IRAQ CONFIDENTIAL
The Untold Story of America's Intelligence Conspiracy

SCOTT RITTER

I.B. TAURIS
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This book shows just how petty and shortsighted bureaucrats can be when vital questions of war and peace are at stake. It is a book about the unwillingness of the American Central Intelligence Agency and the president’s National Security Council to permit an arm of the United Nations, led by an American Marine major, to carry out successful investigations into what weapons capacity Saddam Hussein actually had. Ritter was tipped off about the American double cross by some of his old friends in the British intelligence community. *Iraq Confidential* is a book to make you, like Ritter, angry.

It also helps explain why America’s warning agencies, with their thousands of FBI agents at home and thousands of CIA operatives abroad, failed to provide advance information on al-Qaeda’s planning for the September 11 bombings. At crucial moments, the FBI would not share its information with the CIA and the CIA, at almost all times, refused to share its files with the FBI.

Ritter was in the middle of such madness as he tried, throughout the 1990s, to sort out what Iraq had, or did not have. Ironically the chaos surrounding UNSCOM was counterbalanced by the remarkable unity and team-spiritedness of its culturally diverse members. Ritter’s story sometimes reads like a thriller, as UN inspectors chase and are chased by
Saddam Hussein’s henchmen. There is slapstick, as inspections go awry for the most mundane of reasons, and as Washington repeatedly fails to understand the consequence of its actions. And then, finally, there is fear and foreboding in learning how capriciously the most important efforts towards peace and disarmament can be undermined, even when they are led by Americans.

The most important thing to know about Scott Ritter, the man, is that he was right. He told us again and again in 2002 and early 2003 as President George Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair prepared for war in Iraq that there were no weapons there. The Iraqi WMDs, the main sales tool for the war, did not exist.

With each such statement, Ritter became more and more unpopular – with the politicos in the White House, the neoconservatives in Washington, the war planners in the Pentagon and the American press corps (which was, with a few exceptions, panting for the war). Ritter was in their face, and stayed so – even after the shock and awe began in Baghdad. As the American bombs fell, and embedded journalists filed dramatic stories about young GIs in the battlefield, wearing their overheated chemical warfare suits, Ritter was telling all who would listen that there could be no usable chemical warheads in Iraq, simply because there was no evidence of any chemical warfare production facilities in Iraq. No commander would go to war with chemical weapons left over from the 1991 Gulf War, he insisted – even if such weapons did exist. (Unlikely.) He was right about that, too.

I’ve known Scott as a journalist, and later, as a friend, since the late 1990s and I think I understand somewhat, just a little, what makes him tick. He is a purist, an uncompromising believer in empiricism who has never been afraid to tell the truth to superiors. Somehow, he never perceived, or wanted to perceive, that magic formula for bureaucratic success in Washington – never be the bearer of unpleasant facts. He is a Thomas à Becket in a world full of Bush administration yes-men.

His finest, and most controversial, moment came in the fall of 2002, with the war machinery in place. Scott flew to Iraq (against the advice of many of his friends), to speak to the Parliament in Baghdad and try to convince Saddam Hussein to allow the United Nations weapons inspectors to return to Iraq, thus removing the core public justification for the war. Five days after he left, Saddam publicly announced that the inspectors would be allowed back, without any preconditions. It was, so it seemed, an
extraordinary personal triumph. Nonetheless, Ritter was widely criticized by his government and by the American media for his effort to stop a war that was based, as Scott knew, on faulty intelligence.

Since March of 2003, Ritter has continued to criticize the Iraqi war, in his speeches and newspaper articles, and he continues to be right. It is not a ‘winnable’ war, by any means that provide succor to the long-suffering Iraqi people. In this book, Ritter digs deeper into his deep pocket of secrets and tells far more than he has in the past about the inability of the White House – be it Bill Clinton’s or George Bush’s – and the intelligence bureaucrats to listen to real-time information suggesting that Saddam’s WMD arsenal was empty.

Denials will come when this book is published, but I can vouch for Scott’s amazing recall and his extensive knowledge of the Iraqi disarmament game. That Scott continues to do what he does says something about his determination, his self-confidence, and his Americanism. He is still gung-ho about his country, as a good Marine should be, and he believes that it can be – must be – changed for the better. All I can add is hurry up, Scott – at the time of writing, George Bush has more than thirteen hundred days left in office, and that is a long, long time.

Seymour Hersh
Washington DC
20 June 2005
In August 1998, I walked away from the best job I ever had, and probably would ever have, in my life. For nearly seven years I had served as a UN weapons inspector who, like hundreds of others of my colleagues, had been mandated by the United Nations Security Council to oversee the disarmament of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction programs as part of the United Nations Special Commission, or UNSCOM. In my role as an UNSCOM inspector, I was provided with an opportunity that was unique – I was able not only to plan and implement inspections, but also to have control of the direction, collection and assessment of the intelligence information used in every phase of these operations.

