Yale-UN Oral History
Derek Boothby
Jean Krasno, Interviewer
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New Haven, CT

Jean Krasno: This is an interview with Derek Boothby on July 16, 1998, at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. I am Jean Krasno.

For the record, Derek Boothby, I would like you to give a little bit of personal background on your career and your education and when you joined the UN and in what capacity.

Derek Boothby: I started at the United Nations in 1978. Before that time, I had been a career officer in the Royal Navy, the British Royal Navy. I had gone to the Dartmouth Naval College which is the British equivalent of Annapolis Naval Academy and had then a career in aircraft carriers and destroyers, frigates and various other positions, also with the Ministry of Defense in London. And, in fact, I had just completed two years with the British Embassy in Washington, DC. I had decided to leave the Royal Navy and do something else with my life. It was while I was looking around that it was brought to my attention that in the United Nations they were looking for a successor to the liaison officer of the military staff committee. That person had to be of a military background, from one of the five permanent member countries of the Security Council and fluent in either English or French, whatever other language he or she might have. So, I thought I would apply for that, in the full knowledge that frankly it was a somewhat

bizarre piece of UN history, the military staff committee. But, I wanted to see what happened.

I then joined in '78. In 1980, by that time, I had been working the department for Political and Security Council Affairs, where that position is lodged. In the Department for Disarmament Affairs, they were looking for somebody who had extensive knowledge of disarmament. I went to the Undersecretary-General, Ian Martinson, and I told him that I didn't have that but that I had the next best thing. He said, "What's that?," and I said "As a former military officer, I had an extensive knowledge of armaments." It was a short pause and he said, "I suppose that is your British sense of humor." I thought, "Oh dear, I must have missed that job." Anyway, he said, "I'll think about it." Two days later, he rang me up and said, "Look, I decided to take a risk. I will take you on." So, I joined the Department for Disarmament Affairs, and then between then and 1980 and 1991, I specialized in arms control, arms limitation, and disarmament.

I was the secretary of a number of studies on nuclear testing verification, climatic affects of nuclear war, naval arms race. I was the Deputy Secretary-General of the 1990 NPT Review Conference. I was the Secretary of the Secretary-General's advisory board for disarmament studies. I became the head of the analysis section. So that brings us up to 1990. Desert Storm happened in March of 1991. The head of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, Yasushi Akashi at that time, and I had heard that some sort of resolution was going to come out at the end of Desert Storm. He must have heard that this was going to be a fairly earth-shattering resolution. And he said to me in about the second half of March, "Derek, you are British, make use of your contacts with the UK mission to find out what this resolution is all about, because I understand that there is

something in it about inspections, weapons inspections." I did that. I went to the UK mission where they were in the process of drafting this resolution, together with the Americans and the French.

It was still in its fairly early stages but it was already reasonably well advanced. Somebody showed me the relevant section of this resolution, the one page, in confidence, because it had not yet been shared with other members of the Security Council. It had not yet been shared with other members of the Secretariat. As I read it, frankly, my jaw dropped. My jaw dropped a long way, because clearly the UN was going to be asked to do something that it had never done before. The more one thought about it, the more dramatic and novel, innovative this was. Obviously, it was also going to place a lot of responsibility on the backs of the UN. I knew we had no machinery for it. So, I went back to see Akashi and I showed him this and he agreed that this was quite new. We are talking around about the twenty-third, twenty-fourth of March. He said, "Right Derek, I want you to stop what you are doing right now and start focusing your head in what all this means. Obviously, there is going to be a whole new exercise here. They are going to place this on the backs of the United Nations Secretariat, which means it's going to come from the Department for Disarmament Affairs, and I need to have somebody who is going to have an arms control, an arms limitation background, somebody who had a military background who had some experience on how to put an operation together, somebody who knew how the United Nations worked and somebody who was available." I happened to be all four.

JK: You happened to be that.

DB: That was how I started with this, i.e. before the resolution was even adopted by the Security Council.

JK: That's really fascinating because I wanted to ask you, what was anticipated at the end of the Gulf War? Because that resolution is very long and very complex and so, there must have been people who had been putting a lot of work into the thinking that went behind it and what it is that they hoped to achieve by setting up these inspections. So, what kind of knowledge did they have, and what were their goals for setting up such a complicated resolution?

DB: Yes, that resolution, as I recall it, it became Resolution 687 of the Security Council. It was twelve pages long and like all UN resolutions it was all in one sentence. I seem to recall, perhaps Rolf Ekéus has already mentioned to you, it became known as the "mother of all resolutions." Like all resolutions, or nearly all resolutions, it was drafted by member states. This was quite clearly a child of Washington, London, and Paris, having been in the war, as to what had the war managed to achieve, what had the war not managed to achieve; how it is possible to make sure that certain things that could not be done by military means might be achieved by other means. Now, the Secretariat was not involved in the drafting, preparation, or the thinking that went into this resolution.

JK: That's an important point. I'm glad that you brought that up.

DB: So, I can't contribute anything as to how that thinking arrived at the conclusion that it did. But, what is interesting is that we are talking about a situation shortly after the end of the Cold War. The UN was being rediscovered by the member states of the Security Council because there no longer would be any of the vetoes in the Security Council and this war had just taken place on which there had been unanimity in the Council to adopt the resolution that gave the license to the willing states to carry out this war.

So, here was a situation that opened new doors. Although later experience in Yugoslavia and in Somalia had the effect of souring the attitude by some of the member states, the USA, but also some others towards the UN. At this time, the attitude was much more positive. They were basically going to give to the UN an operation that they knew could not be done by national hands; it could not be done by Americans or by British or French, let alone anyone else. It had to be done under the same sort of international license as was given to Desert Storm in the first place. The only difference was Desert Storm was basically giving a hunting license by the Security Council to a group of willing states to go out and hunt.

