

May 19, 2004

His Excellency Kofi A. Annan  
Secretary-General  
The United Nations Secretariat  
One United Nations Plaza  
New York, New York 10017

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

Permit me to express my deep concern about the conclusions contained in a reputed U.N. internal audit regarding the Oil for Food program that surfaced today in various media reports. Earlier today, I forwarded the document to investigators with the U.S. General Accounting Office to determine its authenticity. Your assistance in confirming the document's authenticity and accuracy would be greatly appreciated. A copy of the document is attached for your review.

I am grateful for the work of journalists reporting on allegations of corruption in the Oil for Food program. However, the U.S. Congress -- which provides 22 percent of the UN's budget and which has publicly requested copies of the 55 internal audits -- should not be required to depend on media leaks for source documents.

In particular, I am concerned about the reputed audit's conclusion that a principle U.N. contractor, Cotecna, which provided vital inspection services for the program, maintained lower than required staff levels in Iraq, overcharged the U.N., and failed to provide 24 hour/7 day a week inspection services as required under its contract with the U.N. I am further concerned about the audit's conclusion that despite repeated warnings, the U.N. Office of Iraq Programs did nothing to correct these oversights. If the document is valid, the criticism by the U.N.'s own internal auditors pose serious questions about the operation of the Oil for Food Program, the work of contractors, and the U.N. Secretariat's failure to supervise the program.

The nature of the allegations against the U.N., and the urgency of getting to the truth, requires that all 55 internal audits be released immediately to the U.S. Department of State for review. This is fully within your authority to do and consistent with the terms of the Volcker inquiry.

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With best wishes, I remain

Sincerely,

HENRY J. HYDE  
Chairman