

# U.S. backs off demand for U.N. war resolution

Diego Ibarguen and Warren P. Strobel  
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WASHINGTON — In an effort to win U.N. Security Council support, the United States is backing down from its demands that a new U.N. resolution must authorize military force against Iraq if Baghdad does not abide by new weapons inspections rules.

The new U.S. approach could delay, possibly significantly, the Pentagon's timetable for war, both because of the time it would take for inspectors to do their work, and for the diplomatic process should the inspection effort fail.

The U.S. retreat suggests that the Bush administration is anxious to preserve a multilateral approach to Iraq, as Secretary of State Colin Powell has advocated, rather than risk going it alone, the course favored by Vice President Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld.

Under compromise language put forward by the United States, Iraq would face unspecified serious consequences if it failed to comply with stiff requirements for the new U.N.

inspections regime.

But, in a major change of approach demanded by France, Iraqi noncompliance would not automatically give the United States a green light to launch an invasion and oust Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, several Western diplomats said.

Instead, the U.N. Security Council would hold additional meetings and perhaps pass a new resolution authorizing the use of force.

It remains unclear whether Bush could or would launch military action while U.N. diplomats are debating.

One U.S. official said the proposal would not limit the United States from acting on its own, noting that the wording of the resolution would make it "quite clear that the Council has to do nothing more."

But a European diplomat in New York called it unlikely. "I don't see them going (to war) by themselves in the middle of these two steps. That doesn't make sense," said the diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

France's initial reaction to the U.S. concession was positive, suggesting agreement on the new approach to

Iraq could come soon.

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov welcomed the new proposal and said Powell told him it would be formally submitted soon. "We believe that there are favorable conditions now to preserve the unity of the global community and ensure the return of international inspectors and their efficient work in Iraq," Ivanov said in Moscow.

Ambassadors from the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council — the United States, China, Russia, Britain and France — were to meet Friday in New York to hammer out a final deal, before sharing the document with the council's 10 non-permanent members.

"Everything should go quickly now," the European diplomat said.

U.S. officials portrayed the outcome as a victory for their demand that Iraq submit to unfettered inspections to eliminate its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons or face stiff consequences.

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# Scientists find new evidence of black hole in our galaxy

David Perlman  
San Francisco Chronicle

Charles Townes, the University of California-Berkeley Nobel Prize physicist, was flying at 41,000 feet aboard a NASA plane 20 years ago, on the hunt for evidence that a monstrously powerful black hole was lurking in the heart of the Milky Way galaxy.

With him on those flights was his German postdoctoral student, Reinhard Genzel, and a team of other scientists trying to discover whether the invisible object was gulping entire stars and cosmic gases under the tug of its own irresistible gravity.

If that "supermassive" black hole did exist, Townes and Genzel knew, it would provide an extraordinary opportunity to study the dynamics of gravitational forces and the behavior of matter under those immense pressures, and could also help clarify many aspects of Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity.

Thursday, Genzel, together with more than 20 other astronomers and physicists, are reporting they have finally found the strongest evidence yet that indeed a dense black hole, more than 3 million times as massive as our sun, does exist at the center of the Milky Way.

After tracking the paths of several stars in the vicinity of the presumed black hole for the past 10 years, Genzel's team discovered last spring that at least one bright star is clearly hurtling in an orbit that could ultimately end in the star's violent death within the black hole.

"It was one of those 'wow' experiences you rarely have as a scientist, but which makes being a researcher so rewarding," said Genzel, now a professor at the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics in Germany, but who spends a quarter of each year as a physics professor at Berkeley. His group's discovery is being reported in

Thursday's issue of the journal Nature.

The star appears to be speeding around the black hole at more than 3,000 miles a second at a distance roughly equal to the diameter of Earth's solar system, he said. It will take about 15.2 years to complete its current orbit.

The mystery object at the very center of the Milky Way, surrounded by bursts of radio noise, is known as SgA because it appears to lie in the southern hemisphere constellation Sagittarius ("The Archer").

Although such black holes have long been suspected in the centers of many other far-off galaxies, the existence of a "supermassive" black hole in our own Milky Way has been highly controversial. But this new evidence from Genzel's group "makes it very difficult for anyone to say it's not a black hole, and the doubters will now have to give up their doubts," Townes said.

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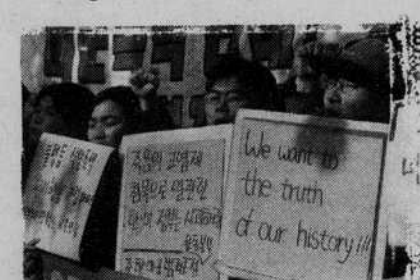
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