But, when you came to post conflict arrangements, quite clearly, that was not going to be valid. These people had to be under UN flag, under UN command, under UN arrangements. To that extent, I thought the resolution was very imaginative and very novel. Now, what they were seeking to do of course, they knew that Iraq had been developing a nuclear weapons program. Iraq appeared to have a chemical weapons program because they had used chemical weapons beforehand against the Iranians and

against the Kurds. Iraq obviously had ballistic missiles, because Russia had sold SCUD missiles and they had launched the missiles during the war against Israel and Saudi Arabia. These things were left. And, as it turned out later on, there were suspicions that if Iraq had these weapons of mass destruction might also have other weapons of mass destruction or pursuing it, namely biological.

Now, how was the international community going to grip on these things? The only way is to have presence on the ground, intrusive, experienced presence on the ground by people who knew what they were looking at and could recognize it. The only way to do that is through intrusive inspections. So, I could see the thought process that led to that part of the resolution.

JK: OK, now, why didn't they use IAEA? Why couldn't IAEA have done this? Why did they have to set up UNSCOM?

DB: Oh no, they did. The IAEA, the International Atomic Energy Agency, was responsible for the nuclear part of the inspections but the IAEA, of course, has no responsibility at all for ballistic missiles or for chemical or for biological weapons. Therefore, a different organization had to be set up.

In setting up UNSCOM, one of the early differences of opinion between Rolf Ekéus and Blix, both Swedes, but Rolf Ekéus was the head of UNSCOM and Blix was the head of IAEA, was where did UNSCOM's responsibility stop and IAEA's start and vice versa, and perhaps we can come to that at a later stage in the interview.

JK: Actually why don't we move right into that because that was one of the next things that I was going to ask you, the level of cooperation between the two organizations and the division of responsibility.

DB: I'd prefer to go back a stage.

JK: OK, that's fine.

DB: Because, I think there are some interesting things that took place in those very early days that to the best of my knowledge are probably not recorded anywhere else. For instance, I was a attached to this operation before the resolution was adopted by the Security Council before Rolf Ekéus was even identified, let alone appointed by the Secretary-General, which I think was around the twelfth of April, and that was when Rolf Ekéus was appointed. Immediately, in late March when this resolution was going through the Security Council, already in the Department of Disarmament Affairs, we knew we were going to have to service this organization.

First thing we had to do was find offices, and finding offices, and telephones and staff. Bearing in mind the crowded nature of the UN Secretariat building, and in the knowledge that this organization was an entirely new organization, where were we going to find? Who was going to fund these things? The sheer cumbersome nature of the UN bureaucracy as to how long does it take to approve the posts, and approve the budget? We knew that we didn't have months, we didn't even have weeks, we scarcely even had days, because as soon as that resolution was adopted by the Security Council, we knew

that there was going to be major pressure by the member states to say "Go on, get on, organize the first inspection, why hasn't it left yet?" So, that was the whole business of putting that thing together.

I remember going into the Secretariat and saying, "We have to find offices." And being told, "No, there are no offices in the building. You are going to have to look for some premises outside and that would then have to go before a committee that would consider it in due course." I was saying, "You have got to be joking. We are going to have Americans and probably the British and the French hammering on the door of the Secretary-General's office within forty-eight hours, if not twenty-four hours, saying 'What are you doing about this?' Don't, please, therefore have us in a situation where the Secretariat says, 'Well, umm, there is system and a bureaucracy and it will take several weeks and you must take tenders for premises.' That is just a non-starter. Now, let's go back to the drawing board, please where can we find offices?"

Literally, I walked around the building and I found some offices on the thirtieth floor which seemed to be temporarily empty and I said, "There seem to be some offices here. At least we can get started." I was told, "You can't have those." I said, "Look, 'no' is a word which the Secretariat must not use. Let us remove this word 'no' or 'you can't' or anything negative out of the vocabulary because here is the UN being asked by its leading Member States to do something. Here is our opportunity to show that we can respond, we can react, and we can get going. So, let us stop thinking negatively, please, everyone has to think, how do we make it possible, not how is it going to be not possible to do?"

JK: I wanted to ask you about the timing of how all of this was going on. You were mentioning a little about what the dates were. Could you please repeat that?

DB: I think the resolution was adopted around the twenty-eighth of March. We had, in the Department for Disarmament Affairs at first become aware of it as I've explained around the twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth of March. I knew that things were going to happen very fast thereafter. Obviously they had to find someone to lead this organization. That was going to take some time. But, where as these things often take several weeks in the UN, as it turned out, Rolf Ekéus' name came up fairly soon, he was approached, and he had a background in the Conference of Disarmament, he came from Sweden, he would be an acceptable nationality. I think he was appointed by the Secretary-General on the twelfth of April. We are talking about the last few days of March and the first few days of April.

JK: So, you had to act very quickly.

DB: This was a very testing time. In my view, here was the UN being put to the test. Here is the UN being asked to do something that it had never done before, now is not the time to be dragging its heels and putting up bureaucratic obstacles and saying why things couldn't be done. Therefore it had to be moved over to being proactive as opposed to being negative.

I remember, I can't remember the date but it must have been literally in the first or second of April, that is to say within twenty-four to forty-eight hours after the adoption of

the resolution. Then the United States delegation arrived, just like I'd suspected. Bob Gallucci, Robert Gallucci, who later became the Deputy Head of UNSCOM, he came up and we went off to see the controller at the time to say that "We need offices, we need facilities, we need staff." I remember being in the controller's office, and I was just appalled when the comptroller said, "Well, Mr. Gallucci, I am about to go visiting on an official visit to other parts of the world, so my office will be available to you. You could use that for two weeks." I thought, "Oh my goodness, that is not the answer that we should be giving. The idea that I could make my office available to you for two weeks in an operation that was going to be really of such major significance and however big it grew, it was certainly going to be growing much bigger than one office. It was likely to go on it seemed to us at that time for at least a couple of years. Little did we know that it was still going to be going seven years later.

JK; Did you find that the people in the UN, like the controller didn't really understand the magnitude of the resolution?

