

GulfWire

Perspectives



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A VIEW OF THE UNMOVIC/IAEA BRIEFING TO THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL DR. JOHN DUKE ANTHONY'S INTERVIEW WITH THE BCC

Editor's Note:

Earlier today, BBC World Service interviewed GulfWire Publisher Dr. John Duke Anthony on this morning's United Nations Security Council Meeting to discuss Hans Blix's report on Iraq. Following is an edited and unofficial transcript of the exchange.

BBC: What is your take on the UN Security Council meeting?

DR. JOHN DUKE ANTHONY: The report's completion and submission represents a major point in the evolution of the unfolding crisis with Iraq. Beyond that, it is too early to give a definitive response as to its likely consequences. But one thing is for sure. As with any long-awaited report that has been hyped in advance as much as this one, it will be immediately and extensively picked apart by analysts. Many will comb it looking for additional points in support of their previously arrived at conclusions. They'll also search it for statements and insights that could possibly be used against the arguments of those with a different perspective.

With the President's State of the Union address scheduled for tomorrow night, the likelihood of his making reference to the report is high. If this proves to be the case, exactly what the President may decide to play up, what he may choose to play down, and what he will leave unmentioned that some feel strongly should be highlighted or interpreted differently, remains to be seen.

BBC: But what about your view?

JDA: Not having read the report, I haven't one.

BBC: But, I mean, do you think the United States should go to war against Iraq without a second

authorizing UN Resolution?

JDA: No, I do not.

BBC: Why?

JDA: To be alone abroad militarily is a place one never wants to be. This is especially so when the matter at issue is whether or not to launch a war. In the present case, it is readily apparent that the United States is overwhelmingly alone.

BBC: And why is that?

JDA: It's largely because the Administration has yet to make a persuasive case that a war against Iraq is necessary. And it's also because the United States, in the eyes of so many of its erstwhile friends, allies, and strategic partners, has appeared unwilling to heed some of their fundamental needs, concerns, and interests - even the implications of their different analyses and recommendations as to how best to achieve certain foreign policy objectives relating to Iraq.

The contrast between the current U.S.-led coalition and the two previous ones it assembled and led in the Gulf is glaring. In the 1990-91 coalition [Desert Shield/Desert Storm], 34 countries joined the internationally concerted action to liberate Kuwait and reverse the Iraqi aggression. Additional countries signified that they would join in the event there was a need. In the coalition before that one [Operation Earnest Will], which helped end the Iran-Iraq War, 24 countries stood with us.

That the existing coalition being cobbled together against Iraq has only the United States, Kuwait, and Great Britain as members is revealing. The weakness of the American position is all the more pronounced in light of certain aspects as to why only Kuwait and Great Britain are on board.

Given the fact that Americans died for its liberation 12 years ago, Kuwait has very little, almost no, room in which to maneuver. In effect, its non-involvement is not an option, and everyone knows and understands the reason why.

In the case of Great Britain, it is not so much the country in terms of its people, or even a unified government, that is on board. Rather, it is mainly one official in the person of Prime Minister Blair himself, who, despite fissures within his own party and far larger cleavages within the public at large over this issue, is expressing a measure of solidarity. Otherwise, the level of British support as a whole for the direction in which President Bush appears to be headed is pathetically small.

That the problem for the Bush Administration stems in large measure from the fact that there is almost no one else of consequence lined up in support of his policies and positions regarding the need to use of force against Iraq at this time could hardly be more transparent.

BBC: Do you think this will change?

JDA: It could. Much may depend on whether the President has something new and different to say tomorrow evening.

BBC: Thank you.

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