As a senior member of the UNSCOM staff, I was also privy to the high-level political intrigue that surrounded the work of the inspectors. I was responsible for some of the most sensitive operations, and most delicate liaison activities, that UNSCOM was involved in.

These circumstances placed me in the position of being able to tell the complete story of UNSCOM’s secret intelligence operations inside Iraq. Until now, this history has gone unwritten, and the CIA’s version of events has been paramount.

While UNSCOM inspections provide the framework around which this story is told, no one should mistake this book as the definitive story of
UNSCOM and the effort to disarm Iraq. This book only includes details relevant to the secret intelligence war that took place inside Iraq and around the world, pitting inspector against Iraqi, and inspector against the CIA. The book describes a dozen or so inspections – overall, UNSCOM carried out nearly 300 discrete inspection missions, and thousands of monitoring inspections. My narrative jumps from inspection to inspection in seamless fashion. The reader needs to understand that my story unfolded while UNSCOM was engaged in a tremendous amount of other work, which took the form of the intervening inspections missing from the sequence presented here. I place a heavy emphasis on the inspections I was involved with, because I saw them with my own eyes. However, this does not in any way imply a denigration of the tremendous, and critically important, work of the hundreds of others inspectors not mentioned in this book. Without their hard work, dedication and sacrifice, Iraq could not have been disarmed to the extent it had been. I salute these fellow inspectors.

On the sources of information used for this book, I have wherever possible provided an appropriate citation of any document used. The primary source of documents is derived from my personal files accumulated over my nearly seven years of work with UNSCOM. I have also, during my time as an inspector, and afterwards, had the opportunity to speak with important figures who figure prominently in this book. Where possible, I have identified these individuals, and the date of the interview. Others, by necessity, must remain nameless. Those American officials who have spoken to me about the activities and events cited in this book have done so in confidence. The same is true of the Iraqi sources I have drawn upon. Given the ongoing situation inside Iraq, naming these sources would only put them at risk from the Iraqi insurgency, the Iraqi government or the American military. Some of my Iraqi sources were interviewed before the war, and are currently imprisoned without any criminal charges being made against them. I chose not to identify these Iraqis as well, since to do so might prejudice their treatment in jail. Likewise, I have sought to use the actual names of as many people as possible who appear in this story. However, many of the characters I discuss were, and possibly are, serving officers in their respective intelligence services, and in those cases I have used a pseudonym in order to protect their true identity. Also, given the controversial nature of the subject matter contained in this book, I have used pseudonyms for junior officials whose privacy should be respected.
Preface

I am solely responsible for the opinions and facts expressed in this book. I stand by everything I have written, and any errors or omission of fact are mine alone.

I would not have been able to tell this story without the vision and support of Iradj Bagherzade, my editor and the publisher at I.B.Tauris. I am thankful for his faith in my story, and my ability to tell it. I am also grateful for the kind editorial advice and assistance of Abigail Fielding-Smith, another one of the incredibly professional staff at I.B.Tauris who helped make this book a reality.

I am also thankful for steadfastness of good friends who have stuck with me over time and through various trials and tribulations – Chris Cobb-Smith, Roger Hill, Norbert Reinecke and Didier Louis, my former colleagues from UNSCOM, and Bob and Amy Murphy (and their new son, Ryan), Mike and Becky Steiner, Frank and Annie Mellet, and Mark Gibson, who comprised my local support network here in Albany, NY. I am also grateful for the support and friendship of all my fellow firefighters in the Delmar Fire Department who volunteer their time in the service of their community.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Seymour Hersh, an unparalleled journalist and even better friend. Alone in the American media, Sy Hersh listened to what I had to say, and then took the time to do the research necessary to determine that I spoke the truth. America, and the world, owes Sy Hersh a debt of gratitude for his integrity and tenacity in writing the truth, and I for one am proud and honored to call him my good friend.

And finally, I would like to thank my mother and father, Pat and Bill Ritter, and my three sisters, Shirley, Suzanne and Amy, their respective families, and my father-in-law, Bidzina, for all of their continuous and unwavering support. But I especially want to express my appreciation for the love of my wife, Marina, and our two wonderful daughters, Patricia and Victoria. I hope that this book helps explain the many months I was away from home during my time as an inspector, and puts in better perspective who I am and what I stand for.

