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MSC Current Issues Awareness strives to educate and inform the Texas A&M community in issues of contemporary interest, such as state and local politics, social and on-campus issues, and the business world today.

Past programs featured speakers such as Governor Perry, former death row chaplain Rev. Pickett, and former skinhead Frank Meeink. Panels have discussed social and on-campus issues at the "Diversity Symposium" and "Forum on the Battalion."

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 MSC Student Programs
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Questions? call 845-1515,
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Powell says there will be consequences for France

By Barry Schweid
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of State Colin Powell is warning France that it faces consequences for trying to block the U.S.-led war with Iraq, and Bush administration officials are exploring ways to exclude France from some NATO meetings.

A senior U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Wednesday the recommendations would be based on the notion that the U.S.-French relationship must be altered.

Potential punishments were discussed Monday at a meeting of top assistants to Powell, Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and Condoleezza Rice, the president's national security adviser.

These could include excluding France from meetings with U.S. allies and bypassing the North Atlantic Council, of which France is a member.

Bypassing the council, NATO's governing body, could mean excluding France from U.S. deliberations with European and Canadian allies because France is not a member of NATO's Defense Planning Committee, where the talks would be shifted.

Such a step was taken in February, when NATO convened the little-used committee to get around French opposition and break a stalemate about protecting Turkey from possible retaliatory attacks by neighboring Iraq in case of war.

The issues of whether NATO peacekeepers would go into Iraq and whether they would look for hidden weapons may also become matters for this committee, said a State Department

official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Powell, in a PBS interview Tuesday night, said there would be consequences for France's opposing the United States in the United Nations. He described it as "a very difficult period," but did not say what the administration had in mind.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said on Wednesday that "it's more than philosophical. Potentially, it will affect how some decisions are made in the future."

White House spokesman Ari

"(Opposition to the war) has put a strain on the relationship, and that's a consequence that was paid."

— Ari Fleischer
 White House spokesman

Fleischer said France's opposition to the war "has put a strain on the relationship, and that's a consequence that was paid."

In the end, Bush believes the two countries and two people have common values and that the alliance will continue, Fleischer said.

French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin telephoned Powell Wednesday while traveling in the Middle East, Boucher said. Among the issues they discussed were sanctions against Iraq.

The United States proposes eliminating them as an unnecessary burden on Iraqis people now that Saddam Hussein and his government have been top-

pled. France favors suspending the sanctions, which Boucher said implies that they could be reimposed.

"Sanctions should be lifted," Boucher said. "The president said that. It should be ended. And we need to get together and talk about how to do that."

On the overall relationship, Boucher said "having had agreements like this in our relationship doesn't change the fact that we are allies."

de Villepin said in a route to Iran that France would continue to uphold its principles. "Throughout the Iraq crisis, France, along with a very large majority of the international community, acted in conformity with its convictions and its principles to defend international law," he said.

"It will continue to do so in all circumstances," the French official said.

Powell outlined in the interview how de Villepin tried to block a second U.N. resolution approving the use of force to disarm Iraq.

Powell said the French foreign minister went to the three African countries that had votes on the Security Council — Angola, Cameroon and Gabon — to get their votes against the resolution.

Powell said he countered with telephone calls before one of de Villepin's three steps "making sure that he did not get" the three votes.

Still, the resolution did not come to a vote. "France is there's nothing you can write that we wouldn't veto," Powell said.

France's veto threat would defeat any resolution. France favored extending U.N. weapons inspections instead of using force. Germany and Russia also opposed war with Iraq.

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