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INLEIDING

In deze aflevering van Facts and Reports vindt u de ontwikkelingen omtrent de crisis rond Irak sinds het uitkomen van Facts and Reports nr. 21. De artikelen en documenten richten zich voornamelijk op de ontwikkelingen rond een tweede Veiligheidsraadresolutie en reacties van de Nederlandse regering en andere landen daarop. Daarnaast komt de verdere aanloop naar de oorlog aan de orde.

Vanwege tijdgebrek ontbreekt deze keer het hoofdstuk 'commentaar en vragen'. In het volgende nummer zal in dat hoofdstuk ook de inhoud van deze brochure worden meegenomen.

Redactie Facts and Reports

LAATSTE ONTWIKKELINGEN ROND IRAK

Verenigde Naties

Press conference Secretary-General Kofi Annan

The Hague, 10 March 2003

[...] Let me start by repeating something which must be obvious: all peoples today feel the threat of weapons of mass destruction. It is an issue of the utmost gravity – by no means confined to Iraq. The whole international community needs to act together to curb the proliferation of these terrible weapons, wherever it is happening.

The determination of the Security Council to disarm Iraq of such weapons is the most urgent issue – because Iraq has actually used such weapons in the past, and because it has twice committed aggression against its neighbours. That is why the Security Council, ever since 1991, has passed successive resolutions requiring Iraq to disarm. On this critical question, there are no divisions, no grounds for doubt, dispute or delay.

All around the globe, people want to see this crisis resolved peacefully. There is widespread concern about the long-term consequences of war in Iraq for the fight against terrorism; for the Middle East peace process; and for the world's ability to address common concerns in the future if deep divisions are sowed today between nations and between peoples of different religions.

Indeed, one must have no illusions about what war means. In certain circumstances the use of force may be necessary to secure a lasting peace. But the reality is that it would cause great human suffering, whether it is long or short; that it may lead to regional instability and economic crises; and it can – as it often has before – lead to unintended consequences producing new threats and new dangers.

War must always be a last resort – arrived at only if and when every reasonable avenue of achieving Iraq's disarmament by peaceful means has been exhausted. The United Nations – founded to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war – has a duty to search till the very end for the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The members of the Security Council now face a great choice. If they fail to agree on a common position, and action is taken without the authority of the Security Council, the legitimacy and support for any such action will be seriously impaired. If, on the other hand, they can come together, even at this late hour, to address this threat in a united manner and ensure compliance with their previous resolutions, then the Council's authority will be enhanced, and the world will be a safer place.

Indeed, Iraq does not exist in a vacuum. What happens there will have profound implications – for better or worse – for other issues of great importance to the surrounding region, and to the world. The broader the consensus on Iraq, the better the chance that we can come together again and deal effectively with other burning conflicts in the world, starting with the one between Israelis and Palestinians. Only a just resolution of that conflict can bring real hope of lasting stability in the region.

Even beyond the Middle East, the success or failure of the international community in dealing with Iraq will crucially affect its ability to deal with the serious situation developing on the Korean Peninsula – not to mention the conflicts which are causing such terrible suffering in Africa, and setting back the prospects for stability and development, from Côte d'Ivoire to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

And there are many other scourges that the world has to face, besides war. Whether they are protecting themselves against terrorism or struggling against the grim triad of poverty, ignorance and disease, States need to work together, and they can do so through the United Nations. However this conflict is resolved, the United Nations will remain as important as it is today.

We have seen in recent months what an immense significance States and peoples around the world attach to the legitimacy provided by the United Nations Security Council, and by the United Nations, as the common framework for securing the peace. As they approach their grave decision, I must solemnly urge all members of the Security Council to keep this in mind, and to be worthy of the trust in them that the world's peoples have shown.

Thank you very much.

I will now take your questions.

Question: Mr. Secretary-General, as you know there does not appear to be much unity on the Council. The Russian Foreign Minister today said he would veto a resolution. How badly damaged would the Security Council, as an institution, be by this lack of unity?

Answer: I think obviously there are divisions and this is why they need to come together and seek a compromise and work together. It may be late or it may still be possible but one has to try and I will say that the Council has been divided before and yet has managed to come together and find a common basis for moving forward. We saw this when we were discussing resolution 1441. Many thought it would not be possible that the Council could not come together. I think with good will and determination and a real focus we should be able to resolve this one as well. But if we are not able to resolve it, as I have indicated, whichever way this conflict is resolved, we must be clear.

The United Nations will be important and [it] will have important roles to play, regardless of how this issue is resolved. We went through this with regard to Kosovo where action was taken outside of the Council and yet those who took action had to return to the Council to be able to deal with the aftermath. Here it is not just dealing with the aftermath of Iraq but also with all the broader issues that I have referred to and I hope that the Council members will be able to come together and deal with the burning issues of the day.

[...]

Question: Mr. Secretary-General, you said that an attack on Iraq without a second Council resolution would not be legitimate. Would you consider it as a breach of the UN Charter?

Answer: I think that under today's world order, the Charter is very clear on circumstances under which force can be used. I think the discussion going on in the Council is to ensure that the Security Council, which is master of its own deliberations, is able to pronounce itself on what happens. If the US and others were to go outside the Council and take military action it would not be in conformity with the Charter. [...]

New York Times

Annan Says U.S. Will Violate Charter if It Acts Without Approval

By Patrick E. Tyler and Felicity Barringer

UNITED NATIONS, March 10 — Secretary General Kofi Annan warned today that if the United States fails to win approval from the Security Council for an attack on Iraq, Washington's decision to act alone or outside the Council would violate the United Nations charter.

"The members of the Security Council now face a great choice," Mr. Annan said in The Hague, where he was trying to broker a United Nations deal on Cyprus. "If they fail to agree on a common position and action is taken without the authority of the Security Council, the legitimacy and support for any such action will be seriously impaired."

Mr. Annan's remarks drew a sharp response from Washington, where the Bush administration, like its allies overseas, was engaged in a strong lobbying effort to win the necessary nine votes to pass a resolution this week authorizing war.

The White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said in a strongly worded retort that "from a moral point of view," if the United Nations fails to support the Bush administration's war aims, it will have "failed to act once again," as it did in Kosovo in the face of persecution of the ethnic Albanians by Serbia and earlier in Rwanda in the face of widespread massacres by Hutus against Tutsis.

Some international legal experts also took issue with Mr. Annan's assertions, arguing that the United States and its coalition partners who ejected Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1991 retained the legal authority to take additional action against Baghdad for its failures to live up to the United Nations resolutions that authorized that Persian Gulf war.

Others said that President Bush has nonetheless muddied the legal picture by returning to the Security Council now for a final resolution authorizing war. In this circumstance, they said, it is difficult for Mr. Bush and the international community to ignore a negative vote by the Security Council or a veto by one of its permanent members.

"I just disagree with the secretary general's legal view because there are fundamental Security Council resolutions that underlie this," said Ruth Wedgewood, professor of international law at Johns Hopkins University.

Richard N. Gardner, professor of international law at Columbia University, said that since Saddam Hussein has repeatedly violated the conditions of the 1991 cease-fire, "the United States and other countries revert to their rights to restore peace and security in the area" under the resolution authorizing that war, passed in 1990.

Mr. Annan, whose trip to The Hague also includes presiding over the investiture of the International Criminal Court, which has been opposed by Washington, insisted that "the United Nations — founded to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war — has a duty to search until the very end for the peaceful resolution of conflicts."

Responding to a question on the United Nations Charter, Mr. Annan said the charter is "very clear on circumstances under which force can be used.

"If the U.S. and others were to go outside the Council and take military action, it would not be in conformity with the charter," he said.

United Nations officials said Mr. Annan planned his remarks today to signal to Washington that it needed to consider a compromise that would draw more support on the 15-member Council.

Lawyers here scrambled to support Mr. Annan's remarks, pointing to Chapter 1 of the charter, which says that all members should refrain from the use of force in international relations. Those lawyers also argued that America's new doctrine to make pre-emptive strikes against perceived threats does not conform with Chapter 7, which recognizes the "right of individual or collective" self-defense.

Referring to Mr. Annan, William H. Luers, a former American diplomat who heads the United Nations Association, said, "His job is to defend the U.N. Charter" because it "best defines how nations should behave when it comes to the use of force."

Professor Wedgewood said that even if the United States loses the final vote and proceeds to war, "the failure of this particular resolution" does "not obviate the prior ones," especially since the prior resolutions gave Washington and its allies authority to disarm Iraq for the sake of the peace and security of the region.

The main point, she said, "is that we've been there before." She cited the case of Kosovo, when the Clinton administration bypassed the Security Council — where Russia was threatening to veto any military action — and used NATO as its instrument to lead the bombing of Yugoslavia.

Professor Gardner agreed that the authority existed in previous resolutions and said he was confident as an international lawyer that Mr. Bush has the authority he needs, "but we are now in a situation where there are certain ambiguities."

He continued, "I am very uneasy about going to war at this stage without authority from the Council" because the Council is divided on the question of whether all efforts by the United Nations weapons inspectors to disarm Iraq peacefully have been exhausted.

At the same time, Professor Gardner said that Mr. Bush had engendered a great deal of confusion by asserting American rights under a new national security doctrine of pre-emptive attack.

"Of course this sounds good," he said. "But it leaves us in a world where every country is self-judging what it does, and that leads to world anarchy. Hitler used national security when he invaded Czechoslovakia, and Russia did the same in its aggressions. I am not one of these purists on this subject, but the search for legitimacy has to be taken seriously."

New York Times

Japan Says It Will Back the U.S. Resolution on Iraq

By Howard W. French – 10 March 2003

Tokyo - Japan's statement on Saturday that it would support a new United Nations resolution on Iraq sought by the United States came after weeks of fence-sitting, marked by almost no public debate on the issue.

"Japan supports the proposed resolution as something that will mark the final step of the global community's effort to pressure Iraq to disarm on its own," Yoriko Kawaguchi, Japan's foreign minister, said in the statement.

Ms. Kawaguchi's announcement came two days after a strongly worded criticism of the government's failure to discuss publicly its position on the Iraq crisis issued by her predecessor, Makiko Tanaka, who said that Japan should do more to avoid war. The decision also coincided with the first large antiwar protests, involving an officially estimated 14,000 demonstrators, who marched through the central city.

"Japan should not hesitate to deliver a clear message to the United States: exercise patience to avoid war," Ms. Tanaka, wrote in an op-ed column in The Japan Times. "But Japan's government also must stop prevaricating with the Japanese people. It should welcome and encourage debate about Japan's defense posture without fearing that the United States-Japan friendship is so fragile that it will be destroyed."

For all their bluntness, however, Ms. Tanaka's comments produced hardly a public echo here. The column appeared only in The Times, a small English-language newspaper, which took the unusual step of omitting it from its Web site and database. Although Ms. Tanaka is one of Japan's best-known politicians, her criticisms of the government she once served — and, implicitly, of the United States — received no news coverage.

Most recent public opinion surveys here indicate that over 80 percent of the population is opposed to war with Iraq. But before Ms. Tanaka's editorial and Saturday's march, Japan had been virtually alone among major American allies in avoiding heated public debate over the threatened American action against Iraq.

The government has bent over backward to accommodate the United States during the war in Afghanistan, by reinterpreting constitutional law to allow the dispatch of warships to the Indian Ocean, where they helped refuel American vessels and patrol sea lanes. Until Saturday, however, senior officials had carefully dodged questions about Japan's support of the United States in the event of an attack on Iraq, and neither the mainstream press nor the Parliament has been persistent in asking.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, whose normal speaking style is so elliptical it has spawned countless parodies, said last week that "if political decisions are made based on public opinion, mistakes may be made."

Few here doubted that in the end, Japan would obligingly support American policy toward Iraq, as it almost always does on almost every major question of international relations. But even among those who support the need to exert pressure on Iraq, many say that the lack of public discussion among officials reveals a foreign policy that has atrophied and a political culture that lacks oxygen.

A cartoon in *Shukan Asahi*, a popular weekly magazine, captured that thought last week with an image of President Bush twirling Mr. Koizumi on his finger like a propeller.

"Why can't the Japanese government express any opinion other than support?" said Soichiro Tawara, the host of Japanese television's most important political discussion program, *Sunday Project*, who was quoted in the accompanying *Shukan Asahi* article. "Frankly speaking, most of the harsh criticism toward the government or toward America is empty, given Japan's excessive dependence on the United States. What must we do in order to make our own choices?"

For younger Japanese, it is tempting to assume that Japan has always been this way, snug and relatively unquestioning in its relationship with the United States. "In one way, I think that democracy has not taken root in Japan yet," said Takashi Uchiyama, a leader of Saturday's march. "It seems like, since the Middle Ages, we have been stuck with a system where things must be decided by the gods."

Older Japanese still have direct memories of an era of far more vigorous politics, when virtually nothing of importance here was decided without discussion, and the partnership with the United States, in particular, generated intense debate.

In a famous incident in 1960, during heated and prolonged debate over a new security treaty between the United States and Japan, President Dwight D. Eisenhower's press secretary had to scramble aboard a helicopter to escape angry protesters.

In contrast, Ms. Tanaka was hounded out of the government last year by powerful bureaucrats, in part for comments in which she called for a review of the alliance with the United States. Undiscouraged, but largely unheard, she returned to that theme in the op-ed column.

"If Japan is a real good friend of the U.S., Japan should be able to express its opinions to the U.S.," she said in an interview. "Japan needs the U.S. but the U.S. also needs Japan. That's the meaning of alliance."

But in the governing Liberal Democratic Party, she added, "conservative politicians seem to still think Japan should accept whatever the U.S. says as it has been doing all these years, and if there is some problem about the alliance, Japan can solve it by paying money."

Chinese Daily

China opposes new UN resolution on Iraq

10 March 2003

United Nations: Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan said on Friday that China is opposed to introducing a new UN resolution on Iraq, "particularly one that authorizes force."

Tang, who came to New York on Thursday for the UN Security Council meeting on the Iraq issue scheduled for Friday, made the remarks during talks with US Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Tang also met separately with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin and British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw on Friday to exchange views on the Iraq issue.

Tang said at his meeting with Powell that he saw no reason to shut the door to peace at this moment. The Chinese Government is not in favour of a new resolution, particularly one authorizing the use of force against Iraq, he added.

Tang said the international community is now extremely concerned over the Iraq issue.

Therefore, the settlement of the issue should not only serve the target of destruction of weapons of mass destruction, but also the cause of safeguarding world peace and development and upholding the authority of the UN Security Council, said the Chinese foreign minister.

To resort to the use of force is not a good option for solving any problem, he said, adding that a war would only produce a catastrophic humanitarian disaster and economic turmoil.

He cautioned that a possible war against Iraq would also cause many other new issues. "The challenges facing the world are too many and efforts should be made to avert the emergence of new man-made issues."

Tang stressed that the UN Security Council Resolution 1441 approved last November is a result of unity and co-operation by all member countries. And the weapons inspection process based on the resolution should in no way be left unfinished.

For his part, Powell reiterated the US position on the Iraq issue, saying that the United States understood China's point of view on the matter.

Ivanov spoke highly of the co-operation between Russia and China, saying he was convinced that there is still the possibility of solving the Iraq issue peacefully.

He stressed that there is no need for the Security Council to adopt any new resolution authorizing the use of force and it is unwise to attempt to solve the issue by war. He said Russia is ready to work together with other countries for a political solution of the Iraq issue within the framework of the United Nations.

Villepin expressed appreciation for China's support to the memorandum and foreign ministers' joint statement of the three countries. He said France was opposed to a new Security Council resolution authorizing use of force since arms inspections in Iraq were making headway.

Straw expressed understanding of China's position and said Britain is willing to maintain contact with the Chinese side on the issue.

US State Department

Security Council Vote Pushed to Later in the Week

By Judy Aita - Washington File U.N. Correspondent

10 March 2003

United Nations -- The United States will not ask the U.N. Security Council to vote on its draft resolution on Iraq until later in the week, U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte said March 10.

On his way to a private council meeting, Negroponte said "I think it is highly unlikely that we'll have a vote on the resolution tomorrow (March 11). What I intend to suggest to the other delegates ... that we be prepared to vote on the resolution sometime later this week, but not tomorrow."

U.K. Ambassador Jeremy Greenstock, whose government co-sponsored the resolution along with the United States and Spain, echoed his colleague's sentiment and said that the co-sponsors are working to forge majority support for the draft resolution.

The three sponsors have amended the draft resolution they originally put forward in late February. The amendment would set a March 17 deadline for Iraq to comply with Security Council disarmament demands. France, China and Russia, permanent members of the council with veto power, say they do not accept the compromise.

The draft currently says that "Iraq will have failed to take the final opportunity afforded by resolution 1441 unless on or before March 17, 2003, the council concludes that Iraq has demonstrated full, unconditional, immediate and active cooperation with its disarmament obligations."

Six non-permanent members of the council, which are undecided on the draft resolution, have urged the permanent members to compromise and are working to that end. They are drafting their own amendment that would change the deadline and include timelines for the completion of each disarmament requirement.

The undecided members are Angola, Cameroon, Chile, Guinea, Mexico, and Pakistan.

Greenstock said that the resolution's co-sponsors are "working very hard to see if there are proposals and continue to try and create a majority in the council for a way forward."

Greenstock said that the United Kingdom delegation has "nothing to add to draft resolution, no instruction to suggest any changes."

Negroponte said that U.S. officials are "still working to try to forge the necessary support for the draft resolution."

"The most important point that I can make is that we remain convinced that Iraq is not in compliance with its obligations under [Security Council Resolution] 1441 and that if it fails to disarm peacefully it will have to be disarmed by force. That is the essence of our position," the U.S. ambassador said.

Negroponte said that he is also going to bring up the issue of Iraqi experiments with unmanned drones with a range in excess of 150 kilometers.

The Iraqi activities were revealed in a new report being prepared by the U.N. weapons inspectors on 29 "clusters" of unresolved Iraqi disarmament issues in the fields of chemical and biological weapons and missiles. Hans Blix, executive director of the U.N. Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission

(UNMOVIC), gave council members a first accounting of the 29 sets of issues in a report of over 150 pages on March 7. The weapons inspectors are required to present a report for the council by the end of March on the issues, how they will be handled, and when those disarmament tasks could be completed.

Negroponte pointed out that "paragraph 3 of resolution 1441 states very clearly that Iraq has an obligation to declare various types of vehicles and aircraft and so forth, including unmanned aerial vehicles of all types. The fact that this was not initially declared is another example of Iraq's failure to have told the truth with respect to its holdings when it submitted its declaration on the 7th of December."

"In addition, it would appear that this unmanned aerial vehicle that was discovered would have the kind of characteristics that would be of great concern -- a capacity to fly beyond 150 kilometers and configuration which suggests that it would be entirely capable of carrying chemical and biological weapons," he said.

"When Secretary (of State Colin) Powell briefed the council on the 5th of February he pointed to the fact Iraq had experimented and actually taken one of these vehicles on a 500 km trajectory," Negroponte said.

"So we think this is a matter of serious concern."

New York Times

Pakistan to Abstain From U.N. Iraq Vote

By the Associated Press - 11 March 2003

Islamabad, Pakistan (AP) -- Pakistan will abstain from voting in the U.N. Security Council on a U.S.-backed resolution approving war with Iraq, a spokesman for the ruling party said Tuesday.

Pakistan holds one of 15 seats at the council. At least nine countries must approve the measure for it to pass. Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali is scheduled to give a speech Tuesday to brief the nation on the issue.

"Pakistan will abstain from the voting" at the Security Council, said Azeem Chaudhry, a spokesman for the Quaid-e-Azam faction of Pakistan Muslim League. "We will not be giving our opinion" in the council, he said.

Jamali said Monday that Pakistan would not support a war against Iraq. Chaudhry explained that the prime minister was referring to an abstention at the United Nations vote, not an outright 'no' vote.

"When he (Jamali) said Pakistan will not back war on Iraq that means we will abstain," Chaudhry said. "We want a peaceful resolution of the issue."

On Monday, before a raucous session of the National Assembly, or lower house of parliament, Jamali said Pakistan would not back the war.

"We will do what is best for our country," Jamali said Monday. "It is not best for my country to support war against Iraq."

Anti-U.S. Islamic hard-liners have drawn hundreds of thousands of people in demonstrations against a possible U.S. war on Iraq in recent weeks and have called on the government to use its vote against America.

Pakistan is a key ally of the United States in the war on terrorism, but its citizens are overwhelmingly opposed to a U.S. attack on Iraq.

Moscow Times

Ivanov Says Russia Will Veto Resolution

11 March 2003

Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov took Russia's opposition to war against Iraq a step further Monday and said flatly that Russia would vote against the proposed new U.S.-British resolution.

"Russia believes that no further resolutions of the UN Security Council are necessary and therefore Russia openly declares that if the draft that has been submitted for consideration, and which contains unfulfillable ultimatum-type demands, is put to a vote, Russia will vote against this resolution," Ivanov said.

He did not use the word "veto," but a Foreign Ministry spokesman confirmed that he meant exactly that.

But Ivanov's comments seemed directed at the present wording of the draft. The United States and Britain have indicated they were willing to consider amending the text, and by emphasizing that Russia's objections related to the resolution in its current form, Ivanov left considerable room for Russia to change course.

French President Jacques Chirac, speaking later Monday in a televised address, backed up Ivanov by saying France also would vote against the resolution.

However, Chirac indicated the veto might not be needed. "Tonight this resolution, which carries an ultimatum ... does not have a majority of nine votes," he said.

Asked whether he believed that voting against the resolution would seriously damage relations with the United States, Chirac said, "I am totally convinced of the opposite."

President Vladimir Putin so far has played his cards close to his chest.

In other disagreements with the United States -- such as NATO expansion and U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty -- Ivanov has espoused harder positions than those ultimately adopted by Putin.

As the diplomacy intensified, Putin returned from a weekend retreat in the Black Sea resort of Sochi to hold a closed-door meeting with his closest aides. The Kremlin would not comment on whether Putin discussed Russia's strategy in the Iraq crisis during the meeting, which in addition to Ivanov was attended by Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov, Kremlin chief of staff Alexander Voloshin, Security Council chief Vladimir Rushailo, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, Interior Minister Boris Gryzlov and FSB head Nikolai Patrushev.

Putin's press secretary Alexei Gromov was quoted by Interfax as saying the meeting at Putin's country estate in Novo-Ogaryovo was held to discuss various questions of domestic and foreign policy.

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said U.S. President George W. Bush would "indeed be disappointed" if Russia were to veto. "The president would look at this as a missed opportunity for Russia to take an important moral stand to defend freedom and to prevent the risk of a missed catastrophe taking place as a result of Saddam Hussein's development of weapons of mass destruction," Fleischer said Monday.

Speaking Sunday on NTV's "Vliyaniye" program, Deputy Foreign Minister Yury Fedotov said Russia does not believe the disagreement with the United States has to hinder the future development of the relationship. "We have too many common interests in the world," Fedotov said, citing strategic weapons, Afghanistan and the Middle East. "We are striving to find a common language with the United States, England and other countries. We have never tried to inflame the conflict."

U.S. Ambassador to Russia Alexander Vershbow, who was also a guest on the NTV program, reiterated the U.S. position that Iraq continues to mislead the United Nations, but he insisted that a chance still exists to disarm Iraq without going to war.

Putin spoke late Sunday with Chirac and on Monday with German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Yakovenko said Putin was still undecided on whether to go to New York for the vote, following a call by Chirac for heads of state to attend.

Ivanov, speaking during an appearance at Moscow State Linguistics University, his alma mater, said UN weapons inspectors needed several more months to finish their work in Iraq.

"Today we have a real possibility to answer the outstanding questions and do so not within years but within months. This way is real, reliable and it allows us to resolve the problem through political means and defuse the Iraqi crisis," he said.

The Bush administration, struggling to find support in the Security Council, has emphasized that it is prepared to go to war without a new UN resolution.

Ivanov, in a television interview Friday in New York, warned the United States that Russia would consider a unilateral attack against Baghdad a mistake and a violation of the UN charter. Ivanov added that while he hoped it would not come to that, Washington seemed headed for "exactly that scenario."

The speaker of the State Duma, Gennady Seleznyov, meanwhile, met with Saddam Hussein in Baghdad on Monday and took with him a message from Putin, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. The statement said Putin's message was aimed at confirming Russia's position on regulating the Iraq crisis, and said Seleznyov had traveled there on Hussein's invitation. No further details were given.

Before the meeting, however, Seleznyov told Russian television he believed there was still a chance for a political resolution to the crisis. "There is still a chance to use the resolution that has already been passed. We need to continue realizing the measures laid out in this resolution and not pass any new documents that would open the way for war," he said, Interfax reported.

Ivanov was headed to Iran on Tuesday for talks during which "special attention" will be given to the Iraq crisis, his ministry said. After Iran, Ivanov is to visit Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

"Russia and Iran speak out firmly against a military scenario for the development of events in the Persian Gulf and for the settlement of the Iraq crisis through political and diplomatic means," Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Yakovenko said in a statement.

Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov arrived in Iran on Monday for a two-day state visit, state-run Tehran radio reported. It was unclear whether he would meet with Ivanov while in Iran.

All three countries have oil and gas interests in the Caspian Sea.

The most influential energy ministers in the world, U.S. Energy Minister Spencer Abraham and Saudi Arabia's oil minister, Ali al Naimi, are headed for Moscow on Wednesday for visits that are bound to include talks on a future shake-up of oil production following war in Iraq.