DB: They didn't understand because they had other things to do and also because people, like in the controller's office, they are there to make sure that the bureaucracy does work, not just to be obstructive but they have to know where the money is coming from. Who is going to pay the bills? Often in the UN you can easily get bitten by Member States that ask you to do things and then they don't pay the bills until much, much later or don't even pay the bills at all. We have been stung. I don't blame him, for

being cautious, that was his job, but my job was to try to do what I could at my level as a D1 at that time, to make things happen and, damn it, that was what I was going to do.

So I kind of virtually commandeered these offices on the thirtieth floor and simply moved down, because possession is nine-tenths of the law in life. Rather than wait for permission to move onto the thirtieth floor, I just moved my personal office there. Then, that's the way you get a telephone engineer to come up and connect the telephones. That's the way you get people to come and deliver furniture. If you sit in your own office all the time, nothing will ever happen. So what you need to do is move.

JK: So, did you have the authority from Mr. Akashi to move ahead with this?

DB: Yes. Akashi said, "Derek, do whatever it takes and let me know if you need my help," and indeed I kept him fully informed. We immediately took one or two people from the Department of Disarmament Affairs just to simply get it going. Then, Bob Gallucci supported by an American contingent wanted also to get things going. Immediately one of the early messages was we, the Americans, we know that the Iraqis are moving materiel in their nuclear research center, they are moving materiel, we need to get that first inspection going quickly.

Now, here is where the overlap of UNSCOM and IAEA came about. IAEA which had to do the nuclear and always did the nuclear inspection, provided the chief inspector. They provided their own civilian IAEA expertise, but then again what we were looking at or they were looking at were nuclear weapons and understandably the IAEA does not have specific nuclear weapon designers, nuclear weapons expertise. What they were

looking at were those kinds of experts who had to come from the respective countries. Therefore they were going to be brought in. So, very quickly, and I am talking around about the 2nd week of April, by which time the name of Rolf Ekéus had come up and the third week of April at the same time as we were trying to get ourselves furniture and telephones and fax machine and all that. Then the pressure was on that the first inspection had to be organized. Since I was the only person there, the operational person there who knew how the UN worked, it fell to me to try to get the UN part of it. Already we had gotten one or two, two or three people, from the US military and from the State Department and the British—I can't remember if there were French at that time—namely to come in with their national expertise. But they didn't know one floor on the UN building from another. They certainly had no idea how to organize things in the UN while bearing in mind people who went on this inspection and would have to have UN identity. This meant they would have to have UN *Laissez* passes, which therefore meant first, we had to identify who they were and what their nationalities were, and then we needed certain details from them, and then there was the of question what contractual basis should they be on or not be on, and what happened if such people were injured or killed? And would the UN be liable? It was totally new material.

I didn't know the answers to these but at least I knew whom in the UN to go to for the answers, whereas none of these newcomers would even know where to turn. In other words, it was right at the start team building. How do we build the team? Who knows what? Who are the contacts? You do this, I'll do this, Fred will do something else. Goddamn it, we got the show on the road. It was highly stimulating, as you might

imagine. It was an exciting, stimulating time. There were very long hours doing things simply to get it on.

Anyway, I became the New York end of the organization of the first inspection IAEA put together. They decided how many people they wanted on the team, who they wanted on the team. Obviously there was close advice being given by Washington, primarily Washington, but also London and Paris and also the Russians to look after. All that was being done elsewhere, the actual nitty gritty. Now we had to get there. There was the question, how do we get the team? Well, firstly, how big is the team? The numbers were in the thirties; it got up to being around forty or forty-two.

JK: For the initial inspection?

DB: Yes, the first inspection. Some of these people came from the USA, and some of these people came from the US side of the Atlantic from the UN headquarters. Most came from the IAEA. But, we also had to say who do we need? Do we need UN security people? We are going to go in there unarmed, we are going to go in there virtually only after six or seven weeks after the war has finished, how are we going to look after our safety and our situation? We are going to need an airplane. So, I found myself going to down trying to find an airplane. It couldn't be British, it couldn't be American, it couldn't be French because they had just been in a war. I went down and if you remember this was pre-Yugoslavia, pre-Somalia, the UN's capacity for organizing these things had been in one sense tried over the years, but the UN's capacity for doing peace keeping operations up to the end of the Cold war was quite different from what it was as we discovered the

big ones, but those were still ahead. How do you find an airplane? Within the UN, what later became the logistics division, I explained what it was that I wanted, they went out to contract, to find, an airplane and we came back with a Romanian airplane. We all, a staff of six or eight people, are thinking what on earth, what kind of an airplane? And then at least we got an airplane and it would go where we wanted it to and we got a date for it to come and pick the team up from Vienna and fly us out there. So, that was going to be the departure date from Vienna. We had to get people to Vienna from the UK, USA, Canada and whatever other countries were taking part. Now there was the question of who was going to pay for the air tickets and on what contractual basis. These minor details, once you settle down and you have a whole system of inspections, these things become routine, but when you're doing these things right from the start you are starting with a totally blank piece if paper.

We also, of course, needed people to deal with unexploded ordinance. I knew from my own military background and my arms limitation background that roughly 15% of all explosives used in conflict don't explode. Therefore, if we were going to be clambering over the rubble of the Iraqi nuclear sight where missiles and bombs had dropped, we were going to be also clambering over unexploded ordinance. It's no good relying on the Iraqis to tell you where there might be an unexploded shell. Well, I rang up the British and said, "Well, this is what I need" and they said, literally, the person I spoke to, who I knew very well, said, "Derek, you have to be joking. We just had a war over there. We're not going to put British soldiers in Baghdad to stumble over the rubble. We can't do that." I got the same answer from the others, the American military, the French. Eventually it turned out that we had to hire a commercial company, which was an

American commercial company. As it turned out on the day they were due to leave with us to go to Vienna for the pre-inspection briefing and then on, their insurance company rang them up and said that their insurance policy has gone up by fifty thousand dollars, either you pay this extra premium or we'll cancel your insurance before you go. Since it was a civilian firm, they came to us at the UN and said, "What should we do? Who's going to pay?" By that time, Rolf Ekéus was in charge and he made the decision to go ahead and pay because we knew politically Washington was strongly behind getting this first inspection going. By that time, we knew that there was going to be both political and financial support. I am now talking about late April when that happened. But in the first instance we had to find a company.

