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(U) Europe: Key Views on Iraqi Threat and Next Steps

~~(C/NF)~~ France, Germany, and the United Kingdom all want the return of UN inspectors to Iraq and the establishment of a long-term monitoring program to contain the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD) threat. But military action against Iraq, absent incontrovertible evidence of links to the September 11 attacks, would create problems for Paris and Berlin. Only British Prime Minister Blair, at substantial political cost, would publicly support a US decision to bomb Iraq. All three countries see a direct link to the spiral of violence in the Middle East and believe strong American pressure on both sides in the peace process is essential.

(U) Assessment of Iraq's WMD threat

~~(C/NF)~~ There is no argument with the US proposition that Iraqi WMD capabilities pose a significant threat. Washington has shared intelligence on this issue, and there is general agreement as to the extent of Iraq's capabilities and potential in the nuclear area. There appears to be a fairly good understanding of the threat represented by Iraq's ballistic missile and chemical weapons capabilities,

[Redacted]

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(U) Views on inspections/monitoring

~~(C/NF)~~ London, Paris, and Berlin believe inspectors should be allowed to return to Iraq. The Allies seek to keep up the pressure on Baghdad for the resumption of inspections. All parties have tried to ensure the Iraqis get the message that their options are limited and time is running out—Baghdad must comply with UN Security Council resolutions and accept UN inspectors or face potential US military action.

(U) Reactions to bombing Iraq

~~(C/NF)~~ The French have indicated that bombing Iraq is a red-line issue for them in the war on terrorism. They are worried that Washington will decide to inform coalition partners only when it is about to undertake hostile action. The French have made clear that their willingness to support military strikes beyond Afghanistan would require three elements: a Security Council resolution, incontrovertible evidence of links between the September 11 attacks and the new target, and a consensus that diplomatic

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and other methods (such as financial controls, police or judicial efforts, surveillance, and covert methods) are insufficient to eliminate terrorist cells.

~~(S//NF)~~ German Chancellor Schroeder and Foreign Minister Fischer repeatedly have voiced objections to expanding the counterterrorism war to Iraq in the absence of compelling evidence implicating Saddam in sponsorship of al-Qaida or other terrorist groups or activities. A US decision to bomb Iraq would confront the Schroeder government with a dilemma. It doubtless would criticize Washington pointedly but would not want to be in the forefront of governments opposing such action. Even the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) probably would criticize the United States in such an eventuality. Schroeder and Fischer have stressed the polarizing effect that the bombing of Iraq would have on "moderate" Arab states. Berlin worries that the defection of Egypt, Jordan, and others from the coalition and concomitant ill will toward the United States would jeopardize the US role as peacemaker in the Middle East.

~~(S//NF)~~ The UK's Blair would publicly support a US decision to bomb Iraq but would face considerable criticism [redacted] about the wisdom of widening the war. The price of this support would be high for him at home and in Europe. He would be exposed to further sharp criticism from the left wing of his own party. Moreover, there is serious concern in the security services and in mainstream opinion about opening a second front at home: it could bring a radicalization of British Muslims, the great majority of whom opposed the September 11 attacks but are increasingly restive about what they see as an anti-Islamic campaign. B1

(U) Middle East peace process

~~(S//NF)~~ There is an insistent refrain that the United States should do more about the deteriorating situation in the Middle East. All three capitals have tried to be helpful in the peace process, believe there is no substitute for an active US role in the region, and emphasize the necessity of avoiding any action that would risk turning the war against terrorism into a war against Islam. Leaders in each of the countries have spoken out and traveled widely in making this point. [redacted] f

(U) For additional analysis related to the Middle East, see
INR Brief on (title S) "Israel/Turkey...." 11/18/2001 - (TS//SI//USA/AUS/CAN/GBR/NZL EYES
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