The U.S. Embassy would not comment Monday on whether Abraham was due to discuss Iraq-related oil issues with his Russian counterpart Igor Yusufov in a meeting scheduled for Wednesday. A diplomatic source told Interfax Monday that al Naimi would discuss with Yusufov cooperation on energy strategy "taking into account the disturbing situation being created over Iraq."

Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin said Russian has prepared itself for war by making sure its economy was shored up against a possible drop in the oil price.

"Russia's economy is ready for this. The budget and central bank reserves will allow us to smooth over any serious changes that could impact the Russia economy. We are ready for this. We prepared for all possible scenarios. We are not afraid of this war," he said in an interview on Rossia television Sunday evening, Interfax reported.

(AP, Reuters, MT)

New York Times

Chile Feels the Weight of Its Security Council Seat

By Larry Rohter – 11 March 2003

Brasília — From the moment it joined the United Nations Security Council on Jan. 1, Chile has followed a strategy of trying to stay out of the line of fire on the Iraq crisis, hoping that the five permanent members can reach a compromise that would spare smaller nations from having to take sides.

But with that outcome now unlikely, President Ricardo Lagos finds himself pressed by the United States on one side and by deepening domestic opposition to any war on the other.

Over the weekend, Mr. Lagos described Chile's position as "equidistant" between the United States and France. While indicating that Chile would not oppose military action against Iraq under certain circumstances, he argued that a March 17 deadline was too soon and that "more clarity" was needed in defining what missiles and chemical weapons Iraq needed to destroy.

"The destruction of the weapons could take two, three or four months," said Mr. Lagos, the first Socialist to govern Chile since Salvador Allende was overthrown in an American-supported coup in 1973. He made the remark in a local radio interview on Saturday. If Saddam Hussein complies with those conditions, "then it is possible to avoid war," he said.

Polls indicate there is virtually no sympathy in Chile or elsewhere in Latin America for the United States' stance. But influential figures like Juan Gabriel Valdés, a former foreign minister of Chile who is currently president of the Chilean Senate's Foreign Relations Commission, have also sharply criticized the way the Bush administration has been lobbying the Lagos government.

Chile is willing to be "a partner, but not a lackey," Mr. Valdés, who is also the father of Chile's ambassador to the United Nations, said in a radio interview early this month. "Talking with the U.S. is like talking to an elephant. It is a big, heavyweight country, generally with bad manners, and it considers Latin America to be its backyard."

President Bush has called Mr. Lagos several times in recent weeks, Chilean officials said. In addition, the White House sent a special envoy, a move that appears to have backfired.

Chile is in a delicate position because it signed a free trade agreement in December with the United States. The treaty has not been ratified by the United States Congress, though.

Reports that Chilean opposition on Iraq would jeopardize the treaty have appeared frequently in the Chilean press this month. In his Saturday radio interview, Mr. Lagos sought to rebut the notion that the Bush administration would exact retribution.

"The free trade treaty is not a present that the United States is giving to Chile or that Chile is giving to the United States," he said. "It has been done because it is to the benefit of both countries. Therefore, to link these two things is profoundly mistaken."

But economic growth has slowed since Mr. Lagos took office three years ago, and war could plunge Chile into recession. The government has also been criticized for seeking membership on the Security Council in the first place, putting Chile in a position that could hurt its interests.

International Herald Tribune

France promises 'no' vote

Brian Knowlton/IHT - March 11, 2003

Washington - President George W. Bush undertook a furious round of telephone diplomacy Monday in an attempt to salvage support for a UN resolution to authorize force against Iraq, but France said it was prepared to do whatever was necessary to block it. "No matter what the circumstances, we will vote 'no,'" President Jacques Chirac said in a television interview. He added that he was considering whether to fly to New York to plead personally for a peaceful solution of the Iraq crisis. Chirac's comment came hours after Russia's most explicit declaration that it would oppose the U.S.-backed resolution. The French leader predicted that China, too, might use its veto power.

That turn of events left U.S. officials, already scrambling desperately for Security Council votes, clearly disappointed. They did not give up the fight, however. "We are in the thick of diplomacy," said Ari Fleischer, the White House spokesman. But he warned of serious alienation with the United Nations if it spurned the U.S. initiative, and he began to elaborate on a rationale for U.S.-led action outside a UN umbrella. Fleischer spoke more directly than before of what he said would be the international legitimacy of a war without a UN imprimatur. He repeatedly used the word "moral" to describe such a conflict and said that it could save Iraqi lives in the long run. The defining vote was possible as early as Tuesday, and is certain by week's end, U.S. officials said. The United States still appeared shy of the support it needed for a Security Council resolution that it could cite as an international call for war, although Fleischer said the administration still had hopes of reaching 9 or 10 votes.

Under enormous political pressure, U.S. officials and their British allies indicated new openness to amending the proposed text. Other council members want to give Iraq some time beyond the currently specified March 17 to disarm; some also favor setting out a list of "benchmarks," or specific disarmament tasks. The diplomatic battle for votes was under way on several continents.

A veto by two or even three of the five permanent Security Council members would represent an enormous setback to the U.S.-led cause, an explosion in the face of intense U.S. diplomatic efforts to build global support to unseat President Saddam Hussein, and make the 9-vote majority Washington seeks difficult to obtain. That might explain the new U.S. flexibility on the resolution. Richard Boucher, the State Department spokesman, would not rule out an extension of time for Iraqi disarmament. But he added that years of Iraqi delay and deception meant that "March 17th is a more than adequate date." And Fleischer said that there was "some level of flexibility," including on the idea of benchmarks. Bush spoke Monday to the leaders of China and Japan. China has steadfastly opposed a war against Iraq, but still is thought to be more likely to abstain than to cast a veto. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said that Japan, not a council member, would not take part in a war but would help pay for Iraqi reconstruction. Seeking to broaden international support, Bush also spoke to the South African and Omani leaders. Bush spoke to Koizumi and President Jiang Zemin of China about North Korea, as well. Pyongyang's moves to revive its nuclear program, along with recent revelations about an Iranian program to enrich uranium, demonstrated why Iraq must now be forced to disarm, said Fleischer. If the Security Council fails to act now, he said, "proliferators will celebrate." And past council hesitations, he said, had cost thousands of lives in Kosovo and Rwanda. Appearing to preemptively justify any action taken by the United States outside the United Nations umbrella, Fleischer said that a U.S.-led war would "remain an international action." It would, he repeatedly said, be "moral" because it could end a dictatorship and, in the long term, save Iraqi lives. The Security Council was to meet in closed session Monday afternoon, and U.S. representatives were to raise the question of a reported new type of Iraqi rocket apparently designed to disperse chemical or biological agents. It appeared that the intense flurry of diplomatic efforts might push the council vote from early to later in the week. A former U.S. ambassador to the UN, Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico, recommended Monday that a vote be delayed for a week or two. The odds of the United States prevailing now, he said, were even at best, and a defeat would be "catastrophic." Iraq, while complaining bitterly about U.S. and British war preparations, has vowed to continue disarming. UN officials in Baghdad said that Iraq destroyed six more banned Al Samoud-2 missiles Monday, for a total of 52, about half the number Iraq has said it owns. But Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz said in Baghdad that Iraq would, if necessary, "fight until the end."

Fleischer said that a Russian veto or "no" vote in the Security Council would be "more than a disappointment." The Russian threat, as expressed by Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, was dramatic in tone but conditional in its wording. "Russia openly declares that if the draft resolution that currently has been introduced for consideration, and which contains demands in an ultimate form that cannot be met, is nonetheless put to a vote, then Russia will vote against this resolution," Ivanov said. Ivanov did not say what Russia would do, however, if the March 17 deadline were extended or the draft resolution otherwise amended. He has often been more outspoken in his opposition to the U.S. approach than has President Vladimir Putin. Time magazine, citing U.S. officials, reported this week that Putin had assured Bush that Moscow would not use its veto. Russia, in any case, will likely wait to see how the council leans when a vote comes. If a majority

votes “no,” Russia could simply do the same. If a majority voted “yes,” Russia, France or China, as permanent council members, could cast a veto to block passage. Like Russia, many other council members have hedged or qualified their positions. The latest best guesses of a likely vote outcome continued to show the United States and its co-sponsors, Britain and Spain, a vote or two shy of the nine needed for passage. Bulgaria stands with those three. Angola appeared to be leaning to the U.S. camp, despite a visit by the French foreign minister, Dominique de Villepin. Foreign Minister Joao Bernardo de Miranda said that his country was resigned to the prospect of war, Agence France-Presse reported. Guinea, another country de Villepin was to visit and the current Security Council chair, was considered undecided. Foreign Minister Francois Fall told reporters Monday, standing alongside Secretary of State Colin Powell at the State Department, that “we are trying to solve the problem peacefully” and maintain council unity. Cameroon, the third country on de Villepin’s itinerary, is also considered undecided, as are Chile and Mexico. Britain, meanwhile, was sending its Africa minister, Baroness Amos, to the three African countries for the second time in two weeks, the BBC reported. In clear opposition are China, France, Germany, Russia and Syria. Pakistan’s prime minister, Mir Za farullah Khan Jamali, said Monday that it would be difficult for his country to vote for a war against Iraq, but there were indications Islamabad would ultimately abstain. “I will do whatever is in the interest of Pakistan,” he said. “I think that it is not in the best interest of the country to go to war against Iraq.”

Bush’s most important ally on Iraq, Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain, continued to face strong domestic opposition to a possible war.

International Development Secretary Clare Short, an outspoken critic of armed conflict, said that she would resign if British forces attacked Iraq without UN approval. Some Labour members of Parliament have similarly threatened a political rebellion. Short’s political future was considered in danger regardless, after she called Blair’s handling of the crisis “reckless.” The German defense minister, Peter Struck, criticized a senior aide, Walter Kolbow, on Monday for reportedly saying that U.S. behavior toward Iraq was that of a “dictator,” but said he would not punish the official, Reuters reported from Berlin.

Struck said that the comment by a junior minister, Walter Kolbow, was “exaggerated and inappropriate” but deserved no sanction, a ministry spokesman said. A spokesman for Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said the German leader agreed. Last year, U.S.-German relations were strained when Justice Minister Herta Daeubler-Gmelin reportedly compared Bush’s political tactics to Hitler’s. She later lost her cabinet post. In Iraq, U.S.-British patrols continued their stepped-up attacks on air-defense-related sites. Using precision-guided weapons, they targeted five military communications sites about 60 miles southeast of Baghdad, the U.S. Central Command said. The two coalition countries have more than doubled their flights over the northern and southern flight-exclusion zones in Iraq, to at least 500 a day.

Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken

Brief van de Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken aan de Tweede Kamer met een overzicht van de recente ontwikkelingen omtrent Irak 23432 – nr. 92 – 11 maart 2003

Graag bied ik u hierbij een overzicht aan van de recente ontwikkelingen met betrekking tot Irak sinds mijn laatste brief aan uw Kamer d.d. 18 februari j.l.

Dit mede naar aanleiding van de briefing van de heren Blix en El Baradei aan de Veiligheidsraad op 7 maart j.l.

Briefing van de heren Blix en El Baradei

Op 7 maart brachten de heren Blix en El Baradei in de Veiligheidsraad een mondelinge voortgangsrapportage uit. Blix ging daarbij tevens nader in op zijn 12e schriftelijke kwartaalrapportage van 28 februari j.l, de eerste kwartaalrapportage o.g.v. resolutie 1284, waarbij daadwerkelijke inspecties worden gerapporteerd, alsmede de ontwikkelingen sindsdien. Beide rapportages gaan in op de mate waarin Irak voldoet aan de eis tot onmiddellijke, onvoorwaardelijke en actieve medewerking die resolutie 1441 stelt.

Op 7 maart gaf Blix aan dat hoewel Irak op sommige punten misschien wel actief, zelfs pro-actief meewerkt, het zeker niet “onmiddellijk” heeft meegewerkt, zoals resolutie 1441 vereist. In zijn rapportage op 28 februari schreef Blix: “Iraq could have made full use of the declaration of 7 December” en “Iraq could have made greater efforts to find remaining proscribed items or provide credible evidence showing the absence of such items” en “It is hard to understand why a number of the measures which are now being taken, could not have been initiated earlier”.

Op een positievere noot gaf Blix op 7 maart aan “One can hardly avoid the impression that, after a period of somewhat reluctant cooperation, there has been an acceleration of initiatives from the Iraqi side since the end of January”. Zo constateerde Blix dat de vernietiging door Irak van Al-Samoud 2 raketten een voorbeeld is van echte ontwapening. Tegelijkertijd zette hij nog altijd belangrijke vraagtekens bij de bereidwilligheid van Irak volledig mee te werken.

Met name ongeloofwaardig vond Blix het feit dat Irak vorige maand wel – zij het laat – gedetailleerde lijsten heeft verstrekt met namen van wetenschappers die bij de unilaterale vernietiging van chemische en biologische wapens en raketten betrokken zouden zijn geweest, maar niet in staat te zijn op consistente wijze duidelijkheid te verschaffen over de oorspronkelijke aantallen van de verboden wapens, noch bewijzen te kunnen leveren voor de vernietiging –van een deel– hiervan.

El Baradei gaf wederom aan dat het IAEA tot nu toe geen bewijs heeft gevonden dat Irak zijn nucleaire programma heeft herstart. De documenten met betrekking tot de vermeende import van uranium zouden niet authentiek zijn.

Ten aanzien van procesmatige medewerking van Irak is de situatie niet veranderd: UNMOVIC en het IAEA ondervinden in zijn algemeenheid weinig problemen. Dit zou volgens beiden ook het gevolg zijn van de militaire druk die op Irak wordt uitgeoefend. Toch achten de inspecteurs nog verbeteringen mogelijk. Belangrijkste element in dit verband is het houden van interviews. UNMOVIC onderzoekt thans de praktische modaliteiten voor het houden van interviews in het buitenland. Ook El Baradei overwoog op korte termijn interviews buiten Irak te laten plaatsvinden.

Inmiddels heeft UNMOVIC een lijst met openstaande ontwapeningsvragen, en suggesties voor Irak hoe deze te beantwoorden, afgerond en ter beschikking gesteld van de VR-leden.

De Veiligheidsraad

Sinds twee weken zijn ontwikkelingen in de Veiligheidsraad in een stroomversnelling geraakt en lijkt de kloof tussen de posities van de Verenigde Staten en het Verenigd Koninkrijk enerzijds en Frankrijk, Rusland en Duitsland anderzijds zich te hebben verdiept. Het Verenigd Koninkrijk heeft - in samenwerking met de Verenigde Staten en Spanje - op 24 februari een ontwerp-resolutie in de Veiligheidsraad ingediend die verwijst naar het feit dat in resolutie 1441 reeds is gesteld dat “continued violations of its obligations” door Irak tot “ernstige gevolgen” zal leiden. In de concept-resolutie wordt verder geconstateerd dat Irak zich niet houdt aan de eisen van 1441 en geen volledige medewerking aan de inspecteurs van UNMOVIC en IAEA verleent. In een toespraak op 6 maart heeft President Bush benadrukt dat de VS dit voorstel in de week van 10 maart in ieder geval in stemming zal brengen.

Frankrijk en Duitsland daarentegen hebben de Veiligheidsraad in de vorm van een memorandum – dus geen concept-resolutie - een voorstel voor versterking van het huidige inspectieregime voorgelegd. Zij stellen onder andere voor om benchmarks vast te stellen, waaraan Irak binnen een bepaalde termijn zou moeten voldoen. Volgens dit voorstel dient Blix per 1 maart de ‘key remaining disarmament tasks’ aan de VR aan te bieden, vervolgens elke drie weken een voortgangsrapport aan te bieden en 120 dagen na aanvaarding van het programma een complete beoordeling aan de VR te presenteren. Daarnaast dient Blix (in lijn met resolutie 1441) op elk moment aan de VR te kunnen rapporteren als Irak niet meewerkt. Onduidelijk is hoeveel steun zij hiervoor zouden krijgen, ook al geven zij aan dat een meerderheid van de VR-leden voorstander van deze systematiek zou zijn. Tijdens het bezoek aan China van de Russische minister van Buitenlandse Zaken, Ivanov, hebben beide landen voor het voorstel gepleit. Daarnaast hebben Frankrijk, Duitsland en Rusland op 5 maart in een gezamenlijke verklaring aangegeven dat zij “een resolutie die het gebruik van geweld zou toestaan” tegen zullen houden. Hiermee lijken Frankrijk en Rusland te doelen op de mogelijkheid van een veto.

Op 7 maart heeft het VK door middel van een amendement van de concept-resolutie Irak een laatste kans voor volledige en onmiddellijke medewerking aangeboden. Het amendement behelst ten eerste een oproep aan Irak om onmiddellijk de benodigde (ontwapenings) beslissingen te nemen. Verder wordt in de geamendeerde tekst vastgesteld dat Irak heeft gefaald de in Veiligheidsraad-resolutie 1441 geboden laatste kans te grijpen, tenzij de Veiligheidsraad uiterlijk op 17 maart zou vaststellen dat Irak alsnog aan zijn verplichtingen heeft voldaan. Met dit amendement wordt Irak een allerlaatste kans geboden de vereiste medewerking te verlenen.

De VS steunt deze amendement. Mogelijk wordt de geamendeerde ontwerp-resolutie deze week nog in stemming worden gebracht. Duitsland en Frankrijk willen de regeringsleiders over de resolutie laten stemmen. Zowel bondskanselier Schroeder als president Chirac hebben reeds geindiceerd in New York aanwezig te zullen zijn.

De uitkomst van een mogelijke stemming over de concept-resolutie is niet te voorspellen. De 15 leden tellende VN-Veiligheidsraad is nog altijd zeer verdeeld. Duitsland, Frankrijk, Rusland, China en Syrië spraken zich uit tegen een resolutie op dit moment. Onbekend is evenwel of de permanente leden Frankrijk, Rusland en China

ook daadwerkelijk een veto zullen uitspreken. Het Verenigd Koninkrijk, de Verenigde Staten, Spanje en Bulgarije steunen de resolutie. De overige Veiligheidsraadleden hebben zich niet duidelijk uitgesproken. De aanneming van een resolutie in de Veiligheidsraad vereist negen voorstemmen zonder dat een van de vijf permanente leden een tegenstem uitbrengt.

Onmiddellijk na de presentaties van de heren Blix en El Baradei hebben de VR-leden – alle vertegenwoordigd door hun ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken – gereageerd. Het gebrek aan overeenstemming kwam duidelijk naar voren, met name in de toespraak van de Britse minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Straw die directe kritiek uitsprak aan het adres van zijn Franse ambtsgenoot De Villepin. Zo benadrukte hij dat Saddam Hoessein als enige de verantwoordelijkheid voor het slagen van de inspecties draagt, en in dat kader - in tegenstelling tot de iets eerder door De Villepin vertolkte visie - de belangrijke rol van de militaire druk op Saddam Hoessein. Ook merkte Straw op dat geen enkel VR-lid tot de conclusie was gekomen dat er op dit moment sprake was van volledige en onvoorwaardelijke, actieve medewerking van Irak aan de inspecties.

Verdere internationale politieke ontwikkelingen

Op 1 maart is de Arabische Liga in een bijzondere Top in Sharm el Sheikh bijeen gekomen. De Top werd gekenmerkt door een gebrek aan eenheid onder de leiders van de Arabische landen. Desondanks heeft de Liga een slotverklaring uitgebracht, waarin hij zich kant tegen een militaire interventie en Arabische landen oproept geen steun te verlenen aan eventuele militaire interventie. Daarnaast heeft de Liga Saddam Hoessein opgeroepen mee te werken aan de inspecties. Tevens heeft het de wens uitgesproken dat de Irak-crisis op vreedzame wijze en via de VN wordt opgelost en dat de inspecteurs voldoende tijd krijgen om hun taken te volbrengen.

Tijdens de bijeenkomst is een voorstel besproken van de Verenigde Arabische Emiraten om Saddam Hoessein op te roepen binnen 14 dagen af te treden en in ballingschap te gaan. Het was het de eerste keer dat een Arabisch land officieel de mogelijkheid van ballingschap heeft voorgesteld. Het voorstel is echter door de meeste leden van de Liga genegeerd.

Op 24 en 25 februari heeft een Top van de 116 leden tellende Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Kuala Lumpur plaatsgevonden. Ondanks de onenigheden heeft de groep een verklaring aanvaard waarin de leden gesteld hebben te hechten aan een vreedzame, multilaterale oplossing van de Irak crisis. Tevens heeft de NAM Irak opgeroepen “actief te voldoen” aan resolutie 1441.

Conclusie

De internationale gemeenschap heeft op 8 november 2002 met resolutie 1441, constaterend dat Irak reeds in gebreke was van de sinds 1991 aanvaarde resoluties, Irak een laatste kans gegeven om aan de VN-eisen te voldoen. Nu is de tijd aangebroken om vast te stellen of Irak deze laatste kans heeft weten te gebruiken.

Naar aanleiding van de laatste briefing van de inspecteurs, is de regering van mening dat nog steeds niet is gebleken dat Saddam Hoessein bereid is te doen wat de wereldgemeenschap van hem verlangt. Weliswaar is er sprake van bepaalde concrete stappen, maar van een volledige medewerking is geen sprake. Ook Blix en El Baradei hebben dat oordeel niet geveld.

Helaas hebben de afgelopen maanden wederom bewezen dat het slechts door middel van grote militaire druk mogelijk is enige vooruitgang te bereiken. Zolang inspecteurs rapporteren over het mogelijk achterhouden van informatie en over een slechts schoorvoetende medewerking van de Iraakse autoriteiten, kan er geen sprake zijn van de vereiste medewerking. Zoals ik reeds eerder heb aangegeven houdt Saddam Hoessein door zijn houding de sleutel van een vreedzame oplossing in eigen handen.

De regering hoopt dat de Veiligheidsraad overeenstemming zal bereiken over een nieuwe resolutie. De regering ondersteunt actief, ook door de diverse contacten van de Minister President en de minister van Buitenlandse Zaken, het werk dat daartoe thans plaatsvindt. Duidelijk is dat Irak nog slechts korte tijd kan worden geboden alvorens moet worden vastgesteld of het regime in Bagdad nog altijd niet bereid is de vereiste medewerking te verlenen en dat het alsdan de consequenties daarvan zal moeten dragen.

Washington Post

Bush Lobbies For Deal On Iraq

By Karen DeYoung and Colum Lynch - Wednesday, March 12, 2003

President Bush personally weighed in yesterday on diplomatic efforts to secure United Nations' authority for war against Iraq, telephoning the presidents of Chile, Mexico and Angola to push a compromise proposal that U.S. and British officials believe could begin to break the impasse at the U.N. Security Council.

Under the evolving plan, Iraq would be given a set of benchmark disarmament tasks and a deadline for achieving them, a proposal that incorporates suggestions made by undecided council members. The proposal would also automatically authorize the end of U.N. weapons inspections and the use of force against Iraq unless a council majority agrees that Baghdad has fully complied with the benchmark demands.

Diplomats and senior administration officials cautioned that many parts of the proposal, which would amend a widely opposed resolution introduced last week, were still under discussion. Chief among the points of disagreement was a deadline date, originally set for March 17. The six undecided members have suggested April 17, while the United States has insisted that it be no later than the end of next week. Britain is seeking a middle ground. The White House has said a vote on the measure must be held by Friday.

Bush's personal intervention marked a sharp change from days of saber-rattling against Iraq and conversations largely limited to fellow leaders who already agreed with him, suggesting that the White House is closing in on the final phase of diplomacy. He also telephoned the leaders of Australia, Italy and Spain yesterday, all strong supporters of his stern attitude toward the United Nations and aggressive policy against Baghdad.

Despite U.S. and British optimism that they will be ready to put a new version of the resolution on the table today or early Thursday, and stand a good chance of winning the nine of 15 council votes needed for passage, early reaction from the six was not encouraging. "I don't think this can be accepted," said one diplomat who said both the benchmarks and the early deadline remained unacceptable. The six uncommitted members are Angola, Mexico, Guinea, Cameroon, Chile and Pakistan.

What they had seen and heard so far, the diplomat said, "is not what we expected" in terms of compromise. Saying that the six were "very frustrated," the diplomat added, "I don't think there will be any solution to this problem. . . . This may possibly be the end of the road" in terms of possible compromise.

An amended resolution is still almost certain to be vetoed by France and perhaps Russia, who oppose any deadline and have argued that only the U.N. inspectors can set benchmarks or judge compliance. But U.S. and British officials, with Spain and Bulgaria the only other declared members on their side, have made clear they will consider nine votes a "moral victory" sufficient to launch a war they say is legally justified by years of U.N. demands on Iraq.

"We prefer a vote of 15 to nothing," a senior official said. "But we'd also be glad to have nine votes." In fact, the official said, many in the administration view a vetoed majority as a very good outcome, leaving the United States on what it perceives as moral high ground but with no obligation to obey the terms of the mooted resolution.

"The resolution would not be a resolution," the official said. "It would be a vetoed resolution," and the administration would see no further need to wait for additional reports from inspectors, or for any deadline beyond a decision by Bush.

A French official yesterday described the new proposals as a "completely artificial" attempt at compromise that merely restates U.S. and British insistence that weapons inspections be ended by a definite early date, regardless of whether they are making progress. Referring to a report to the council by chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix last Friday, the official said, "The inspectors have already said they need not years, not days, but months to complete their assessments."

