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# Is Blix Tough Enough?

November 19, 2002



(AP)

**(CBS)** For the first time in four years, U.N. weapons inspectors are back in Iraq, scouring a country the size of California for evidence of weapons of mass destruction. What, if anything, this team finds on its mission may well determine whether the United States goes to war against Iraq. **Steve Kroft** reports.

Leading the team is Hans Blix, an unflappable Swedish diplomat regarded as brilliant but cautious. The Bush

Administration, and the rest of the world, will be watching his every move, as Blix confronts an Iraqi regime notorious for delaying, deceiving and lying to weapons inspectors.

He knows he is on the hot seat.

We'll be correct and effective, he says. Will he be aggressive?

Aggressive is an American quality. You're aggressive in business, that's fine. Aggression is prohibited under U.N. charter. And as a European, I would rather use the word dynamic and effective, if you don't mind, he says.

Semantics aside, Hans Blix wasn't anyone's first choice for the job of chief inspector. According to some reports, he was the 24th, after permanent members of the U.N. Security Council vetoed each candidate one by one until compromising on Blix, who had been the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency for 16 years.

Some said he was too much of a diplomat for the job. Well, I prefer peaceful solutions to war-like solutions if I can have them. But I'm not a pacifist, he says.

His team will be made up of 280 weapons inspectors from around the world, supported by helicopters, surveillance planes and state-of-the-art detection devices, some designed specifically for this mission.

He knows that it could all come down to one locked gate or one locked door, or one building to which he is denied access. That could touch off a war.

We will report honestly and objectively from the field. But it's clear that we, too, have to exercise some common sense. If we have one flat tire among our escorts on the road and are delayed a quarter of an hour, it's one matter. But if you have four flat tires on the road to the same place, that's a different matter.

The U.N. Security Council has given the inspectors extraordinary powers. Under the terms of the resolution, Blix will have the authority to seal off entire compounds, to airlift Iraqi scientists and their families out of the country for interviews, and unimpeded, unconditional and unrestricted access to any site. Whether the Iraqis will cooperate is anyone's guess.

Under the resolutions enforced by the Security Council, there are no sanctuaries and there are no places closed to us, says Blix. Even the so-called presidential sites, and there are quite a few - eight of them which were defined on the maps - we will now have immediate access.

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Does he think the Iraqis know where he is going to go? Some of the places, yes, but I don't think they will know all the places we'll go to, Blix says with a chuckle.

But anticipating the inspectors' next move has become a national pastime in Iraq. Previous U.N. teams were penetrated by intelligence agents who may have compromised the inspections. Blix's group of international scientists and military experts were personally interviewed by his staff and chosen from thousands of applications.

Blix has confidence in the people he has hired. But I can never have 100 percent guarantees that no one will not be someone who worked for a state. All I've said is that if I discover that ever, then I'll fire the person, he says.

With that in mind, Blix says most of his team will be kept in the dark on operational details until the last possible moment.

Iraqis will not know either: Most inspections are no-notice inspections. As you say, the inspectors tell you we go in this direction on this road and when they reach the target, they tell them, This is the target we're going to visit.

But Tim McCarthy, a former U.N. weapons inspector who conducted nearly 100 inspections inside Iraq in the 1990s, says "no-notice" inspections hardly ever surprise the Iraqis because of their highly sophisticated intelligence network.

They know who's defected from their country and where those people worked and those are sites that inspectors want to go see. They say 'Hey, something is going on here.' They have the capability to listen to our conversations. You know, it's a high likelihood they will know where inspectors are going, he says.

What about decoy teams? There are techniques, but frankly, it's still their country. And the advantages really go to them. And it's a very significant advantage.

In McCarthy's view, the real strength of this U.N. resolution is a provision forcing Iraq to provide an "accurate, full and complete declaration" of all its past and present weapons programs by Dec. 8. "False statements or omissions" could be grounds for war.

It is very unlikely that they will find a weapon. They won't come back with the bomb in the basement. This will not happen. What they will come back with is a kind of body of evidence saying Iraq is lying, he says. Then, he says, there may have to be another war.

But Iraq isn't the only one under pressure. In recent weeks, Blix has been told repeatedly by top U.S. officials - including President Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell - that they expect him to take a tough stand with Iraq. The U.S. has given him some possible sites, he says.

In Washington, Blix's record on Iraq doesn't inspire a lot of confidence. As head of the IAEA from 1981 to 1997, his job was to monitor and prevent the spread of nuclear weapons around the world. But during his tenure, Iraq built a massive nuclear weapons program right under his nose.

Blix says he was not the only one: The criticism has been that when I was at the IAEA, the IAEA did not discover what Iraq was doing in the '90s. And that is true. We did not. And this was a misery we shared with the CIA. And MI5, and even the Mossad. They also did not know at all. They had all the spies and the satellites.

Yet Blix did have his own inspectors on the ground, sometimes in the very same compound where the Iraqis were enriching nuclear material for the bomb. But he says his team then did not have unrestricted access. They needed Iraqi approval to enter particular buildings.

The one thing that we need to see happen is Hans Blix become a man of steel, become very hard nosed, not accept any kind of obfuscation or ambiguity, says Paul Levanthal, the founder of the Nuclear Control Institute, which tracks the spread of nuclear weapons around the world. He's followed Blix's career for 20 years.

The real question in my mind is whether Hans Blix, based on I think a rather flawed record when he was the head of the IAEA, both before and after the

Gulf War, whether he really has the backbone to be confrontational, which is, I think, the first requirement for effective inspections is a willingness to be confrontational, says Levanthal, who says he is skeptical.

But Blix says he can be confrontational when the situation demands.

According to Ken Pollack, that will happen. A former analyst with both the CIA and the National Security Council, Pollack says Iraq is still hiding weapons - a belief shared by the Bush administration. Pollack contends that Blix and his team have little chance of finding those weapons.

We know that the Iraqis have taken very big portions of all of their weapons of mass destruction programs and put them on the road. The biological warfare program is the best example. Where all the evidence we have indicates that the Iraqis have taken small biological labs and put them in the back of recreational vehicles. And they are driving these things all around Iraq. And you're trying to figure out which of these Winnebago's actually has a biological warfare lab on the back of it. Or even where it is, he says.

Pollack says that the U.S. government may not have given all its information to Blix, because it doesn't want to reveal its best sources.

What is success in this mission? Success certainly is to disarm Iraq. I agree with those who say that inspection is not the goal, it's disarmament that is the goal, says Blix.

Blix will not say what he thinks the chances of success are. He thinks this time will be different, though. They know that the consequences might be very serious this time. Now, you have a unanimous Security Council that demands all the Iraqis to cooperate. I think it's a very somber moment and I hope that this is taken to heart by the Iraqis.

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