

CRS Report for Congress

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Iraq: International Support For U.S. Policy

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Summary

Although there is a worldwide consensus that Iraq must comply with all applicable U.N. resolutions, international attitudes differ sharply on how to compel Iraq to comply with the U.N. program of eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs. Some countries support U.S. threats to use force against Iraq as a necessary step to ensure that Iraq does not reconstitute banned weapons programs. Other countries believe that force would kill Iraqi civilians already chafing under seven years of international sanctions and could prompt Iraq to expel U.N. weapons inspectors. Meanwhile, during the week of February 23, the Senate is scheduled to consider S.Con.Res. 71, calling on the President to take all necessary and appropriate actions in response to the threat posed by Iraq's refusal to end its lethal weapons program.

Introduction

The United States is attempting to line up international backing for and participation in the use of force against Iraq, should diplomacy fail to obtain from Iraq a pledge to allow U.N. weapons inspectors (U.N. Special Commission on Iraq, UNSCOM) unfettered access to sites they need to inspect. In some cases, such as the Persian Gulf states, the United States seeks important operational as well as political support for airstrikes against Iraqi targets.

As shown in the analysis below, some countries are ambivalent in their support for the U.S. position in the current crisis.¹ Their ambivalence reflects the conflicting goals of supporting the United States while trying to respond to public opinion that does not necessarily favor airstrikes on Iraq. Several countries that are opposed to military action have economic interests in Iraq that might be acting as a factor in their positions on the crisis. It is possible that, as the crisis continues to develop, some countries might shift their positions depending on the degree to which Iraq is willing to compromise on the

¹The information in the report is taken from press reports and public statements by world leaders.

question of UNSCOM access to restricted sites. (*For further background on the crisis, the weapons inspection program, U.S. military deployments, and Iraqi capabilities, see CRS Issue Brief 92117, Iraqi Compliance With Cease-fire Agreements, updated regularly; Issue Brief 94049, Iraq-U.S. Confrontations, updated regularly; and CRS Report 97-808 F, Iraq: Erosion of International Isolation?, August 29, 1997.*)

Russia/Europe/Canada/Australia

Russia. Strongest opponent of the use of force among the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. Actively attempting to mediate a solution to the crisis. Has longstanding political and economic ties to Saddam Husayn; Iraq owes Russia \$8 billion or more in debts. President Yeltsin has warned that U.S. military action against Iraq could set off a "world war," although his spokespeople subsequently softened his statements.

France. Opposes use of force, except possibly as a last resort, and says it will not join any military operation against Iraq in this crisis. Also attempting to mediate, in concert with Russia. Has longstanding ties to Iraq, and interest in developing Iraq's large untapped oil reserves. Iraq owes \$4 billion to France. Believes the United States has not given Iraq incentives to comply with applicable U.N. resolutions.

United Kingdom. Strongest supporter of U.S. position. Has sent aircraft carrier and other forces to the Gulf to join U.S. Despite support, prefers airstrikes should be authorized by U.N. Security Council declaration of Iraq in "material breach" of the cease-fire.

Canada. Prime Minister Jean Chretien announced February 10 that Canada will send a frigate, transport aircraft, and 300 to 400 troops to support U.S. forces in the Gulf.

Netherlands. The Foreign Ministry said February 13 the Netherlands would send a frigate to join U.S. forces in the Gulf, but it would only participate in military action if all diplomatic options are exhausted.

Germany. After February meeting with Secretary of Defense Cohen, Chancellor Helmut Kohl said Germany will allow U.S. use of bases in Germany for strike on Iraq. Offer is considered more significant politically than operationally. German leaders appear to want all possible diplomatic options exhausted before any strike.

Italy. Believes military action could have unintended adverse consequences for Middle East stability. Has not yet taken a position on U.S. use of bases in Italy for strikes.

Belgium. Announced (February 18) deployment of a frigate to support U.S. forces in the Gulf, but would need a further government decision to engage it in hostilities if they occur.