The official said it was doubtful the proposal would draw in any of the six undecided votes particularly with the short deadline Washington is demanding. "They've resisted so much pressure . . . if they were going to swallow this so easily, they would have done it days ago," the official said, adding that French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin has just returned from a tour of the three African countries "quite confident" they will stand firm in opposition.

Germany and Syria are seen as extremely unlikely to change their opposition to any deadline, and China is likely to vote no or abstain.

In a day of frenzied diplomacy, most of the negotiating took place in bilateral and regional conversations on the telephone and behind closed doors. The council held an open meeting to listen to the views of non-council members, most of whom opposed the move toward war and argued that weapons inspections be given more time.

The six undecided members have been stuck between the extremes of the United States, which believes it has enough information on Iraqi intransigence and needs no further inspections or deadline, and France, which feels the inspections are progressing, however slowly, and should be open-ended. The six reached a common understanding over the weekend to promote their own proposal, giving Iraq an April 17 deadline to prove it is ready to disarm. If it failed, the council would meet again to decide what to do. It calls for establishment of a list of specific disarmament tests and biweekly council briefings by inspectors.

Canada, which is not a council member, floated its own proposal yesterday, calling for benchmark tasks and a deadline set three weeks after the resolution was adopted. Unlike the proposal of the six, it specifically

authorizes U.N. member states to "use all necessary means to disarm Iraq" if it does not comply. Canada's U.N. ambassador, Paul Heinbecker, called the proposal a "melding" of a number of plans.

The Canadian proposal also reflects wording in the resolution co-sponsored by the United States, Britain and Spain. Some of the undecided six had objected to setting the benchmarks and a deadline, but allowing for no further meeting to judge compliance and decide whether war was justified. The new wording calls for a council meeting, but only if members want to argue that Baghdad has fully cooperated. Thus members are spared having to overtly authorize war.

Even as Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair worked the telephones, there was still significant disagreement between Washington and London. The administration has not yet agreed to the five benchmarks proposed by the British, which require specific Iraqi progress in: arranging unmonitored interviews of weapons scientists and technicians and providing substantive information on alleged stores of VX nerve gas, outstanding stores of anthrax, prohibited ballistic missiles and remotely piloted aircraft.

And while Britain is willing to move the deadline far closer to the April 17 proposal, Washington has sharply refused. "That's not going anywhere," a senior administration said. "Our bottom line is getting shorter and shorter," and is extremely unlikely to budge beyond the end of next week, the official said.

Britain has committed as many as 40,000 troops to the invasion, and despite overwhelming domestic opposition and a deep desire for Security Council approval, Blair has not wavered. But tension between Washington and London neared a breaking point yesterday, when Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, noting battles over Iraq in the British Parliament and within Blair's government, told reporters that Britain's role in both a military attack and in postwar Iraq was still "unclear."

After sharp British protests yesterday afternoon, Rumsfeld issued a clarification, saying: "I was simply pointing out that obtaining a second United Nations Security Council resolution is important to the United Kingdom and that we are working to achieve it. In the event that a decision to use force is made, we have every reason to believe there will be a significant military contribution from the United Kingdom."

British officials also expressed fresh concern that failure to obtain a resolution authorizing war against Iraq would expose them to potential prosecution by a newly established International Criminal Court with jurisdiction over war crimes. Britain is a signatory to the treaty establishing the tribunal, but the United States is not. Blair was advised by his attorney general last October that military action to force "regime change" in Baghdad would violate international law.

In a separate move that defense officials suggested was a message to Iraq, the United States yesterday successfully tested the most powerful nonnuclear bomb in its arsenal. The 21,000-pound MOAB, or Massive Ordnance Air Blast, sent a mushroom cloud into the sky over the test range at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. "There is a psychological component to all aspects of warfare," Rumsfeld said in reference to the bomb.

The Times

US would start war without British troops

From Roland Watson in Washington and Philip Webster in London – 12 March 2003

Washington acknowledged for the first time yesterday that Tony Blair's political troubles could force the US to go into battle alone against Iraq.

Donald Rumsfeld, the US Defence Secretary, speaking shortly after a telephone conversation with Geoff Hoon, his British counterpart, said American officials were talking daily to the UK about the possibility that President Bush may lose the battlefield support of his closest ally.

His statement caused immediate confusion in Downing Street and later provoked a round of backtracking from the Pentagon, which hastily issued a "clarification" saying that Mr Rumsfeld continued to expect full military support from Britain.

"I have no doubt of the full support of the United Kingdom for the international community's efforts to disarm Iraq. In the event that a decision to use force is made, we have every reason to believe there will be a significant military contribution from the United Kingdom," it said.

Officials in Washington said Mr Rumsfeld had been trying to help the Government by demonstrating that the US was not taking Britain's involvement for granted, and that he was aware of the political pressures Mr Blair was under. But he had gone too far. "He over-reached," said one official.

Earlier, referring to Mr Blair's constitutional obligations, which Mr Bush does not face, Mr Rumsfeld said: "Their situation is distinctive to their country. They have a government that deals with a parliament. What will ultimately be decided is unclear as to their role. Until we know the resolution we won't know what their role will be."

Mr Rumsfeld was speaking a day after President Chirac of France vowed to veto the UN war resolution that Mr Blair desperately needs to send troops into battle without splitting his party and the country.

The notoriously outspoken Defence Secretary said that if Mr Blair were unable to commit British troops to battle, there were “work-around” scenarios that would allow the US to proceed. Officials in Washington said a series of non-combat tasks was being drawn up that British Armed Forces could perform in Iraq after a war. Under such a “division of labour”, British troops could hold oil fields, take a lead in reconstruction and humanitarian work, and oversee areas that were too dangerous for aid agencies to enter. Such roles would be much harder for Labour MPs hostile to war to oppose. There are currently around 46,000 British troops in the Gulf region.

A leading anti-war MP, Graham Allen, described Mr Rumsfeld’s words as a “heaven-sent opportunity” to help Mr Blair. “He has been franker with the British people than the Government,” he said. “The cat is out of the bag. They can do it without us and given Tony Blair the chance to get out of the hole if he wishes.”

Downing Street last night insisted that Mr Rumsfeld’s comments “changed nothing” and denied that there had been any talks — “daily or otherwise” — about Britain not playing its full part in the war.

“Donald Rumsfeld has got that wrong, we will be actively engaged if we have to be,” said a spokesman. “We continue to work for a second resolution.”

Mr Rumsfeld also told a press conference at the Pentagon that America would not pay for the reconstruction of a post-Saddam Iraq — a statement that will do nothing to swing the UN Security Council behind a war resolution. He said the massive rebuilding programme would probably be funded by the “tens of billions” of dollars held under the UN’s oil-for-food programme, revenue from Iraq’s oil reserves and foreign donors.

Earlier, British officials prepared the ground for going to war without a UN mandate by threatening to ignore a promised French veto.

Downing Street seized on President Chirac’s pledge on Monday night to vote down a war resolution “in all circumstances” to suggest that such a veto would be unreasonable.

For months, Mr Blair has said that he would go to war only after a second UN resolution, or if that resolution was “unreasonably” blocked after Saddam Hussein was shown to be in clear breach of UN disarmament demands.

Diplomats have been working frantically on an amended resolution capable of securing at least nine of the Security Council’s 15 votes. That way the Prime Minister could at least claim a moral majority for war.

Officials were expected to finalise today a shopping list of “tough but deliverable” demands for Saddam to allow within days scientists out of Iraq for interviews and to account for missing stocks of anthrax, nerve gas and mustard gas.

But there were clear differences over how long he should be given to comply, with the US and Britain wanting a date as close as possible to the existing March 17 deadline and the waverers wanting longer. It was clear that Monday’s original deadline would now slip, though London and Washington were still hoping for a UN vote tomorrow.

A source close to Mr Blair said there were also differences of emphasis emerging between Britain and America. “We have always said that Saddam can avert war by disarming but if he was to comply with these new tests it would be fair to say such action would not be welcome in some parts of the US Administration.”

Mr Blair will also face another major problem if Russia fulfils its threat to join France in vetoing a war resolution. Two vetoes would be much harder to dismiss as “unreasonable”.

Last night President Putin of Russia told Mr Blair that no new UN resolutions on Iraq were needed.

Both the Prime Minister and President Bush will exert maximum pressure on Russia over the next two days to try to dissuade it from exercising its veto. Both leaders have already made private appeals to President Putin and there are certain to be more.

Britain believes that France is desperate to avoid the issue coming to a vote in the Security Council. They point out that the French have been desperately lobbying the African countries to vote down the resolution so that they do not have to veto it.

The mood of impending conflict hardened as Mr Blair called key ministers, including Jack Straw, Mr Hoon, and Lord Goldsmith, the Attorney-General, to Downing Street, along with Admiral Sir Michael Boyce, the Chief of Defence Staff.

Mr Blair and Mr Bush were calling world leaders all day. Gerhard Schröder, the German Chancellor, will visit Mr Blair today.

Yesterday trade union leaders had a regular meeting with Mr Blair at No 10. They apparently told him that a second resolution was vital but dismissed suggestions by Labour leftwingers that they might stage an early special conference of the Labour Party to call for a leadership election.

The Prime Minister responded to Paris and Moscow’s threat that they were ready to block a new resolution with a warning of his own about the dangers of driving a wedge between Europe and America.

In barbed comments, apparently aimed at President Chirac, he said that seeking easy applause by making a show of “standing up to America” could have damaging consequences for the international community. He said: “When you really think about it, dividing Europe from America, an alliance that has served us well for over half a century, would be a very, very dangerous thing to do.”

Tweede Kamer

Beantwoording Kamervragen De Graaf (D66) aan de minister-president en de minister van Buitenlandse Zaken over de rechtsgrond van unilateraal optreden tegen Irak.

Nr. 909 – 12 maart 2003

Antwoord van de heer De Hoop Scheffer, minister van Buitenlandse Zaken, mede namens de heer Balkenende, minister-president, op vragen van het lid De Graaf (D66) over de rechtsgrond van unilateraal optreden tegen Irak.

Vraag 1

Vormt een militaire aanval op een andere staat, wanneer dit niet in overeenstemming is met het Handvest van de Verenigde Naties, een schending van het geweldsverbod als verwoord in art. 2 lid 4 van het Handvest en is deze derhalve aan te merken als een internationaal misdrijf van agressie?

Antwoord: Ja, een militaire aanval niet in overeenstemming met het Handvest zou een schending zijn van het geweldsverbod (artikel 2, vierde lid) van het Handvest, en zou onder voorwaarden aangemerkt kunnen worden als agressie in de zin van resolutie 3314 van de Algemene Vergadering van de Verenigde Naties van 14 december 1974 indien de Veiligheidsraad aldus zou besluiten.

Vraag 2

Kunt u toelichten op grond waarvan u meent dat een nieuw besluit van de Veiligheidsraad volgend op resolutie 1441 niet noodzakelijk doch slechts wenselijk is om militaire actie tegen Irak te legitimeren?

Antwoord: Resolutie 1441 kondigt ‘ernstige gevolgen’ aan indien Irak wederom in gebreke zou blijken. In de visie van de regering houdt dit de mogelijkheid van militair optreden in tot afdwinging van de naleving door Irak van alle relevante resoluties van de Veiligheidsraad. Volgens de op 29 november 1990 door de Veiligheidsraad, ex Hoofdstuk VII van het VN Handvest aangenomen resolutie 678 zijn de lidstaten van de VN gemachtigd tot het gebruik van “all necessary means”. De op 3 april 1991 aangenomen resolutie 687, die o.m. ziet op de ontmanteling van het Irakese arsenaal aan massavernietigingswapens en ballistische raketten, verwijst terug naar resolutie 678.

Toen in 1998 het systematisch door Irak tegenwerken van de inspectieteams leidde tot de terugtrekking ervan, reageerden de VS en het VK hierop met militaire acties in de vorm van luchtaanvallen. De Nederlandse regering stelde zich destijds op het standpunt, met haar brief aan de Tweede Kamer van 17 december 1998, dat dit militair optreden werd gelegitimeerd door het geheel aan resoluties van de Veiligheidsraad vanaf 1991 inzake Irak (dat wil zeggen m.n. VR-resolutie 678 in combinatie met 687). Bij het Algemeen Overleg met de Vaste Kamercommissie Buitenlandse Zaken van 11 februari 1999 bleek van brede steun voor het standpunt dat dit militaire optreden legitiem was.

Een specifieke mandaterende resolutie is derhalve juridisch niet noodzakelijk. Een uitspraak van de Veiligheidsraad is wel uit politiek oogpunt buitengewoon wenselijk ten behoeve van het internationale draagvlak. Dat alle leden van de VR ieder hun eigen onafhankelijke afweging zullen moeten maken spreekt voor zich.

Vraag 3

Welke waarde hecht u in dit verband aan de bepaling in resolutie 1441 dat de Veiligheidsraad na rapportage van Monitoring Verification and Inspection Commission van de Verenigde Naties (UNMOVIC) bijeen moet komen om de situatie te overwegen?

Antwoord: Dit beraad in de Veiligheidsraad is van groot belang om de leden van de wereldgemeenschap in staat te stellen tot een afgewogen oordeel te komen over de vraag of Irak in gebreke is bij de naleving van resolutie 1441. De Veiligheidsraad is overigens al verscheidene malen bijeen geweest om hierover te overleggen n.a.v. de rapportage van UNMOVIC.

Vraag 4

Indien een tweede resolutie, volgend op resolutie 1441, uitdrukkelijk door de Veiligheidsraad wordt verworpen of wordt getroffen door en of meerdere veto's, wat is naar uw oordeel dan nog de eventuele rechtsgrond voor een militair optreden tegen Irak? Is er dan nog sprake van overeenstemming met het Handvest van de Verenigde Naties?

Antwoord: Ik moge verwijzen naar het antwoord op vraag 2.

Vraag 5

Hoe beoordeelt u de huidige diplomatieke onderhandelingen om tot draagvlak voor een tweede resolutie te komen en de daarbij door de Verenigde Staten gehanteerde methoden als financiële beloften, politieke druk en, naar verluidt, het inwinnen van inlichtingen over mogelijk stemgedrag?

Antwoord: Ik wil niet reageren op persberichten omtrent de werkwijze die door de Verenigde Staten zou worden gevolgd. Overigens is de Veiligheidsraad een politiek orgaan, waarbinnen diplomatieke onderhandelingen om tot draagvlak voor resoluties te komen, zo nodig gepaard gaande met de uitoefening van politieke druk, niet ongebruikelijk zijn.

[...]

Verenigde Naties

Security Council hears from 53 speakers in two days on Iraq's disarmament; some stress Iraq has not cooperated, most say inspectors need more time

Security Council – Press release SC/7687 – 12 March 2003

In a two-day debate, that began yesterday and concluded this afternoon, the Security Council heard from 51 Member States and two regional organizations on the crisis surrounding Iraq's disarmament. The request to hear non-Council members in open debate was made by the 116-member Non-Aligned Movement, as closed consultations continued on the draft resolution co-sponsored by the United Kingdom, United States, and Spain that would set a clear deadline for Iraq to comply with its obligations or face military action.

Today, several speakers, among them the representatives of Japan, Latvia, Georgia and the Dominican Republic, voiced support for the draft resolution. Japan's representative said that even though some progress had been observed recently, Iraqi cooperation was still insufficient and limited. The proposed draft resolution was truly a "final effort" to place the consolidated pressure of the international community on Iraq, and to lead it to disarm voluntarily. If it was not adopted and the international community was divided, not only would that benefit Iraq, but it would also raise grave doubts about the authority and effectiveness of the United Nations.

Speaking on behalf of the European Union and associated States, and echoing the view of many speakers, the representative of Greece said war was not inevitable and force should be used only as a last resort. Inspectors must be given the time and resources that the Council believed they needed. However, inspections were not an endless process and could not continue indefinitely in the absence of full Iraqi cooperation. Iraq had to comply with the demands of the Council and seize this last opportunity afforded to it. Baghdad alone would be responsible for the consequences if it continued to flout the will of the international community and did not take this last chance.

Addressing the consequences of an armed conflict in Iraq, the representative of Malawi, speaking on behalf of the African Group, said war would impact negatively on poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Africa would witness an almost total collapse of its nascent industrial base and economic development for lack of capacity to accommodate the pressures resulting from war. The peaceful disarmament of Iraq was possible with a little measure of extended patience and perseverance. Resolution 1441 (2002) was not necessarily a blueprint for war.

The African position, he continued, did not endorse war at the present stage. The international community, through the inspectors, must subject the sincerity of Iraq's promise of full cooperation and compliance with relevant resolutions to some rigorous test. Any war against Iraq would have to be sanctioned by a resolution from the Council.

Many speakers expressed their concern about current divisions in the Council. Bolivia's representative said that division undermined the United Nations' capacity to defend international peace and security. Now, more than ever, the Council must shoulder its responsibility and act firmly, so that its decisions could be duly implemented.

In a closing statement, Iraq's representative said he understood why some States had joined the United States and the United Kingdom, as he knew the magnitude of the pressure brought to bear by them on all, without

exception. Some speakers were able to raise law, peace and the Charter, while others had included parts of the draft resolution in their statements, in order to pacify those two countries. Others were being occupied by United States or United Kingdom troops, and some were even being paid. He reiterated that Iraq had destroyed its weapons of mass destruction unilaterally.

He warned that those who joined the caravan of war would regret it. Referring to the development by the United States of the “mother of all bombs”, he said that he wished the Council would stand up to new weapons of mass destruction, which would be launched against Iraq, in exercising its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. He hoped the Council would not stand by in the face of such a clear and present danger.

The representatives of the Sudan, Thailand, Philippines, Nigeria, Argentina, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, Tunisia, Zambia, Morocco, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Venezuela, Senegal, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Colombia and Ethiopia also spoke.

Today’s meeting started at 3:21 p.m. and was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Background

The Security Council met this afternoon to hear the remaining non-Council members debate the situation on Iraq. The meeting, which began yesterday, was convened at the request made by the Malaysian delegation, as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement. The letter expressed the Movement’s interest in assisting the Council in responding to the briefing by the chief United Nations weapons inspectors last Friday, and to anticipated action later this week on a further draft resolution, submitted by the United States, the United Kingdom and Spain.

Statements

KOICHI HARAGUCHI (Japan) said that, even though some progress had been observed recently, the reports of the chief weapons inspectors indicated Iraqi cooperation was still insufficient and limited, despite the ever-stronger pressure from the international community. That was a common recognition, in that regard, in the international community, including among Council members. The hoped for peaceful solution hinged on whether or not Iraq changed its attitude “drastically” and took the final opportunity it had been given. The special envoy of Japan’s Prime Minister was recently dispatched to Iraq, where he urged that Government to take the final opportunity and disarm, but the Iraqi response was insufficient, and there had been no fundamental change in Iraq’s attitude since then.

He said the international community should clearly demonstrate its determined attitude and apply further pressure on Iraq to cooperate with the inspections immediately, fully, unconditionally and proactively. The revised draft resolution proposed by Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States on

7 March was a truly “final effort” to maintain international solidarity, and place the consolidated pressure of the international community on Iraq. He, therefore, supported the text. If it was not adopted and the international community was divided, not only would that benefit Iraq, but it would also raise grave doubts about the authority and effectiveness of the United Nations. He hoped the Council would be united, demonstrate clear and resolute judgement, and fulfil its responsibility for international peace and security.

ELFAITH MOHAMED AHMED ERWA (Sudan) said that he was convinced of the effectiveness of the inspection process, which was the best approach to put an end to the current crisis. He paid tribute to the cooperation by Iraq thus far, including the destruction of the Al-Samoud missiles. He highlighted the outcomes of various recent conferences, including the Arab Summit and the non-aligned summit, which called for the implementation of all resolutions relating to Iraq. Iraq’s continued full cooperation with inspectors must be the basis for the peaceful settlement of the crisis and the subsequent lifting of sanctions.

He supported the use of political means to settle disputes. There was no justification for the adoption of a second resolution. Rather, the inspectors should be given additional time to complete their work. The declaration of war was an admission of failure. The unilateral approach was a denial of the legacy of giving precedence to the peaceful settlement of disputes. The Charter had clearly indicated the instances in which force might be used. It prohibited war except in the case of self-defence or unless authorized under Chapter VII. He affirmed his commitment to the letter and spirit of the Charter and called for giving precedence to the peaceful settlement of crises.

CHUCHAI KASEMSARN (Thailand) welcomed Iraq’s further cooperation with the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), enabling them to make progress in their inspections. However, as Mr. Blix had said, what they had done could not be said to constitute immediate cooperation, and did not cover all areas of relevance. As time was running short for the implementation of the demands of resolution 1441 (2002), he urged Iraq to

immediately fulfil those demands by providing complete and unconditional cooperation to UNMOVIC and the IAEA.

The United Nations, which embodied the hope of humankind for a world free of war and want, stood at a critical juncture in its history. What was being done now would mean either the gradual disintegration of that hope or its renewal. He called on all Members to exert their utmost collective effort to ensure that the will of the United Nations as expressed in resolution 1441 (2002) was fully respected and implemented, so as to preserve the viability and sanctity of that universal institution.

ENRIQUE A. MANALO (Philippines) supported every effort to resolve the issue of Iraq in a peaceful way, but diplomatic and political pressure to disarm must be applied on the Iraqi leadership. That was a difficult balance -- calling for peace, while, at the same time, making sure that the Iraqi leadership did not misinterpret the desire for peace as a refusal to resort to all means allowed by the United Nations Charter and international law.

He wanted a stable and secure Middle East, for a stable and secure Middle East was a safer Middle East for everyone, particularly the one and a half million Filipinos in the region. The unresolved issue of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction placed the stability of the Middle East in peril and could be a direct threat to all the people there, including the Filipinos. Resolution 1441 (2002) had found Iraq to be in material breach of its obligations under relevant resolutions. Full and verifiable compliance had not been achieved. He shared everyone's hope for peace, "but we must always be ready to take decisive action to preserve and maintain meaningful peace", he said.

ADAMANTIOS TH. VASSILAKIS (Greece), speaking on behalf of the European Union, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, said that the Union's objective remained the full and effective disarmament of Iraq and it wanted to achieve that disarmament peacefully. That was what the people of Europe wanted, as well. War was not inevitable. Force should be used only as a last resort. He reiterated its full support for the ongoing work of the inspectors. They must be given the time and resources that the Council believed they needed. Inspections were not an endless process, however, and could not continue indefinitely in the absence of full Iraqi cooperation.

Baghdad should have no illusions, he stated. Iraq had to comply with the demands of the Council and seize the last opportunity afforded to it. It had to immediately, fully, actively and unconditionally cooperate with the inspectors, including providing them with all the additional and specific information on the issues that had been raised in the inspectors' reports. Baghdad alone would be responsible for the consequences if it continued to flout the will of the international community and did not take this last chance.

The Union recognized, he said, that the unity and firmness of the international community, as expressed in the unanimous adoption of resolution 1441 and the military build-up, had been essential in obtaining the return of the inspectors and the work done so far. Those factors would remain essential to achieve the full cooperation that was sought.

ARTHUR C.I. MBANEFO (Nigeria) said his country was deeply concerned about the consequences that the escalating situation could have on international peace and security, and in particular its adverse effect on Africa. As the least developed region of the world, Africa would suffer most from a possible war with Iraq. The present harsh socio-economic realities on the continent, resulting from poverty, hunger, drought, HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases, would be exacerbated in an international environment engaged in war. The prospects for multilateral assistance for Africa's development programmes would also suffer the negative impact of war. Iraq should continue to cooperate actively with the international inspectors and fulfil its disarmament obligations, transparently and without conditions.

He said he was encouraged by the latest report citing Iraq's increased level of cooperation with the inspectors, whose deployment, only three months ago, had set the disarmament process in motion. It was in the interest of world peace not to exert undue pressure on them, or take any action that could undermine their activities.

As practical disarmament was the main objective of resolution 1441 (2002), the Council should take "every necessary step" to ensure the continuation of the inspection process until Iraq fully disarmed. Any new decision of the Council should follow consideration of the inspection team's final report. He stressed the importance of maximizing the opportunities offered by the inspectors' new mandate, which had clearly paved the way for success in the peaceful disarmament of Iraq.

Nigeria, he continued, shared the universal desire to exhaust all peaceful means for resolving the Iraqi problem and agreed with the view expressed by the Secretary-General that no amount of bombs could destroy the number of weapons of mass destruction that inspectors could identify and dismantle or destroy. In line with the declaration issued by the African Union on 3 February, he urged all parties to make sustained efforts to avoid the use of force, while ensuring effective implementation of resolution 1441 (2002). Military confrontation against Iraq on the basis of a unilateral decision would have serious implications for world

peace and potentially destabilize the entire Middle East region and beyond. Multilateral cooperation was the only option. He called for restraint, including against any unilateral action without the Council's authority.

ARNOLD LISTRE (Argentina) said it was clear that Iraq had not fully complied with resolution 1441 (2002). Iraq's partial and unsatisfactory compliance demonstrated that pressure must be applied constantly. It was evident that the Iraqi regime only cooperated when it had no other alternative and responded only to diplomatic and military pressure. In spite of Iraq's attitude, there was still time to reach a peaceful solution to the crisis. He appealed once more to the Council to stand united and give Iraq one last chance to cooperate fully and in good faith to achieve disarmament.