Then we had to find transport. How were we going to get transport? These are the questions I was asking myself about ground transportation. We are now talking about the second week in April. How were we going to find transport? We must not put ourselves in the hands of the Iraqis. Because you do that and the next morning, "Well, I am sorry, the driver is sick, or, I've lost the keys." So we looked around and I rang the British saying that they couldn't help me with the unexploded ordinance team, could you get us transport? Oh yes, they said we have plenty of transport. What do you need? So I said, rough and ready transport. I mean you must have Land Rovers there, long-wheel-based Land Rovers. And they said right, "How many?" I had no idea so I said eight. They said, "OK we will ask London."

The next day, things we're happening very fast as you can imagine, they came back and said London says, "Yes, you can have them but you have to understand that we will get them to the Kuwaiti/Iraqi border. After that it is up to you to get them from the

Iraqi border up to Baghdad." So, I said, "All right." I had no idea how to do that, but I said, "Right, we'll do that."

In the meantime, as I said, people were arriving. Bob Gallucci was bringing people from the State Department, from the Pentagon, so other things were also clicking into gear more. But I'm describing the initial two weeks in April when everything was a clean piece of paper, everything was a clean slate, everything had to be started from scratch. It was an exciting time. It worked because everybody who was involved wanted it to work. Everybody was really putting out, and the cooperation and spirit of people who had never worked with the UN before from the US military, from the UK military and from the other nationalities, the spirit was really good. So, anyway, I was doing my bit to help put together these things in the knowledge that people had to be gotten together, people who were on the North American side of the Atlantic and from wherever else had to be contacted and got to Vienna. The idea was that they were going to spend forty-eight hours in Vienna and then be briefed by the IAEA and the chief inspector of the team, and then they were going to get onto this Romanian airplane and fly out. Then, literally forty-eight or seventy-two hours before the assembly time in Vienna it had become clearer and clearer that the Chief Inspector of the IAEA needed a sort of Mr. Fix-it and a political advisor, someone who had been involved in helping to put it together. The Chief of the IAEA did not know how the Security Council or UN worked. They were just dealing with the atomic energy agency side, but there were things going on in New York that they had heard nothing about.

JK: Who was that Chief Inspector?

DB: A Greek, Zerelli {?} So, anyway, I got told to be the Mr. Fix-it. I then said, well, as I turned my mind to that because all of the sudden I was going, I said what are the practical issues that have to be faced? We knew that we were going to be staying at a hotel in Baghdad but we did not know what bills there were going to be. Common sense told me that we would need to have some money. I remember going to Rolf Ekéus and saying I am going to need to go with some money. He said, "How much do you need?" "I don't how much, but how about fifty-thousand dollars?" He said that sounds reasonable, then asked, "How do you get that?" I said, "I don't know, I'll go off and see the finance people."

JK: Well, that makes sense if you have over forty people, and you were going to be there, well, did you know how long at that point?

DB: I think we expected our first inspection to be about five days all together. We just did not know what costs there would be. Obviously, fifty thousand dollars, if we were expected to pay the hotel bill for forty people for five days, that fifty thousand would nowhere near cover it. That was not what the fifty thousand was for. It was for incidental expenses that might come up if you had to rent a bus or get certain equipment, or pay, as indeed it turned we did, pay for certain engineering or welding jobs. I told Rolf I need a piece of paper - so please sign. The result was I went down to the controller and again, the UN moved heaven and earth this time. They had gotten the message by this time, and they gave me fifty thousand dollars in cash. I took that fifty thousand dollars in my

briefcase and traveled around with it in Vienna and in Baghdad, to be the bagman, and the Mr. Fix-it, the political advisor. Then we went to Vienna and met up and were briefed by David Kay and by Hans Blix and by the others as to the inspection. Obviously everyone's very conscious that the reputation of the IAEA and the UN and everything was on the line here for this very first inspection.

Duly, on the appointed morning we went off to Vienna airport and there was this Romanian aircraft on the runway. We loaded on board and I was very pleased to see and recognize a BAC 111, a British Aircraft Company. I recognized the design, a rather short hull, rather like a 727. I remember at some time during the flight I spoke to one of the Romanian stewardesses and said, to make conversation, "It's a nice airplane. It's good to see. I recognize the type." She said, very proudly, "Yes, this I think is the first one of its type that we built under contract in Romania." There was a big difference between flying in BAC 111 built and maintained in the UK and one that had actually been built perhaps under license in Romania and you did not know what it's maintenance was like.

Anyway, so we flew off to Baghdad. We went through Kuwait with all the oil wells still burning and all the shell cases and missile cases still rolling around the Kuwait runway and the military aircraft taking off. We landed there briefly. We had refueled at Bucharest; we then went to Cyprus, then Kuwait. Then we headed north. There were no radio beacons, navigational beacons, working in Baghdad, in Iraq. They'd all been knocked out by the war. So the pilot had to navigate by dead reckoning, having a map on his knee and peering out of the cockpit to see where he was.

We headed out for Habbiniyah which was the military airport about ninety miles to the west of Baghdad. Those of us who were British or American or French aboard that

airplane, as we then came in to land, I am sure were like I was, were really quite apprehensive as to how we were going to be received. Clutching our UN *Laissez* passes. It was this one thing, not one's national passport, the UN document that was your license for survival. As it turned out, little did we know that we were probably being received by the Iraqis with a similar amount of apprehension. So actually when we landed on the ground and went into the airport building everybody was extremely polite and civil to each other, very calm, and it actually went off, that very first meeting, went off very well. Certainly I shall always remember as the wheels touched ground on that runway with destroyed airplanes to the right and left that one really wondered what exactly was going to happen.

JK: I want to pick up one thing you had mentioned - the ground transport, how did you actually get it through the border?

