council.” I said, “But Iraq has these weapons.” “Yes” “And we’re supposed to do inspections to find these weapons.” “Yes.” “And we have very good intelligence where these weapons are.” “Yes.” “But you’re not going to let us do these inspections.” “No.” “Why not?”
“We’re not prepared for the consequences.” I said, “Guys, I have to leave.” They said, “Well what do you want us to do?” I said, “I want you to let me do the inspection.” “But then they’re going to stop you.” I said, “Yes.” “Well then what do you want?” I said, “The ball’s in your court, buddy. You created me, you created this problem, the law is for me to go in and get it, what are you going to do about it?” They said, “Well we’re not prepared to go to war.” I said, “You just answered the question there. There’s nothing for us to talk about. I’m not going to play a charade, I’m not going to lie.” And I left.

Now I had a choice to either leave quietly or leave publicly. I fought in the Gulf War. Hundreds of Americans died in the Gulf War, tens of thousands of Iraqis died in the Gulf War. Twenty-two million Iraqis are paying a price right now because the world said that Iraq must be held accountable to international law, under precondition of termination of conflict, of getting rid of these weapons of mass destruction. As an American, we have twenty-seven thousand force men and women in the Gulf right now, with their life at risk. Saddam Hussein should have been contained. The world set the preconditions for containment. Saddam Hussein today is on the verge of getting a clean bill of health, getting sanctions lifted, going back to full-business, and keeping the weapons he was supposed to get rid of.

I view Saddam Hussein as a risk. If the world viewed him as a risk in 1990-1991, I view him as an even greater risk today, because he’ll have stood up to the world and won, and feel that now he is somehow even bigger than he was in 1990-1991. This is wrong, fundamentally wrong. Also view the fact that the Security Council is a farce, it shouldn’t be allowed to get off the hook. It started something that was noble, and was unable to do the task. The Security Council shouldn’t get a clean bill of health. And the
United States has a failed foreign policy; it’s saying one thing and doing another. All these things are wrong, I tried to change it from within, I couldn’t. By resigning publicly, I felt that I could at least bring the issue to public debate. I may lose; I had lost anyway. I may lose, but there’s a chance that by going public, that getting Congress involved, that you can get the administration to change its policy, you can get the administration to provide leadership to get the Security Council to be a responsible organization, and ultimately, you can get the world body to agree that Iraq must be held accountable to the original provisions of Security Council resolution. And in that way, you can finally alleviate the grievous harm that’s been done to twenty-two million innocent Iraqi people. Get these sanctions lifted; I hate sanctions, I despise them, I think they serve no useful purpose. But it’s a farce to not hold Iraq accountable for the weapons, and yet continue to punish the people of Iraq because you’re not willing to hold ultimately who’s responsible, Saddam Hussein, accountable. So that’s why I resigned publicly, in an attempt to do that. I knew that there’s no easy way to do this, a lot of people are going to get hurt, UNSCOM is going to get hurt. But I felt that UNSCOM needed to get hurt. Sometimes when you create a crisis, what emerges are opportunities, and that’s what I think is happening right now. There are opportunities out there for UNSCOM to become a stronger organization. People just have to take advantage of it.

JS: How did you understand the U.S. rationalization for its reluctance to see the intrusive inspections pursued?
SR: Ultimately, the intrusive inspections would result in Iraqi confrontation, Iraqi blockages, which would push the Security Council, and because you now have the weight of the Secretary-General’s 23 February memorandum of understanding, the Security Council would have to take some decisive action. The Security Council wouldn’t take decisive action, and the ball world fall in the U.S. court, and the U.S. had learned that every time it deploys troops, it costs a lot of money—billions of dollars—they had to go and get a sixteen billion dollar emergency appropriation—I think it’s six or sixteen, I can’t remember which one—just last Spring, to pay for this deployment of troops. And the reality is that deployment wasn’t enough force to compel Saddam. In order to compel Saddam, you’re going to have to deploy even more. And the U.S. isn’t really willing to do that. So rather than confront the fact that they’re toothless, that they can’t militarily contain Saddam Hussein, the U.S. felt that they needed to buy time for a diplomatic solution. But this diplomatic solution would entail some very serious compromises that would create, again, what I call the illusion of arms control, and Iraq given a clean bill of health. But the bottom line is the United States, this administration, was not prepared politically, domestically, or internationally and militarily, to do what it takes to hold Saddam accountable.

JS: I know you have to go, but you mentioned the twenty-two million people of Iraq, and this is the final question. In your inspections, the trips around Iraq and so forth, could you perceive the suffering, and ultimately, any improvement in the condition of the people as the Oil for Food bargain went into effect?
SR: There’s no doubt that we saw the suffering. But one thing I have to say about the sanctions—it was heartbreaking, you’d see a mother with four children, babies, laid out on the street, and it didn’t matter how much food or money you gave to her, within a week there’s only three babies, and a week later there’s only two babies, and ultimately, the mother’s by herself, all her kids died. You try to intervene as much you want—you gave her money, you gave her food, you gave her medicine, nothing. Why? Because she went out and sold that medicine and shared the food a little bit. But she was a victim, not of the sanctions, but of her government. Saddam Hussein exists solely to keep Saddam Hussein in power.