He said that cooperation must be carried out in a concrete and verifiable manner, measured against, for example, clearly defined tests which could be objectively assessed by the Council in light of reports from UNMOVIC and IAEA inspectors in a reasonable period of time. The Council, the sole organ that could authorize the legitimate use of force, must be up to the grave responsibility of ensuring that a peaceful solution to the crisis was reached. That was particularly necessary at a time when other serious threats to peace and security — such as terrorism and nuclear arms proliferation, as well as regional conflicts such as the Middle East — required that the Council preserve all its authority and prestige.

PEDRO PADILLA TONOS (Dominican Republic) said that the Iraqi Government's continued failure to comply with Council resolutions had driven the situation to a critical stage, and divided the international community, particularly the members of the Council. The ideal thing would be to arrive at a concerted decision for the complete, effective and peaceful disarmament of Iraq. The Council had before it a draft resolution, which would reassert the need for the complete implementation of 1441 (2002), appeal to Iraq to take the decisions necessary in the interest of its people and the region, and establish a deadline by which Iraq must prove its complete and full compliance of relevant resolutions.

He endorsed the draft resolution because it contained valid elements, which, once subjected to thorough analysis and negotiation in the Council, would make it possible for the Council to adopt a consensus decision and assure a peaceful solution to the crisis. It was necessary to send the Iraqi Government a united and definitive message calling on it to comply immediately with its obligations, thus, avoiding events fraught with grave consequences. His country was a small and profoundly peace-loving country and its views might not be decisive. However, he invited the Council, particularly the permanent members, to consider the following. Peace embodied one of the most deep-rooted aspirations of human beings in all parts of the world. In times of war, people yearned for peace, and in times of peace, people feared losing it and felt the need to defend it. Genuine peace must be based in truth, justice, solidarity and freedom. The absence of war was not in itself peace.

GINTS JEGERMANIS (Latvia), aligning himself with Greece's statement on behalf of the European Union, said even taking into account such recent steps by Baghdad as the destruction of Al-Samoud 2 missiles, Iraq had not taken the strategic decision to disarm and to cooperate fully with the United Nations. Unfortunately, Iraq had continued its policy of deception. Neither enhancement of inspections nor extension of inspections' time frame could substitute for active cooperation. The limited progress achieved so far was a result of strong diplomatic pressure, backed by military force. It fell short of satisfying the demands of the international community.

He said if peaceful disarmament of Iraq was to be achieved, the diplomatic pressure on Saddam Hussein had to be increased. He, therefore, supported adoption of the draft resolution co-sponsored by the United Kingdom, the United States and Spain that would set a clear deadline for Iraq to comply with its obligations. A unanimous adoption of that draft would ensure the continued credibility of the United Nations and would send a clear and unequivocal message to Saddam Hussein that the time for taking the last opportunity to comply was limited and that, in case of Iraq's failure to comply, serious consequences would apply.

VICTOR MANUEL LAGOS PIZZATI (El Salvador) said it was in the context of restoring the territorial integrity of Kuwait that a key decision had been taken to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction. Regrettably, that objective was still unfulfilled, and the Government of Iraq had not complied with its international obligations, thereby defying the will of the international community and the binding decisions adopted by the Security Council to maintain peace or prevent acts that might undermine it. Today, the situation had not changed substantially when it came to the fundamental disarmament obligations. The protracted suffering of the Iraqi people was a direct result of the negligence of the Iraqi leadership and its non-compliance with resolution 687 (1991), among others.

He said he was profoundly concerned about the crisis, which had arisen out of Iraq's failure to comply fully with its obligations, leading to the "impending possibility" of an armed conflict and its consequences for peace, security and stability. Countless political and diplomatic efforts had been made to convince the Iraqi Government to comply with its international disarmament obligations, but Iraq had scorned the authority of the Council, as embodied in its unanimously adopted resolutions on the subject. Thus, the Council must face

up to its lofty responsibility and give effect to its decisions. No delegation had asserted that Iraq had fully complied.

Indeed, he said, the situation had arrived at a stage where it was necessary for the Security Council members to take a decision, with the greatest sense of urgency. The utmost effort must be made to retain the unity that had been a feature of the Council on the Iraqi issue. Inspections could not be indefinite and Iraq could not continue to delay compliance. It needed to take advantage of what remained of that “last chance” to resolve the crisis peacefully, and it should do so with the conviction that that would be to the benefit of the peoples of Iraq, the region and the world.

GOCHA LORDKIPANIDZE (Georgia) said everyone now had to make critical choices. Despite some recent progress on cooperation by Iraq, it continued to fail to meet the requirements of resolution 1441(2002), namely, to offer a full, accurate and complete declaration of its holdings, and engage in voluntary, unconditional and active cooperation with UNMOVIC and the IAEA. Iraq had already been found to be in material breach of 16 previous resolutions over 12 years. He believed, therefore, that Iraq’s continued possession of mass destruction weapons was a direct and active threat to international peace and security.

He called on Iraq to disarm “immediately and unconditionally” and to meet in full its obligations. Introduction of the time frame for implementation of resolution 1441 (2002) was justified. He joined those delegations that had voiced support for the draft resolution sponsored by Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. That text offered a sound basis for the Council to meet its responsibilities and take all necessary and effective action to compel immediate Iraqi compliance. No one should be allowed to breach its obligations under Council resolutions, especially when international peace and security was at stake. Otherwise, serious consequences were imminent.

EDUARDO JOSÉ SEVILLA SOMOZA (Nicaragua) said that multilateralism was being severely tested. The collective response taken would determine the credibility of the system that the international community had built up. Nicaragua had considered the latest reports provided by Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei. The former had stated that Iraq’s initiatives could not be regarded as active or proactive, nor that they constituted immediate cooperation or covered all areas. It was clear from the reports that the Iraqi regime continued to omit important information on compliance with relevant resolutions.

No one, he continued, had been able to find reliable proof that Iraq was cooperating fully under the relevant resolutions. World security hinged on full compliance with the resolutions of the Council. What was needed was rigorous compliance with multilateral mandates. It was not a question of the process of inspections or inspectors for an indefinite period of time, but a question of disarmament. The Council should immediately demand compliance with its various resolutions to achieve the disarmament of Iraq, as required by the international community, which had placed its faith in the United Nations to maintain international peace and security.

ERWIN ORTIZ GANDARILLAS (Bolivia) said he was concerned about the unforeseeable consequences in terms of human, political, economical and social costs an armed conflict could entail. He was, however, also concerned about the danger the Iraqi regime presented to international peace and security through its weapons of mass destruction, which it might put to use or might fall into the hands of extremist or terrorist groups. In that light, the Council had for

12 years demanded the total disarmament of Iraq’s war arsenal. Regrettably, the situation now stemmed from Iraq’s determination to arm itself, which was a defiance of resolution 1441 (2002). It was the responsibility of the Iraqi regime to demonstrate effectively and reliably that it possessed no weapons of mass destruction.

He was also concerned about the division in the Council, which undermined the United Nations capacity to defend international peace and security. Now, more than ever, the Council must shoulder its responsibility and act firmly, so that its decisions could be duly implemented. The message of the United Nations must be clear and unequivocal. The Government of Iraq must disarm promptly in order to spare the international community greater conflicts.

B.G. CHIDYAUSIKU (Zimbabwe), quoting the African Union, said that unilateral military action against Iraq would not only be accompanied by disastrous consequences, but would negate Africa’s stability and development. For that reason, Africa was against a military solution to the Iraq crisis. That observation was also expressed in the Non-Aligned Movement Kuala Lumpur Declaration, reaffirming one of the Movement’s cardinal principles — the settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means.

The Council had before it a road map for the peaceful disarmament of Iraq, which was clearly laid out by resolution 1441 (2002). It was the duty of the Council to support the inspectors, whose mandate was not fault-finding, but verifying Iraq’s disarmament. UNMOVIC and IAEA status reports had failed to find Iraq in material breach of resolution 1441. With both Mr. Blix and Mr. Elbaradei in agreement that Baghdad was proactively supporting the inspectors by encouraging its scientists to accept private interviews, allowing

reconnaissance flights and destroying the Al-Samoud 2 missiles, it was mind-boggling that some States had the audacity to request the Council to abandon the tried and tested diplomatic road map for war.

Resolution 1441 was about disarmament, not regime change, he said. There were other serious threats to international peace, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which was killing 3,000 people each week in southern Africa. Was it not disturbing that, while the coffers of the global AIDS fund were dry, some Member States could spend billions of dollars deploying 300,000 troops?

ALI HACHANI (Tunisia) said that, from the start, the Arab States had tried to defuse the crisis by redoubling efforts to exhaust all possible means to achieve a peaceful solution. Those efforts had borne fruit. Iraq had accepted the inspectors' return and had been cooperating with them, in order to implement the relevant resolutions of the Council. The latest Arab summit had reaffirmed Iraq's desire and that of the Arab States to continue along that path. The initiatives of the Arab nations reflected the international community's desire to stave off the horror of war. That was also in keeping with the majority public opinion. All international partners agreed on the need to give the inspectors more time, so that they could continue to realize the implementation of resolution 1441 (2002). Their job had so far produced concrete results, as affirmed by the chief weapons inspectors.

He said his country firmly believed in the need to continue to try to resolve the Iraqi question through political and peaceful means, thereby avoiding military action, especially since Iraq was clearly seeking to comply with the Council. He hoped there would be a peaceful solution in the near future, so that Iraq's unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty could be preserved. That would pave the way for the lifting of sanctions, and it would stave off instability and tensions in the Middle East and around the world. The peaceful option would also have a positive impact on the prestige of the United Nations and the Security Council, as the guarantor of collective global security. It would reinforce the Organization's role in seeking effective solutions to various matters, particularly that of the Palestinian people, who were suffering under Israeli occupation.

MWELWA C. MUSAMBACHIME (Zambia) said during six briefings to the Council, the weapons inspectors had reported progress in their work. Mr. Blix had stated that there was still work to be done and that UNMOVIC could fulfil the remaining tasks within months. Mr. ElBaradei had stated that after three months of intrusive inspections, the IAEA had found no evidence of the revival of a nuclear weapons programme. He believed war was not the best approach to resolve the issue and urged for continued peaceful measures provided for in resolution 1441 (2002).

He appealed to all Council members to maintain their unity. Any military action would spell disaster for the least developed countries, he said, and Africa and other developing regions would suffer the most. The world today should strive to maintain peace and promote economic development for the benefit of the entire mankind. Resources spent on armaments should be channelled to where it was needed for human survival.

MOHAMED BENNOUNA (Morocco) said that he had listened closely to the updates given last Friday by Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei. He had taken note of the progress made within the inspection regime and the tasks not yet completed, to ensure that Iraq was free of weapons of mass destruction. No one disputed the fact that the way in which the Council addressed the Iraqi crisis would have crucial repercussions on the future of the States in the Middle East, the global system of checks and balances and the United Nations system. The recent Non-Aligned summit, the Arab summit and the extraordinary meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference had affirmed the need to assert all possible efforts to resolve the crisis peacefully, in a way that would maintain the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. They had also affirmed that Iraq should complete implementation of resolution 1441 (2002) and that the inspection teams be given adequate time to complete their mandates.

His country had, two weeks ago, expressed the need to address the crisis peacefully on the basis of the implementation of United Nations resolutions, and save the Iraqi people, along with people of the region, the tragic consequences of a new war. At the same time, that required Iraq to maintain proactive cooperation with the United Nations inspectors and with the IAEA. He remained committed to dialogue and to the need to exhaust all possible avenues under the Charter to resolve all disputes by peaceful means. He also remained hopeful that major partners in the United Nations, especially in the Council, would avail themselves of the next few days to find a peaceful exit to the current dilemma in a way that would preserve the credibility of the Council.

DIMCE NIKOLOV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the international community was facing very complex decisions that not only related to the disarmament of Iraq, but to the future of the collective system of security of the United Nations, which was founded on Council unity. Thus, Council members should seek the broadest possible consensus for achieving the objective of the immediate, full and unconditional disarmament of Iraq. Despite some recent progress, the Iraqi regime continued to delay and obstruct the inspections. Clearly, it had been unwilling to respect the international community's demands,

aimed at resolving the matter peacefully. It had now become clear, however, that the threat remained and that Iraq was in “continuing material breach” of the Council’s resolutions.

He said that the Council must act in an even firmer matter now. The inspection process could not go on indefinitely. Political pressure and the real threat of the use of force had proven to be the right mechanisms for intensifying Iraqi cooperation, but the international community should not tolerate any more deceptions by the Iraqi regime. Iraq had done everything to prevent or avoid implementation of resolution 1441 (2002). Therefore, the further draft resolution before the Council was an effective means to increase pressure on Iraq to comply with the relevant resolutions. He supported the proposals contained therein for setting clear deadlines and concrete disarmament demands. Iraq must implement those immediately, actively, fully and unconditionally or face serious consequences, including the use of force as a last resort.

ISAAC C. LAMBA (Malawi), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the inspectors’ reports on 7 March had reduced the original anxieties about possible total non-compliance by Iraq. The Group was pleased to note the progress so far, as announced by the inspectors, on process and substance. The peaceful disarmament of Iraq, in line with resolution 1441 (2002), was possible with a little measure of extended patience and perseverance spent on the search for peace through the United Nations. Peace must be given a chance even at the eleventh hour. Resolution 1441 was not necessarily a blueprint for war and that explained the reluctance of some countries to go for a second resolution, which diminished further the chances for peaceful disarmament.

In the present situation, the heavy consequences of war in Iraq would be felt very acutely, even in Africa, he said. The overspill of the war would conceivably create a regional conflagration, as the conflict transcended the borders of Iraq. The economic consequences of the war would also impact negatively on poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Africa would witness an almost total collapse of its nascent industrial base and economic development for lack of capacity to accommodate the pressures resulting from war.

The African position, he said, did not endorse war at the present stage. The inspections required more time than the deadline of 17 March suggested in the draft resolution on which the Council would vote. The inspections could not continue indefinitely, but a realistic time frame would enhance the credibility of the Council’s intentions. The international community, through the inspectors, must subject the sincerity of Iraq’s promise of full cooperation and compliance with relevant resolutions to some rigorous test. Any war against Iraq would have to be sanctioned by a resolution from the Council.

MILOS ALCALAY (Venezuela), associating himself with the position of the Non-Aligned Movement, which reflected the feelings of the developing world, said he was deeply concerned about the current situation in Iraq, and expressed his country’s firm commitment to the strict compliance with international law. He also underlined its respect for the decisions of the Council, which implied not only the full compliance with all resolutions adopted in regard to Iraq, but also to support the next decision to be adopted by the Council.

He aligned himself with the statement of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile on 7 March, when she expressed the hope of reaching a unanimous support in response to the expectations of all the peoples of the world, in the same way consensus had been achieved on resolution 1441 (2002). He said efforts must be aimed at the search for a solution through diplomatic means.

PAPA LOUIS FALL (Senegal) said that Iraq must be urged to abide by Council resolutions. It was imperative for its leaders to scrupulously implement all Council texts, dating back to 1991. The chief weapons inspectors had said that, after many twists and turns and delays, Iraq had finally started proactively increasing its initiatives. The world was still not seeing the immediate cooperation demanded by the Security Council, although there was no cogent evidence of Iraq’s pursuit of a weapons of mass destruction programme. Hence, the widespread view was that the limited, hard-won progress had not yet reversed the general negative impression about the lack of cooperation. He, therefore, appealed to Iraq to show greater cooperation, and to the Council to give the inspectors time to conclude their mandate.

He said he appreciated the untiring willingness of UNMOVIC and the IAEA to pursue the mandate anchored in the relevant resolutions and to complete it in a matter of months, or weeks. Meanwhile, if the wrenching sanctions imposed on Baghdad were not soon lifted, and if the Iraqi people continued to pay a heavy price, the basic responsibility lay with the Iraqi leaders and their refusal, until recently, to comply with United Nations’ decisions. Iraq should take the “umpteenth” chance to provide tangible proof that it no longer possessed weapons of mass destruction, or, if it did, that it was prepared to publicly list them, in order that they might be destroyed. He urged Baghdad to honour its obligations in full in that final phase. It should release the Kuwaiti war prisoners, return its property and archives, and resolve the question of third-State nationals.

Disarmament was not instantaneous, nor could the inspections continue indefinitely, he said. As the representative of Cameroon had stated, members together should seek a credible alternative and explore even the slightest opportunities for peace, including previously unexplored avenues, based on international law.

Also, multilateralism must be preserved within the United Nations, as that was the best way to offset any threats to international peace and security. Finally, any use of force against Iraq must be pursued under the authority of the United Nations, through the Security Council, whose members needed to act together to stave off a clash of civilizations and offset tyrannical chaos.

ROBERT AISI (Papua New Guinea) said that, when all was said and done, the effects of the Council's final decision on the matter would have far-reaching global consequences. All countries, large and small, would be affected in one way or another. The matter did not only affect the Middle East and the immediate region, but the whole world. Already, its consequences were being manifested at many global levels. The Council's resolutions could not be left in abeyance. Any further delays would only compound an already simmering, volatile situation. While the inspectors had achieved much so far, their efforts could be far easier, quicker and more effective if there was greater willingness by Iraq to comply with the provisions of resolution 1441 (2002).

Undoubtedly, he said, Iraq could do more to comply with the relevant resolutions and defuse the extremely tense situation. As many had advocated, however, war should be the last resort. Many nations had seen the aftermath of the consequences of war. While the degree of destruction might vary, the common denominator was ultimately human suffering by all sides of a conflict. War should be avoided at all costs, and sustainable peace with extreme vigilance should be the imperative. But, if war was to be resorted to now, then the Council and the United Nations must be the final arbiter of such a decision. Today's question was perhaps the most challenging issue in United Nations' history. The world had called upon it to decide the matter, and it must be allowed to do so. Either way, the Council's decision would herald the birth of a new international order, whose far-reaching consequences would affect us all.

OSWALDO DE RIVERO (Peru) said the Government of Iraq must understand once and for all that the only possibility of normalizing its relations with the international community lay in immediate disarmament and unconditional, active and complete implementation of Council resolutions. Only those actions could be considered by the international community as verifiable guarantees that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction. Only in that way would it be possible to prevent the authority and legitimacy of the Council from being undermined.

He said the current crisis must be resolved within the normative framework of the United Nations, in particular, in the context of Council decisions. It was essential to first exhaust the possibilities of a peaceful solution. That depended on a complete disarmament of Iraq according to resolution 1441 (2002). The inspectors' reports had indicated that that obligation for disarmament had not been fulfilled. Full implementation of resolution 1441 (2002) should involve a binding deadline. One should not allow the time to be used to strip the Council resolutions of their content and leave them without effect.

LUIS GUILLERMO GIRALDO (Colombia) said that only the threat of the use of force and the approval of resolution 1441 (2002), which gave Iraq its last chance to cooperate unconditionally, immediately and actively with the inspections, had made it possible for some headway to be made in that cooperation. At the same time, that cooperation was still far from being unconditional, immediate and proactive. Iraq continued to be in non-compliance and had opened the possibility for application of the "serious consequences" mentioned in resolution 1441. He urged the members of the Council to engage in a final and decisive effort to maintain unity in the Council and agree on a new resolution that settled a specific deadline with clear benchmarks, so that the Iraqi Government would finally comply with their disarmament obligations.

The international community, however, faced a high and probable need to use force, he said. His country, having lived with internal conflict, could understand the situation. It had thought that it could convince armed groups about the goodness of the use of peaceful means, but now acknowledged that that only allowed them to buy time, arm more and more, and enlarge their capacity to harm. Their offerings of dialogue, peace, disarmament, and a peaceful solution to the conflict had been mere rhetoric to hide their worst intentions.

TERUNEH ZENNA (Ethiopia) said it was clear from the chief weapons inspectors' latest report that some progress had been achieved, but much remained to be done. Iraq should demonstrate, without delay, that it was complying with its disarmament obligations. It was imperative that the focus now be on the need to secure Iraq's disarmament, without resorting to the use of force, as much as possible. That required full, active and immediate compliance by Iraq with resolution 1441 (2002) and other relevant Council texts. A strong unity on the part of the Council was indispensable.

Progress achieved thus far had been, to a great extent, the result of a credible military presence in the region, he said. He was conscious of the incalculable human and material cost that would be unleashed in the region and beyond. Thus, he called on Iraq to comply with the resolutions. Force should be a very last option. Countries, such as his own, that had voted for the first resolution on the Iraq-Kuwait crisis remained convinced that it was only immediate Iraqi compliance that stood between war and peace.

MOHAMMED A. ALDOURI ([Iraq](#)) expressed his gratitude to all those States that had spoken during the last two days, especially to those States which had expressed to his country their support for a political solution to the Iraqi question. A clear majority of states had paid tribute to Iraq's cooperation, as they had to the work of the IAEA and the positive results achieved on the ground since the resumption of inspections.

He wanted to remind those States that had associated themselves with the United Kingdom and the United States that war was not in their interest. The war would bring an incalculable catastrophe to the world. Those States had been compelled to take that position, and he respected their decisions and views. He knew the magnitude of the pressure brought to bear by the United States and the United Kingdom on all, without exception. Some were able to opt for law, peace and the Charter, while others had included parts of the United States/United Kingdom resolution in their statements, in order to pacify those two countries. Others were being occupied by United States and United Kingdom troops, and some were even being paid.

He reassured the Council and all those States that, as expressed by Saddam Hussein last year, Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction. "It has no desire to join such a club now or in the future." The inspectors had searched every corner in Iraq and had left no stone unturned. Through reinforced inspections, they had stated, a few days ago, that they had not been able to find any nuclear weapons. Iraq had destroyed its weapons of mass destruction unilaterally in 1991. What was being asked now was how many weapons had been destroyed and how. It was a 13-year-old question. Only time was needed for Iraq to provide proof to the international community that it had no weapons of mass destruction. The question was not one of the presence of weapons of mass destruction or lack thereof.

He warned that those who joined the caravan of war would regret it. Referring to the development by the United States of the "mother of all bombs", he said that he wished the Council would stand up to new weapons of mass destruction, which would be launched against Iraq, in exercising its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. He hoped the Council would not stand by in the face of such a clear and present danger.

US State Department

Statement of the Atlantic Summit: a vision for Iraq and the Iraqi people

Statement of the United States, Britain, Spain and Portugal at the Azores – 16 March 2003

Iraq's talented people, rich culture, and tremendous potential have been hijacked by Saddam Hussein. His brutal regime has reduced a country with a long and proud history to an international pariah that oppresses its citizens, started two wars of aggression against its neighbors, and still poses a grave threat to the security of its region and the world.

Saddam's defiance of United Nations Security Council resolutions demanding the disarmament of his nuclear, chemical, biological, and long-range missile capacity has led to sanctions on Iraq and has undermined the authority of the U.N. For 12 years, the international community has tried to persuade him to disarm and thereby avoid military conflict, most recently through the unanimous adoption of UNSCR 1441. The responsibility is his. If Saddam refuses even now to cooperate fully with the United Nations, he brings on himself the serious consequences foreseen in UNSCR 1441 and previous resolutions.

In these circumstances, we would undertake a solemn obligation to help the Iraqi people build a new Iraq at peace with itself and its neighbors. The Iraqi people deserve to be lifted from insecurity and tyranny, and freed to determine for themselves the future of their country. We envisage a unified Iraq with its territorial integrity respected. All the Iraqi people -- its rich mix of Sunni and Shiite Arabs, Kurds, Turkomen, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and all others -- should enjoy freedom, prosperity, and equality in a united country. We will support the Iraqi people's aspirations for a representative government that upholds human rights and the rule of law as cornerstones of democracy.

We will work to prevent and repair damage by Saddam Hussein's regime to the natural resources of Iraq and pledge to protect them as a national asset of and for the Iraqi people. All Iraqis should share the wealth generated by their national economy. We will seek a swift end to international sanctions, and support an international reconstruction program to help Iraq achieve real prosperity and reintegrate into the global community.

We will fight terrorism in all its forms. Iraq must never again be a haven for terrorists of any kind.

In achieving this vision, we plan to work in close partnership with international institutions, including the United Nations; our Allies and partners; and bilateral donors. If conflict occurs, we plan to seek the adoption, on an urgent basis, of new United Nations Security Council resolutions that would affirm Iraq's territorial integrity, ensure rapid delivery of humanitarian relief, and endorse an appropriate post-conflict administration

for Iraq. We will also propose that the Secretary General be given authority, on an interim basis, to ensure that the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people continue to be met through the Oil for Food program.

Any military presence, should it be necessary, will be temporary and intended to promote security and elimination of weapons of mass destruction; the delivery of humanitarian aid; and the conditions for the reconstruction of Iraq. Our commitment to support the people of Iraq will be for the long term.

We call upon the international community to join with us in helping to realize a better future for the Iraqi people.

US State Department

Statement of the Atlantic Summit: Commitment to Transatlantic solidarity

Statement of the United States, Britain, Spain and Portugal at the Azores – 16 March 2003

We, the leaders of four democracies with strong Transatlantic affiliation, meet at a time of great challenge. We face painful choices.

We uphold a vision of international security we share with other nations. Our nations and people know the horror of war, whether visited upon us, or whether we are called to confront a great danger.