DB: Yes, the eight Land Rovers. The British took the gun turrets off the top of the Land Rovers. Yes, UN vehicles should not be driving around too much with gun turrets on the top, at least not in these circumstances. There was a small UN contingent that had been left in Baghdad, a residual UN office in Baghdad, which I think may have been there throughout the war, or had got back in, even if it had gone to Jordan and come back in. It was there, a small liaison office.

JK: What had it been doing?

DB: I think the UN, previous to this, had something; I don't know if it was UNDP, or World Food Program, or those kinds of operations. I don't exactly know. It gave us at least a point of contact. We told them we arrived and they were the people who then went off to the local Palestine Hotel—that was the name of the hotel we stayed in—and acted as the initial linkages between ourselves and the Iraqi authorities. We were able to contact them and he had, I think, a small number of Iraqi staff. He was also able to engage some others who then got them down to Baghdad, to the Iraqi/Kuwait border and drove these vehicles up to Baghdad so they were there by the time we arrived.

JK: So the vehicles were already there?

DB: The vehicles had got there. But, what I had omitted mentioning was the fact that although there had been a strong British influence in Iraq many years before, the fact was that Iraq had changed the side of the road on which things drove. So, we now had British right wheel drive vehicles on left wheel drive roads, if you see what I mean.

JK: Yes, exactly.

DB: Iraqi roads, as we were quick to discover, have a lot of heavy truck traffic. I mean, they drive furiously. And you have to poke the nose of your vehicle out much further than normally in order to see what you need to overtake. So that took a little getting used to.

JK: That's scary.

DB: But, I mean, then again, we did - we got transport and we got everything else. Now on the very first occasion when we arrived, the Chief Inspector met up with the Iraqi authorities and their nuclear scientists who ran the nuclear research center, al-Tuwaitha I think it was called, and made arrangements then to start the inspection the next day. We went off, I think in buses provided by the Iraqis. On that first day we did not use our own transport. We went off by buses to get to this place that is literally only on the outskirts of Baghdad. It's not very far, only about twenty-five or thirty kilometers from the center of Baghdad, that's all. We drove out for that first inspection.

JK: By saying that this was 25 km outside of Baghdad, what was it you were going to inspect at that point?

DB: It was their primary nuclear research center. It was the same place that had had the research reactor, the Osirak research reactor, provided by the French and bombed by the Israelis several years before. It being a prime target that close to Baghdad, I would imagine that on the several days that it was bombed, it was probably quite a fireworks display. To have a nuclear research station that close to the capital city, in other words, its not like Los Alamos or Lawrence Livermore or New Mexico is from Washington. It's like Bethesda, Maryland is from Washington and that's a rather different thing.

I remember going on that first inspection. And I was going not now as an inspection expert. They had had enough people there. They had got the IAEA people.

They had got technical, nuclear qualified inspectors. So the Chief had technical and nuclear knowledgeable people who knew what they were looking for and I was not a part of that. I was a member of the group as the person from the UN in New York if something was needed. And, as I say, a political advisor, a staffer. But the inspection was now in the hands of the technical experts and they were doing their job. I must say, it was very impressive to see how accurate those bombs and those Tomahawk missiles had been because when we went into...

JK: Now you're talking about the bombs that had hit the site during the war?

DB: Yes, that's right. We went into the very large military compound and then driving through various sorts of areas and then you come to what's called a sand berm of about ninety feet high, thirty meters high, a great big wall of sand all the way around in a square so that no where from ground level can you see what's inside the square. We then drove through a tunnel, and into what you'd find, expect to find, mainly a car park, and there was no sign of any damage in the car park, and then through turn-styles and through the admissions gates, no damage there. And there were some offices, what might have been a library, possibly therefore and further on a cafeteria, the kind of administrative offices, and we began to see the odd broken window, the odd curtain flapping through a window, some sort of damage.

Continuing, driving into this, or walking into this area for another hundred yards or hundred and fifty yards and turn a corner and then you start to come to the research buildings. And one after the other they'd all been absolutely smashed flat with direct hits,

including the reactor building which had been a three or four story building and now had no roof and you could walk up the stairs which were full of rubble to stand at the top of the core pond which was now open to the sky and look into the core pond and see where it had previously, of course, been inside a building. And the building just didn't exist anymore.

JK: And the building didn't exist.

DB: Big craters all over the place and I mean, the destruction just was immense.

And as I say very struck by the accuracy, the effectiveness. There'd been several raids on the places, not just one raid, as I understood it. Anyway, so the technical people did what they did and, as I gathered from them, they started taking careful notes but then began to sort-of say, you know, this rubble is not the way that the bombs left it, this rubble has quite clearly been moved and then bulldozed back because that kind of rubble does not come from that building there, it came from that building thirty yards away. They knew what kinds of facilities they were looking for. They knew what kinds of equipment that they might expect and they could begin to see that there had been indeed, things had been shifted. And in one place there was a building; various areas inside this research center had been off limits. They had been built with the help of Italians or with the help of French, or with the help of Russians. But, as I understood it, those scientists, when they came to help the Iraqis had not been allowed to go to the other parts of the research area, the nuclear area. So in other words, only Iraqis had actually had access to the whole of the area. There was even one area where the Iraqis kept to themselves.

And on that very first inspection, the team apparently went to one building and had not known what was in the building—the building had not been bombed—went inside and the building was empty, a very large building. And there were big heavy power cables that fed to the outside of the building but then had been chopped off inside the building. There were concrete plinths on the floor which had obviously been built to take some fairly heavy machinery, but there was nothing on the concrete plinths and the building itself was entirely empty. And the technical experts sort of looked carefully around, took notes, took photographs, tried to work out what this building had been used for. I believe somebody later told me that they had sort of scuffed up some graphite which they took for identification at a later stage and it could not be ascertained what this building had been used for and how important, or unimportant, it was in the whole scheme of things. And there was a lot of information that everyone had to gather. I understand that, by the time of the next nuclear inspection which took place probably some three weeks or four weeks after, when they went back to look at that sight, it was a car park. The building had been entirely demolished. The rubble had been moved away and where the building had stood, it didn't stand anymore.