One thing I saw in Iraq, it was devastated by the war, but in the end his weapons programs always stayed in funded. There were no starving engineers, their families didn’t starve. And Saddam Hussein took advantage of sanctions to redefine the Baghdad intelligencia in the middle class. If you look at the middle class of Baghdad today, it’s a completely different middle class than existed prior to the Gulf War. The families, the independent merchant families, which were not pro-Saddam, don’t have any money anymore—they’re devastated, they’ve been impoverished. The Suni tribes outside of Baghdad who supported Saddam are now in, running the major mercantile industries. In 1994 when you drove through the streets of Baghdad, it was a darkened city. In 1997-1998, it is a thriving city—lights on, restaurants open, shops open—a thriving consumer-based economy. Iraq has defeated sanctions, they’ve busted them wide open. Sanctions have no effect on Iraq, except the effect that Saddam wants them to have. He has targeted specific portions of his population, the Shias, primarily, the Kurds. Ask the camera crew the last time they went in—I can give them some hospitals to go to, if they want to go and
see healthy people with medicine; I can also give them all the hospitals to go to if they
want to see sick people—the Shia hospitals—we’ve walked into warehouses full of
expired medicine that was brought in under Oil for Food, that Iraq won’t distribute. I’ve
seen security reports from the Aman al Amm on how they’re going to isolate the water
supply of Saddam City—no chlorine, and divert sewage water into the water—so that
there’s an increase in dysentery—no antibiotics. What’s the result? A lot of sick kids
who are going to die, so you can bring in the cameras and take pictures of them.

I have nothing but sympathy for the people of Iraq. They’re being used by
Saddam Hussein, and the thing is, Saddam Hussein is being enabled by the United
Nations to do this. The UN’s at war with itself. The UN created sanctions to punish Iraq,
to compel them into compliance, but the sanctions themselves were ineffective. They
gave them an immediate multi-billion dollar outlet through Jordan, which is never
monitored effectively. So sanctions already are never going to work perfectly. And then
Turkey started leaking, and then Turkey eventually last year said, “Hell, we’re going to
legalize this whole operation.” Now Syria’s doing it, now Saudi Arabia’s doing it, the
U.A.E. is doing it. There are no sanctions on Iraq today, trade is flourishing. But you
have the paper called sanctions, the resolution, the UN is behind it, the Security Council.
And then the UN says, “My God, we’ve got this horrible humanitarian disaster here. We
have to alleviate this.” So they create humanitarian relief programs, and they do Oil for
Food, allow Iraq to sell billions of dollars in oil to derive income.

Oil sales are prohibited under sanctions, but now they’re allowed. Five point two
billion dollars worth—that’s more oil they sell than anytime before the Gulf War. And
it’s funding the largest humanitarian relief program to achieve what? To achieve relief
from sanctions. So you have sanctions imposed by the UN, the UN relieving sanctions—the UN’s at war with itself on this, and it’s Iraq, Saddam, who’s standing back there laughing the whole time because he’s able to pull the strings any way he wants. Sanctions only help Saddam and it’s a terrible tragedy being perpetrated on the population of Iraq not because of sanctions directly, but because indirectly. Because Saddam’s playing on the perception of a disaster of sanctions to create specific humanitarian disasters in Iraq.

JS: If this is true, then would you conclude that the UNSCOM, the whole UNSCOM operation, is under considerable peril, since in fact if Saddam Hussein doesn’t really care about lifting sanctions; he wouldn’t really lose much by getting rid of UNSCOM?

SR: No, UNSCOM’s dead. Ultimately, UNSCOM is over. There will be a political compromise; there will be the facade of inspections, an illusion, but in terms of really going in to finding these weapons…. Take a look at what’s happening with the VX report—came out today, everybody said the American lab results are good, but there’s enough give written in there by the Russians and the French and the Chinese in that report that politically, it won’t have a dramatic impact. Iraq will get out of this one. If they get out of the VX, we have no hope, because it’s one of the best—it’s one of the few things that we can put out on the table for the Security Council. There’s other things that we have that are as good, or better, but if the Security Council won’t buy that one, then they’ll never buy this other stuff. And this other stuff has political baggage with it, like how we got the information—we don’t want to say. If we put it on there, we have to
explain how, and then everybody will be attacking how we got it and not what the
information is. With the VX, it’s clear-cut.

JS: And it’s clear-cut because actually the missiles were found, right?

SR: Correct, the warhead remnants.

JS: The warhead fragments were found in the ground. Thank you very much.