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**UNSCOM:
A UNITED NATIONS INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION**

by

Ira Jacobs, Dr. Med. Sc. *

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Canadian Forces College

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** The author participated in UNSCOM inspection missions in Iraq between 1995-98, as a mission expert, deputy chief inspector and chief inspector. The content of this paper is based on information that is all unclassified and available in public domain open literature sources. All commentary, interpretation and opinion expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not represent those of the UNSCOM, the United Nations, the Canadian Department of National Defence, or the Government of Canada.*

*“Intelligence is the product resulting from the processing of information concerning foreign nations, hostile or potentially hostile forces or elements, or areas of actual or potential operations. The term is also applied to the activity which results in the product and to the organization engaged in such activity. Information is unprocessed data of every description which may be used in the production of intelligence.”*¹

INTRODUCTION

Rather than differentiate between the terms “Intelligence” and “Information,” the United Nations (UN) prefers to equate the terms and usually replaces the former with the latter. Sensitivities are probably such that the title of this paper, if viewed by senior officials in Permanent Missions to the United Nations (UN), would likely result in at least the expression of formal objections, and more likely conspicuously volatile reactions. This is because the concept of UN-coordinated and directed intelligence has historically been considered anathema when it comes to traditional UN operations such as peacekeeping.² Just the use of the word “intelligence” is apparently problematic on UN peace-keeping operations, as exemplified by the Canadian contingent of a UN operation in Bosnia, whose intelligence officer was formally converted into a Military Information Officer for the duration of the deployment.³ The word “intelligence” seems to be intentionally avoided in official UN documentation, in deference to use of “information.” In the thousands of documents and press releases accessible at the UN’s own world-wide

¹ Canadian Forces Operations. Chapter 20 --- Intelligence. (1997, 15 May). Canadian Forces Document B-GG-005-004/AF-000. Ottawa: Dept. of National Defence.
http://www.dnd.ca/dcds/drs/pubs/cfdoc20_e.htm

² Rehbein, Robert E. Informing the Blue Helmets: the United States, UN Peacekeeping Operations, and the Role of Intelligence. Martello Paper 16. Kingston: Centre for International Relations, Queen’s University, 1996.

³ Villeneuve, Daniel. “Intelligence and the United Nations: lessons from Bosnia – a Canadian experience.” Military Intelligence. October-December (1996): 22-25.

website, a search for the phrase “UN (or United Nations) intelligence” will prove almost futile.⁴ Those few discussions of “intelligence” that are yielded by such a search typically refer to acknowledgement of the value of a “...well managed intelligence and information analysis programme” for peace-keeping operations,⁵ and the problems that have been caused by not having such a programme available.⁶ In spite of such recommendations for the institutionalization of an independent UN intelligence unit,^{7,8,9} no documentation indicates that the UN has formally established an intelligence organization. Examination of the UN’s structure, at both the macro- and micro- levels will not find any organizational unit labeled as “intelligence.” UN headquarters does contain a Situation Centre which gathers and processes information from the field continuously and round-the-clock, but the use of the term “intelligence” was scrupulously avoided in 1993 when the Centre’s Information and Research unit (IRU) was created. Although the IRU does possess a “Joint Deployable Intelligence Support System” which it received from the US, access by the System to the American intelligence network is extremely limited.¹⁰ The IRU’s role is primarily restricted to collection and processing of information coming into the UN from its field operations in order to keep the UN Secretary General abreast of operations. The role of this IRU does not include provision of intelligence to military commanders of units operating under the auspices of the UN,

⁴ The United Nations website and site search engine is excellent and exhaustive. <http://www.un.org>.

⁵ United Nations. “Multidisciplinary peacekeeping: lessons from recent experience.” Section D. Intelligence and information analysis. <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko.lessons/handbuk.htm#Intelligence>.

⁶ United Nations. “Lessons learned from United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda.” <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/lessons/rwandles.htm>.

⁷ Smith, Hugh. “Intelligence and UN peacekeeping.” *Survival* 36.3 (1994): 174-192.

⁸ Johnson, Paul. “No cloak and dagger required: intelligence support to UN peacekeeping.” *Intelligence and National Security* 12.4 (1997): 102-112.

⁹ Eriksson, Par. “Intelligence in peacekeeping operations.” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 10.1 (1997): 1-18.

¹⁰ Herman, Michael. *Intelligence Power in Peace and War*. Cambridge: University Press, 1996.

but is much more akin to the definition of a unit that generates “information” as defined above.