At this difficult moment, we reaffirm our commitment to our core values and the Transatlantic Alliance that has embodied them for two generations. Our alliance rests on a common commitment to democracy, freedom, and the rule of law. We are bound by solemn commitment to defend one another. We will face and overcome together the twin threats of the 21st century: terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. All nations must unite to defeat these dangers. We will not allow differences of the moment to be exploited in ways that bring no solutions.

Our security is tied to peace and security throughout the world. Together, we are working to bring security to Afghanistan, and to root out the terrorists who remain there. We affirm a vision of a Middle East peace in which two states, Israel and Palestine, will live side by side in peace, security, and freedom. We welcome the fact that the roadmap designed to implement this vision will soon be delivered to Palestinians and Israelis, upon the confirmation of an empowered Palestinian Prime Minister. We would welcome the appointment of a Palestinian Prime Minister with sufficient authority to put an end to terrorism and consolidate necessary reforms. We shall look to the parties to work constructively together. We have today issued a statement outlining the challenge that Saddam Hussein poses for the world, and our vision of a better future for the Iraqi people.

We urge our friends and allies to put aside differences, and work together for peace, freedom and security. The friendship and solidarity between Europe and the United States is strong and will continue to grow in years to come.

White House

Press availability with President Bush, Prime Minister Blair, President Aznar and Prime Minister Barroso

Community Activity Center Ballroom - Lajes Field - Terceira, The Azores, Portugal
16 March 2003 - 5:30 P.M. (Local)

PRIME MINISTER BARROSO: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I am very pleased to welcome here in the Azores the leaders of three friends and allied countries, the United States, Spain and United Kingdom. President Bush, Prime Minister Aznar, and Prime Minister Tony Blair.

This meeting in the Azores also shows the importance of transatlantic relations, and also shows the solidarity among our countries. Actually, these agreements have approved two statements, one statement on transatlantic relations, and a declarative statement on Iraq.

We have joined this initiative and we organized it here in the Azores because we thought this was the last opportunity for a political solution -- and this is how we see it, this is the last possibility for a political solution to the problem. Maybe it's a small chance, a small possibility, but even if it's one in one million, it's always worthwhile fighting for a political solution. And I think this is the message that we can get from this Atlantic summit.

As I was saying, for my English-speaking guests, I'll speak English now. First of all, let me say, welcome, George Bush, to Europe. I think it's important that we meet here, in a European country, in Portugal, but in

this territory of Azores that is halfway between the continent of Europe and the continent of America. I think it's not only logistically convenient, it has a special political meaning -- the beautiful meaning of our friendship and our commitment to our shared values.

So welcome to all of you. Welcome to you. And I now give the floor to President George Bush.

THE PRESIDENT: Jose, thank you very much for your hospitality. You've done a great job on such short notice. And I'm honored to be standing to here with you and two other friends as we work toward a great cause, and that is peace and security in this world.

We've had a really good discussion. We've been doing a lot of phone talking and it was good to get together and to visit and to talk. And we concluded that tomorrow is a moment of truth for the world. Many nations have voiced a commitment to peace and security. And now they must demonstrate that commitment to peace and security in the only effective way, by supporting the immediate and unconditional disarmament of Saddam Hussein.

The dictator of Iraq and his weapons of mass destruction are a threat to the security of free nations. He is a danger to his neighbors. He's a sponsor of terrorism. He's an obstacle to progress in the Middle East. For decades he has been the cruel, cruel oppressor of the Iraq people.

On this very day 15 years ago, Saddam Hussein launched a chemical weapons attack on the Iraqi village of Halabja. With a single order the Iraqi regime killed thousands of men and women and children, without mercy or without shame. Saddam Hussein has proven he is capable of any crime. We must not permit his crimes to reach across the world.

Saddam Hussein has a history of mass murder. He possesses the weapons of mass murder. He agrees -- he agreed to disarm Iraq of these weapons as a condition for ending the Gulf War over a decade ago. The United Nations Security Council, in Resolution 1441, has declared Iraq in material breach of its longstanding obligations, demanding once again Iraq's full and immediate disarmament, and promised serious consequences if the regime refused to comply. That resolution was passed unanimously and its logic is inescapable; the Iraqi regime will disarm itself, or the Iraqi regime will be disarmed by force. And the regime has not disarmed itself.

Action to remove the threat from Iraq would also allow the Iraqi people to build a better future for their society. And Iraq's liberation would be the beginning, not the end, of our commitment to its people. We will supply humanitarian relief, bring economic sanctions to a swift close, and work for the long-term recovery of Iraq's economy. We'll make sure that Iraq's natural resources are used for the benefit of their owners, the Iraqi people.

Iraq has the potential to be a great nation. Iraq's people are skilled and educated. We'll push as quickly as possible for an Iraqi interim authority to draw upon the talents of Iraq's people to rebuild their nation. We're committed to the goal of a unified Iraq, with democratic institutions of which members of all ethnic and religious groups are treated with dignity and respect.

To achieve this vision, we will work closely with the international community, including the United Nations and our coalition partners. If military force is required, we'll quickly seek new Security Council resolutions to encourage broad participation in the process of helping the Iraqi people to build a free Iraq.

Crucial days lie ahead for the world. I want to thank the leaders here today, and many others, for stepping forward and taking leadership, and showing their resolve in the cause of peace and the cause of security.

Jose Maria.

PRESIDENT AZNAR: Good evening everyone. I would firstly like to thank the Prime Minister, Jose Durao, for his hospitality and welcome, which I particularly am grateful for. And I'm very pleased to be in the Azores once again.

I have short remarks on our debate on this situation and on the documents we've agreed on during today's meeting. I'd first like to refer to our document on Atlantic solidarity. We have renewed Atlantic commitment on our common values and principles, in favor of democracy, freedom and the rule of law.

We understand that the expression of this commitment is essential, by way of guarantee of peace, security and international freedom. And I honestly believe that there is no other alternative to the expression of the Atlantic commitment in terms of security. We are committed on a day-to-day fight against new threats, such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and tyrannic regimes that do not comply with international law. They threaten all of us, and we must all act, consequently.

This transatlantic link, this transatlantic solidarity has always been, is, and should continue to be, in my opinion, a great European commitment, and as such, amongst other things, we express it this way -- without this commitment, today's Europe could not be understood. And without that commitment, it would be very difficult to picture the Europe of tomorrow.

So I would like to invite our friends, our allies, to leave aside any circumstantial differences and to work together seriously for that commitment of democracy, freedom and peace, so that this becomes a commitment of us all.

We've agreed on launching, on boosting the Middle East peace process, and on our vision that that peace process has to accommodate with all necessary security guarantees and putting an end to terrorism. And this should end with the peaceful coexistence of two states, an independent Palestinian state and the Israeli state.

In view of the situation created by Iraq, with their continued non-compliance of international law, I would like to remind you that we all said before we came here that we were not coming to the Azores to make a declaration of war, that we were coming after having made every possible effort, after having made this effort, continuing to make this effort, to working to achieve the greatest possible agreement, and for international law to be respected and for U.N. resolutions to be respected.

And we would like to say that we are aware of the fact that this is the last opportunity -- the last opportunity expressed in Resolution 1441, adopted unanimously by the Security Council, and that being aware that this is the last opportunity, we are also making the last effort. And we are ready to make this last effort of the very many efforts we've been making throughout these last weeks and months.

We are well aware of the international world public opinion, of its concern. And we are also very well aware of our responsibilities and obligations. If Saddam Hussein wants to disarm and avoid the serious consequences that he has been warned about by the United Nations, he can do so. And nothing in our document, nor in our statement, can prevent him from doing so, if he wants to. So his is the sole responsibility.

Tony.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Thank you, Jose Maria. Thank you, Jose, for hosting us today. And I think it's just worth returning to the key point, which is our responsibility to uphold the will of the United Nations set out in Resolution 1441 last November. And for four and a half months, now, we've worked hard to get Saddam to cooperate fully, unconditionally, as that resolution demanded.

Even some days ago we were prepared to set out clear tests that allowed us to conclude whether he was cooperating fully or not, with a clear ultimatum to him if he refused to do so. And the reason we approached it in that is that that is what we agreed in Resolution 1441. This was his final opportunity; he had to disarm unconditionally. Serious consequences would follow if he failed to do so.

And this is really the impasse that we have, because some say there should be no ultimatum, no authorization of force in any new U.N. resolution; instead, more discussion in the event of noncompliance. But the truth is that without a credible ultimatum authorizing force in the event of noncompliance, then more discussion is just more delay, with Saddam remaining armed with weapons of mass destruction and continuing a brutal, murderous regime in Iraq.

And this game that he is playing is, frankly, a game that he has played over the last 12 years. Disarmament never happens. But instead, the international community is drawn into some perpetual negotiation, gestures designed to divide the international community, but never real and concrete cooperation leading to disarmament.

And there's not a single person on the Security Council that doubts the fact he is not fully cooperating today. Nobody, even those who disagree with the position that we have outlined, is prepared to say there is full cooperation, as 1441 demanded.

Not a single interview has taken place outside of Iraq, even though 1441 provided for it. Still, no proper production or evidence of the destruction, or, for example, -- just to take one example, the 10,000 liters of anthrax that the inspectors just a week ago said was unaccounted for. And that is why it is so important that the international community, at this time, gives a strong and unified message.

And I have to say that I really believe that had we given that strong message sometime ago, Saddam might have realized that the games had to stop. So now we have reached the point of decision, and we make a final appeal for there to be that strong, unified message on behalf of the international community that lays down a clear ultimatum to Saddam that authorizes force if he continues to defy the will of the whole of the international community set out in 1441.

We will do all we can in the short time that remains to make a final round of contacts, to see whether there is a way through this impasse. But we are in the final stages, because, after 12 years of failing to disarm him, now is the time when we have to decide.

Two other points, briefly, on the documents that we've put before you. The first is the -- President Aznar was just saying to you a moment ago on the transatlantic alliance is, I think, very important. Some of you will have heard me say this before, but let me just repeat it. I believe that Europe and America should stand together on the big issues of the day. I think it is a tragedy when we don't. And that transatlantic alliance is strong and we need to strengthen it still further.

And secondly, we've set out for you that should it come to conflict, we make a pledge to the people of Iraq. As President Bush was just saying to you a moment or two ago, it is the people of Iraq who are the primary victims of Saddam: the thousands of children that die needlessly every year; the people locked up in his prisons or executed simply for showing disagreement with the regime; a country that is potentially prosperous reduced to poverty; 60 percent of the population reliant on food aid.

And what we say is that we will protect Iraq's territorial integrity; we will support representative government that unites Iraq on the democratic basis of human rights and the rule of law; that we will help Iraq rebuild -- and not rebuild because of the problems of conflict, where if it comes to that, we will do everything we can to minimize the suffering of the Iraqi people, but rebuild Iraq because of the appalling legacy that the rule of Saddam has left the Iraqi people -- and in particular, Iraq's natural resources remain the property of the people of Iraq. And that wealth should be used for the Iraqi people. It is theirs, and will remain so, administered by the U.N. in the way we set out.

Finally, on the Middle East peace process, I welcome very much the statement that President Bush made the other day. I think it's important now. He said he wanted a partner on the Palestinian side. I think the coming appointment of Abu Mazen is so important there. It allows us to take this process forward. The road map give us the way forward. The appointment of Abu Mazen gives us the right partner to take this forward. And I believe that that will demonstrate, and it's important to demonstrate, in particular at this time, that our approach to people in the Middle East, in that troubled region is indeed even-handed. And all of us will work to make sure that that vision of the Middle East, two states, Israel confident of its purity, a Palestinian state that is viable, comes about and is made reality.

Thank you.

Q: (Inaudible.)

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes. They couldn't hear the question.

Q: I was asking the Portuguese Prime Minister, how does he see the result of this summit. Does the Prime Minister think that starting now, Portugal has more responsibilities with this war that seems to be inevitable?

PRIME MINISTER BARROSO: The results of the summit, as I described them and as all the other heads of state and government said it, too, this summit is -- this is the last opportunity for a political solution to this very serious problem for the international community. This has been said here. It's been said here that tomorrow -- tomorrow we'll start with these last initiatives towards a political solution. And it's for that reason I am very, very happy with the results of this summit.

Now, coming to our responsibility in case there is a conflict, I must say that the responsibility falls entirely on the dictator Saddam Hussein. He bears the entire responsibility because he has not respected for all of these years international law and consistently violated the U.N. resolutions. And in that case, if there is a conflict, I want to repeat it once more, Portugal will be next -- side by side with his allies. And the fact that we are here today in the Azores with the United States, with Spain and with the UK, this is very significant.

As it's been said here before, the transatlantic relationship is very, very important, not only for Europe and for the U.S., but it's very important for the whole world. I remember a few days ago, Kofi Annan in the European conference in Brussels, said the same thing -- he said this is very important. It's very important for Europe and the U.S. to remain united and not separate, because the world needs the U.S. and Europe working together towards the same direction, in the same sense -- not only about the security, but also fighting under-development and all the other tasks that fall to the international community.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Ron Fournier.

Q: Thank you, Mr. President. Before I ask my question I just want to nail down one thing so there's no confusion. When you talk about tomorrow being the moment of truth, are you saying that is the --

PRESIDENT BUSH: Is this the question, or are you trying to work in two questions?

Q: Yes, sir. (Laughter.) Because there's one thing we need to make clear. When you say tomorrow is the moment of truth, does that mean tomorrow is the last day that the resolution can be voted up or down, and at the end of the day tomorrow, one way or another the diplomatic window has close?

PRESIDENT BUSH: That's what I'm saying.

Q: Thank you, sir. And now for the question --

PRESIDENT BUSH: And now for your question?

Q: That being the case, regardless --

PRESIDENT BUSH: That being my answer --

Q: Regardless of whether the resolution goes up or down or gets withdrawn, it seems to me you're going to be facing a moment of truth. And given that you've already said you don't think there's very much chance

Saddam Hussein is going to disarm, and given that you say you don't think there's very much chance he's going to go to go into exile, aren't we going to war?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Tomorrow is the day that we will determine whether or not diplomacy can work. And we sat and visited about this issue, about how best to spend our time between now and tomorrow. And as Prime Minister Blair said, we'll be working the phones and talking to our partners and talking to those who may now clearly understand the objective, and we'll see how it goes tomorrow.

Saddam Hussein can leave the country, if he's interested in peace. You see, the decision is his to make. And it's been his to make all along as to whether or not there's the use of the military. He got to decide whether he was going to disarm, and he didn't. He can decide whether he wants to leave the country. These are his decisions to make. And thus far he has made bad decisions.

Q: I understand that if tomorrow is the day for taking the final decision, that means that you consider that there's no possible way out through the United Nations because a majority does not support a war action. I would like to know, Mr. Blair, Mr. Bush, whether in that military offensive you count on many countries, whether it's going to be the UK and the U.S. carrying out the military offensive? I understand from what Mr. Blair that you're counting on the U.N. for the reconstruction. Are you going to look for other countries through the United Nations?

And for Mr. Aznar, what is Spain's participation in that military offensive, in addition to your political support?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Resolution 1441, which was unanimously approved, that said Saddam Hussein would unconditionally disarm, and if he didn't, there would be serious consequences. The United Nations Security Council looked at the issue four and a half months ago and voted unanimously to say: Disarm immediately and unconditionally, and if you don't, there are going to be serious consequences. The world has spoken. And it did it in a unified voice.

Sorry.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: The issue is very simply this, that we cannot have a situation where what happens through the United Nations, having agreed to 1441, having said there would be serious consequences if he does not cooperate fully and unconditionally, what we cannot have is a situation where we simply go back for endless discussion.

Now, we have provided the right diplomatic way through this, which is to lay down a clear ultimatum to Saddam: Cooperate or face disarmament by force. And that is entirely within the logic, the letter, the spirit of 1441. And that is why -- all the way through we have tried to provide a diplomatic solution. After over four and a half months since we passed Resolution 1441, we're now three months on from the declaration that Saddam on the 8th of December that not a single person in the international community -- not one -- believes was an honest declaration of what he had. And yet, 1441 said, the first step of cooperation was to make an honest declaration.

So when people say haven't we exhausted all the diplomatic avenues, we tried exhausting. But understand from our perspective and from the perspective of the security of the world, we cannot simply go back to the Security Council, for this discussion to be superseded by that discussion, to be superseded by another discussion. That's what's happened for 12 years. That's why he's still got the weapons of mass destruction. We have to come to the point of decision. And that really is what the next period of time is going to be about.

PRESIDENT AZNAR: Well, I would like to say that this statement we're making today, as we've all said, it's a last chance, one last attempt to reach the greatest possible consensus amongst ourselves. And I can assure all of you that we've made -- we have all made -- enormous efforts, and we're going to continue making these efforts in order to try to reach an agreement, to reach a solution.

We have our own worry, our own responsibility to make U.N. resolutions be abided by. If the Security Council unanimously adopts a resolution -- Resolution 1441 -- giving one last opportunity to disarm to someone who has weapons of mass destruction and we know he has used them, the Security Council cannot, one year after the other, wait for its resolutions to be implemented. That would be the best way to do away with it altogether. And it could do away with all the United Nations' credibility. And we honestly don't want that to happen.

To me, there is no -- you cannot have the same distance between illegality and impunity. And neither Saddam Hussein, nor any other tyrant with weapons of mass destruction can set the rules for international law and the international community.

Q: I'm from the BBC. Can I ask, first of all, Prime Minister Blair -- you said that you want a second resolution to be put down and voted on. Could we be clear; is that what's going to happen tomorrow, under all circumstances?

And either way -- also, if I may, for President Bush -- if you don't get that second resolution, what is the future for the United Nations? You talked about Saddam Hussein dividing world community. Surely, he succeeded.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Well, on your last point, I think this is one of the things that is tragic about this situation, that Saddam plays these games and we carry on allowing him to play them. Now, we will do, in the next period of time, with respect to the resolution, what we believe to be in the interest of the U.N.

But I would say why I think it is so important that even now, at this late stage, we try to get the United Nations to be the root of resolving this -- because the threat is there and everyone accepts it: the threat of weapons of mass destruction, the threat of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists who will cause maximum damage to our people. Everybody accepts the disarmament of Saddam has to happen. Everybody accepts that he was supposed to cooperate fully with the inspectors. Everybody accepts that he is not doing so.

So, whatever the tactics within the U.N. -- and that's something we can decide -- whatever those tactics, the key point of principle is this: that when we came together last November and laid down Resolution 1441, now is the moment when we decide whether we meant it and it was his final opportunity to disarm, or face serious consequences -- or whether, alternatively, we're simply going to drag out the diplomatic process forever. And that's why I say it's the point of decision.

Q: Vote or not?

PRESIDENT BUSH: I was the guy that said they ought to vote. And one country voted -- at least showed their cards, I believe. It's an old Texas expression, show your cards, when you're playing poker. France showed their cards. After I said what I said, they said they were going to veto anything that held Saddam to account. So cards have been played. And we'll just have to take an assessment after tomorrow to determine what that card meant.

Let me say something about the U.N. It's a very important organization. That's why I went there on September the 12th, 2002, to give the speech, the speech that called the U.N. into account, that said if you're going to pass resolutions, let's make sure your words mean something. Because I understand the wars of the 21st century are going to require incredible international cooperation. We're going to have to cooperate to cut the money of the terrorists, and the ability for nations, dictators who have weapons of mass destruction to provide training and perhaps weapons to terrorist organizations. We need to cooperate, and we are. Our countries up here are cooperating incredibly well.

And the U.N. must mean something. Remember Rwanda, or Kosovo. The U.N. didn't do its job. And we hope tomorrow the U.N. will do its job. If not, all of us need to step back and try to figure out how to make the U.N. work better as we head into the 21st century. Perhaps one way will be, if we use military force, in the post-Saddam Iraq the U.N. will definitely need to have a role. And that way it can begin to get its legs, legs of responsibility back.

But it's important for the U.N. to be able to function well if we're going to keep the peace. And I will work hard to see to it that at least from our perspective, that the U.N. is able to be -- able to be a responsibility body, and when it says something, it means it, for the sake of peace and for the sake of the security, for the capacity to win the war of -- the first war of the 21st century, which is the war against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction in the hands of dictators.

Thank you all.

PRIME MINISTER BARROSO: Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. This is the end of the conference. Have a good trip.

US State Department

Powell Hopes for Turkey Acceptance of U.S. Troops

16 March 2003

Secretary of State Colin Powell indicated that he continues to hold out hope that the Turkish parliament will approve the basing of U.S. troops within Turkey, as the United States prepares for a possible invasion of Iraq.

Interviewed on ABC's This Week March 16, Powell said that although the parliament already has voted not to accept the troops, he knows that the new Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and former Prime Minister Abdullah Gul "are trying to do everything they can to get that package through" in a new vote.

Powell added that "it could be as long as a week" before the vote occurs. He noted that Erdogan has just come into office, and this issue has "hit them at a rather difficult political time, but Turkey is a great friend of ours, a

great ally of ours, we are very sensitive to their concerns about their relationship with the situation in northern Iraq and we're working very closely."

Powell also said U.S. officials have made it clear to Turkey that "it would be better if there were no Turkish forces in [northern Iraq], as part of any military operation that might take place. They are concerned about that area, but they also know that we don't want to see anything happen that would precipitate a crisis between Turkey and the Kurdish populations in northern Iraq."

Powell also discussed at length issues surrounding United Nations Security Council efforts to get Iraq's Saddam Hussein to give up all weapons of mass destruction.

ANP

Van den Broek: 'Niet meedoen aan aanval Irak zonder VN'

16 maart 2003

RIJSDWIJK (ANP) - Oud-minister Van den Broek van Buitenlandse Zaken (CDA) vindt dat zijn eigen partij en de PvdA hun onderhandelingen over een nieuw kabinet niet moeten opofferen aan militaire steun aan een aanval op Irak. Van den Broek zei dit zondag in het tv-programma Buitenhof.

"Als er geen VN-steun is voor zo'n aanval, moet Nederland geen militaire bijstand verlenen als dat de kansen op een kabinet van PvdA en CDA verspeelt". De CDA'er doelde op eerdere uitspraken van PvdA-leider Bos dat hij niet in een kabinet wil zitten met het CDA als die partij een aanval steunt zonder VN-steun. De christen-democraten hebben zich echter niet tegen zo'n aanval zonder Veiligheidsraadresolutie uitgesproken.

„De schade die dat oplevert in Nederland, weegt niet op tegen loyaliteit met de internationale rechtsorde. De bijdrage die Nederland kan leveren bij een dergelijke militaire actie maakt toch weinig verschil," aldus Van den Broek.

Washington Post

U.S. lacks specifics on banned arms

By Walter Pincus – 16 March 2003

Despite the Bush administration's claims about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, U.S. intelligence agencies have been unable to give Congress or the Pentagon specific information about the amounts of banned weapons or where they are hidden, according to administration officials and members of Congress.

Senior intelligence analysts say they feel caught between the demands from White House, Pentagon and other government policymakers for intelligence that would make the administration's case "and what they say is a lack of hard facts," one official said.

"They have only circumstantial evidence . . . nothing that proves this amount or that," said an individual who has regularly been briefed by the CIA.

The assertions, coming on the eve of a possible decision by President Bush to go to war against Iraq, have raised concerns among some members of the intelligence community about whether administration officials have exaggerated intelligence in a desire to convince the American public and foreign governments that Iraq is violating United Nations prohibitions against chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons and long-range missile systems.

"They see a particular truck associated with chemical weapons activities keep reappearing, and they estimate chemical activities are there, but that and most intelligence would not pass the courtroom evidence test. For policymakers, who are out on a limb, that is not enough," one official said, adding that he questioned whether the administration is shaping intelligence for political purposes.

Said another senior intelligence analyst, "If it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck and looks like a duck, we professionals say it's a duck. . . . They [policymakers] want a smoking duck."

Although senior intelligence officials said they are convinced Iraq is hiding weapons of mass destruction, they feel they will not be able to prove it until after an invasion, when U.S. military forces and weapons analysts would have unrestricted access. These officials said the administration is withholding some of the best intelligence on suspected Iraqi weapons -- uncertain as it is -- from U.N. weapons inspectors in anticipation of war.

"They are clearly hiding weapons, but it is a Catch-22 situation that we will only prove after an invasion," one senior intelligence official said.

U.S. intelligence on Iraqi weapons sites has raised a credibility problem involving the U.N. inspectors and, more recently, members of Congress.

Intelligence agencies in December produced a 2-inch-thick book that listed high-, medium- and low-priority sites in Iraq related to weapons of mass destruction, according to senior administration officials and members of Congress.

Sen. Carl M. Levin (D-Mich.), while chairman of the Armed Services Committee earlier this year, several times asked CIA Director George J. Tenet about how many of the "top suspect sites" had been passed to chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix. The initial transfers of information to U.N. inspectors were limited as U.S. intelligence was measuring the security of Blix's system. In one early case, U.S. intelligence data had been electronically intercepted by Iraq, officials said.

Levin was concerned that only a small number of sites contained in the December list had gone to Blix's team, but at a public hearing in February, Tenet said that all relevant information on high- and moderate-value sites had been shared with the inspectors.

Levin said in an interview that his concern the United States was holding back its best information was heightened by a March 6 letter Tenet sent to Sen. John W. Warner (R-Va.), now Armed Services Committee chairman. In it the CIA director said the United States has "now provided detailed information on all of the high-value and moderate-value sites," as well as "far more than half of these lower-interest sites" to the inspectors.

