

REPORT FROM THE SECURITY COUNCIL



Middle East

■ Since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August, the UN Security Council has been engaged in one of its most intense and prolific periods ever. Not since its creation forty-five years ago, have the five major powers and the ten other nations worked with such unanimity within the Council.

The new tone was set at 5 a.m. on 2 August, when the Council voted to condemn the Iraqi invasion. The adoption of Resolution 660, which demanded the unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces, became the foundation for further Council action as Iraq steadfastly refused to heed the demand. It also marked the beginning of almost non-stop diplomatic activity that would continue in the coming months.

On 6 August, the Council adopted Resolution 661, which imposed on Iraq the most sweeping set of mandatory sanctions in the history of the UN. In explaining Canada's support for the measure, ambassador Yves Fortier told the Council that it was necessary to safeguard the rule of law and to deter future aggressors. "We owe this responsibility particularly to the small and vulnerable states such as Kuwait who look to this Council for protection and support," he said.

On 9 August, the Council declared Iraq's annexation of Kuwait "null and void." The vote was unanimous. On 18 August, after Iraq announced that foreign nationals would be treated as "guests" and could not leave the country, the Council again acted unanimously. It adopted Resolution 664 which demanded Iraq "permit and facilitate" the immediate depar-

ture from Kuwait and Iraq of all third-country nationals.

Soon after, the US indicated it planned to "interdict" ships headed for Iraq and Kuwait, a unilateral move strongly opposed by Canada which led a diplomatic offensive in the Council to persuade Washington to act within the authority of the UN. This led to intense negotiations which resulted in Resolution 665. The document, adopted on 25 August with only Cuba and Yemen abstaining, called on States deploying maritime forces in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea area to use "measures commensurate to the specific circumstances" to halt all inward and outward shipping. It also requested the states involved to coordinate their actions using "as appropriate," mechanisms of the Council's Military Staff Committee.

The language was carefully chosen and reflected the desire to accommodate the differing views of the US and the Soviet Union on the role of the Military Staff Committee, a long dormant organ whose original purpose, among other things, was to direct UN military operations.

The Soviet Union wanted to activate the committee by invoking article 42 of the UN Charter, a move successfully resisted by the US. The result was a compromise, which gave a UN blessing to naval interdiction efforts but avoided placing US and other forces under a unified UN command.

Amidst reports that Iraq was depriving third-country nationals of food, the Council adopted Resolution 666 on 13 September. The resolution stated that the Council "expects" Iraq to comply with its obligations and that it was responsible for their safety. It also authorized the sanctions committee created by Resolution 661 to keep the situation regarding foodstuffs under constant review. The document also requested that the sanctions committee pay particular attention to the needs of children under fifteen, expectant mothers, the sick and the elderly with a

view to exempting them from the impact of the UN embargo.

On 16 September, the Council took further action after Iraq entered various diplomatic premises and arrested a number of diplomats and foreign nationals. Resolution 667, adopted unanimously, "strongly condemned" Iraq and demanded that it protect the safety and well-being of diplomatic and consular personnel.

On 25 September, the Council voted 14 to 1 (Cuba) to tighten the embargo against Iraq. At an unusual meeting attended by the foreign ministers of thirteen of the fifteen member countries, the Council elected to ban air transport to and from Iraq or Kuwait. The resolution did not allow for military interdiction of aircraft. Rather, it called on all states to deny overflight permission to any aircraft destined for Iraq or Kuwait unless the aircraft landed at a specified airport for inspection. The resolution further stated that only humanitarian food aid and medical supplies should be allowed to pass.

On 12 October, the Council unanimously adopted a resolution that condemned Israeli actions that resulted in the deaths of over twenty Palestinians four days before (8 October) at the Temple Mount (Al Haraam alShareef) in Jerusalem during clashes with security forces. The resolution was significant in that the US supported the condemnation and the unanimity of the Council was preserved.

Diplomats feared that a US veto or abstention would signal to Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein that the Council was divided. At the same time, a number of non-aligned countries insisted that the Council not be perceived as having a double standard, one for dealing with issues dear to the US and another for issues of concern to Arab nations.

Under the terms of resolution 672, the Secretary General was requested to send a mission to the region and report back by the end

of the month. Israel, however, refused to receive the mission. On 24 October, the Council voted, again unanimously, to deplore the Israeli refusal and urged it to reconsider. Underlying Israel's refusal was a reluctance to grant the UN any role in East Jerusalem, which it considers part of its capital but which the international community considers to be under occupation.

Cambodia

■ On 20 September, in the midst of consideration of further measures against Iraq, the Council unanimously adopted Resolution 668 that welcomed the formation of a Supreme National Council by the parties in the Cambodian conflict. The decision by the warring factions was the result of prolonged efforts by the five permanent members to create a framework for a peaceful solution in Cambodia.

The resolution was viewed by diplomats as a significant step forward in the efforts to end the conflict. Soon afterwards, the UN began planning for a possible operation in Cambodia which would be one of the biggest of its kind with a force that some officials said could be as high as 20,000 military and civilian personnel.

Other Business

■ The Council also managed to attend to some routine matters. On 14 August, it adopted Resolution 663, which recommended that the Principality of Liechtenstein be admitted to membership of the United Nations. Liechtenstein became the 160th member, and in October, the 159th when the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany united.

■ On 27 September, the Council extended the mandate of the Iran-Iraq military group (UNIIMOG) by two months, to 30 November. Diplomats predict the group will eventually be dismantled as a result of Iraq's decision to settle its dispute with Iran. □

— TREVOR ROWE