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Thursday, February 27, 2003

Mexico appears to shift toward U.S. position

By Dafna Linzer THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED NATIONS - Mexico appeared to be the first among a handful of undecided U.N. Security Council members to shift toward the U.S. position on Iraq as Canada sought to find a middle ground among members split between disarming Saddam Hussein by force or giving weapons inspectors more time.

The Canadian proposal was rejected by the United States Wednesday after Secretary of State Colin Powell conferred by telephone with Foreign Minister Bill Graham. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the proposal "only procrastinates on a decision we all should be prepared to take.'

Boucher recalled other governments tried earlier to set a deadline for Iraq. But he said in the meantime "we have heard from inspectors again, again and again" that Iraq had not agreed to fully disarm.

The change in policy for Mexico — one of the most outspoken supporters of continued weapons inspections instead of war, echoing French and German desires — was first presented in a key address by Mexican President Vicente Fox on Tuesday and then outlined in a new and confidential foreign policy directive obtained by The Associated Press.

Canada's plan sought to reconcile the bitter dif-ferences posed by the U.S.-British-Spanish resolu-tion, which is seeking U.N. authorization for war, and a French-Russian-German proposal to continue weapons inspections at least into July

Canada, which held a rotating seat on the council

two years ago, has circulated a two-page proposal suggesting Iraq be given until the end of March to complete a list of remaining disarmament tasks identified by the inspectors. The council would then be asked to vote on whether Iraq was complying with its U.N. obligations, diplomats told AP.

A senior Bush Administration official, meanwhile, said it was unlikely Russia would veto the U.S.-British-Spanish draft despite Moscow's repeated statements that it opposes war.

In Washington, a top aide to President Vladimir Putin was being received at the highest levels including a meeting with National Security Adviser Condoleeza Rice that included a drop-in visit by President Bush. Alexander Voloshin, Putin's chief of staff, was also expected to confer with Secretary of State Colin Powell, Vice President Dick Cheney and other top administration officials.

U.S. officials were close-mouthed about Voloshin's unannounced visit, which coincided with an equally secretive trip by former Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov to Baghdad and Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov's consultations in Beijing.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder discussed the Canadian proposal by telephone with Canada's Prime Minister Jean Chretien but was not moved from his anti-war stance, spokesman Thomas Steg said Wednesday. Chretien was to travel later Wednesday to Mexico for talks with Fox.

"There is no need for either a new resolution or any thoughts about any kind of compromise," Steg said, adding that "Iraq is being better controlled than ever before" under existing Resolution 1441.

In the meantime, chief weapons inspector Hans Blix said Iraq is providing new information about its

Passing a Security Council resolution			
An affirmative vote from at least nine of the 15 U.N. Security Council members is required to pass a resolution. But any of the five permanent members can veto a resolution.			
Permanent members Rotating members			

All five vote in favor	+	At least four others vote in favor		
All five either vote in favor or abstain (none against)	+	Enough vote in favor to give a total of at least nine affirmative votes		
China		Angola	Guinea	
France		Bulgaria	Mexico	
Russia		Cameroon	Pakistan	
United Kingdom		Chile	Spain	
United States		Germany	Syria	

weapons and has reported the discovery of two bombs, including one possibly filled with a biological agent - moves that he said signaled real cooperation.

SOURCE: Associated Pres

On Wednesday, Blix said the new information does not represent "full cooperation or a breakthrough."

"We have a very long list of disarmament issues and it will require a big effort in order to clarify all of those," Blix said. "But we welcome every step and I have the impression that they have stepped up their efforts lately

Asked whether there was any evidence that Iraq wants to disarm, he said, "I do not think I can say there is evidence of a fundamental decision, but there is some evidence of some increased activity.'

Mexico's shift comes after a weekend phone call to Fox from Bush and numerous visits to the country by senior U.S. officials.

THE BATTAL

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Mass marks 10th anniversary first World Trade Center atta

NEW YORK (AP) - A decade after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Ce family and friends of the six victims ered Wednesday morning for a m Mass at a church near ground zero.

The service inside St. Peter's Chu lower Manhattan, which was filled mourners, started at 11 a.m. Wednes the 10th anniversary of the day that abo exploded in a trade center parking gara on Feb. 26, 1993.

A moment of silence for the six dead observed at 12:18 p.m., the exact more of detonation. Among those at the were Mayor Michael Bloomberg and George Pataki, neither of whom address the gathering of 300-plus mourners.

"The deaths of these people do not out for vengeance," said the Rev. Ke Madigan, pastor of the church, in his host increased R ly. "They cry out that we should try to cost of ope some meaning ... find a safer world, a w more free and more just."

In his eulogy, Madigan noted how annual memorial Mass has united the ilies of the six 1993 victims despite the ficulties of life in this "lawless, disord world."

The first attack on the trade center, a van loaded with explosives, killed ah dozen people, injured more than 1,000 forced the evacuation of 50,000 pe from the twin towers.

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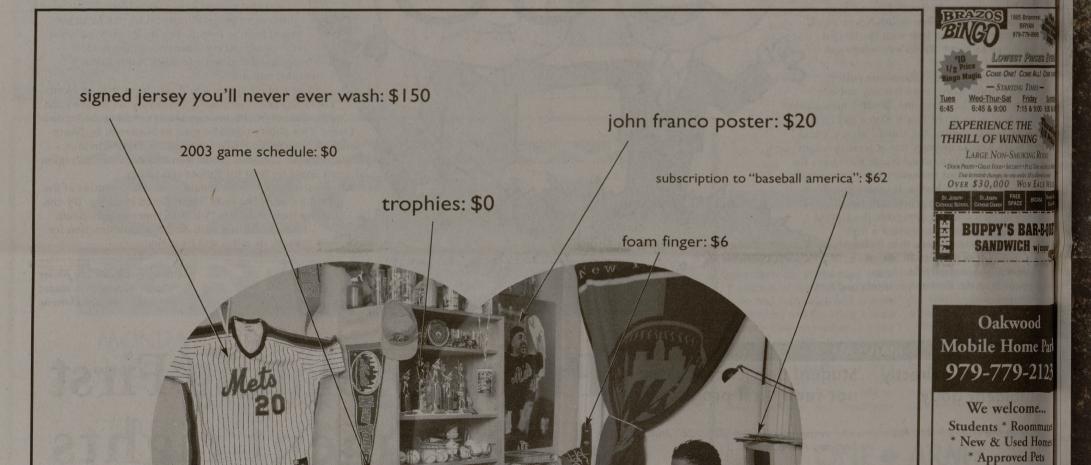
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