The almost reflex-like dissociation of UN operations from “Intelligence” is not surprising considering the concepts of neutrality and impartiality associated with the phrase “United Nations,” and the contrast with the serving of national interests that “intelligence” connotes. The irony therefore becomes all the more apparent in both the title of this paper and the thesis that is presented. With the establishment of its United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM), the UN created an organization which was given a mission that no international arms control agency had ever attempted, i.e. the disarming of a country against its will. It is this author’s opinion that this task could not be accomplished (and indeed has yet to be accomplished) unless UNSCOM epitomized “intelligence.” This paper will demonstrate that UNSCOM was a UN intelligence agency that engaged in traditional intelligence operations at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. Collectively, the activities carried out by UNSCOM can be grouped into the following processes: “the direction of an intelligence effort; the collection of information; the processing of that information into intelligence; and the dissemination of the resulting intelligence to the user.” These processes are defined by Canadian Forces Doctrine as constituting the “Intelligence Cycle.”¹¹ In support of this thesis, selected aspects of Canadian Forces intelligence doctrine and terminology will be used to provide a frame of reference.

¹¹ Intelligence Doctrine and Procedures for Canadian Forces Operations. Chapter 4, Section II, The Intelligence Process. The Intelligence Cycle. Chapter 3. (1995, 24 May). Canadian Forces Document B-GG-005004/AF-008. Ottawa: Dept. of National Defence. This document is found via the Canadian Forces College internet site at <http://bbs.cfc.dnd.ca/Curriculum/jointdocs/cdnpubs/int/intch3.html>.

UNSCOM BACKGROUND

The Persian Gulf War ended in February 1991. UNSCOM was established with the adoption of Security Council Resolution (SCR) 687 on April 3, 1991¹² and the formal acceptance of the terms of the resolution by Iraq on April 6th. SCR 687 Section C specifies the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and related development, production, and testing facilities. WMD encompass biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons, as well as guided missiles with a range greater than 150 kilometres. UNSCOM was established to supervise the elimination of Iraq's chemical, biological and missile weapons and related facilities, and to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in eliminating nuclear weapons and facilities. The UN Secretary-General appointed UNSCOM's first Executive Chairman on April 19th, as well as 20 members of the Commission, from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, the United States and Venezuela.

The first inspections of Iraq by UNSCOM inspectors began on June 9th 1991. The inspections, analysis and interpretation of the results of the inspection, and reporting to the Security Council continued, albeit with intermittent short-term breaks, until December 16th, 1998, when all UNSCOM personnel were withdrawn from Iraq because of Iraqi non-compliance with SCR 687. That same day the US-led coalition commenced

¹² United Nations Security Council (1991, 03 April). [Resolution 687 \(1991\). Document S/RES/687.](#)

bombing of Iraq because of that non-compliance ... operations that are continuing as of today.¹³

UNSCOM devised three stages to implementing Section C of Resolution 687. First, UNSCOM (in cooperation with the IAEA) assessed Iraq's capabilities in the biological, chemical, nuclear, and guided-missile fields. Second, UNSCOM and IAEA destroyed weapons of mass destruction and related equipment and facilities. A third phase, in progress until UNSCOM withdrew because of Iraqi non-compliance, was the ongoing programme of monitoring and verification (OMV) to ensure that Iraq continued to comply with SCR 687.

UNSCOM IN CF INTELLIGENCE DOCTRINE TERMS

The CF classifies intelligence as strategic, operational or technical in accordance with the decision-making that it supports. If, as hypothesized, UNSCOM is indeed a formal UN intelligence construct, then it should be possible to characterize the organization and its activities in accordance with established intelligence nomenclature and theory, such as CF doctrine. To this end, those definitions of key phrases and terms quoted below in bold font were copied from Canadian Forces manuals containing related sections on Intelligence.¹⁴

¹³ The United Nations website provides a detailed chronology of events and related Security Council Resolutions. UNSCOM: Chronology of Main Events. <http://www.un.org/Depts/unscom/chronology.htm>

¹⁴ **Intelligence Doctrine and Procedures for Canadian Forces Operations. Chapter 4, Section II, The Intelligence Process. The Intelligence Cycle. Chapter 3. Op. cit.**

Strategic Intelligence

CF doctrine is that strategic intelligence is **“Intelligence which is required for the formulation of policy and plans at the national and international levels.”**