Deceptions like that and acts like that by the Iraqis took place in all areas of the program. Yes, they knew that they had to allow the inspections to take place but they were not being open with their information. They would give information and provide information if you asked the right questions. Having answered a question you then had to ask the next right question in order to get the next piece of information. And there were lots of indications where they simple did not offer information; they did not make things clear. And the whole pattern was a pattern of hiding materials, hiding clues, deception. It

did not create the necessary sense of confidence that was needed from the inspectors to make sure that the war was behind, "We're here now to inspect what you have. We want you to be open and tell us what you've got." No, on the contrary, it was like pulling hen's teeth. And that set up a climate which by and large has remained ever since, throughout the entire period.

JK: What was the language situation? Did you have translators?

DB: We had, yes, we had interpreters, UN interpreters, some of whom came from Arabic countries but others, in order to be totally independent and in order also to not risk bringing any danger to people who might at least have relatives still in countries in the Arab world, there were interpreters from other countries, from the USA, the UK and the other countries as well. So that also meant that in that sense as well, where necessary, we could be completely independent.

So, we were there for several days and we had to find materials and it then transpired that again they were looking for "yellow oxide," as I understand it, the raw material. I got the description wrong, but it comes in large drums of material that they use in the nuclear process.

JK: Yes, "yellow cake."

DB: Yes, yellow cake, that's it, yellow cake. And they knew that they should be finding material and they were not finding the things that they knew that they ought to be finding.

Even though it was basically a research reactor in this place; it was not a nuclear weapons establishment, per se, it was a research reactor. The fact was that even the ordinary aspects, items and ingredients that the nuclear experts would expect to find, they weren't finding. Eventually, yet again, by constantly probing and asking the questions, obviously the Iraqis would decide at some stage that there was nothing to be gained by continuing to hide that piece of information. So the next morning you would come along and they would sort of say, "Well, this is where that is and this is where this is and we'll take you to so and so," but there again, having got there, the nuclear experts would then have to ask the right questions to get the answers they wanted to know. Very little of any real importance was ever offered by the Iraqis. It all had to be pulled out - teased out, one way or the other.

There were other installations in Iraq which from various intelligence sources of the Member States concerned—that is to say, the US, the UK and France—had reason to believe that this or that installation had a role to play in the nuclear weapon program but they did not know quite what that role was. They wanted to do surprise inspections and go there to see what there was. Sometimes the Iraqis would sort of say, "No, no, that was nothing but an industrial building, or industrial site." You would turn up there, a surprise, talk to the manager and the manager would profess total ignorance and then at a later stage you'd then find, oh indeed he'd had a key role to play in the nuclear program. So anyway, those were the early days.

JK: So was the first inspection primarily targeted at the nuclear capacity?

DB: All

JK: The first was all nuclear.

DB: The first one, because that was the primary concern. How close had Saddam Hussein gotten to having a deliverable nuclear weapon?. To have a nuclear explosive devise is one thing, it will work, but if it is still so big you have to deliver it on a truck, then it limits very considerably where you are going to deliver that weapon. If, on the other hand, not only does it work, but it had been successfully weaponized to the extent that it could be put on the end of a missile, or a bomb in an aircraft or anything else, it offers more options for use. Do you see what I mean?

JK: Yes.

DB: So at that time, everybody knew that there must be a nuclear weapon program but how were the Iraqis using it? How were they getting their uranium up to weapons grade uranium? Were they using plutonium? How far had they gotten with their program? Where were their research facilities? Where were their test facilities? How about their storage facilities? How did they intend to use these things? All that remained yet to be discovered.

JK: Later, what did you find in terms of what their capacities were for enrichment? They had found that they were using a system called the calutron that was rather cumbersome and awkward.

DB: Well, I remember sitting on that first inspection, sitting next to one of the nuclear experts in the bus on the way back, sort of saying, well, what did you find? He said, "It's very difficult to tell what we found. There are some very puzzling things." There are things for which, if there were an innocent explanation, then that explanation should have been given to us and it wasn't. There were other things for which there was no satisfactory explanation and quite clearly, the kind of information that we were being given by the Iraqis is not true. We were being given lies. We were being set-up. But it was very difficult to tell. And the thing that they were looking for was, how did they produce the weapon grade material? Everyone was attune to the idea of looking for gas centrifuges which was the standard way in which this was done in the US and elsewhere. To do that you need a large amount of electrical power, a fairly large site, and again I am not a technical expert so I don't know, but you are looking for certain things and they were not finding any of that at all.

There continued to be a lot of puzzlement and I am not the right person to be able to ask how they did the detective work, but gradually it became clear that there must have been another method. As I understand it, they came back with some photographs at some stage, of various bits of metals or various things that they had found and took them down to nuclear knowledgeable people in the USA who had not been on the inspection. As I understand it, at some stage, some retired scientist from Oakridge in Tennessee saw some

of these photographs and said, "Oh well, I remember those. That was the way in the Manhattan Project that we started to produce the weapons grade uranium and eventually stopped that route, did not go down that route, and went down the gas centrifuge route. It's called cauldrons. And so, that's what indeed transpired. If you remember they became what is known colloquially as the 'Baghditrons.' Then teams were sent out to hunt for these things.

And if you remember, there was one occasion when David Kay on a further inspection was the chief inspector. There had been information that large transport trucks with these very large saucer-shaped equipment had been sitting in an army transport yard in Baghdad. Now, he went out with the information as to where to go and what to look for. We in New York, and by this time we had set up in the UNSCOM offices a little operations room. The head of operations was a United States Army colonel, and I was involved in it and I later became the Deputy Director of Operations for the Weapons inspections. Well, eventually we got titles; that's what I became. I had a couple of colleagues at that time from the US, because you know we lent heavily on US Intelligence information which obviously had to be very carefully handled, very sensitively handled by them and by us because the US was in this very difficult position for them of sharing highly sensitive, national intelligence information with a crowd of foreigners. Almost worse still, sharing it with a bunch of people from the UN. Horror of horrors. So, we all had to get over that problem.