Levin wrote Tenet back March 7 saying the CIA director gave a "misleading assertion" and repeated a request that Tenet provide a percentage figure, not the number, of the "top suspect sites" listed in the December report that had been turned over to U.N. inspectors. "I can't believe we are holding back, and it would be shocking if it is being done, because it might lead the inspectors to something," Levin said.

A CIA spokesman refused to discuss the matter. But some officials charge the administration is not interested in helping the inspectors discover weapons because a discovery could bolster supporters in the U.N. Security Council of continued inspections and undermine the administration's case for war.

"We don't want to have a smoking gun," a ranking administration official said recently. He added, "I don't know whether the point is to embarrass Blix or embarrass Saddam Hussein."

Another official familiar with the intelligence said, "Not all the top sites have been passed to the inspectors."

A senior intelligence analyst said one explanation for the difficulties inspectors have had in locating weapons caches "is because there may not be much of a stockpile."

Administration officials, in making the case against Iraq, repeatedly have failed to mention the considerable amount of documented weapons destruction that took place in Iraq between 1991 and 1998, when the previous U.N. Special Commission on Iraq had inspection teams in the field.

In that period, under U.N. supervision, Iraq destroyed 817 of 819 proscribed medium-range missiles, 14 launchers, 9 trailers and 56 fixed missile-launch sites. It also destroyed 73 of 75 chemical or biological warheads and 163 warheads for conventional explosives.

U.N. inspectors also supervised destruction of 88,000 filled and unfilled chemical munitions, more than 600 tons of weaponized and bulk chemical weapons agents, 4,000 tons of precursor chemicals and 980 pieces of equipment considered key to production of such weapons.

Destruction of biological weapons -- which were not discovered to be in Iraq's possession until 1995 -- was less advanced. The main facility where biological weapons were produced and developed, Al Hakam, was destroyed along with 60 pieces of equipment taken from three other facilities. In addition, 22 tons of growth media for biological weapons were destroyed.

CNN

War threat sparks Western exodus

17 March 2003

LONDON, England (CNN) --Western countries are warning their nationals to leave the Gulf region as war looms ever nearer.

The British government Monday warned its citizens to "urgently" leave Kuwait because of a high threat of terrorist attacks. It follows a warning from the German government to its nationals to leave Iraq.

The U.S. State Department on Sunday ordered all non-essential consular personnel and dependents to leave Kuwait, Syria, Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, and also warned U.S. citizens against traveling to these areas.

The UK Foreign Office Web site cited the threat of terrorist attack for its nationals to leave Kuwait. "If you are already in Kuwait, you should leave urgently while commercial flights remain available."

"The threat to British individuals and organisations from terrorism is now high. It will rise further in the event of hostilities with Iraq." Britain is reducing its embassy staff in Kuwait, and has already ordered their dependents out of the country, according to the statement.

The German Foreign Ministry is urging the estimated 40 Germans still in Iraq to leave. A ministry spokesman said Sunday that German embassy staff in Baghdad would help make arrangements for any Germans who wish to leave. The German charges d'affaires is expected to leave Iraq for Amman, Jordan, and close the embassy within the next three days, the spokesman said. A foreign ministry statement said: "Germans in Iraq are being called to leave the country immediately."

And the Russian Foreign Ministry urged its citizens to leave Iraq and not travel to the country. Russia, which has already withdrawn dependents of employees working in Iraq, warned its people of an "exacerbated situation around Iraq."

Americans and Australians have also been warned against traveling in the region.

The U.S. warned its citizens in the relatively liberal Gulf nation United Arab Emirates (UAE) to avoid large crowds and nightspots popular with Westerners and to exercise caution when traveling within the country. The decision "is a result of an overall assessment of the security situation in the region due to the threat of military action in Iraq," the State Department said in three separate travel warnings issued simultaneously Sunday.

Private American citizens in Syria, Kuwait, Israel and the Palestinian territories "are strongly urged to depart immediately," because of growing tensions, the warnings added. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell also advised Americans to leave Iraq. "In the event of military action in Iraq, there is a risk that Iraq or terrorist organizations may use chemical and/or biological materials which could affect the region," the State Department said.

The spate of travel warnings came as U.S. President George W. Bush warned "Monday [represents] the moment of truth for the world." The warnings also noted military action in Iraq could cause disruptions in commercial flights, which would make departure from those areas more difficult.

Some U.S. consular personnel remain in Kuwait, Syria, Israel and the territories to provide emergency services to American citizens, the State Department said.

In another further worrying sign that war could be imminent, the U.N.'s observer mission along the Iraq-Kuwait border has ceased operations and is pulling its staff out of the area.

De Telegraaf

Blix: Inspecteurs blijven zo lang mogelijk in Irak

17 maart 2003

Stockholm - De wapeninspecteurs van de Verenigde Naties blijven zo lang mogelijk in Irak, "tot alle hoop op vrede is verdwenen". Dat heeft de chef van de wapeninspecteurs, Hans Blix, gezegd in een vraaggesprek met de Zweedse krant Aftonbladet van maandag.

"Wij blijven zo lang als wij durven. Vertrekken, dat is een signaal geven dat alles voorbij is. Wij willen niet vertrekken voor alle hoop vervlogen is", aldus Blix. De Zweed gaf toe dat "het er op dit moment niet erg veelbelovend uitziet".

Blix vindt dat er tijdens het bliksemoverleg van de Verenigde Staten, Groot-Brittannië en Spanje op de Azoren geen sprake was van een "gesloten front". "President Bush lijkt aan te dringen op manieren om Irak te bevrijden en te verzekeren dat er geen wapens meer zijn. Blair en Aznar "leggen meer nadruk op het feit dat zij een laatste kans willen vinden om de wereld te verenigen, om Saddam Hussein een ultimatum te stellen".

Reuters

New Iraq Resolution Has 'No Chance' in U.N.-Russia

17 March 2003

MOSCOW (Reuters) - A senior Russian foreign ministry official said on Monday a draft resolution backed by the United States, Britain and Spain for military action against Iraq had no chance of winning U.N. Security Council approval. "As before, this draft has no chance of getting through the Security Council," Interfax news agency quoted Yuri Fedotov, a deputy foreign minister, as saying.

"We consider that further resolutions are not required," he said in Russia's first official comments since a summit of the United States, Britain and Spain set Monday as a "moment of truth for the world" in the crisis over Iraq.

Washington accuses Iraqi President Saddam Hussein of developing forbidden weapons and has threatened to go to war to disarm him. U.N. Security Council consultations were due to resume in New York at 10 a.m. (1500 GMT) on Monday.

Russia, a veto-wielding member of the Security Council, has with fellow members France and Germany, said U.N. weapons inspectors should have more time to search Iraq for banned weapons.

"Russia thinks that all the members of the Security Council back our support for a political solution to the Iraqi crisis, (a view) which is shared by the overwhelming majority of the international community," Fedotov said.

France has already threatened to veto any resolution authorizing the use of force

Telegraaf

De Hoop Scheffer hoopt op diplomatie

17 maart 2003

Den Haag - Nederland hoopt dat tussen nu en maandagavond de diplomatie nog alle kans krijgt om een oorlog tegen Irak te voorkomen. Minister De Hoop Scheffer (Buitenlandse Zaken) benadrukt bovendien het belang van een voorttrekkersrol voor de VN-veiligheidsraad en hij wil dat daar de discussie maandag tijdens een nieuw beraad volledig tot zijn recht komt.

De bewindsman reageert daarmee op de uitkomst van een topontmoeting zondag tussen de Amerikaanse president Bush, premier Blair en zijn Spaanse collega Aznar op de Azoren. Zij spraken daar af dat maandag de 'dag van de waarheid' wordt voor Irak. Als de Iraakse president Saddam Hussein niet tot ontwapening bereid blijkt, gaan de drie, met of zonder steun van de VN-veiligheidsraad, over tot militair ingrijpen.

Een woordvoerder van het ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken wil zondagavond nog niet vooruitlopen op de positie van Nederland als het zover zal komen. "Onze positie bekijken we op dat moment. Bovendien volgt dan na de VN-beraadslagen nog de besluitvorming op nationaal niveau."

Reuters

U.S. Poised to Drop UN Resolution and Head for War

17 March 2003

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - The United Nations faced a Monday deadline for sanctioning force to disarm Iraq, but France restated a veto threat that is likely to signal the end of diplomacy and a green light for a U.S.-led war.

After President Bush declared on Sunday that "tomorrow is a moment of truth for the world" in the crisis over Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction, Security Council consultations were called for 10 a.m. New York time (1500 GMT).

"France cannot accept the resolution that is on the table in New York... which poses an ultimatum and which envisages an automatic use of force," French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin told Europe 1 radio on Monday.

Britain and the United States, who have a 250,000-strong force in or around the Gulf, advised their civilians to leave Kuwait, which is the likely launch pad for an invasion of Iraq.

Saddam Hussein told his military commanders that if Iraq were attacked, it would take the battle anywhere in the world "wherever there is sky, land or water."

As conflict loomed, U.N. observers who have monitored the Iraq-Kuwait border since the 1991 Gulf War said on Monday they had stopped all operations in the demilitarized zone, which invasion forces would have to cross.

Britain landed some of its seaborne marines on a Kuwaiti beach on Monday after a forecast of violent sandstorms that could hamper an amphibious assault. A British officer, Captain Alan Massey, told his men war could come "within very few days."

A U.S.-British-Spanish resolution on the use of force, opposed by a majority on the Security Council, appeared doomed.

Bush issued his deadline after an emergency summit with the leaders of Britain, Spain and Portugal on the Azores Islands in the eastern Atlantic.

"We concluded that tomorrow is a moment of truth for the world," he told a news conference after a meeting an Iraqi newspaper called "a summit of evils."

U.S., BRITAIN CHALLENGE FRANCE

Bush said the 15-member Security Council had to agree in the next 24 hours on a resolution laying the groundwork for war. He left no doubt that the United States and its allies would otherwise move to invade Iraq without explicit U.N. backing.

But after weeks of trying to get the minimum nine votes for the resolution, Washington ended up with only one nation, Bulgaria, publicly declaring its support.

Both France and Russia have threatened a veto. France wants a minimum of 30 days for Iraq to meet final disarmament tasks set by chief U.N weapons inspector Hans Blix. The Bush administration has rejected that.

Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair repeatedly challenged President Jacques Chirac of France to withdraw his veto threat. If he stands firm, they are expected to walk away from the U.N. process rather than face a humiliating defeat.

Bush is expected to go on television this week warning Americans of the coming war and giving U.N. inspectors and humanitarian workers time to quit Iraq, U.S. officials say.

In Baghdad, Saddam said on Sunday it was a "great lie" that Iraq still had banned weapons and branded the United States "the unjust judge of the world." Foreign Minister Naji Sabri said tens of thousands of "martyrs" were ready to fight Americans.

"When the enemy opens the war on a large scale it should realize that the battle between us will be waged wherever there is sky, earth and water anywhere in the world," Saddam told officers at a meeting quoted by the state Iraqi News Agency.

Villepin is considering attending a Security Council meeting on Tuesday when Blix is to speak about key tasks for Iraqi disarmament, diplomats say. If he comes other foreign ministers are bound to follow, for the fifth time this year.

WORKING THE PHONES

Blair, who like Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar faces overwhelming domestic opposition to a war, challenged U.N. members to make their mind up "overnight" on the resolution but expressed little hope of a consensus.

"It is difficult to know how we can resolve this," Blair told reporters on his plane back to London.

Britain's U.N. Ambassador, Jeremy Greenstock, worked telephones on Sunday, to "take the temperature" of council members and "see if there was any flexibility," diplomats said.

The resolution before the council has a March 17 deadline for Saddam to scrap or account for any chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. Britain has offered to put off that date for some days if the measure has a chance of adoption.

Bush made little secret of his exasperation with France. "We have an expression in Texas that says, 'Show your cards,'" he said. "France has shown its card. Now we have to see tomorrow what that card meant."

If there is no vote on the new resolution, the United States, Britain and their supporters are likely to argue that an invasion is justified by Resolution 1441, adopted on November 8, which threatened "serious consequences" if Iraq did not disarm.

Blix has been invited to Baghdad although diplomats said it was unlikely at this point he would go. He said he was still evaluating the invitation.

"We need to have more information about the purpose... We want to know that the Iraqis are ready to take some significant steps forward," he said.

ANP

'VS adviseren VN wapeninspecteurs terug te trekken'

17 maart 2003

Wenen (ANP) - De Verenigde Staten hebben Mohammed el-Baradei, de directeur van het Internationaal Atoomenergieagentschap IAEA, zondagavond laat gevraagd alle wapeninspecteurs terug te trekken uit Irak. Dat heeft hij maandag gezegd tijdens een bestuursbijeenkomst van het IAEA.

Hij zei dat eenzelfde advies is gegaan naar de inspecteurs van Unmovic, die in Irak zoeken naar biologische en chemische wapens. El-Baradei vertelde dat hij direct de voorzitter van de VN-Veiligheidsraad heeft ingelicht en hem om raad had gevraagd. Hij lichtte ook VN-secretaris-generaal Kofi Annan in.

Blix en El-Baradei zijn aanwezig bij het begin van de zitting van de VN-Veiligheidsraad om 16.00 uur Nederlandse tijd. Diplomatieke bronnen rond de raad denken dat zij het advies zullen krijgen om hun inspecteurs zo snel mogelijk in veiligheid te brengen. Op dit moment zijn er nog ongeveer 135 inspecteurs van Unmovic en IAEA in Irak. Een woordvoerder van de VN in Bagdad deelde maandagochtend mee dat zij nog geen opdracht hebben gekregen het land te verlaten.

Diplomaten

De Verenigde Staten hebben inmiddels een deel van hun diplomaten in Israël, Syrië en Koeweit opdracht gegeven te vertrekken. Het gaat om zogenoemde niet-essentiële medewerkers.

Duitsland maakte zondag bekend zijn ambassade in de Iraakse hoofdstad Bagdad binnen de komende drie dagen te sluiten. Het ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken in Berlijn riep alle Duitsers in Irak op het land te verlaten.

BBC

Emergency cabinet meeting called

17 March 2003

An emergency meeting of Tony Blair's cabinet is to be held on Monday at 1600 GMT as the build-up to apparent war with Iraq intensifies, Downing Street has announced.

The meeting, which the prime minister promised to hold before any military action, comes amid growing opposition from Labour MPs. There could be cabinet resignations if the go ahead is given for war without fresh UN fresh approval - with Clare Short and Robin Cook seen as the most likely to go.

Downing Street said that Foreign Secretary Jack Straw is to make a statement to MPs regarding the Iraq crisis at 1900 GMT.

Ministers are discussing holding a new vote in Parliament on the Iraq crisis on Tuesday.

On Sunday Mr Blair told the world to decide on Monday whether to back a second resolution giving Saddam Hussein a clear ultimatum to disarm or face war.

Fears that war is imminent heightened when the Foreign Office advised all Britons in Kuwait, except diplomatic staff, to leave the country.

No UN vote?

The Attorney General, Lord Goldsmith, has set out the legal case for war in a written statement in the House of Lords. He said legal authority for war came from three previous UN resolutions - including one passed soon after the Gulf War in 1991 and the latest resolution, agreed last November.

Mr Blair will report to the cabinet developments from Sunday's emergency summit in the Azores with US President George Bush and Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar.

The prime minister's spokesman signalled there would not be a vote on a second resolution, declaring: "The central issue here is whether, in what is obviously a diplomatic crisis of very serious proportions, there is anything approaching a consensus that could be discussed."

In an effort to win over sceptics ministers are repeating assurances about the security of Iraq's oil reserves and efforts to resolve the Palestinian crisis.

'Window dressing'

Speaking while returning from the summit, Mr Blair said the UN had to decide overnight on a fresh resolution with "teeth". Earlier, at a news conference after the Azores meeting, Mr Bush repeated Monday was the deadline for diplomacy on Iraq and a "moment of truth" for the world.

He said the UN Security Council had a final day to issue the Iraqi president with an ultimatum if he continued to defy the world.

On Monday, Foreign Office Minister Mike O'Brien accused France of frustrating the diplomatic process with its veto threat. But there was still time for French President Jacques Chirac to show "statesmanship" and change course, he argued.

Those comments sparked some concern among Labour and Lib Dem MPs who believe diplomatic efforts should continue. If Mr Blair goes ahead with a Commons debate on military action, MPs warn they will table an amendment stating there is no moral justification for war without a new resolution. More MPs than the 122 who voted against the government last time are expected to rebel this time.

Tory support

Ex-Labour whip Graham Allen and a group of MPs, including former cabinet minister Chris Smith, are drawing up the amendment. It would make clear their support for British troops but challenge the "moral authority" of war.

The Conservative Party has remained steadfast in its support for Mr Blair.

But Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy told his party conference on Sunday: "If the president and the prime minister were serious about finding a peaceful solution, they'd be talking to Kofi Annan, not to each other."

The Stop The War Coalition is this Saturday set to organise a repeat of the peace rally which last month attracted between 750,000 and 2m people in London.

US State Department

U.S., U.K., Spain Will Not Call for U.N. Security Council Vote on Iraq

17 March 2003

United Nations -- The United Kingdom, United States, and Spain said March 17 they would not call for a U.N. Security Council vote on their draft resolution on Iraq in the face of a threatened French veto.

U.K. Ambassador Jeremy Greenstock, making the announcement on behalf of the draft resolution's co-sponsors, said that "in the last few hours we have had to conclude that council consensus will not be possible in line with resolution 1441. One country in particular has underlined its intention to veto any ultimatum no matter what the circumstances."

"That country rejected our proposed compromise before even the Iraqi government itself and has put forward suggestions that would roll back the unanimous agreement of the council in 1441. Those suggestions would amount to no ultimatum, no pressure, and no disarmament," Greenstock said.

"The co-sponsors reserve the right to take their own steps to secure the disarmament of Iraq," he said.

Throughout their brief appearance outside the Security Council chambers, the envoys of the three countries never mentioned France by name. But French Ambassador Jean-Marc de La Sabliere told journalists last week that his government would never vote for a resolution that contained an ultimatum.

Greenstock concluded by saying that the statements made by the United States, United Kingdom, Spain, and Portugal March 16 in the Azores "explain our positions."

U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte said, "It has been nearly four and a half months since the council unanimously adopted resolution 1441 which found Iraq in material breach and gave it a final opportunity to disarm or face serious consequences. The government of Iraq has clearly failed to comply. Our governments believe that through acts of omission and commission Iraq is now in further material breach."

"We advocated a second resolution because a united council would have shown it was intent on enforcing resolution 1441 and disarming Iraq," Negroponte said.

"We believe that the vote would have been close. We regret that, in the face of an explicit threat to veto by a permanent member, the vote counting became a secondary consideration," he said.

France, Russia, and China, which have veto power in the council, had rejected the draft resolution. Six non-permanent members -- Angola, Cameroon, Chile, Guinea, Mexico, and Pakistan -- had said they were undecided on the draft. Last week the United Kingdom proposed changes in attempt to gain a majority for the draft resolution.

Spanish Ambassador Inocencio Arias said that the draft resolution "established in an unequivocal way that any false statement or omission or sheer fact of not cooperating fully would constitute a further material breach. We believe that the government of Iraq was given a last opportunity and it has squandered it."

Greenstock also pointed out that the co-sponsors "worked very hard in the last few days in a final effort to reunite the council" behind the draft resolution which gave Iraq one final opportunity to disarm by March 17.

The United Kingdom proposed amendments to the draft last week, which would have challenged Iraq to take a strategic decision to disarm, Greenstock said.

"There were three key elements to the compromise we proposed. First: tough, but realizable tests, including an unequivocal commitment by Saddam Hussein. Second: a realistic, but tight timetable for completion for those tests, given the urgent need for Iraq to comply after 12 years of prevarication. And, third: an understanding that if Iraq failed the test, serious consequences would ensue, as set out in resolution 1441."

The Security Council was scheduled to hold private meetings on Iraq throughout the day March 17.

CNN

France: Most on council oppose war

17 March 2003

United Nations -- France said Washington and its allies abandoned their proposed U.N. resolution on Iraq after they realized they lacked a majority on the Security Council.

French U.N. ambassador Jean-Marc de La Sabliere said the United States, Britain and Spain "realized that the majority in the council is against and oppose a resolution authorizing the use of force."

The U.S., UK and Spain announced Monday that they had abandoned efforts to seek a vote on their proposed second U.N. resolution on Iraq.

A short time later, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said weapons inspectors and humanitarian workers were to be pulled out of Iraq.

De La Sabliere said a "huge majority" of the Security Council remained opposed to war.

He said: "It would not be legitimate to authorize the use of force now while the inspections set out by resolution are producing results.

"The co-sponsors made some bilateral consultation last night and this morning and the result is that the majority of the council confirmed that they do not want to authorize the use of force."

Later Monday, French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin said France regretted the decision by the United States and its allies to abandon diplomacy.

"Despite the clearly expressed will of the international community, the United States, Great Britain and Spain are today underlining their determination to resort to force," Villepin said in a statement.

"France regrets a decision which nothing justifies today and which could have heavy consequences for the region and for the world.

"True to its convictions, France reaffirms that in any case, the United Nations, the only bearer of international legitimacy, must play a central role in the settlement of the Iraqi crisis," he said.

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, speaking in Moscow after the United States and its allies abandoned their proposed U.N. resolution, said no one had the legal right to go to war with Iraq under existing U.N. resolutions.

"We believe the use of force against Iraq, especially with reference to previous resolutions of the U.N. Security Council, has no grounds, including legal grounds," Reuters quoted Ivanov as telling reporters.

Both Washington and London say military action would be legal.

"Resolution 1441, to which so many references are made, does not give anyone the right to use force automatically," he said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, in his first direct comments since Sunday's summit, said on Monday that war in Iraq would be "a mistake fraught with the gravest consequences which may result in casualties and destabilize the international situation in general."

Speaking to a group of Muslim clerics, Putin said Moscow continues to support exclusively a peaceful resolution of the crisis and "any other option would be a mistake."

Germany, a non-permanent member of the Security Council, also reiterated its opposition to military action, and Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said he would continue fighting for peaceful disarmament.

"I think it is always worth it -- even in the last minute -- to push for peace and to fight for a peaceful disarmament," Schroeder told German television ZDF late Sunday, The Associated Press reported.

Germany's U.N. Ambassador Gunner Plugger said it was important to make a "100 percent effort" even if there's only a "1 percent chance of keeping the peace."

Despite military action appearing imminent, France, Russia and German have asked the Security Council to schedule a meeting among foreign ministers on Wednesday to set a timetable for key disarmament tasks to be carried out.

It wasn't clear how many of the 15 council foreign ministers would attend, AP said.

President Says Saddam Hussein Must Leave Iraq Within 48 Hours

Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation

The Cross Hall – 17 March 2003 - 8:01 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: My fellow citizens, events in Iraq have now reached the final days of decision. For more than a decade, the United States and other nations have pursued patient and honorable efforts to disarm the Iraqi regime without war. That regime pledged to reveal and destroy all its weapons of mass destruction as a condition for ending the Persian Gulf War in 1991.

Since then, the world has engaged in 12 years of diplomacy. We have passed more than a dozen resolutions in the United Nations Security Council. We have sent hundreds of weapons inspectors to oversee the disarmament of Iraq. Our good faith has not been returned.

The Iraqi regime has used diplomacy as a ploy to gain time and advantage. It has uniformly defied Security Council resolutions demanding full disarmament. Over the years, U.N. weapon inspectors have been threatened by Iraqi officials, electronically bugged, and systematically deceived. Peaceful efforts to disarm the Iraqi regime have failed again and again -- because we are not dealing with peaceful men.

Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised. This regime has already used weapons of mass destruction against Iraq's neighbors and against Iraq's people.

The regime has a history of reckless aggression in the Middle East. It has a deep hatred of America and our friends. And it has aided, trained and harbored terrorists, including operatives of al Qaeda.

The danger is clear: using chemical, biological or, one day, nuclear weapons, obtained with the help of Iraq, the terrorists could fulfill their stated ambitions and kill thousands or hundreds of thousands of innocent people in our country, or any other.

The United States and other nations did nothing to deserve or invite this threat. But we will do everything to defeat it. Instead of drifting along toward tragedy, we will set a course toward safety. Before the day of horror can come, before it is too late to act, this danger will be removed.

The United States of America has the sovereign authority to use force in assuring its own national security. That duty falls to me, as Commander-in-Chief, by the oath I have sworn, by the oath I will keep.

Recognizing the threat to our country, the United States Congress voted overwhelmingly last year to support the use of force against Iraq. America tried to work with the United Nations to address this threat because we wanted to resolve the issue peacefully. We believe in the mission of the United Nations. One reason the U.N. was founded after the second world war was to confront aggressive dictators, actively and early, before they can attack the innocent and destroy the peace.

In the case of Iraq, the Security Council did act, in the early 1990s. Under Resolutions 678 and 687 -- both still in effect -- the United States and our allies are authorized to use force in ridding Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. This is not a question of authority, it is a question of will.

Last September, I went to the U.N. General Assembly and urged the nations of the world to unite and bring an end to this danger. On November 8th, the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1441, finding Iraq in material breach of its obligations, and vowing serious consequences if Iraq did not fully and immediately disarm.