UNSCOM’s regular reports to the Security Council were the only formal means the international community had at its disposal to judge whether or not Iraq was acting in accordance with the terms and conditions of the SC resolutions which it undertook to fulfill. When UNSCOM informed the SC that Iraq was not in compliance, the UN publicly expressed its acceptance of the necessity for the use of force to re-establish compliance. The result was re-commencement of a bombing campaign condoned, if not formally endorsed by the UN. This resumption of hostilities is not a UN-mandated activity, but is a US-led international coalition, involving major military commitments and operations by the US and the UK. Further evidence of the national strategic uses of UNSCOM’s work is found in US national policy. As a result of reports of non-compliance from UNSCOM, US policymakers developed national policy in the form of the Iraq Liberation Act, which includes helping to coordinate efforts by Iraqi opposition groups to overthrow Saddam.¹⁵ Thus, UNSCOM characterizes a strategic intelligence asset which influenced the formulation of policy at the national and international levels.

Operational Intelligence

CF doctrine defines operational intelligence as **“intelligence required for determining, planning, executing, and evaluating the effects of all types of operations.”** As described earlier, UNSCOM phased its activities into three distinct campaigns: the assessment of Iraq’s capabilities and the extent of their past WMD

programmes, the destruction of designated WMD and facilities, and the Ongoing Monitoring and Verification programme to verify Iraqi compliance with UN Security Council resolutions. Each of these campaigns required distinct supporting operational intelligence. There is a paucity of open literature sources available for examination when it comes to operational intelligence activities of UNSCOM, other than published interviews with and/or books by former UNSCOM officials and Iraqi defectors, and other media reports. These sources reveal an interesting intelligence and counter-intelligence campaign that also exemplifies operational intelligence. For example, according to the reports of a former UNSCOM inspector, assistance was sought and received from both United States and Israeli intelligence agencies.¹⁶ Even the government of Iraq considered UNSCOM an intelligence organization which required counter-intelligence at the operational level. This was demonstrated by the establishment by Iraq of an extensive counter-intelligence network involving their state security and intelligence establishments. This network had the specific purpose of collecting intelligence about UNSCOM activities in order to hide evidence of the magnitude of their past WMD programme, and to frustrate UNSCOM inspections, an issue which came to light a couple of years after the creation of UNSCOM.¹⁷ UNSCOM therefore formulated an operational intelligence campaign to clarify how Iraq was obfuscating their past programme in WMD, and how they were attempting to confound UNSCOM intelligence activities.¹⁸

Tactical Intelligence

¹⁵ Gause III, F. Gregory. "Getting it backward on Iraq." *Foreign Affairs* 78.3: (1999): 54.

¹⁶ Ritter, Scott *Endgame: Solving the Iraq Problem – Once and For All*. New York: Simon Schuster, 1999.

¹⁷ Boyne, Sean. "Iraqis perfect the art of evading UNSCOM." *Jane's Intelligence Review*. 01 Feb. 1998: 27.

Tactical intelligence is defined as **“intelligence which is required for planning and conducting tactical operations.”** A case could be made that any of the three phases of UNSCOM operations described previously could be depicted in tactical intelligence terms. For the purposes of this paper, examples of tactical intelligence will be drawn from the last phase, i.e. ongoing monitoring and verification (OMV). UNSCOM was primarily engaged in this last phase at the time of its most recent withdrawal from Iraq. It is therefore important to be familiar with the inspection methodology used for OMV and it is outlined in the next section. In order to again facilitate reference back to CF doctrine, it is important to be familiar with CF definitions of means of collecting intelligence:¹⁹

- ◁ Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) describes both Communications Intelligence (COMINT) and Electronic Intelligence (ELINT);
- ◁ Imagery Intelligence (IMINT) refers to imagery acquired by photographic, radar, electro-optical, infra-red and thermal sensors;
- ◁ Documentary Intelligence (DOCINT) is based on analysis of information from published material, broadcasting media, and includes material not available in open sources;
- ◁ Human Intelligence (HUMINT) is obtained from human sources, including: reconnaissance reports, undercover agents, prisoners of war, and defectors;
- ◁ Acoustic Intelligence (ACINT) is derived from collection and processing of acoustic data which are radiated through air or water;

¹⁸ Ritter. *Op. Cit.*

¹⁹ Intelligence Doctrine and Procedures for Canadian Forces Operations. Chapter 4, Section II, The Intelligence Process. The Intelligence Cycle. Chapter 3. *Op. cit.*

- ◁ Measurements and Signatures Intelligence (MASINT) is based on analysis of scientifically and/or technically derived data obtained from sensors.

