

IAEA safeguards provide assurance to countries of their neighbors' peaceful intentions. However, the recent discovery of Iraq's nearly successful efforts to develop nuclear weapons has raised questions about the effectiveness of IAEA inspections associated with the NPT. During the period in which Iraq acquired equipment and components associated with its nuclear weapons program from outside suppliers, IAEA inspections neither uncovered the signs of Iraq's program nor did the inspections detect its use of calutrons and its misuse of a safeguarded research reactor. It should also be noted that intelligence bodies in the United States, Canada, and other signatories to the NPT were not aware of the true nature, scope, and development status of the Iraqi nuclear weapons program before the end of the War in the Gulf, and they only became aware of the true scope after the UNSCOM/IAEA inspections.

In 1995, the NPT parties will decide by a majority vote "whether the Treaty shall continue in force indefinitely, or shall be extended for an additional fixed period or periods." Prospects for a long-term extension depend upon arguments that the NPT is meeting its goals. It can be argued that two of the goals — to foster peaceful use of nuclear energy and to encourage nuclear arms control and disarmament — are being met. The third goal — to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons — will inevitably be evaluated in the light of activities in countries such as Iraq, North Korea, India, Pakistan, and Israel, and the sales of nuclear reactors and advanced delivery systems by China. A clear benefit of keeping the NPT in force indefinitely is that it establishes a norm, a standard of international behavior, backed up by a legal process, which leads countries to renounce the right to acquire nuclear weapons. The existence of the NPT has been essential to the efforts to bind three non-Russian republics of the former Soviet Union to adherence to a non-nuclear-weapon status. Because most signatories take this obligation seriously, the NPT is a source of international stability. Moreover, the legal foundation for global nuclear export controls resides in the

NPT. NPT safeguards and inspections are the guarantee of this process, and they should be strengthened.

New steps must be taken to strengthen the IAEA's effectiveness in monitoring compliance with the NPT. These should include support of the IAEA's right to request special inspections at undeclared sites or locations. These suspect site inspections (SSIs) would not necessarily detect cheating, but they would make cheating more difficult and costly. The right to request SSIs would deter non-compliance, because a refusal to grant access would provide a clear signal of suspect illegal activities and would lead to the focusing of other collection assets on the activity or site. Thus, even though the SSI regime would not detect a violation, its existence could trigger a synergistic effect when it was combined with other collection methods.

Other changes need to be considered. For example, NPT parties could be required to declare and provide design information on projected nuclear facilities to the IAEA sooner than is presently the case. Timely reports to the IAEA about all nuclear-related sales and export denials by all IAEA members would also improve nuclear transparency. More extensive reporting to the IAEA on nuclear exports in general could also help establish a vital component of an early warning system — a system whose effectiveness would in large measure depend upon the synergistic effects among several monitoring methods and data exchanges. A return to the country officer approach might permit IAEA inspectors to serve as central points for the reception and evaluation of information relevant to a specific country.

Strong support by the UN Security Council of NPT goals is also essential. The Security Council needs to bring its considerable authority to bear upon potential violators of the NPT. The Council could declare that any violation of IAEA safeguards, the NPT, or any other legally-binding nuclear non-proliferation obligation would be considered a threat to peace and would require consideration of strong sanctions.