Today, no nation can possibly claim that Iraq has disarmed. And it will not disarm so long as Saddam Hussein holds power. For the last four-and-a-half months, the United States and our allies have worked within the Security Council to enforce that Council's long-standing demands. Yet, some permanent members of the Security Council have publicly announced they will veto any resolution that compels the disarmament of Iraq. These governments share our assessment of the danger, but not our resolve to meet it. Many nations, however, do have the resolve and fortitude to act against this threat to peace, and a broad coalition is now gathering to enforce the just demands of the world. The United Nations Security Council has not lived up to its responsibilities, so we will rise to ours.

In recent days, some governments in the Middle East have been doing their part. They have delivered public and private messages urging the dictator to leave Iraq, so that disarmament can proceed peacefully. He has thus far refused. All the decades of deceit and cruelty have now reached an end. Saddam Hussein and his sons must leave Iraq within 48 hours. Their refusal to do so will result in military conflict, commenced at a time of our choosing. For their own safety, all foreign nationals -- including journalists and inspectors -- should leave Iraq immediately.

Many Iraqis can hear me tonight in a translated radio broadcast, and I have a message for them. If we must begin a military campaign, it will be directed against the lawless men who rule your country and not against you. As our coalition takes away their power, we will deliver the food and medicine you need. We will tear down the apparatus of terror and we will help you to build a new Iraq that is prosperous and free. In a free Iraq, there will be no more wars of aggression against your neighbors, no more poison factories, no more executions of dissidents, no more torture chambers and rape rooms. The tyrant will soon be gone. The day of your liberation is near.

It is too late for Saddam Hussein to remain in power. It is not too late for the Iraqi military to act with honor and protect your country by permitting the peaceful entry of coalition forces to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. Our forces will give Iraqi military units clear instructions on actions they can take to avoid being attacked and destroyed. I urge every member of the Iraqi military and intelligence services, if war comes, do not fight for a dying regime that is not worth your own life.

And all Iraqi military and civilian personnel should listen carefully to this warning. In any conflict, your fate will depend on your action. Do not destroy oil wells, a source of wealth that belongs to the Iraqi people. Do not obey any command to use weapons of mass destruction against anyone, including the Iraqi people. War crimes will be prosecuted. War criminals will be punished. And it will be no defense to say, "I was just following orders."

Should Saddam Hussein choose confrontation, the American people can know that every measure has been taken to avoid war, and every measure will be taken to win it. Americans understand the costs of conflict because we have paid them in the past. War has no certainty, except the certainty of sacrifice.

Yet, the only way to reduce the harm and duration of war is to apply the full force and might of our military, and we are prepared to do so. If Saddam Hussein attempts to cling to power, he will remain a deadly foe until the end. In desperation, he and terrorists groups might try to conduct terrorist operations against the American people and our friends. These attacks are not inevitable. They are, however, possible. And this very fact underscores the reason we cannot live under the threat of blackmail. The terrorist threat to America and the world will be diminished the moment that Saddam Hussein is disarmed.

Our government is on heightened watch against these dangers. Just as we are preparing to ensure victory in Iraq, we are taking further actions to protect our homeland. In recent days, American authorities have expelled from the country certain individuals with ties to Iraqi intelligence services. Among other measures, I have directed additional security of our airports, and increased Coast Guard patrols of major seaports. The Department of Homeland Security is working closely with the nation's governors to increase armed security at critical facilities across America.

Should enemies strike our country, they would be attempting to shift our attention with panic and weaken our morale with fear. In this, they would fail. No act of theirs can alter the course or shake the resolve of this country. We are a peaceful people -- yet we're not a fragile people, and we will not be intimidated by thugs and killers. If our enemies dare to strike us, they and all who have aided them, will face fearful consequences.

We are now acting because the risks of inaction would be far greater. In one year, or five years, the power of Iraq to inflict harm on all free nations would be multiplied many times over. With these capabilities, Saddam Hussein and his terrorist allies could choose the moment of deadly conflict when they are strongest. We choose to meet that threat now, where it arises, before it can appear suddenly in our skies and cities.

The cause of peace requires all free nations to recognize new and undeniable realities. In the 20th century, some chose to appease murderous dictators, whose threats were allowed to grow into genocide and global war. In this century, when evil men plot chemical, biological and nuclear terror, a policy of appeasement could bring destruction of a kind never before seen on this earth.

Terrorists and terror states do not reveal these threats with fair notice, in formal declarations -- and responding to such enemies only after they have struck first is not self-defense, it is suicide. The security of the world requires disarming Saddam Hussein now.

As we enforce the just demands of the world, we will also honor the deepest commitments of our country. Unlike Saddam Hussein, we believe the Iraqi people are deserving and capable of human liberty. And when the dictator has departed, they can set an example to all the Middle East of a vital and peaceful and self-governing nation.

The United States, with other countries, will work to advance liberty and peace in that region. Our goal will not be achieved overnight, but it can come over time. The power and appeal of human liberty is felt in every life and every land. And the greatest power of freedom is to overcome hatred and violence, and turn the creative gifts of men and women to the pursuits of peace.

That is the future we choose. Free nations have a duty to defend our people by uniting against the violent. And tonight, as we have done before, America and our allies accept that responsibility.

Good night, and may God continue to bless America.

CNN

Washington lines up behind U.S. troops

17 March 2003

WASHINGTON (CNN) --As the United States moved closer to war Monday, politicians from both parties lined up behind the president as he issued a 48-hour deadline for Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein to leave power or face military action.

Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, who earlier in the day had lashed out at President Bush, saying he had "failed so miserably" at diplomacy in the crisis with Iraq that the United States now stands on the brink of war, issued a statement after Bush's televised address assuring the president of congressional unity.

"If the President decides that force is the only remaining option to disarm Saddam Hussein, Democrats and Republicans will be unanimous in our strong support for our troops and for ensuring that they have all the tools and resources needed to be successful," said the statement from Daschle, a South Dakota Democrat.

But the statement also stressed the importance of diplomacy and building alliances for this and other conflicts.

"If the United States does act militarily against Iraq, it is important that we continue diplomacy to pull together the broadest coalition to aid our efforts during and after the military conflict. America will need the support of our allies to rebuild Iraq once Saddam's regime is toppled," it said.

"At the same time, it is also important that we remain committed to addressing our other pressing national security threats. As we prosecute the war on terrorism and confront the dangers posed by the development of weapons of mass destruction in North Korea and elsewhere, the cause of peace and stability in the world can only be served with the unwavering support of the community of nations."

After a White House briefing to congressional leaders on the president's television address to the nation Monday night, another senior congressman, Virginia Republican Sen. John Warner, said the president was resolute and had thought through "all the options." He said many of those present cast doubt on whether the Iraqi leader would take advantage of the final window before the United States would take military action to disarm Iraq.

In October, Congress passed a resolution authorizing the use of force, if necessary, against Iraq.

Among those present at the briefing were Daschle; House Speaker Dennis Hastert, an Illinois Republican; Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, a Republican of Tennessee; and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, a California Democrat.

Anticipating that Bush would soon authorize a strike against Iraq -- accused of harboring weapons of mass destruction and defying U.N. resolutions to disarm -- many lawmakers began issuing statements in support of U.S. troops Monday.

"It's time to come together and support our great American men and women in uniform and their commander-in-chief," said Sen. Joseph Lieberman, a contender for the 2004 Democratic presidential nomination. He has been among the most supportive in his party of a possible military strike against Iraq.

"If military action is necessary, the fault will clearly be Saddam Hussein's," Lieberman said. He urged other nations to "stand strong and together." But the Connecticut Democrat also faulted "the Bush administration's unilateralist, divisive foreign policy, which has pushed a lot of the world away."

Rep. Tom DeLay, a staunch supporter of the White House, called for an end to debate about how to proceed on Iraq, suggesting that lawmakers keep any thoughts of disagreement to themselves.

"There is a proper time and place for vigorous debate, but now is the time for America to speak with one voice," DeLay, a Republican of Texas, said in a statement. "In the weeks and months ahead, let us rededicate ourselves to our common mission, the defense of freedom."

Michigan Democrat Sen. Carl Levin said he also felt it was unlikely that Saddam would use the 48-hour window and worried about what military action would bring.

"We obviously hope that he would collapse," he said. "We hope he'll go into exile for that matter and do what the president urged him to do tonight. If there is going to be a battle in Baghdad it could be a very difficult one, and we should be prepared for that while praying for a much-swifter outcome."

Nederlands kabinet

Korte verklaring van de minister-president na de Ministerraad

17 maart 2003

Gezien de internationale ontwikkelingen rond Irak vandaag, is het kabinet vanavond bijeengekomen voor een extra ministerraad. De situatie geeft daar alle aanleiding toe.

De Nederlandse regering heeft altijd ingezet op het bereiken van een oplossing via de weg van de Verenigde Naties. We wilden het diplomatieke pad van de VN tot de laatste centimeter aflopen. Het is dan ook zeer spijtig dat vandaag is gebleken dat het niet is gelukt in de Veiligheidsraad tot overeenstemming te komen. Ik betreurt dat bijzonder.

Dat betekent echter niet dat er binnen de Verenigde Naties geen overeenstemming is over het **doel** dat we voor ogen hebben. Het gezamenlijke doel is: onvoorwaardelijke, onmiddellijke en actieve medewerking van Saddam Hussein bij het onschadelijk maken van zijn wapens. Dat is vastgelegd in resolutie 1441.

Die resolutie zegt ook dat er serieuze consequenties zijn als Saddam niet aan de eisen van de internationale gemeenschap tegemoet komt.

Nederland heeft steeds gezegd een eigen afweging te zullen maken. Nu het diplomatieke spoor van de VN is afgebroken, heeft het kabinet gesproken over de nieuwe fase die is ingegaan.

In het bijzonder heeft het kabinet gesproken over de vraag of er sprake is van een 'material breach', een essentiële schending door Saddam van de resoluties van de internationale gemeenschap.

Wij kunnen niet anders constateren dan dat Saddam tot op heden geen gehoor heeft gegeven aan resolutie 1441. In de logische redenering van resolutie 1441 betekent dat ook dat serieuze consequenties nu aan de orde zijn.

Daar komt bij dat de kwestie-Irak al heel lang speelt. **Twaalf** jaar geleden heeft de VN Saddam voor het eerst opgeroepen te ontwapenen. In die twaalf jaar heeft de Veiligheidsraad in totaal **zeventien** resoluties aangenomen waarin Saddam wordt aangespoord te voldoen aan de wens van de internationale gemeenschap. Geen enkele daarvan werd door Saddam ingewilligd.

Wij blijven ons tot het laatste toe inzetten voor een oplossing zonder geweld. Dat zijn we ook verplicht aan alle mensen die zich terecht zorgen maken.

Maar gezien de laatste ontwikkelingen moeten we er ernstig rekening mee houden dat het toch komt tot een militair ingrijpen.

Het steeds weer negeren van de nadrukkelijke wens van de internationale gemeenschap maakt Saddam tot een veelpleger. En veelplegers roepen het over zichzelf af als ze op een gegeven moment worden aangepakt.

We moeten de zaken in het juiste perspectief blijven zien. Saddam is niet het slachtoffer van een harde aanpak. Hij is er zelf de aanstichter van.

Internationaal is er echter geen breed draagvlak voor militaire acties tegen Saddam. Daar komt bij dat ook nationaal geen breed draagvlak bestaat voor actieve militaire steun van Nederland aan acties tegen Saddam. Dan spreek ik zowel over het gevoelen in de samenleving als over het draagvlak in het parlement.

Het kabinet heeft daarom besloten dat het een eventuele actie tegen Irak politiek kan steunen. Maar dat het daaraan geen militaire bijdrage zal leveren.

Nederland zal wél zijn rol blijven spelen op defensief gebied. Nederlandse Patriots blijven aanwezig op het grondgebied van NAVO-bondgenoot Turkije.

Vanzelfsprekend zal Nederland ook volop meedoen aan de heropbouw van een vrij, democratisch Irak nadat een eventueel gewapend conflict voorbij is. Die wederopbouw zal onder de vlag van de VN gestalte moeten krijgen.

Washington Post

Bush Clings To Dubious Allegations About Iraq

By Walter Pincus and Dana Milbank – 18 March 2003

As the Bush administration prepares to attack Iraq this week, it is doing so on the basis of a number of allegations against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein that have been challenged -- and in some cases disproved -- by the United Nations, European governments and even U.S. intelligence reports.

For months, President Bush and his top lieutenants have produced a long list of Iraqi offenses, culminating Sunday with Vice President Cheney's assertion that Iraq has "reconstituted nuclear weapons." Previously, administration officials have tied Hussein to al Qaeda, to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, and to an aggressive production of biological and chemical weapons. Bush reiterated many of these charges in his address to the nation last night.

But these assertions are hotly disputed. Some of the administration's evidence -- such as Bush's assertion that Iraq sought to purchase uranium -- has been refuted by subsequent discoveries. Other claims have been questioned, though their validity can be known only after U.S. forces occupy Iraq.

In outlining his case for war on Sunday, Cheney focused on how much more damage al Qaeda could have done on Sept. 11 "if they'd had a nuclear weapon and detonated it in the middle of one of our cities, or if they had unleashed . . . biological weapons of some kind, smallpox or anthrax." He then tied that to evidence found in Afghanistan of how al Qaeda leaders "have done everything they could to acquire those capabilities over the years."

But in October CIA Director George J. Tenet told Congress that Hussein would not give such weapons to terrorists unless he decided helping "terrorists in conducting a WMD [weapons of mass destruction] attack against the United States would be his last chance to exact vengeance by taking a large number of victims with him."

In his appearance Sunday, on NBC's "Meet the Press," the vice president argued that "we believe [Hussein] has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons." But Cheney contradicted that assertion moments later, saying it was "only a matter of time before he acquires nuclear weapons." Both assertions were contradicted earlier by Mohamed ElBaradei, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, who reported that "there is no indication of resumed nuclear activities."

ElBaradei also contradicted Bush and other officials who argued that Iraq had tried to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes to use in centrifuges for uranium enrichment. The IAEA determined that Iraq did not plan to use imported aluminum tubes for enriching uranium and generating nuclear weapons. ElBaradei argued that the tubes were for conventional weapons and "it was highly unlikely" that the tubes could have been used to produce nuclear material.

Cheney on Sunday said ElBaradei was "wrong" about Iraq's nuclear program and questioned the IAEA's credibility.

Earlier this month, ElBaradei said information about Iraqi efforts to buy uranium were based on fabricated documents. Further investigation has found that top CIA officials had significant doubts about the veracity of the evidence, linking Iraq to efforts to purchase uranium for nuclear weapons from Niger, but the information ended up as fact in Bush's State of the Union address.

In another embarrassing episode for the administration, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell cited evidence about Iraq's weapons efforts that originally appeared in a British intelligence document. But it later emerged that the British report's evidence was based in part on academic papers and trade publications.

Sometimes information offered by Bush and his top officials is questioned by administration aides. In his March 6 news conference, Bush dismissed Iraq's destruction of its Al Samoud-2 missiles, saying they were being dismantled "even as [Hussein] has ordered the continued production of the very same type of missiles." But the only intelligence was electronic intercepts that had individuals talking about being able to build missiles in the future, according to a senior intelligence analyst.

Last month, Bush spoke about a liberated Iraq showing "the power of freedom to transform that vital region" and said "a new regime in Iraq would serve as a dramatic and inspiring example of freedom for other nations in the region." But a classified State Department report put together by the department's intelligence and research staff and delivered to Powell the same day as Bush's speech questioned that theory, arguing that history runs counter to it.

In his first major speech solely on the Iraqi threat, last October, Bush said, "Iraq possesses ballistic missiles with a likely range of hundreds of miles -- far enough to strike Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey and other nations - - in a region where more than 135,000 American civilians and service members live and work."

Inspectors have found that the Al Samoud-2 missiles can travel less than 200 miles -- not far enough to hit the targets Bush named. Iraq has not accounted for 14 medium-range Scud missiles from the 1991 Persian Gulf War, but the administration has not presented any evidence that they still exist.

Reuters

U.N. Quits Iraq as Bush Prepares for War

By Steve Holland and Nadim Ladki – 18 March 2003

Washington/Bagdad (Reuters) - U.N. weapons inspectors pulled out of Iraq on Tuesday and U.S. forces prepared to invade after President Bush gave Saddam Hussein 48 hours to flee the country.

Defying U.N. allies and dividing world opinion, Bush defended Washington's right to wage what he portrayed as a pre-emptive war against September 11-style terrorism and promised to bring prosperity and democracy to the Iraqi people.

"The United Nations Security Council has not lived up to its responsibilities, so we will rise to ours," Bush said in a brisk, 13-minute televised address from the White House.

"The tyrant will soon be gone," he added, urging Iraq's forces to surrender rather than be destroyed by the high-tech firepower of 280,000 U.S. and British troops massed in the Gulf.

"Saddam Hussein and his sons must leave Iraq within 48 hours. Their failure to do so will result in military conflict, commenced at a time of our choosing," Bush said.

Aides said the deadline was 4:15 a.m. Iraqi time (0115 GMT) on Thursday. Few expect the Iraqi president and sons Qusay and Uday to meet it. One of Saddam's ministers scoffed at the idea.

With war looking all but inevitable, the United Nations drew down the curtain on 12 years of efforts since the 1991 Gulf War to ensure Iraq has no chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. U.N. weapons inspectors boarded a plane for Cyprus.

"We're sad that we're leaving. We know that we could have stayed longer to finish our job," one of them said, reflecting the views of powers like France, Russia, China and Germany.

Bush said Iraq might provide nuclear, chemical or nuclear arms to groups like the Islamist radicals of al Qaeda. Many Western leaders share Bush's skepticism of Saddam's denials of developing weapons of mass destruction. But some disagree about the extent of Baghdad's possible sponsorship of terrorists.

FRANCE, MUSLIMS ANGERED

France, whose U.N. veto forced Bush to go it alone, accused Washington of flouting international law and preferring "force over justice." Some Muslim states said war would inflame just the sort of violence that Bush said he was seeking to prevent.

In Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, a moderate Muslim leader called Bush and his close ally, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, "war criminals."

Bush warned that new terrorist attacks were possible. The U.S. government put the country on the second-highest level of terror alert and spelled out tough new security measures, including temporary detention of some asylum seekers.

Japan expressed support, Australia offered troops. Blair prepared to face down a major parliamentary rebellion in his Labour Party in order to keep his troops in the Gulf.

Turkey, a normally loyal NATO ally, also appeared to be softening its resistance to helping U.S. forces. A cabinet minister said he was optimistic parliament would finally offer Washington support, though it was not clear if this meant simply allowing aircraft and missiles to use Turkish airspace rather than having U.S. troops invade Iraq from the north from Turkey.

To the south, U.S. and British troops were on the move in Kuwait, packing up tents and preparing kit for an invasion they expect within days, probably preceded by a massive bombardment.

"Finally we're going somewhere. We're going to war," said Sergeant Robert Vennebush, 25, with an army engineering unit in the desert after hearing what Bush had to say to Saddam.

BAGHDAD FEARFUL

Iraqi Foreign Minister Najji Sabri said on Monday that "any child" in Iraq knew Bush's ultimatum would be ignored.

In Baghdad, Iraqis were fearful but resigned to their third war in just over two decades. Impoverished by U.N. sanctions since 1990, people stocked up on food and other essentials.

In remarks addressed to Iraqi troops, Bush said: "If war comes, do not fight for a dying regime that is not worth your own life." He promised food, medicine and eventually democracy.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard committed his country's forces to war on Iraq, including special forces, jet fighters and warships already in the Gulf. Australian public opinion, like much of the world, remains hostile to war.

Protesters daubed "No War" across the landmark roof of the Sydney Opera House and Howard was heckled in parliament.

Members of the U.S. Congress reflected a divided American public as they voiced support, fears and concerns about the march to war. Lawmakers rallied around U.S. forces even as some of them expressed sharp differences over how Bush has handled the biggest diplomatic crisis of his presidency.

Many Democrats blamed Bush for the failure to build a broad international coalition against Saddam. Most fellow Republicans saluted the president.

"I'm saddened, saddened that this president failed so miserably at diplomacy that we're now forced to war," said Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota.

Oil prices skidded and Asian stocks jumped after Bush's ultimatum started to clear a pall of uncertainty that had hung over global markets for months.

The dollar kept its overnight gains and key Asian markets rose two to four percent after a Wall Street rally on expectations of a swift and decisive military strike.

"At the moment, markets are truly backing the view that it's going to be a short, sharp, successful affair that will reduce the uncertainty that's been a driver on markets," said Michael Wilson, chief investment officer at Ausbil Dexia in Sydney.

"The markets appears to be pricing in a war that brings a quick victory and minimal problems."

Washington Post

Turkey Says It May Alter Decision on Use of Bases

By Philip P. Pan and Vernon Loeb – 18 March 2003

Ankara, Turkey -- With Turkey's financial markets plummeting and U.S. officials threatening to withdraw a \$6 billion aid package, the country's military and civilian leaders indicated tonight that they are preparing to reverse course and let the Pentagon use Turkish airspace and territory in an attack on Iraq.

But it was unclear when final authorization would come, meaning the last-minute change of heart could be too little and too late for the Bush administration. U.S. military officials have said that, even after Turkish authorization, it would take a few weeks for the Army's 4th Infantry Division to unload its heavy equipment from ships waiting offshore and move into position along Turkey's 218-mile border with northern Iraq.

"Turkey has decided to take urgent steps to preserve its national interests," a government spokesman said, following an emergency meeting of Turkey's president, prime minister and military chief that was convened after a phone call from Secretary of State Colin L. Powell to the Turkish foreign minister.

Two senior officials in the governing Justice and Development Party, who asked not to be identified, said they expect Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to send a new proposal to parliament in the next two days. "A resolution is on the way," one of the officials said.

The cargo ships carrying the 4th Infantry Division's tanks and other equipment could be offloaded relatively quickly if parliament changes course. But a war with Iraq could begin long before the division is ready to roll into northern Iraq. The division's 25,000 soldiers are still at Fort Hood, Tex., waiting to be airlifted through Europe to Turkey.

In the short term, defense officials said they are far more concerned about gaining overflight rights from Turkey. That would enable fighters, bombers and transport planes carrying equipment, Special Operations forces and airborne troops to fly into northern Iraq from Incirlik air base or, in some cases, straight from Europe. Without overflight rights, U.S. aircraft heading for northern Iraq would be restricted to a narrow air corridor over Israel and Jordan.

Erdogan had previously demanded further assurances from the United States about Turkey's role in shaping postwar Iraq and said any vote on the U.S. deployment would not be scheduled until next week. The Turkish parliament rejected by three votes his earlier proposal to allow U.S. troops in the country. Erdogan, whose party took power only four months ago, appeared worried about the political risk of calling another vote in a country where more than 90 percent of the public opposes a war in Iraq.

But the Turkish lira fell to an all-time low against the dollar, and the Turkish stock market dropped nearly 11 percent today on worries that the country's weak economy -- already on life support with a \$16 billion International Monetary Fund loan -- would have to get through a war in Iraq without the help of the U.S. economic aid package.

A U.S. diplomatic team led by presidential envoy Zalmay Khalilzad told Turkey on Friday that the aid package was "off the table" and that an earlier proposal to let Turkish troops take up positions about 121/2 miles into northern Iraq was also no longer valid because Turkey had not approved the U.S. deployment. Asked tonight whether the United States was willing to revive the offers if Turkey moves quickly to approve the U.S. deployment, Khalilzad said only: "We'll have to see."

In meetings tonight, U.S. officials and Iraqi Kurd leaders warned Turkey not to enter northern Iraq unilaterally, saying that might lead to clashes with Kurdish and American forces. They said Turkey's concerns could be addressed without sending troops across the border.

Ahmed Chalabi, head of the opposition Iraqi National Congress, said U.S. military officials are considering a plan to use the estimated 70,000 troops under the command of the Iraqi opposition, primarily Kurdish militias in northern Iraq, as the main body of the attack force in the north, with the support of U.S. Special Forces. "We're talking to the Americans about it, and they are amenable to it," he said. "It's being done right now." A senior Iraqi Kurdish official also said the Pentagon was preparing to use Kurd forces against Iraq. "We know it, and the Turks know it," he said. "That's why they're feeling so much pressure." The United States has repeatedly said armed Kurdish forces would confine themselves to the autonomous zone in northern Iraq, in part to satisfy Turkey, which fears Kurdish forces would seize oil fields that might give them the economic power to establish an independent Kurdish state. Khalilzad repeated that position tonight, saying no decision has been made to use the Kurdish forces in a northern offensive.

ANP

Kwart Nederlanders steunt besluit VS

18 maart 2003

Bijna een kwart van de Nederlandse bevolking, zo'n 23 procent, staat achter de beslissing van de VS om de oorlog tegen Irak te beginnen. Dat blijkt uit een peiling die Maurice de Hond in opdracht van 'Stem van Nederland' hield onder 800 mensen.

De steun is het grootst onder LPF-stemmers, 56 procent van hen staat vierkant achter het besluit van de VS om tot actie over te gaan. Bij de VVD en het CDA is dat respectievelijk 37 en 30 procent. Traditioneel is de steun het minst onder de aanhang van de 'linkse' partijen. De GroenLinks-achterban ziet het minst in het Amerikaanse plan voor een aanval, slechts 2 procent van hen zegt de VS te steunen.

