

Senate begins debate on Iraq resolution

Ron Hutcheson and Diego Ibarguen
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WASHINGTON — The Senate opened debate Thursday on a resolution that would clear the way for war with Iraq as President Bush again prodded the United Nations to get on board or get out of the way.

"We'll determine whether or not the U.N. Security Council wants to live up to its obligations," Bush said during a talk to Hispanic leaders at the White House.

But the president made no apparent headway in his efforts to win U.N. support for possible military action. France and Russia continued to resist his push for a proposed U.N. resolution that would authorize force if Iraq fails to comply with strict disarmament terms.

In Congress, the acknowledgment among lawmakers that they will easily approve a war resolution next week deflated any sense of drama in their high-stakes debate, even

though it carries potentially large consequences. The House of Representatives and the Senate intend to vote next week for a resolution that will give Bush broad authority to wage war against Iraq on his timetable.

"It's up to us today to send a message to the world," Senate Minority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., said.

At the United Nations, diplomats kept their focus on plans for a new round of weapons inspections in Iraq beginning as soon as mid-October. Nations opposed to Bush's hard-line approach want the United Nations to avoid talk of war until inspectors have a chance to test Iraq's willingness to cooperate. The return of inspectors after a four-year absence would complicate Bush's bid for a new U.N. resolution authorizing force, and could become a big obstacle to his war plans.

British and U.S. diplomats described a growing consensus among members of the Security Council on the need for some type of new resolution establishing stronger terms

governing a new round of inspections.

"There's a general sense in there that we do still need greater clarity on arrangements to make sure inspections are really effective," said one British diplomat who attended the meeting and who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Yet while the Security Council appears receptive to setting tougher terms for inspection — including insisting on unfettered access to Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's palaces — France and Russia still oppose including language in this initial resolution that would authorize military action if Iraq fails to cooperate. Both nations hold veto power on the Security Council.

France favors requiring a second U.N. vote on the use of force if the inspection process fails. Top Russian diplomats said Thursday that any U.N. resolution with an automatic war trigger would be "unacceptable."

Bush administration officials have a fallback plan if they are unable to convince the

Security Council to approve a resolution with an automatic war trigger. If forced to deal with two U.N. votes, U.S. diplomats intend to make the resolution dealing with inspections so strongly worded that the United Nations would have little choice but to approve force is Saddam refuses to cooperate.

Bush displayed no appetite for compromise as he pressed the United Nations again Thursday to take a firm stand against Saddam.

"My intent, of course, is for the United Nations to do its job," the president said. "I think it'll make it easier for us to keep the peace. My intent is for the world to understand that the obligation is up to Saddam Hussein to disarm like he said he would do."

The military option is my last choice, not my first. . . . But Saddam has got to understand, the United Nations must know, that the will of this country is strong."

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Churches call for peace, but few seem to hear

Steve Gushee
Cox News Service

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — A just war is hard to justify. Convincing people to embrace the idea might be even more difficult.

The church has long set high the bar to a morally acceptable war. Currently the Vatican, the World Council of Churches and nearly 50 denominations are on record opposing military action in Iraq.

Sadly, their opinion might not matter. The church seems to have lost its power to mold public opinion.

As if to acknowledge their impo-

tence, most religious leaders insist that the United Nations Security Council, not religious norms, be the authority to sanction action taken against Saddam Hussein.

The consensus of a gaggle of nations is a new addition to the ancient criteria for moral warfare. A just cause for using lethal force is the primary issue on that list.

Most scholars agree that St. Augustine initially wrestled with the problem of a just war in the fourth century. Catholic teaching evolved over eons of increasingly violent warfare, according to a 1993 statement by the United States Catholic

Conference on peace and justice.

Force may be used only to correct a grave evil such as the violation of the basic rights of an entire population or to defend against a critical threat to a nation's peace.

The good to be achieved must significantly outweigh the destruction needed to accomplish it.

Although both parties might have legitimate concerns, the injustice to be addressed by warfare must be significantly greater than anything suffered by the other party.

No more force may be used than is absolutely necessary. Civilians

may never be the object of an attack.

Ultimately, force may only be used as a last resort and only after all peaceful alternatives have been seriously explored and exhausted.

As in so many religious issues, the conditions necessary to justify war are open to interpretation. That makes the authority of the interpreter critical. The church has little.

Roman Catholics routinely ignore their church's teaching about birth control. Many disagree with its stand against the death penalty. They will not easily accept a "just

war" argument from leaders whose direction they nonchalantly disregard on other vital questions.

Protestant leaders also try to sway the opinion of their flocks, but they are split asunder. Most oppose a war, but some evangelists, including the ethics commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, strongly support the idea.

Divided and discredited leadership will convince no one — even when it's right.

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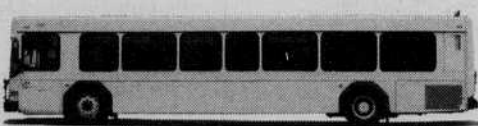
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