

Iraq ambassador says palaces are open

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and Joyce M. Davis
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

WASHINGTON — Facing threats of a U.S.-led invasion, Iraq on Sunday hinted that it might allow United Nations weapons inspectors greater freedom to search for nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

Mohammed Aldouri, Iraq's U.N. ambassador, suggested that Baghdad is willing to give the inspectors unfettered access to so-called "presidential sites" — sprawling palace compounds belonging to Iraqi

leader Saddam Hussein for which Iraq has previously demanded special status.

"I don't think that we will have a problem on that question," Aldouri said. "Certainly, we can accommodate ourselves with the U.N. to have free access to presidential sites."

Contradicting recent statements by other Iraqi officials, Aldouri also said that Baghdad may accept a proposed new U.N. Security Council resolution that's expected to set stiff terms for eliminating its suspected chemical, biological, nuclear and missile programs.

"We are not rejecting any resolutions of the Security Council," the Iraqi diplomat said on the ABC News program "This Week." "We will see these resolutions. First of all, to have this resolution in our hand, and after that, we can conclude."

However, Aldouri's remarks are unlikely to satisfy the Bush administration, which accuses Iraq of repeatedly breaking its promises.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher called it "pretty typical Iraqi behavior... Whenever they're faced with a determined

front, they start backpedaling."

Aldouri's remarks come as diplomatic pressure mounts on Baghdad, and as President George W. Bush prepares to deliver an address at 8 p.m. EDT Monday laying out his case about the danger Iraq poses to the United States.

Bush is expected to say that war may be unavoidable if Iraq does not live up to previous commitments to disarm. He also is expected to discuss U.S. plans for a post-Saddam Iraq.

The coming week also could

prove pivotal on other fronts.

The United States on Sunday appeared to be moving closer to gaining allies' agreement to the new U.N. Security Council resolution.

France and Russia have balked at a U.S. proposal that would authorize military strikes on Iraq if Baghdad fails to meet the U.N.'s terms. France has proposed a two-step process in which a second resolution authorizing force would have to be approved.

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News briefs

Poll finds Americans worried about jobs

A majority of Americans say that the nation's economy is in its worst shape in nearly a decade and that President Bush and congressional leaders are spending too much time talking about Iraq while neglecting problems at home, according to the latest New York Times/CBS News poll.

The poll found signs of economic distress that cut across party and geographic lines. Nearly half of all Americans are worried that they or someone in their household will be out of a job within a year.

The number of Americans who said they believe the economy is worse than it was just two years ago has increased markedly since the summer. The number of Americans who approve of the way Bush has handled the economy — 41 percent — is at the lowest level of his presi-

dency. And many people said they worry that a war in Iraq — which most Americans view as inevitable — would disrupt an already unsettled economy.

The poll found that despite the emphasis by Bush since Labor Day on the need to move against Saddam Hussein, support for such a policy has not changed appreciably since the summer. While most Americans said they backed Bush's campaign against Iraq, the sentiment was expressed with reservations and signs of apprehension about its potential repercussions.

Americans said they feared a long and costly war that could spread across the Middle East and encourage more terrorist attacks in the United States. They said they do not want the United States to act without support from allies and do not want the United States to act before U.N. weapons inspectors have had an opportunity to enter Iraq.

— Adam Nagourney and Janet Elder, *New York Times*

Music industry takes on Napster successor

Having vanquished the music swapping service Napster in court, the entertainment industry is facing a formidable obstacle in pursuing its major successor, KaZaA: geography.

Sharman Networks, the distributor of the program, is incorporated in the South Pacific island nation of Vanuatu and managed from Australia. Its computer servers are in Denmark and the source code for its software was last seen in Estonia.

KaZaA's original developers, who still control the underlying technology, are thought to be living in the Netherlands — although entertainment lawyers seeking to have them charged with violating U.S. copyright law have been unable to find them.

What KaZaA has in the United States are users — millions of them — downloading copyrighted music, television shows and movies 24 hours a day.

How effective are U.S. laws

against a company that enters the country only virtually? The answer is about to unfold in a Los Angeles courtroom.

— Amy Harmon,
New York Times

Supreme Court to hear hot-button issues

After a significant term defined by rulings on school vouchers and the death penalty, Supreme Court justices return to the bench Monday to take up a slate of interesting cases with important implications for American life.

The court has announced it will hear cases on such hot-button issues as cross burning, abortion protests, three-strikes laws and sex offender notification statutes, as well as state efforts to regulate HMOs and keep down the costs of prescription drug prices. And in the months to come it also could add a key affirmative action case as well as other cases addressing the constitutionality of criminal procedures

implemented after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

With those cases on the horizon, the justices are in for what many observers predict will be an extraordinarily important term, one that could leave a dramatic imprint on the law.

"Before it is all over, it is likely to be regarded as a historic term," said Steven Shapiro, national legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union, which could have up to eight cases before the court this session. "But many of the most important cases are still working their way toward the court."

With just over 40 cases on its docket so far, the court will add others every week until it gets close to 75 or so. Among those scheduled are cases challenging the use of race in university admissions and the legality of closing immigration proceedings for hundreds of people detained after the Sept. 11 attacks.

— Jan Crawford Greenburg,
Chicago Tribune

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