

Three nations reject U.S. call to attack Iraq

Margaret Coker
Cox News Service (U-WIRE)

MOSCOW — The Bush administration failed over the weekend to win support for military action in Iraq from three key nations, further complicating American diplomatic efforts at the United Nations.

Russia, siding with France and China, said Sunday that military intervention is not needed since Baghdad has already caved to international pressure and will allow weapons inspectors back into Iraq.

The White House sent diplomatic missions to Paris, Moscow and Beijing over the weekend to urge these permanent members of the U.N. Security Council to back a new U.S. draft proposal that would permit the use of force against Iraq. President George W. Bush said Saturday this policy was in the "national interest" of the United States.

The early version of the U.S. draft, set to be made public today, sets out a seven-day deadline for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to accept demands to

disarm and open all suspected weapons sites to U.N. weapons inspectors. It also sets a 30-day deadline for Iraq to make a full declaration of any weapons of mass destruction programs and authorizes a military attack if Baghdad does not comply.

The United Nations says it still does not have a complete accounting of Baghdad's weapons programs because weapons inspectors were pulled out of Iraq in December 1998 after Iraq's failure to comply with their demands.

The United States already has the

backing of Great Britain. However, approval from France, Russia and China — all of whom hold veto power at the Security Council — is vital in the White House's attempt to achieve international legitimacy for a war against Saddam.

The Russian news agency Interfax on Sunday quoted high-ranking Kremlin officials as saying they were "disappointed" with the U.S. draft.

France, Russia and China, who conferred on the subject Thursday and Friday, say they favor a two-step

Security Council plan against Iraq.

The three have said that they agree that a new Security Council resolution is needed to revise the mandate for U.N. weapons inspectors. But they will only consider a Security Council resolution mandating force against Baghdad after weapons inspectors finished their job or if Saddam hindered their work.

U.N. weapons inspectors are scheduled to return to Iraq in mid-October.

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Saddam's 'arrogance' may fuel calls for attacks

Ken Moritsugu
and Diego Ibarguen
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

WASHINGTON — Iraq's rejection of any new conditions on U.N. weapons inspections could play into President George W. Bush's hands as both Congress and the United Nations prepare to grapple with the issue this week.

With congressional leaders set to meet Monday to try to iron out differences on a resolution authorizing war, Iraq's combative position could

push Congress toward approval of such a resolution, a Democratic senator said Sunday.

Meanwhile, as Iraqi and U.N. officials prepared to meet in Vienna on Monday to try to agree on a resumption of weapons inspections, a Security Council member said that Iraq's stance underlines the need for a new and tougher U.N. resolution on Iraq.

The Bush administration is pushing hard for both resolutions. Despite continued objections by a handful of

Democrats, a congressional resolution is widely expected to pass, though disagreement remains on the exact wording. The battle in the United Nations is uphill. Many countries want to give Iraq one more chance to prove it has no weapons of mass destruction before passing any resolution that could set the stage for war.

Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan said Saturday that his country welcomed weapons inspections under rules that existed when

the inspections ceased in 1998, but would reject any new conditions.

The rejection indicated "a certain arrogance" on the part of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., said Sunday.

"This latest reaction is not going to help him in my view at all and probably going to bring us closer to support of a resolution in the Senate and in the House," he said on CBS' Face the Nation.

But Reps. David Bonior, D-Mich.,

Jim McDermott, D-Wash., after meeting with Iraqi officials in Baghdad, said Sunday that both Congress and the United Nations should hold off on any new resolutions until Iraq tries to comply with U.N. weapons inspections.

"They should be given a chance," McDermott said in an interview on ABC's This Week with George Stephanopoulos. "Otherwise, you're just trying to provoke them into war."

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Israel leaves Arafat compound without 'terrorists'

Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

JERUSALEM — Bowing to American pressure, Israeli military forces withdrew Sunday from Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's ruined headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah, but tanks and troops remained close, to keep watch on a number of suspected terrorists inside.

White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said "the president wel-

comes this development" and called on Israel and Arafat "to live up to their responsibilities to promote peace, stability and reform in the Palestinian Authority."

Administration officials had pressured Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to stop his assault on Arafat, launched on Sept. 19 in response to two suicide bombings in Israel that killed seven and injured dozens more.

Israeli troops in tanks and bulldoz-

ers virtually demolished the sprawling, one-block compound, leaving only one building in which Arafat and about 200 Palestinians were confined.

Besides wanting to force out dozens of suspected terrorists Israeli officials insist are inside with Arafat, Sharon had hoped the demolition would make it so uncomfortable for the Palestinian leader that he would leave the West Bank altogether. Sharon and other hawkish govern-

ment leaders have repeatedly expressed a desire to expel Arafat from the region because they believe him to be the main force behind continued terror attacks on Israelis.

But mounting pressure from the Americans forced Sharon to capitulate. At a Sunday morning meeting of senior Israeli cabinet officials, Sharon agreed to end the siege on the day that coincidentally marked the second anniversary of the cur-

rent Palestinian uprising.

Arafat and other Palestinian officials later complained the Israeli withdrawal was incomplete, with soldiers still roaming Ramallah in armored vehicles and stopping anyone who left Arafat's compound to ensure they were not on Israel's list of wanted Palestinians. A curfew was imposed on Palestinians as dusk fell.

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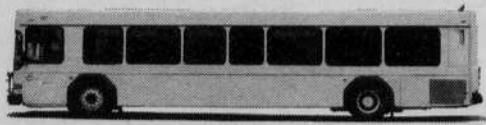
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