Spain. Position somewhat unclear. Spanish press report says government will authorize U.S. to station 30 aerial refueling tankers at a southern base. Also offering to send technicians to support UNSCOM.

Portugal. Favors diplomacy backed by threat of force. Authorizes U.S. use of base in Azores islands group. Currently sits on the U.N. Security Council.

Greece. Will not participate in military action without Security Council backing. Non-committal on U.S. use of bases in Greece for a strike.

Denmark. Government asked parliament on February 16 to support sending a C-130 transport aircraft to the Gulf.

Ireland. Wants to give diplomacy every chance, according to Ireland's Ambassador to the United Nations. Considered unlikely to participate in military action or provide logistical help. Not a NATO member.

Sweden. Currently sits on U.N. Security Council and a new member of the European Union. Tends to oppose use of force in most international situations but reportedly might support force against Iraq if Baghdad remains uncooperative.

Poland/Hungary/Czech Republic. The foreign ministers of the three prospective NATO members told Secretary of State Albright February 9 they would support use of force against Iraq if it becomes necessary. Poland says it will send an anti-chemical and biological warfare unit to the Gulf in the event of military action. Hungarian parliament voted February 17 to allow U.S. aircraft to use Hungarian airspace and airfields, and to send a medical team to the Gulf.

Australia. Backs use of force, and will send 250 troops to the Gulf, including specialists in covert search and rescue operations. Home country of UNSCOM Chairman Richard Butler.

New Zealand. Prime Minister Jenny Shipley said February 16 New Zealand will send two surveillance aircraft and up to 20 special forces personnel.

Romania. Foreign Ministry said February 15 Romania would join military action if authorized by U.N. Sent chemical warfare specialists in 1991 Gulf war. Iraq owes Romania \$1.7 billion dating to Ceausescu era.

Norway. Plans to send about 30 personnel to support the coalition.

Middle East/Persian Gulf

Turkey. Generally opposes use of force, and Foreign Minister Ismail Cem is attempting to intercede with Baghdad to avoid a U.S. strike. Does not want U.S. to ask for use of bases in Turkey for strikes on Iraq, but continues to allow U.S./British patrols of northern Iraq no fly zone from Incirlik air base. Fears safehaven in Iraq for Turkish Kurdish opponents and has sent troops into northern Iraq to prevent a Kurdish refugee surge into Turkey that might result from a U.S. airstrike. Key outlet for Iraqi oil exports under Resolution 986 "oil-for-food" program and tacitly permits some illicit imports of Iraqi oil products by Turkish truck drivers.

Egypt. Generally opposed to use of force against Iraq, and Foreign Minister Amr Moussa is attempting to organize other Arab opinion in support of a diplomatic solution.

A publicly. Like many other Arab states, Egyptian public opinion is sympathetic to the light of the Iraqi people; some pro-Iraqi demonstrations have been held. Egypt and other Arabs also believe the United States insists on a higher standard of Iraqi compliance with

Jordan. King Hussein hurt the Iraqis. The King supports efforts to obtain full Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions and says Iraq will pay dearly for defying the United Nations. Has long maintained close political and economic relations with Iraq and did not support allied military action in Desert Storm. Dependent on subsidized shipments of Iraqi oil. Despite a UN arms ban, Iraq has continued to produce and export oil. February 18.

Strongly supportive of the U.S. position and Prime Minister Netanyahu says Israel reserves the right to retaliate if attacked by Iraq. Nervous about possible remaining

Palestinian Generally supportive of Iraq, as the PLO was in Desert Storm, but Arafat said February 16 he does not want Israelis hurt. Despite a ban, pro-Iraqi demonstrations have been held repeatedly in February. Radical wing of Islamist Palestinian organization Hamas vowed February 17 to attack Israelis if the U.S. strike Iraq.

