

Summit leaders pledge teamwork

By Deborah Seward
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

EVIAN, France — President George W. Bush's fiercest opponents over Iraq worked behind them Monday, with French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder pledging firm support to build a stable and prosperous Iraq. But charges the United States and Britain used flawed intelligence about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction to justify the war cast a dark shadow on the summit. British Prime Minister Tony Blair rejected the accusations, leading a chorus of defensive comments around the globe from America

and its allies over why they went to war. Summit host Chirac and other G-8 leaders meeting in this Alpine resort projected outward harmony. Leaders who vehemently opposed Bush's war decision made a conspicuous show of shaking his hand. Privately, the leaders purposefully shrank from discussing their differences over the war and tried to propel their relationships forward. "We had a good meeting. Because it could have been a disaster," Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien told reporters. "We realized we had to look to the future instead of the past, and everybody took that stand, with positive effect," he said. "It was very cordial from all sides." There were even warm words between

Bush and Chirac — estranged after France actively campaigned against the war. Bush praised Chirac's knowledge of the Middle East and promised to consult him on his diplomatic push to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The two leaders may meet in the United States in September at the sidelines of the United Nations, Chirac said. "French-U.S. relations are 200 years old and will, believe me, continue for a long time," he said. More than forgotten, the acrimony of the past months was being buried. "We must be frank. We went through a difficult period. There was no question where Jacques Chirac stood" on the war, Bush said. "That is why I can say we had good relations, because we are able to be very honest with each other."

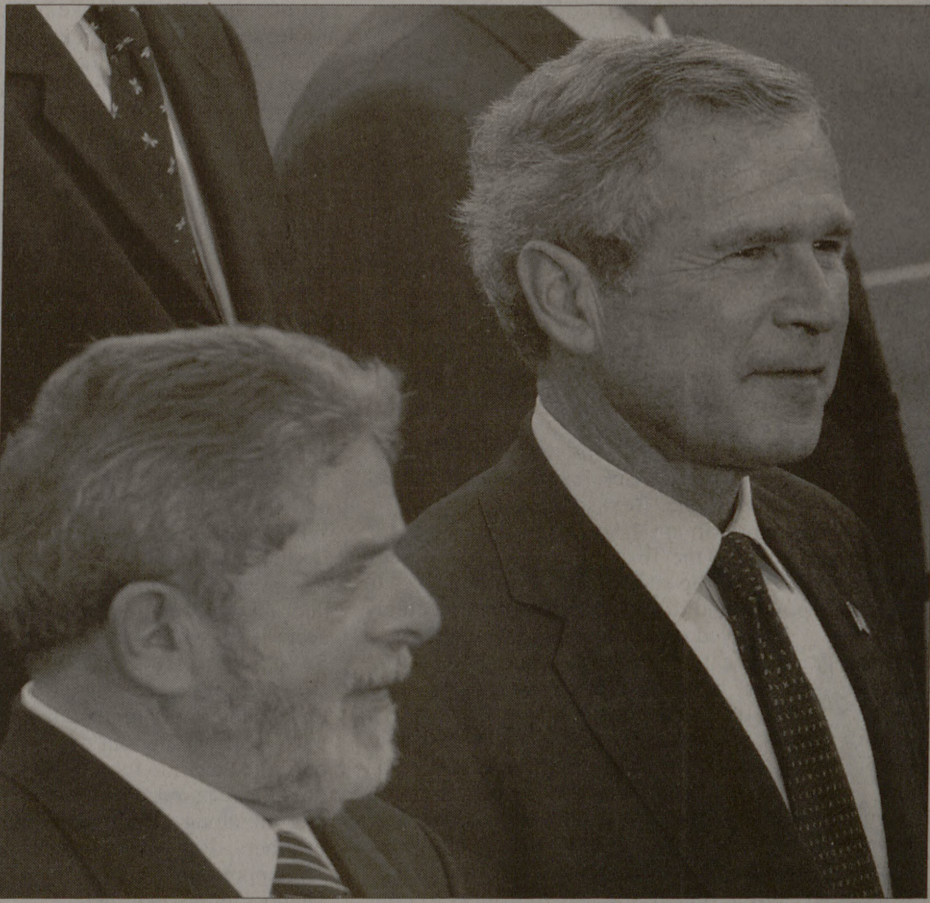
Spinning ahead, the German chancellor's chief political adviser said that Europe and the United States were equally committed to establishing a stable Iraq. Still, none of the G-8 nations made new offers to support the rebuilding effort financially, although the United States is planning to hold a donors conference among rich nations later this year. Schroeder, speaking to German television, described broad agreement "to leave behind the conflicts over the Iraq war."