METHODS OF ONGOING MONITORING AND VERIFICATION

In carrying out OMV, UNSCOM employed a variety of measures, including declarations by the Iraqis, on-site inspection, sampling and identification, inventory control of dual-use equipment, on-site continuous monitoring, and aerial surveillance. A brief description follows using the Biological Weapons Inspections as a frame of reference, although similar issues applied to chemical, nuclear, and missile weapons inspection regimes.²⁰ Note that the tactical intelligence methodology used, in accordance with CF terminology, is shown in parentheses.

Declarations (DOCINT)

Declarations involved the mandatory, periodic reporting by the government of Iraq about information related to the development, production, stockpiling, and acquisition of biological and toxin agents. According to SCR 687, Iraq had to provide information pertaining to:

- ◁ facilities (including those participating in biological defence programs, vaccine production plants, facilities where plant pathogens and biological pesticides were bred, etc.);

²⁰ The description is based on the author's participation in several biological weapons inspection missions, as an expert inspector, Deputy Chief Inspector, and Chief Inspector during 1995-1998.

- ◁ programmes (large vaccination programmes, R&D programmes related to smallpox, biological pest control programmes involving aerosol dissemination, etc.);
- ◁ international transfers (including imports and exports of microorganisms and toxins having potential for BW); and
- ◁ general information pertaining to the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), which Iraq signed in 1972 and ratified in April 1991.

Another form of Declaration was the “Full, Final, and Complete Declaration” (FFCD) which the government of Iraq was to make as its penultimate declaration that all aspects of its Biological Weapons programme had been revealed and addressed in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. To date, at least four such FFCDs have been made; each of these FFCDs have been deemed by UNSCOM to be incomplete and inconsistent with the evidence that UNSCOM has garnered from its inspections.

On-Site Inspections and Interviews (HUMINT, DOCINT, IMINT)

In general, an on-site inspection of a facility was carried out to validate the accuracy and completeness of the facility’s declaration and to discover indications of the presence of illicit BW-related activity. Such inspections also involved interviews to identify personnel with relevant competencies, searching of documentation, photography and/or videography.

Sampling and Identification (MASINT)

Sampling and identification refers to the taking of samples by the inspection team and analyzing them for agents or materials indicative of illicit BW activity. Thus, samples could be collected on-site from various sources inside and outside the facility undergoing inspection, such as equipment used for research, development, manufacturing, and storage; dust within buildings; soil outside buildings; a facility's waste stream; filters used to clean air being emitted by a facility; and animals and plants used in R&D, and product testing. Off-site environmental samples were collected from locales possibly affected by past suspicious activities or from locales close to currently operating biological facilities.

Inventory Control of Dual-Use Equipment (DOCINT, IMINT)

Biological agents suitable for weapons, unlike chemical and nuclear weapons, can be produced in "dual-use" facilities, i.e. facilities that were designed and constructed for legitimate biomedical or agricultural research, development and production, and that might continue legitimate production while also undertaking illicit BW-related development and production. A vaccine, fertilizer, or bioinsecticide production facility, or even a brewery could be converted in a matter of weeks to BW-related research, development, production, or storage. Dual-use facilities provide effective cover for BW production facilities, or can serve as training sites for BW production plant personnel. For these reasons, key equipment in such facilities must be considered dual-use equipment. UNSCOM compiled a data base of dual-use equipment in Iraq and subjected them to inventory control.

On-Site Continuous Monitoring (IMINT)

More than a hundred remote-controlled video cameras were installed by UNSCOM at “dual-use” facilities throughout Iraq; 24 of these cameras were installed at biological production plants that were considered to be capable of being converted fairly easily to the development and production of BW agents. The purpose of such surveillance is to collect data on the routine activities at each site so that deviations from this baseline can be subsequently detected.

Aerial Surveillance (IMINT)

UNSCOM’s assets for aerial surveillance consisted of helicopters and a U-2 reconnaissance aircraft. Helicopter-based Aerial Inspection Teams photographed suspected facilities or activities for the purpose of delineating perimeters of facilities, clarifying details of photographs taken by the U-2, and otherwise checking up on unusual and suspicious activities. The US government supplied a U-2 to UNSCOM and provided continuous logistical support to keep the airplane flying. The U-2 flew under a UN flag, according to flight plans and programs formulated by UNSCOM. The photographs taken by the U-2, from 70,000 to 90,000 feet,²¹ were analyzed at UNSCOM headquarters in New York by experts seconded by supporting governments. Satellite data were passed on to UNSCOM from national intelligence services of supportive nations, but UNSCOM did not have direct access to satellites carrying remote-sensing equipment. It is conceivable, however, that UNSCOM could have purchased the needed imagery from commercial sources.