Syria. A strike against Iraq would be unjustified. Has been improving relations with Iraq over the past few years, and reopened border with Iraq in June 1997. Supports Iraqi demands to alter the composition of UNSCOM.

n. Opposes military action against Iraq, according to Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Politically and economically close to Syria, and tends to follow Syrian lead on foreign policy issues.

Iran. Opposes military action against Iraq, despite eight year war with that country (1980-88) in which Iraq used chemical weapons and Scud missiles. Stood neutral in the 1991 Gulf War. Opposes U.S. forces or allow strikes on Iraq from their territories. Relations with Iraq have improved over the past two years although deep differences remain. Relations with the

Saudi Arabia. Largest and most important of the Gulf states, has indicated it will not allow military action in Saudi Arabia. Is allowing continuation of U.S. overflights of southern Iraq (Southern Watch operation) from Saudi airfields, and has assured Secretary of Defense Cohen privately that it will allow U.S. overflights and operations of U.S. support aircraft. February 18. Saudi Arabia to carry out strikes on Iraq.

Most supportive of the Gulf states, has allowed emplacement of additional

United Arab Emirates. Least supportive of the Gulf states for strikes against Iraq. Leader, Shaykh Zayid bin Zayid Al Nuhayyan, has repeatedly called for forgiving Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and reintegration into the Arab fold. However, UAE leaders are reported to have privately assured Secretary of Defense Cohen that U.S. aerial refueling tankers could continue to operate out of UAE, and that they will allow overflights in the event of an airstrike.

Oman. Agreed to allow U.S. to station five KC-10 tankers in Oman. Secretary Cohen asserts Oman will support a U.S. strike on Iraq, but Omani leaders have not said that publicly.

Qatar. Generally opposed to military action against Iraq. Has not offered to host additional forces for a possible strike, but will permit U.S. access to equipment prepositioned in Qatar. Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jasim Al Thani met Saddam February 16 to attempt mediation; highest ranking Gulf official to visit Iraq since 1991 war.

Bahrain. Has allowed U.S. to station additional combat aircraft, including B-1 bombers, during the crisis. However, Information Minister Muhammad al-Mutawa said February 17 Bahrain has not allowed strikes on Iraq from Bahrain. Has hosted U.S. naval headquarters in the Gulf since the 1940s.

Yemen. President Ali Abdullah Salih opposes military force in the current crisis. Generally supported Iraq during the 1991 Gulf war; favored an Arab-led diplomatic solution to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Arrested pro-Iraqi demonstrators February 14.

Asia/South Asia

China. Strongly opposed to military action, and would likely oppose a U.N. Security Council resolution declaring Iraq in material breach of the Gulf war cease-fire. Foreign Minister Qian Qichen said in December 1997 that it is possible Iraq no longer has or is producing banned weapons of mass destruction.

Japan. Generally opposed to military action, but will likely support the U.S. publicly if it decides to strike Iraq. Currently a member of the U.N. Security Council.

India. Opposed to military force against Iraq in the current crisis, according to a letter from Prime Minister Inder Gujral to the U.N. Secretary General.

Pakistan. "Advising" against use of force, according to the Foreign Ministry.

Malaysia. Foreign Minister Abdullah Badawi says Malaysia opposes the use of force.

Africa

South Africa. Opposes military action against Iraq, according to Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo.

Latin America

tina. Defense Minister Jorge Dominguez said February 13 that Argentina will contribute 100 noncombat support troops (medical, transport) to the Gulf.

International/Multilateral Bodies

Secretary General Kofi Annan said February 10 that both and the U.S. should back down from maximalist positions. Says that any solution should action. e crisis.

Secretary General of the organization, Egyptian diplomat Ismat Abd I-Magid, opposes the use of force against Iraq and is attempting to mediate a diplomatic

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Groups Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Ministers e if current crisis results in airstrikes against Iraq. The statement called the crisis a

The Vatican. Pope John Paul urging a diplomatic solution. R war a "just war."

European Union. European Commission (executive body of the EU) President Jacques Santer calling for a diplomatic solution.