Delmar, New York
June 2005
Glossary

Ababil-100: An Iraqi short-range missile
ACIS: Arms Control Intelligence Staff, the CIA organization responsible for overseeing intelligence support to UNSCOM in 1991–1992
Air Bag: The SIS covert operation in support of UNSCOM to disrupt Iraqi missile procurement efforts in Romania
Al-Hussein: Iraqi modified SCUD missile capable of ranges of over 500 miles
Al-Nida: Iraqi indigenously produced mobile missile launcher, used with the Al-Hussein missile; required a separate fueling/launch control vehicle to operate
Aman: The Israeli Directorate of Military Intelligence
Amn al-Amm: The Iraqi Directorate for General Security, or DGS, responsible for political security in Iraq
ASARS: Advanced Synthetic Aperture Radar System, a special imaging device that was used on the U-2 aircraft in support of some Olive Branch missions. Can detect moving targets, and distinguish some camouflaged items, can be used at night
C-130: Aircraft designation for a four-engine transport aircraft manufactured by Lockheed, and used by civilian contractors to transport UNSCOM into and out of Iraq from 1997–1999
C-160: Aircraft designation for a two-engine transport aircraft manufactured by a European consortium, and used by the German air force to transport UNSCOM into and out of Iraq from 1991 to 1997
Cabbage Patch Code name for the UNSCOM 61 inspection mission in Iraq, conducted in September–October 1993, which used airborne ground-penetrating radar to detect buried Iraqi missiles

CCT Combat Control Team, US Air Force personnel specially trained in controlling air traffic inside enemy territory

CIA Central Intelligence Agency, the agency within the US Government responsible for overseeing foreign intelligence collection and analysis

CSCI Capable Sites/Concealment Investigations Team, established by order of Executive Chairman Richard Butler on 4 August 1997, this specialized unit within UNSCOM coordinated the most sensitive intelligence and special inspection operations in Iraq

CSPSU Capable Sites Planning Support Unit, the successor unit to the CSCI team, established in June 1998

DAT Digital audio tape, used by the SCE to record Iraqi communications signals

Delta Force The US Army’s elite counter-terrorist unit, formally known as Special Operations Forces Detachment-Delta

DIA Defense Intelligence Agency, the agency within the US Department of Defense responsible for overseeing military intelligence collection and analysis

DIS Defence Intelligence Service, the British Ministry of Defence agency responsible for military intelligence matters

DGS See Amn al-Amm

DMI Directorate of Military Intelligence, the Israeli Defense Force’s intelligence arm

DNA Defense Nuclear Agency, a Department of Defense agency responsible for overseeing nuclear weapons activities, as well as associated arms control projects

DO Directorate of Operations, the CIA’s covert operations directorate

DO/NE Directorate of Operations, Near East Division, the organization inside the Directorate for Operations responsible for the Middle East, including Iraq

DOD Department of Defense

EOD Explosive Ordnance Disposal, special units trained and equipped to make safe unexploded military munitions

FBI Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Justice agency responsible for domestic law enforcement issues, including counter-terrorism and counter-espionage

FCO Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the British equivalent of the United States State Department
Final Curtain  The code name for the CIA/NSA program providing support to the UNSCOM SIGINT activities in Iraq

FIS  Foreign Intelligence Service, the post-Soviet successor to the KGB, responsible for foreign intelligence

FLIR  Forward Looking Infra-Red, a night vision system mounted on helicopters and used by UNSCOM to support night inspection operations

FTG  Foreign Training Group, a unit within the CIA’s Special Activities Staff responsible for coordinating training with UNSCOM

Gateway  The name of the CIA’s analytical and operational planning support center in Bahrain, used in support of UNSCOM operations

GCHQ  The British code breaking service, equivalent to the US Government’s NSA

GPR  Ground-penetrating radar, special devices designed to look underground for buried material. UNSCOM used two types of GPR – airborne and hand held

IAD  International Activities Division, the unit within the CIA’s Directorate for Operations responsible for overseeing international operations, and in which resided the Special Activities Staff paramilitary unit

IAU  Information Assessment Unit, the organization within UNSCOM which oversaw intelligence liaison and information analysis

IAEA  International Atomic Energy Agency. The organization responsible for carrying out the nuclear aspects of implementation of Security Council resolution 687 (1991)

IDF  Israeli Defense Force

INA  The Iraqi National Accord, a joint CIA-SIS sponsored Iraqi opposition group

INC  The Iraqi National Congress, a CIA sponsored Iraqi opposition group

IOG  The Iraq Operations Group, a secret unit inside the CIA tasked with overthrowing Saddam Hussein

ISMTF  Iraq Sanctions Monitoring Task Force, the CIA unit set up to coordinate intelligence support to UNSCOM from 1991 until early 1992