Anyway, on this particular occasion we had sent out an overnight cable, as I say, the inspections were done by the IAEA, but the day to day sort of hour to hour running was shared, not always easily, between Rolf Ekéus in New York as the head of

UNSCOM because the transport, the administration, the organization had to be done by one authority. If you had two authorities doing it you were going to get chaos. But the technical expertise and the nuclear inspection were always run by the IAEA and we had an open telephone line because David Kay had satellite telephone with him at a time when there were no telephone lines working in Baghdad.

Because there was an eight-hour time differences, we knew he was going to set off round about nine-thirty or ten o'clock in the morning for this place. So my colleagues in New York and myself were sitting in this office in the UN at two thirty in the morning waiting to see whether this inspection was going to produce anything or not, and when David Kay got out to this area he set up the satellite telephone and thereafter we had an open telephone line and it was quite bizarre because there in the middle of the night in New York we were sitting with an open telephone line to an inspection team out in the—I won't say quite the desert—but the suburbs of Baghdad, halfway around the world waiting to see whether this inspection was going to find the treasure, or not. Indeed, if it turned out to be successful then things were likely to happen very quickly and if in fact firing started and people were getting killed, we had to be in a position to know and tell the Secretary-General and tell Rolf Ekéus and the others before CNN or BBC or anybody else got it. And indeed that's what transpired.

If you recall, David Kay turned up at the gate and said "I've come to inspect," and they said, "Well this is just an army transport depot, you can't come in here." Kay said, "I have the authority from New York." "Well," says the army sergeant, "well I can't let you in here" and then one of the Iraqis said, "We've got nothing in here to hide." And David Kay said, "Well there's a tower up there and if you've got nothing to hide can I put

my people up in the tower to just look over the fence." And that chap said, "Certainly you can. No problem with that." So David sent a couple of people up with a video camera and there sitting in the yard were the big army transport truck with this big saucer-shaped equipment on board and everything was perfectly quiet and silent and that was exactly what we were looking for. We were told this over the telephone and he said, "It's there."

JK: David Kay was on the phone in Baghdad?

DB: On the telephone to us and we were in New York and we were receiving, I mean this was minute-by-minute action, and were sitting in the middle of the night in New York and saying at last, "We've got something there."

And then, as I understand it, the David Kay end of the story was that, all of a sudden the army depot having been very quiet, the doors of the barrack blocks burst open and out people started running. The drivers jumped into the trucks, started up the engines and started driving to the opposite end of the compound. Now we had got a line drawing of the compound. We knew where the gates were. We told David in the cable what to look for, how to recognize that he'd arrived at the right place on that day, which he'd done. What we had not known was that there was another exit. So, the drivers were now taking these vehicles out, and we could hear this over the telephone. David was then shouting to his people to go around and cover the other exit. So they had to drive across unmade, no road, around to the back exit. When they got around there, three trucks were then driving out onto the main road and driving off. Now because they were big heavy

trucks they did not have the acceleration and they didn't have the speed that the UN Land Rovers had. So, in fact, the Land Rovers chased them with video cameras on board.

At that point one of the security guards on board the Iraqi truck opened fire and started firing at the UN team.

JK: At the UN team!

DB: At which point David Kay quite rightly, discretion is the better part of valor, we had enough there to prove that obviously the Iraqis had something to hide, obviously they were driving it off and now was not the time to get shot. So he called off the hunt and we had all this back in New York. There we were on the thirtieth or thirty-first floor at, by now four o'clock in the morning, and it was drama, drama as it happens. And it was very exciting and indeed they took these things off, but now of course, they could not hide them any longer. Eventually, these things were hidden somewhere else, then they were taken off to the deserts, then they were exploded and buried, but in the end, they had to be revealed.

Then it was revealed indeed that it was right. They had not gone the gas centrifuge, they'd gone this other route and gradually, but steadily, this detective work, piece by piece and the same was happening in the chemical and the same was happening in the ballistic and later in the biological. Piece by piece, step by step this detective work was put into place.

JK: I remember at one point seeing you on television in a parking lot going in and out of a bus or something like that? When would that have happened? Did you go back to Baghdad?

DB: Oh, yes, I went back on two or three occasions. I was also the chief inspector of a very large ballistic missile inspection on one occasion. Of course we'd also got another team going for the 'super gun'?

JK: The 'super gun'?

DB: The super gun. And you see, you have to bear in mind there was a need to pin down the Iraqis as quickly as possible but there was a sheer physical limit as to how many inspection teams could we administratively support, administratively and logistically support in the country at the same time. If you tried to put a nuclear team and ballistic missile team, and a chemical weapon team and a super gun team all in the country at the same time they would all require radio sets. They would all require transport. They would all require equipment.

JK: Security?

DB: We took UN Security with us on that first team, that first visit. But thereafter we didn't take them anymore because the Iraqis said, "You don't need your security. We will provide security for the team." Thereafter, the Iraqis basically provided the security.

The logic being, well it wasn't in their interest to see any of us get shot, just like it wasn't in our interest to be shot. As long as they didn't interfere with what the teams were doing, Iraqi security was probably a wise way to go.

JK: OK, right.

DB: So, we then had a series, a program of inspections. Back in New York we were putting together inspection teams and trying to stagger them and then do the pre-inspections planning, doing the inspection assembly team, going out, doing the inspection, coming back to New York, doing the debrief, putting the material together and there was a cycle. Gradually as the weeks and months passed, we were able to get ourselves organized and put that into action.

Now I was the chief inspector on another occasion of a ballistic missile inspection. I had instructions from New York to do several surprise inspections without telling the Iraqis where we were going, and the routine there was that one, we went to Bahrain and assembled the team beforehand. We discussed things and we trained in Bahrain, trained how to do it, because Bahrain was the place where the people then came together not for the nuclear inspection but for the other inspection for the first time, so people would fly in. The Russians would come, the Germans would come, the British, the French, the Canadians, the whoever, the Australians. As a chief inspector, you had to spend a day or two or three, depending on how complicated the inspection was, pulling this team together, melding this team to work as a team. Some of them knew each other. Some of them hadn't met each other. Once they'd done an inspection it became very

useful because you didn't have to start right from scratch every time. But you had to make sure that they put it together.