²¹ Jane’s Publishing Company. Janes All the World’s Aircraft. 1983-84. London: Jane’s Publishing Company, 1984.

Special Activities (HUMINT, COMINT, ELINT)

Once it was determined that Iraqi security units were attempting to cover-up past and current WMD activities, scanners were used to tap into the radio and cell-phone frequencies used by the Iraqi security units. These were eventually replaced by miniaturized monitors which were brought into Iraq and activated by Defense Intelligence Agency operators, while working as UNSCOM inspectors.²² There is also media speculation, based on interviews with anonymous sources that the recorded signals were transmitted via a satellite communications network to the U.S. National Security Agency for decoding, and that filtered information was then relayed back to UNSCOM.²³

UNSCOM AND HUMINT

It is probably fair to surmise that political sensitivities are exacerbated more by the use of HUMINT than other means of intelligence production or collection. Thus, it merits particular attention. The HUMINT aspect of UNSCOM has attracted considerable media attention; perhaps because of the threat many perceive it constitutes to the UN's image of neutrality and impartiality. There is no doubt though that in its relatively benign form HUMINT was derived from the overt work of the various inspectors using the methods described above. Political sensitivities were probably provoked however, by recent reports and statements from US State Department and former UNSCOM officials which indicate that, in addition to UNSCOM, sovereign intelligence services derived

²² Nelan, Bruce. "Bugging Saddam." *Time*. 18 Jan. 1999:42-43.

²³ Ricks, Thomas and Greenberger, Robert. UN used US gear to tap Iraqi data --- arms inspectors' NSA ties likely to anger Arabs. *The Wall Street Journal*. 07 Jan. 1999: A3.

HUMINT by providing their own personnel as members of inspection teams when the call for personnel came from UNSCOM. Apparently this included covert paramilitary operators who worked for the US Central Intelligence Agency and who were members of biological and chemical inspection teams.²⁴ The public concern, however, is difficult to reconcile with the fact that many of the HUMINT skills required for UNSCOM work reside in the intelligence community. As has been pointed out by UNSCOM officials, “It’s not what agency they are from that’s important to us...it’s the skills they bring.”²⁵

It is important to understand how members of an inspection team were chosen in order to understand how intelligence operatives could become members of an UNSCOM mission. Permanent staffs residing in UN headquarters in New York were responsible for setting mission objectives. Those objectives dictated the skill set that would be required for a given mission in addition to standard logistics and other support skills. For example, in my own experience an inspection mission included inspection of a large facility involved in the formulation and manufacturing of pharmaceutical products. The skill sets required included individual(s) with expertise in plant design and engineering of a pharmaceutical product line, experts in the pharmacological sciences with experience in drug formulation, translators, and an expert to facilitate rapid filtering of banks of computer files which we envisaged would be found at the site. Once the required skill sets were identified, UNSCOM would send formal messages to the permanent UN

²⁴ Statements to this effect have been attributed in the news media to a former American UNSCOM inspector, who resigned from UNSCOM claiming that one of the reasons for his resignation was his opinion that UNSCOM independence was compromised by influence from sovereign governments via their intelligence agencies. He recently published a book describing the background to those claims; legal action was threatened by the US government in an unsuccessful attempt to stop publication. Ritter, Scott. *Op. Cit.*

²⁵ Shannon, Philip. Former UN arms inspector is criticized by State Dept. New York Times. 24 Feb. 1999: 6.

missions of countries supporting UNSCOM activities, identifying the type of expertise required. UNSCOM would rarely identify specific individuals by name in their request, other than suggested Chief or Deputy-Chief Inspectors. The missions would in turn forward the request to their national government offices responsible for foreign affairs, and that department would identify the individuals possessing the required skill set. As a former UNSCOM Chief Inspector I never asked members of my team to specify their normal place of employment if they chose not to when introductions were made; several members chose not to do so, and they were typically the members that provided technical, translation and/or logistical skills. Where would one find experts in analysis of the images obtained from the U2 surveillance? Where would one find computer experts with the skills, software, and hardware, to enable the rapid filtering and translation of computer files in search of keywords relat 0 8uuDe? fom(er UNSCOM)Tj

What remains is for the UN to acknowledge publicly that it created an organization which engaged in traditional strategic, operational, and tactical intelligence activities for over seven years.

²⁷ Alexseev, Mikhail. Without Warning: Threat Assessment, Intelligence, and Global Struggle. New York: St Martin's Press, 1997. p. 269.

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<http://www.un.org/Depts/unscom/chronology.htm> A United Nations website link to the chronology of events involving UNSCOM.