JCS  Joint Chiefs of Staff, the US military joint command structure

JRC  Joint Reconnaissance Center, the US military branch responsible for tasking national imagery collection assets

Mass Appeal  Also known as Operation Mass Appeal, the British MI6 covert operation designed to influence public opinion on issues pertaining to Iraq and WMD

MI6  The British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS)
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MIC</td>
<td>Military Industrial Commission, the Iraqi Ministry responsible for overseeing conventional weapons programs, as well as weapons of mass destruction</td>
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<td>MOD</td>
<td>Ministry of Defence, usually in reference to the British organization</td>
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<td>Mukhabarat</td>
<td>Iraqi Intelligence Service</td>
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<td>NIS</td>
<td>Notification of Inspection Site, the document presented by weapons inspectors to the Iraqi authorities which authorized the inspection of a site designated by geographic coordinates contained in the document</td>
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<td>NMD</td>
<td>National Monitoring Directorate, the Iraqi organization responsible for overseeing compliance by Iraqi industry with Security Council provisions regarding disarmament</td>
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<td>NPC</td>
<td>Non-Proliferation Center, the CIA organization responsible for coordinating intelligence support to UNSCOM from 1992 until 1999</td>
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<td>NSA</td>
<td>National Security Agency, the US Government agency responsible for overseeing all communications and signals intercept operations worldwide</td>
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<td>Olive Branch</td>
<td>The code name for the U-2 surveillance program provided by the US Government to UNSCOM</td>
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<td>OMI</td>
<td>Office of Military Industry, an early name for the Iraqi Military Industrial Commission</td>
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<td>OPC</td>
<td>Operations Planning Cell, the secret planning organization within the CIA that fused military and CIA special operations support</td>
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<td>OSIA</td>
<td>On-Site Inspection Agency, the Department of Defense agency responsible for coordinating US Military support to UNSCOM</td>
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<td>PI</td>
<td>Photographic interpreter, a specialist in analyzing overhead imagery taken from U-2 aircraft, satellites, and other resources</td>
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<td>Project 144</td>
<td>The Iraqi missile conversion program which oversaw the lengthening of SCUD missiles into Al-Hussein missiles</td>
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<td>Resolution 687</td>
<td>Passed in April 1991, the original disarmament resolution of the Security Council regarding Iraq, authorizing the creation of UNSCOM</td>
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<td>Resolution 707</td>
<td>Passed in July 1991, in response to Iraqi obstruction of the work of UNSCOM</td>
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<td>Resolution 715</td>
<td>Passed in October 1991, mandates long-term monitoring and inspection operations in Iraq</td>
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<td>Resolution 1115</td>
<td>Passed in June 1997, condemned Iraqi non-cooperation and established automatic travel sanctions on Iraqi officials should further acts of non-compliance be reported</td>
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Rockingham  Also known as Operation Rockingham, or OP Rockingham, the DIS unit responsible for coordinating intelligence with UNSCOM

SAS (1)  Special Activities Staff, the CIA paramilitary operations unit, responsible for covert operations involving regime change, insurrection, counter-insurgency, etc

SAS (2)  Special Air Service, British or Australian Commando forces, similar to the US Army's Delta Force

SCE  Special Collection Element, the unit within UNSCOM responsible for carrying out sensitive intercept operations against the communications of Iraqi leadership, intelligence and security targets

SCSO  Special Commission Support Office, a Department of State organization responsible for coordinating interagency support within the US Government for UNSCOM

SCUD  NATO designator for the SS-1/R-17 missile, a short-range missile system originally designed for a range of 300 miles, but modified by Iraq, as the ‘Al-Hussein’, for ranges in excess of 500 miles

SIE  Romanian intelligence service

SIGINT  Signals Intelligence, the collection of electronic data/communications, usually covertly, for intelligence purposes

SRC  Space Research Center, an organization within the Scientific Research Council responsible for designing satellites and rocket launch vehicles for Iraqi space programs

SRG  The Special Republican Guard, the military force responsible for the protection of Saddam Hussein

SSO  Special Security Organization, also known as the ‘Amn al-Khass’, this was the senior most security organization in Iraq, responsible for the security of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein

U-2  A high-altitude surveillance aircraft made available by the US Government for use on behalf of UNSCOM

UN  United Nations

Unit 8200  The Israeli Military Intelligence Unit responsible for signals intelligence operations. UNSCOM coordinated with Unit 8200 from 1996 until 1998

UNSCOM  United Nations Special Commission, the organization created by Security Council resolution 687 (1991) to oversee weapons inspections in Iraq

WMD  Weapons of Mass Destruction, as used here, Iraq’s chemical, biological, nuclear and long-range (over 150 kilometers) missile programs