Then when we were at pains to make sure that although people would discuss the inspections that they might be doing we did not want them discussing with each other in hotel rooms in Baghdad that tomorrow we are going to go to the such and such. So, in fact, we kept that information absolutely to the chief inspector, his deputy, and each inspection would have an operations officer. So those three, and we would make that decision at the end of the day, well what have we got on out list, what should we do tomorrow, and we would not even tell our own team what they were going to do tomorrow. So, they would wake up, we would assemble at the hotel lobby at say five-thirty or six o'clock in the morning and we would say, "Today we're going to do site Delta, or target number nine," even then not mention the name. Then people, because we'd planned it and we'd briefed beforehand, then they knew what their jobs were.

This particular inspection, for instance, we had to do a surprise inspection of the Republican Guard Headquarters. Now, this major army camp outside Baghdad was 5 km by 7 km in size, 35 square km. Now we had about forty people in the team. We carefully planned it that we would drive in, we'd go to a central point, we had concentric circles on our map. Each circle was divided into a certain quadrant, each quadrant was given a color, each quadrant was then subdivided into further sections and each color was then given a subsection number. Each vehicle was given a number which was painted on it and it was also painted on the roof. These were the kinds of details that we went into so that once we arrived the vehicles we had would all split up into several different directions and go off at the same time. We wanted to try to make sure that as you came in

the front end, the stuff you were looking for wasn't being taken out by truck at the back end.

JK: Right, having had that experience.

DB: On this occasion, for instance, we'd also, by this time, had got helicopters, German helicopters, and we would fly these helicopters. We would talk with the pilot before hand, the night before. Explain to him where we wanted him and what time we wanted him and if it took us an hour and half to drive to a place, but it would only take him twenty minutes to fly. We wanted him to stay on the ground and not take off and not get there before we got there, otherwise he'd be in the air but there would be no one on the ground to check. You see what I mean? So the idea was that we would coincide our arrival, so that, and on this particular occasion, when we were within a mile or a mile and half of the camp, then lo and behold, up in the air we'd hear the helicopter noise and we'd know that our helicopter was arriving on time. His job was to orbit over the camp all the time of the inspection so that if he saw something being driven out—as he did out of a northern gate—or if he saw some suspicious activity, he would give us some grid reference on the map which he had and we had. Since we knew which quadrant and which sector each particular vehicle was operating in, we would then by radio on the ground send a vehicle, alpha bravo in team so and so and he would stop his inspection straight away, go to such and such a point and then find that.

I think this was a warehouse where as it happened on the other side of the camp there were two or three trucks gathered. They were taking things out of the warehouse

and when out inspection team arrived, it turned out that they were sorting out tents. And they weren't trying to hide anything at all, it was just that it was an ordinary day in the ordinary army life and these guys had been given the job to sort out tents and all of the sudden what was this helicopter doing over there head and what was this car doing arriving? You know. Those are the things that you had to do.

As time went on, I did this for about eighteen months all together and then I left and went to back my Department for Disarmament Affairs. I went to lead a chemical weapon investigation in Azerbaijan, which is a different story. But as time went by these inspections got more and more sophisticated, more and more detailed, more and more clues came in, but the whole story of how intelligence was shared, how technical knowledge was shared without compromising each countries national system, how multinational teams were put together to make this work. Not just simply what did they find and how did they dispose of things, but how do you get, in those circumstance, multi-national, multicultural, multidisciplinary teams to work under the UN heading I think was a fascinating story.

JK: Were you involved with the team that was held up in the parking lot?

DB: No, I was in New York at that time. Also, again, running our little operation center. That team was lead by Bob Gallucci and they had gone in to do a surprise raid. They'd gone into this area; they had discovered some boxes of documents that obviously the Iraqis wanted to stop them from getting. Having not been able to stop the team getting to the documents, the next best thing was to stop the team leaving with the

documents. So that was what all that was about. I am sure you have done other interviews about that, have you? Of that incident?

JK: We've done some but we don't have the details of that because we haven't actually interviewed someone who was right there.

DB: You need to talk to Bob Gallucci. And I think you need to get hold of Bob Gallucci and do something like this from his point of view to get you to share with him what he feels he can share with you.

JK: Yes, I think actually that Jim Sutterlin is working on that.

DB: All right. Now Bob was there. There are fascinating insights from the inside of what it was like inside for the three days they were trapped in there. Now back in New York, we knew that now they were not able to get out and they were telling us. They had with them a satellite telephone and they got a telephone line back to us which the Iraqis couldn't do anything about since it was a satellite line, but there was only one line. So physically they couldn't get out of the parking lot, but actually over the airways they could be in constant communication with us.

So back in New York the decision was taken and I suppose it was taken by Rolf Ekéus because he was the authority at that time. We would use this telephone and we would open it to the press. We said, we made it clear that this was the one and only telephone line we had. We would need to have use of it on some occasions, but any press

who wanted to talk to somebody of their own nationality on that team would they please contact us, give us their name, their telephone number, and their authority. We would make a list of these and put them into direct contact with their nationality on the team.

And we did this very consciously for three reasons. Firstly, it meant that every hour on the hour the UN was on the headlines. The UN was right up front in front of everybody's face and we were getting massive publicity out if this situation. Secondly, the very fact that we were getting that massive publicity made it extremely difficult for the Iraqis to consider what else they might do about it. If they decided that they suddenly might want to go and do a quick raid into the parking lot and arrest everybody and everything else, then they would know that this was live telephone line that was not just open to New York but open to the press, and therefore, this was going to be something that would really blow back in their faces. Thirdly, by doing it this way we were bolstering the morale of all these guys who were trapped in the parking lot.

End of Tape