

Bush sets no deadline for Iraq in U.N. speech

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — President Bush told the United Nations on Monday "we cannot compromise" on demands that Iraq destroy its nuclear weapons capability. He also urged the world body to disavow its stand that Zionism is a form of racism.

While talking tough about Iraq, Bush set no deadline for Saddam Hussein to either un-

conditionally submit to the inspection and destruction of his most dangerous weapons or face the possibility of renewed military force. White House press secretary Marlin Fitzwater told reporters that the United States was discussing a 48-hour deadline with other Security Council members.

Bush said the U.N. should keep economic sanctions

clamped on Iraq as long as Saddam remains in control.

He took a strong stance on the 1975 Zionism resolution, a major source of mistrust between Israel and the U.N.

"To equate Zionism with racism is to reject Israel itself," Bush said in his speech to the representatives from 166 nations. "This body cannot claim to seek peace and at the same

time challenge Israel's right to exist.

"By repealing this resolution unconditionally," he said, "the United Nations will enhance its credibility and serve the cause of peace."

The United States has long deplored the resolution but Bush had postponed a campaign to repeal it out of a desire to maintain Arab support for the effort against Saddam in the Persian Gulf.

The State Department's assistant secretary for international organizations, John Bolton, told reporters, "We think we have a majority in favor of repeal."

As for Iraq, some advisers had urged Bush to set a 48-hour deadline after which American warplanes would be used to accompany U.N. inspectors on helicopter flights in Iraq.

However, another administration official said the 48-hour plan "may not be relevant" anymore as the U.N. faces new problems with Iraq's denial of documents to U.N. inspectors. Nevertheless, the official asserted that the United States and its allies have the authority to use force if necessary against Iraq.

Fitzwater said Saddam's interference with inspections "leads us to be more pessimistic" that he will comply with U.N. demands. "It doesn't appear that Saddam recognizes the seriousness of the situation. The basic problem is he doesn't want to comply."

Bush reworked his speech at Camp David over the weekend and tinkered with the section on Iraq before leaving the

White House on Monday — as Iraqi soldiers were detaining U.N. inspectors who were trying to take nuclear-weapon documents from a building in Baghdad.

"We're not going to do anything before we understand the facts," Bush said after his speech. In Baghdad, the Iraqis released the inspectors but kept the documents.

Bush's plea for keeping up pressure on Saddam and for repealing the resolution on Zionism were the high points of a speech in which he outlined his vision of the world in the post-Cold War era.

Bush also used his visit for a marathon of diplomatic meetings at his suite at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. He met with the leaders of Brazil, El Salvador and South Korea and arranged a reception for all the U.N. heads of state.

At the same time, Secretary of State James A. Baker III was conferring with foreign ministers of Britain, the Soviet Union, France and China, presumably solidifying Big Five support for pressure on Iraq.

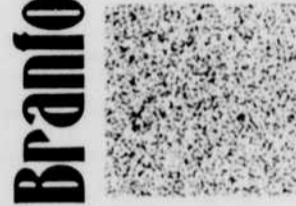
Baker appeared to warn Saddam of the threat of military force. "We saw earlier the tragic consequences of failure to comply" with U.N. resolutions, he told reporters.

In his speech, Bush said the United States had no desire to impose a "pax Americana" on the world. At the same time, he said, "We will not retreat and pull back into isolation. ... We will offer friendship and leadership."

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