

Hans Blix: US Government Disrespects United Nations

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Former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency Hans Blix in a phone call interview with Neday Enghelab discussed his views on the current Syrian situations and the odds that the US might launch a military attack on the country.

Neday Enghelab: What is the use of the inspection teams if they [the US] do not have enough time to listen to the reports?

Blix: Yes. I think there's a certain amount of disrespect for the United Nations and for mechanisms that are set up by consensus in the Security Council. That is to regret. Though, I think that the whole world will be interested in hearing all the inspectors in Syria have found out. I think it will also be interesting for the world to hear the evidence of the United States. It may be quite interesting, but of course it is one of the factors and we have more confidence in impartial international evidence. Nevertheless, US evidence is also of value and of course they will look also into the question who has in fact used chemical weapons. The inspectors do not have a mandate looking at who has used the weapons. So, both should be on the table of the Security Council.

Neday Enghelab: Do you think the experts' report can be relied on or is it going to be influenced by the US?

Blix: No, I don't think it's going to be influenced by the Americans. I think that the group that is being appointed by the Secretary General and assistants of the Chemical Weapons Organization, this is a group of impartial inspectors. Actually the inspectors I had in UNMOVIC the only leaning stone is to be absolutely professional and impartial.

Neday Enghelab: Do you think if they say the report is against the will of the United States and allies, the United States will respect the report?

Blix: I hope so. I mean I think they very well ought to do so. And I think the world will have a great deal of confidence in the report that comes from the UN. And after the case of Iraq I think there is a certain suspicion against intelligence that comes from member states. I heard that among the evidence are intercepted telephone calls. Well, in the case of Iraq Mr. Colin Powell also recited intercepted telephone calls and they were evidence but not reliable to see they were. So I think there are good reasons to wait for the report of the UN inspectors.

Neday Enghelab: Mr. Panetta, the former Secretary of Defense of the US has said in an

interview with NBC that the US had been ready to attack Syria one month before the chemical attack happened. So it means that they were prepared to attack Syria before the chemical attack and they needed an excuse. Do you think the same?

Blix: No, I don't think that they were looking for an excuse. I think they feel rather uncomfortable in seeing a political need to threaten an attack, because they do not really want to intervene substantially in the civil war. They do not like the establishment, to be sure, that they and many others in the West are regarded as oppressive, but at the same time they are worried that Assad could be replaced by a more fundamentalist regime which perhaps would be even less conciliable vis-à-vis Israel than the Assad regime. I don't think they were looking for an excuse to attack Syria at all. The inspectors who were sent to Damascus to investigate earlier allegations or accusations of the use of chemical weapons even as far back as the attacks in March, I think. So that was the original part of the mission which the Assad regime had accepted; and then came this attack in Damascus which now is being investigated.

Nedaye Enghelab: Do you think that the United States will attack Syria, even a short attack, in the near future or not?

Blix: Well, through the action by Obama to go to Congress there is established a time [...] and I think that time should be used for contemplations and discussions under the security councils, and with Russia in particular; but also with Iran and other countries in the region. I think that in the US certainly the indignation of the use of chemical weapons is one reason for their wish to threaten the Assad regime. But I think it's also much about the credibility of the president. He said that if Assad would use chemical weapons that would be a red line; and I think many on the opposition side think to themselves "well, that's good. If chemical weapons are used then the US will intervene on our side." Well we don't know to what extent did it happen. But I think the other credibility question is perhaps even more important. I think that they may feel that if they don't shoot at Syria then it will be also to lose the credibility of the threats that they make vis-à-vis Iran.

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