On other topics, the leaders claimed they had addressed some concerns raised by anti-globalization protesters, devoting a record amount of time to discussions to alleviate poverty in developing countries.

The leaders exchanged views on economic reforms and said there were hopeful signs that stronger economic growth was on the way in the United States, Europe and Japan. Chirac called the economic discussions "very positive" and said the leaders expressed a "message of confidence" that their countries could achieve higher growth rates.

They pledged to redouble efforts to counter global terrorism, focusing on such issues as blocking financing and denying safe haven to terrorists. And they issued a strong statement urging North Korea to dismantle any nuclear weapons programs and underlining the danger posed by Iran's advanced nuclear program.

But Chretien said the stern warning for Iran to comply with the Non-Proliferation Treaty was not a prelude to military action — another reminder of how talk of the Iraq war hung over the meeting.



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Brazil President Lula Da Silva stands with President George W. Bush during the Group of Eight Summit in Evian, France. World leaders have pledged to work together to address rebuilding Iraq.

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Report: inspectors found no weapons of mass destruction

By Edith M Lederer
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED NATIONS — U.N. inspectors found no evidence Iraq had weapons of mass destruction but had many questions and leads to pursue when their searches were suspended just before the U.S.-led invasion, chief inspector Hans Blix said in his final report Monday.

But the United States and Britain have barred U.N. inspectors from returning to Iraq. Instead, Washington and London have deployed their own teams and Blix said they have not requested any information or assistance from U.N. inspectors.

In the report to the Security Council, Blix said U.N. inspectors "did not find evidence of the

continuation or resumption of programs of weapons of mass destruction or significant quantities of proscribed items."

But, he said, the inspectors had many questions about its chemical and biological programs when they left shortly before the March 20 invasion.

Inspectors also didn't have time to follow up on some late information provided by the Saddam Hussein government — including interviewing a list of Iraqis who helped destroy anthrax after the 1991 Gulf War, he said.

The United States and Britain used the claim that Iraq had illegal weapons programs as a major reason for the war that toppled Saddam Hussein's regime. The failure of U.S. and British teams to find any nuclear, chemical or biological weapons in the 11 weeks since combat ended has become a major issue in Washington, London and other international capitals.

President Bush said this weekend that weapons had been found. As evidence, however, he pointed to two two suspected mobile biological laboratories, which both the Pentagon and American weapons hunters have said do not constitute arms.

Blix said in his 40-page report that Iraq denied any such units existed and had provided U.N. inspectors "with pictures of legitimate vehicles, which, they suggested, could have led to the information."

He noted, however, that "none of the vehicles in these

pictures look like the trucks recently described and depicted by the U.S.-led teams hunting for weapons.

Blix is retiring after his contract as executive chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, known as UNMOVIC, ends on June 30.

His report detailed the efforts of his inspectors, who were only allowed back in late November after a four-year absence. Their searches for banned weapons were suspended on March 18.

U.N. inspections uncovered "a small number of undeclared empty chemical warheads which appear to have been produced prior to 1990," he said.

These were destroyed along with a few other proscribed items and some 70 Al Samoud 2 missiles with a range beyond the 92-mile limit allowed under U.N. resolutions.

While Iraq's cooperation with U.N. inspectors started improving in late January and inspectors got "a better understanding of past weapons programs," Blix said, "little progress was made in the solution" of outstanding disarmament issues.

Extensive excavations by the Iraqis, which were witnessed by U.N. inspectors, showed that Iraq had destroyed a large number of R400 bombs containing a biological agent, as it had claimed. But the excavations couldn't verify the amount of agent produced or destroyed, he said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Another SARS death reported in Canada

TORONTO (AP) — Officials announced another death and 10 more SARS cases in Canada's largest city Monday and said they would review how they handled a renewed outbreak of the flu-like illness after accusations that warnings were ignored.

Signaling that the crisis may be easing in Asia, China reported no new cases of SARS on Monday for the first time since April, while Taiwan reported only one new

SARS case on Tuesday, the lowest since the island's first hospital outbreak erupted in late April.

"It's heartening. But it's not time to think that SARS has been beaten," said Bob Dietz, the World Health Organization spokesman in Beijing. "No one should drop their guard yet."

The global death toll from SARS rose to at least 772 on Monday with two new deaths reported in China, one in Hong Kong and one in Toronto. More than 8,300 people have been sickened by the flu-like illness.

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