Ongeveer 18 procent van de Nederlanders vindt dat het kabinet ook militaire steun moet toezeggen aan de VS. Ook dit standpunt kan de meeste goedkeuring krijgen onder LPF'ers (42 procent). Van de GroenLinks- en SP-stemmers denkt slechts 3 procent dat Nederland de VS militair moet bijstaan.

Guardian

Why I had to leave the cabinet

Robin Cook – 18 March 2003

I have resigned from the cabinet because I believe that a fundamental principle of Labour's foreign policy has been violated. If we believe in an international community based on binding rules and institutions, we cannot simply set them aside when they produce results that are inconvenient to us.

I cannot defend a war with neither international agreement nor domestic support. I applaud the determined efforts of the prime minister and foreign secretary to secure a second resolution. Now that those attempts have ended in failure, we cannot pretend that getting a second resolution was of no importance.

In recent days France has been at the receiving end of the most vitriolic criticism. However, it is not France alone that wants more time for inspections. Germany is opposed to us. Russia is opposed to us. Indeed at no time have we signed up even the minimum majority to carry a second resolution. We delude ourselves about the degree of international hostility to military action if we imagine that it is all the fault of President Chirac.

The harsh reality is that Britain is being asked to embark on a war without agreement in any of the international bodies of which we are a leading member. Not Nato. Not the EU. And now not the security council. To end up in such diplomatic isolation is a serious reverse. Only a year ago we and the US were part of a coalition against terrorism which was wider and more diverse than I would previously have thought possible. History will be astonished at the diplomatic miscalculations that led so quickly to the disintegration of that powerful coalition.

Britain is not a superpower. Our interests are best protected, not by unilateral action, but by multilateral agreement and a world order governed by rules. Yet tonight the international partnerships most important to us are weakened. The European Union is divided. The security council is in stalemate. Those are heavy casualties of war without a single shot yet being fired.

The threshold for war should always be high. None of us can predict the death toll of civilians in the forthcoming bombardment of Iraq. But the US warning of a bombing campaign that will "shock and awe" makes it likely that casualties will be numbered at the very least in the thousands. Iraq's military strength is now less than half its size at the time of the last Gulf war. Ironically, it is only because Iraq's military forces

are so weak that we can even contemplate invasion. And some claim his forces are so weak, so demoralised and so badly equipped that the war will be over in days.

We cannot base our military strategy on the basis that Saddam is weak and at the same time justify pre-emptive action on the claim that he is a serious threat. Iraq probably has no weapons of mass destruction in the commonly understood sense of that term - namely, a credible device capable of being delivered against strategic city targets. It probably does still have biological toxins and battlefield chemical munitions. But it has had them since the 1980s when the US sold Saddam the anthrax agents and the then British government built his chemical and munitions factories.

Why is it now so urgent that we should take military action to disarm a military capacity that has been there for 20 years and which we helped to create? And why is it necessary to resort to war this week while Saddam's ambition to complete his weapons programme is frustrated by the presence of UN inspectors?

I have heard it said that Iraq has had not months but 12 years in which to disarm, and our patience is exhausted. Yet it is over 30 years since resolution 242 called on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories.

We do not express the same impatience with the persistent refusal of Israel to comply. What has come to trouble me most over past weeks is the suspicion that if the hanging chads in Florida had gone the other way and Al Gore had been elected, we would not now be about to commit British troops to action in Iraq.

I believe the prevailing mood of the British public is sound. They do not doubt that Saddam Hussein is a brutal dictator. But they are not persuaded he is a clear and present danger to Britain. They want the inspections to be given a chance. And they are suspicious that they are being pushed hurriedly into conflict by a US administration with an agenda of its own. Above all, they are uneasy at Britain taking part in a military adventure without a broader international coalition and against the hostility of many of our traditional allies. It has been a favourite theme of commentators that the House of Commons has lost its central role in British politics. Nothing could better demonstrate that they are wrong than for parliament to stop the commitment of British troops to a war that has neither international authority nor domestic support.

• Robin Cook was, until yesterday, leader of the House of Commons

ANP

PvdA wil meer uitleg CDA-standpunt Irak

DEN HAAG (ANP) - De PvdA wil in het kamerdebat van dinsdagmiddag „meer uitleg over de praktische consequenties" van het CDA-standpunt over de oorlog met Irak. Dit heeft PvdA-partijleider Bos dinsdag gezegd.

Tweede-Kamerlid Karimi van GroenLinks zei dinsdag dat de Nederlandse regering een oorlog met Irak moet veroordelen. Ze reageert hiermee op het kabinetsstandpunt, dat premier Balkenende maandagavond meedeelde.

De premier maakte bekend dat Nederland wel politieke steun geeft, maar geen militaire bijdrage levert aan een oorlog met Irak. Balkenende zei dat de politieke steun is gebaseerd op de verplichtingen die Irak heeft volgens VN-resolutie 1441, maar dat er besloten is geen militaire steun te geven, „gelet op het draagvlak in de samenleving".

Volgens Karimi heeft het optreden van de Amerikaanse president Bush geen legitimiteit en moet Nederland op geen enkele wijze steun verlenen. SP-Kamerlid Van Bommel vindt het standpunt van het kabinet „ongeloofwaardig en slechts bedoeld om de formatie niet te verstoren. Er is geen rechtsgrond voor een oorlog, want hier is geen nieuwe resolutie voor aangenomen door de VN", aldus Van Bommel.

SP en GroenLinks willen beiden dat Nederland stopt met het doorlaten van Amerikaanse legertransporten. Via de doorvoer verleent Nederland feitelijk militaire steun aan de oorlog tegen Irak en de voorbereiding van die oorlog, vindt Van Bommel.

ANP

Chirac: oorlog tegen Irak is niet gerechtvaardigd

18 maart 2003

Parijs - De Franse president Jacques Chirac heeft dinsdag gezegd dat er geen rechtvaardiging is voor een eenzijdige beslissing om Irak aan te vallen en dat Bagdad geen onmiddellijk bedreiging vormt die een dergelijke beslissing kan rechtvaardigen.

Chirac zei dat het ultimatum van zijn Amerikaanse collega Bush aan Irak, negatieve gevolgen heeft voor toekomstige conflicten over massavernietigingswapens. Daarmee verwees de Franse president naar een mogelijk toekomstig conflict met Noord-Korea over diens kernwapenprogramma.

Chirac vroeg de internationale wetten te respecteren en riep andere landen op "de eenheid van de Veiligheidsraad te bewaren door binnen het raamwerk van resolutie 1441 te blijven". Die resolutie bepaalde dat wapeninspecteurs moesten controleren of Irak massavernietigingswapens bezit. Als Irak niet aan de resolutie zou voldoen, zouden "ernstige consequenties" volgen.

Nederlandse regering

Brief van de Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken aan de Tweede Kamer over de kwestie-Irak

DAM-145/03 – 18 maart 2003

Graag informeer ik u hierbij, mede namens de Minister President en de Minister van Defensie en conform het verzoek van de voorzitter van de Vaste Kamercommissie voor Buitenlandse Zaken, over de Nederlandse opvatting ten aanzien van de laatste ontwikkelingen omtrent Irak in de VN-Veiligheidsraad.

Zoals ik reeds aan de Kamer heb bericht in mijn brief van 17 maart jl., is maandag duidelijk geworden dat de Veiligheidsraad geen overeenstemming heeft weten te bereiken over een uitspraak over de mate van medewerking van Saddam Hoessein aan resolutie 1441. In deze unaniem aanvaarde resolutie werd vastgesteld dat Irak zijn ontwapeningsverplichtingen heeft geschonden maar een laatste kans krijgt alsnog tot ontwapening over te gaan. Gisteren is de Veiligheidsraad ernstig verdeeld gebleken tussen landen die menen dat Irak de "laatste kans" van 1441 niet gegrepen heeft, landen die menen dat de met militaire druk afgedwongen inspecties resultaat beginnen op te leveren en dus meer tijd moeten krijgen, en landen die (al dan niet uitdrukkelijk) menen dat militair optreden sowieso niet gerechtvaardigd is, maar inzetten op een vorm van "containment" van Irak.

Wat betekent dat voor de opstelling van Nederland? De regering heeft de afgelopen maanden, gesteund door de Tweede Kamer, consequent het standpunt ingenomen dat

- het bezit van massavernietigingswapens door Irak een ernstige zaak is;
- de aanpak daarvan in de allereerste plaats een verantwoordelijkheid van de VN gezamenlijk, in casu de Veiligheidsraad, is;
- de Veiligheidsraad begin 1991 Irak verplicht heeft te ontwapenen en sindsdien herhaaldelijk maatregelen heeft genomen tegen Irak's voortdurende pogingen aan deze verplichtingen te ontkomen;
- de Veiligheidsraad nu ook gehouden is zijn eigen besluiten serieus te nemen, en in het bijzonder die vastgelegd in de unaniem aanvaarde resolutie 1441;
- dreiging met geweld om naleving af te dwingen een aanvaardbaar instrument is, en derhalve het gebruik daarvan in laatste instantie niet uit te sluiten valt;
- een nieuwe VR-machtiging om zonodig geweld te gebruiken zeer wenselijk, maar niet strikt noodzakelijk is;
- de Nederlandse regering zelf uiteindelijk een eigen beoordeling zou moeten geven over de mate waarin Irak zijn verplichting om te ontwapenen nakomt.

Dat moment is nu aangebroken.

De beoordeling van de mate waarin Irak zijn verplichting om te ontwapenen nakomt, moet rekening houden met het gegeven dat het hier gaat om een regime dat nu al twaalf jaar kans ziet zich te onttrekken aan uitspraken van de Veiligheidsraad. Saddam Hoessein is een recidivist wiens optreden over een reeks van jaren volstrekt consistent is. Duidelijk is dat, zonder grote militaire druk, besluiten van de Veiligheidsraad op hem geen enkele indruk maken. Terecht legt resolutie 1441 de lat dan ook hoog. De "laatste kans" die resolutie 1441 Saddam Hoessein geeft, is tegen die achtergrond echt een laatste kans.

Behalve Syrië is geen enkel lid van de VR van mening dat Irak voldoende meewerkt. Er is echter verschil van mening over de consequenties die dat zou moeten hebben.

Het valt te betreuren dat de Veiligheidsraad er niet in is geslaagd tot een uitspraak te komen. De regering betreurt het dat daardoor een situatie is ontstaan waarin thans de VS en het VK genoopt voelen om zonder nadere VR-resolutie tot militaire actie over te gaan. Alle bij de besluitvorming in de VR betrokken landen dragen daarvoor een verantwoordelijkheid. De ernstige verdeeldheid binnen de Raad tast in de eerste plaats zijn gezag aan. Voor een geloofwaardige druk op Irak om langs vreedzame weg tot ontwapening over te gaan is nodig dat alle betrokken landen een eensgezinde opstelling innemen. Gebrek aan eensgezindheid leidt tot

een verkeerd signaal aan Saddam Hoessein. Het onvermogen om tot een besluit te komen vormt bovendien een verkeerde boodschap aan andere landen die de internationale rechtsorde zouden willen ondermijnen.

Het achterwege blijven van een uitspraak plaatst de internationale gemeenschap, en dus ook Nederland, voor een moeilijke keuze. De verdeeldheid van de Veiligheidsraad heeft naar het oordeel van de regering het internationale draagvlak voor militair optreden aangetast. In het geval Irak is dit overigens niet de eerste keer. Ook in 1998 bestond er in de Veiligheidsraad geen overeenstemming over militair optreden tegen Irak. Toen heeft Nederland dat militair optreden als onontkoombaar omschreven en heeft de Nederlandse regering – gesteund door de Tweede Kamer - de stelling ingenomen dat de sinds 1990 door de VR aangenomen resoluties op zich voldoende rechtsbasis vormden voor militair optreden.

De vraag die Nederland nu wederom heeft te beantwoorden is, simpel gezegd, niet zozeer of militair optreden mag, maar of het moet. Immers, de stelling dat de VR zich alsnog (dat wil zeggen na aanvaarding van resolutie 1441) zou moeten uitspreken, impliceert dat gegeven het gebrek aan overeenstemming niet zou kunnen worden opgetreden. Resolutie 1441 veronderstelt daarentegen dat, gelet op de verwijzing naar ‘ernstige gevolgen’, militair optreden niet wordt uitgesloten. Vandaar de steeds uitgedragen opvatting van de regering dat een tweede resolutie wel wenselijk, maar niet noodzakelijk is.

Zelfs onder grote druk heeft Irak nog steeds niet begrepen dat het nu echt ontwapenen moet, zoals geëist in resolutie 1441.

Zo zijn de inspecteurs alleen onder dreiging van militair optreden toegelaten, was de in december verstrekte opgave in feite een gecompliceerde manier om bezit van massavernietigingswapens te ontkennen en blijken openhartige interviews met wetenschappers onmogelijk.

Daarnaast is tot op heden nog geen enkel openstaand vraagstuk uit de UNSCOM-periode (1991-1998) en de periode sindsdien opgelost. In zijn werkdocument van 6 maart heeft UNMOVIC 128 van dergelijke vragen geïdentificeerd. Het betreft o.a. vragen over 21.000 liter biologische- en chemische middelen, waaronder 10.000 liter anthrax, rakettechnologie, vliegtuigbommen met een biologische- en/of chemische lading en informatie over onbemande vliegtuigen.

Het werkdocument versterkt het beeld dat Irak nog op veel punten geen of onvoldoende opheldering heeft willen geven. Zo heeft Irak – laat – zeer gedetailleerde lijsten geproduceerd met namen van wetenschappers die bij de unilaterale vernietiging van verboden wapens zouden zijn betrokken, maar is het niet in staat, ondanks een zo hoogwaardig administratief systeem, de gevraagde bewijzen van vernietiging van verboden wapens te leveren. Uit het feit dat Irak na al die tijd nog op geen enkele van de openstaande vragen afdoende antwoord heeft gegeven, kan slechts de conclusie worden getrokken dat Irak niet wenst mee te werken aan zijn eigen ontwapening.

Kortom, Irak heeft de “laatste mogelijkheid” die resolutie 1441 biedt niet gegrepen.

Zijn er dan alternatieven denkbaar voor militair optreden? Is een systeem van voortgezette inspecties, in combinatie met de geldende sanctiemaatregelen (d.w.z. toezicht op het gebruik door Irak van zijn olie-inkomsten) in staat te beletten dat Irak op enig moment zijn MVW-programma weer hervat? De inspecteurs hebben vastgesteld dat, alleen als Irak volledig meewerkt aan de ontwapening, zij hun werk op zinvolle wijze kunnen blijven doen en zekerheid kunnen verschaffen over de beëindiging van Irak’s potentieel op het gebied van massavernietigingswapens. Dat vereist derhalve tenminste langdurige voortzetting van het huidige niveau van dreiging met militair optreden.

Naar het oordeel van de regering is dit uiteindelijk geen begaanbare weg. Alles wijst erop dat Irak nog steeds de intentie heeft zijn MVW-capaciteit te behouden, en bovendien die op een geschikt moment verder uit te bouwen. Nu het zo evident de kans laat lopen duidelijk te maken dat het die opzet niet langer heeft, moet worden aangenomen dat Irak bereid en in staat is de internationale gemeenschap bij voortduring om de tuin te leiden. Met financiële sancties en inspecties alleen kan die intentie niet afgestopt worden.

De regering betreft bij dat oordeel ook een aantal andere factoren.

De door met name Frankrijk, Rusland en China bepleitte voortzetting van het inspectiesysteem is niet overtuigend omdat inspecties alleen onder voortdurende dreiging van militair optreden tot stand zijn gekomen. Genoemde landen hebben aan die druk op geen enkele manier een bijdrage geleverd. Hun pleidooi zou overtuigender zijn als zij ook bereid zouden zijn Irak daadwerkelijk onder druk te zetten.

Daarnaast is de VS-administratie er toe overgegaan de kwestie-Irak neer te leggen daar waar die thuishoort: in de Veiligheidsraad. Samen met de Britse regering en anderen is herhaaldelijk getracht de leden van de Raad te wijzen op de lange-termijn-gevolgen voor het gezag en de effectiviteit van de Veiligheidsraad wanneer deze verzuimt zijn verantwoordelijkheden te nemen en, in dit geval, de naleving van zijn eigen besluiten zonnig met geweld af te dwingen.

Wat Irak de laatste tijd aan beweging heeft laten zien, is uitsluitend en alleen het gevolg van dreiging met militair optreden door de VS en het VK. Die dreiging kan niet onbeperkt worden voortgezet. Op zeker moment verdwijnt immers het effect van de enkele aanwezigheid van militaire eenheden.

Alles afwegende komt de regering tot de slotsom dat er, gelet op de onvoldoende medewerking door Irak, sprake is van 'further material breach'. Zij constateert dat de VS en het VK op grond van eenzelfde redenering de hoop op een vreedzame oplossing vrijwel hebben opgegeven en bereid zijn tot militair optreden. De regering steunt de conclusie dat het onvermogen tot besluiten van de Veiligheidsraad er niet toe mag leiden dat Saddam Hoessein ongemoeid wordt gelaten. De regering realiseert zich daarbij ten volle dat de inzet van militaire middelen ernstige gevolgen kan hebben, bij voorbeeld in de vorm van verder lijden van de burgerbevolking, die reeds jarenlang het slachtoffer is van het Iraakse regime. Als dit conflict niet met andere middelen kan worden opgelost, ligt de schuld daarvoor zonder enige twijfel in Bagdad.

Nederland heeft wel bijgedragen aan het opvoeren van de militaire druk op Irak, onder meer door het openstellen van het luchtruim, havens en luchthavens voor de transit van militair materieel en personeel. Daarnaast werden in bondgenootschappelijk verband Patriot luchtverdigingssystemen naar Turkije uitgezonden en participeert Nederlands personeel in de AWACS-vliegtuigen. Voorts levert Nederland belangrijke bijdragen aan de operatie Enduring Freedom. Het uitblijven van een nadere VR-uitspraak heeft echter ook gevolgen voor het nationale draagvlak voor verdere Nederlandse betrokkenheid. Op die grond concludeert de regering dat het geen eigen actieve militaire bijdrage zal leveren aan operaties ten aanzien van Irak.

Uitgaande van een militair optreden zal de regering zich concentreren op de aanpak van problemen in de fase daarna. Het gaat hierbij allereerst om humanitaire hulp en wederopbouw, maar ook om zaken als het bestuur van Irak en het verzekeren van stabiliteit en veiligheid. In dit verband kan ook de wenselijkheid van een militaire bijdrage worden overwogen.

De Verenigde Naties zullen in deze vervolgfase een centrale rol moeten spelen, idealiter op basis van een mandatering van de Veiligheidsraad. De Europese Unie en haar lidstaten zullen tezamen en afzonderlijk daaraan een bijdrage moeten leveren. De regering ziet in deze activiteiten ten gunste van de toekomst van de bevolking van Irak tevens een mogelijkheid om de eensgezindheid in multilaterale organisaties als de VN en de EU te herstellen.

Associated Press

Report: Iraq Leadership Rejects Ultimatum

18 maart 2003

Iraq's leadership on Tuesday rejected the U.S. ultimatum for President Saddam Hussein and his family to leave Iraq or face war, Iraq's al-Shabab television reported.

It said the decision was made in a joint meeting of the Revolution Command Council - Iraq's highest executive body - and the leadership of the ruling Baath party. Saddam chaired the meeting, it said.

A statement read by the announcer said the meeting condemned the ultimatum issued by President Bush.

"Iraq doesn't choose its path through foreigners and doesn't choose its leaders by decree from Washington, London or Tel Aviv," it said.

Later, the announcer said that mass demonstrations would be organized throughout Iraq on Tuesday to express support for Saddam.

"The march of struggle will continue against the American, English and Zionist aggressors," said the statement from the joint meeting.

Earlier in the day, a planeload of U.N. weapons inspectors left Baghdad aboard a flight to Cyprus, joining the exodus of diplomats, aid workers and other foreigners.

The inspectors were ordered out Monday by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan. U.N. officials said about 150 inspectors, support staff, humanitarian workers and observers would be evacuated.

"We left Iraq with a sense of sadness," U.N. spokesman Hiro Ueki said in Cyprus. "We have done our job to the extent that we could. All the staff did this the best possible way, both objectively and professionally."

Ueki said 56 inspectors as well as support staff were on the first flight. He said that two more flights were planned and that the exodus would be complete by the end of the day.

In a speech Monday night, Bush gave Saddam and his two sons 48 hours to go into exile or face war. "The tyrant will soon be gone," Bush said in a televised address.

He asked Iraqi troops not to "fight for a dying regime," use weapons of mass destruction or blow up oil wells. He warned that war criminals will be prosecuted.

It was not clear if the speech was widely seen in Iraq, where information is tightly controlled and most Iraqis are barred from owning satellite dishes.

Top military officers are likely to be among the minority of privileged Iraqis with access to satellite TV and may have seen it. Lower-ranking officers may have been able to hear the speech on radio stations like the BBC and Washington's Radio Sawa, which are clandestinely listened to in the country.

Earlier Tuesday, Saddam's elder son rejected the U.S. demand, saying instead that Bush should resign.

In a statement distributed by the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, Odai Hussein said that Bush is "unstable" and that the U.S. leader "should give up power in America with his family."

Odai also warned that a U.S.-led attack will force Iraq to broaden the war against the United States. Any attack on Iraq, he said, would leave "the wives and mothers of those who fight us constantly crying. ... They should not believe there is a single safe spot for them inside Iraq or outside Iraq."

Echoing these remarks, Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Sabri said Tuesday that Bush should step down, not Saddam, "because he made the U.S. hated and isolated in the world."

Iraqi U.N. Ambassador Mohammed Al-Douri said war would destabilize the region as well as the rest of the world. "I think this would be a mistake, a grave mistake from the part of the American administration to launch this war against my country," he said in New York.

Nearly 300,000 U.S. and British troops are in the region poised to strike.

Before Bush spoke, Saddam warned that American forces would find an Iraqi fighter ready to die for his country "behind every rock, tree and wall."

He acknowledged that Iraq had once possessed weapons of mass destruction to defend itself from Iran and Israel, but insisted it no longer has them. "When Saddam Hussein says he has no weapons of mass destruction, he means what he says," Saddam said.

Baghdad residents braced for war, lining up for gas and bread and taping their windows.

U.N. weapons inspectors arrived in Baghdad in November for the first time in four years. During four months of inspections, arms experts traveled the length of the country hunting for banned weapons of mass destruction.

Chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix has said that inspectors never found any "smoking gun," although they did find 18 empty warheads designed for chemical agents. Inspectors also oversaw the destruction of Al Samoud 2 missiles.

U.N. workers have been gradually leaving Iraq over the past several weeks because of the deepening crisis. Diplomats from Germany, the Czech Republic, India, China, Bahrain and Britain are also leaving Iraq and neighboring Kuwait for fear that Baghdad might retaliate against them in the event of a war.

U.N. aid agencies have maintained a significant presence in Iraq since the end of the 1991 Gulf War, helping to ease the effects of years of war and of U.N.-imposed sanctions. Hundreds of people were working for such agencies as the U.N. Development Program, the U.N. Children's Fund and the World Food Program.

The Times

Mixed response to Bush ultimatum for Saddam

By AFP and AP – 18 March 2003

President Bush's ultimatum to President Saddam Hussein to step down within 48 hours or face war received a mixed response today.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, expressed regret at the speech, as did India, France and Mexico.

A Government spokesman in Jakarta said: "We still believe that a solution to the crisis should be found within the UN Security Council."

The countdown to war has raised the prospect of a backlash by Muslims in Indonesia and Malaysia, making it difficult to crack down on radical groups.

China said that peace could still be won. "The arrow has already been placed on the bow," said Wen Jiabao in a speech on his second full day as China's Prime Minister. "As long as there is one glimmer of hope, we will not give up our efforts for a peaceful settlement."

President Jacques Chirac said that the US takes a "heavy responsibility" with its ultimatum. "This unilateral decision is contrary to the wishes of the Security Council and the international community which wants to pursue disarmament."

The most solid official support for Mr Bush came from Australia, where John Howard, the Prime Minister, said that his Government would commit 2,000 troops to a US-led attack.

He said: "I believe very strongly that the position the government has taken is right."

Junichiro Koizumi, Japan's Prime Minister, said. "It was a decision that had to be made. We support the US position."

Gerhard Schröder, the German Chancellor, had the opposite view. "Does the threat posed by the Iraqi dictator justify a war, which is sure to kill thousands of innocent children, women and men? My answer in this case was and is: no."

Politicians and newspapers in Pakistan accused Washington of endangering the UN and warning of protracted campaigns like the 17-month operation in Afghanistan.

The Turkish Cabinet was due to hold a special meeting today on support for US military operations against Iraq. The US had asked to use Turkish territory as a launch pad for attacks on Iraq, but the Parliament in Ankara narrowly rejected a first motion on the deployment of 62,000 US soldiers in Turkey on March 1, hampering Washington's plans to invade Iraq from the north.

UN weapons inspectors and other staff arrived in Cyprus today after pulling out of Iraq.

Eighty one people were evacuated and 100 more UN staff in Baghdad would be airlifted out later today, an official said. Hiro Ueki, the inspectors' spokesman, told journalists, "We have done our job to the extent we could."

Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General, ordered the evacuation yesterday and suspended the oil-for-food programme allowing Baghdad to export oil in return for essential supplies.

"We left with a sense of sadness but the decision to leave was made at the highest political level at the United Nations," said Mr Ueki.

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