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Russia Opposes New U.N. Resolution Against Iraq

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Filed at 1:59 p.m. ET

MOSCOW (AP) -- Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said Friday that Russia opposes a new U.N. Security Council resolution that would authorize the use of force against Iraq.

"We do not see today any grounds for passing a U.N. resolution that would envisage or sanction the use of force against Iraq," Ivanov said after a meeting with the Finnish foreign minister.

"We always underlined that the use of force is an extreme measure, which involves grave consequences for the country and grave international consequences and it should only be applied in extreme situations."

Ivanov said a new U.N. Security Council resolution on Iraq might be needed, but its sole purpose should be to strengthen the inspectors' mandate.

Later, after a meeting with Russian lawmakers, Ivanov strongly urged Iraq to cooperate more actively with U.N. inspectors.

"Iraq must not only let inspectors into its facilities, but also must provide materials proving that it had dismantled the weapons it had," Ivanov said. "It should be active, not passive cooperation."

Russia, which wields a veto on the U.N. Security Council, says international weapons

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inspectors should be given more time and there still is time to find a political solution to the crisis over allegations that Iraq has a weapons of mass destruction program.

Ivanov apparently was reacting to remarks made Thursday by President Bush that "the game is over for Saddam Hussein." Bush on Friday urged the Security Council to "make up its mind soon" about confronting Iraq, or the United States will disarm Saddam Hussein with the help of a coalition of allies.

Ivanov said unilateral U.S. military action would "deal a blow to international structures, the authority of the U.N. and split the anti-terror coalition."

"This is just one possible consequence of unilateral action, but there likely will be other grave political and economic consequences," he said. "The cost would be extremely high, and this is why Russia is so strongly pushing for a political solution."

His remarks came as Russian President Vladimir Putin prepared to travel to Germany and France, both of which oppose the use of force against Iraq.

"The problems of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq can be solved by political means. There are all opportunities for that," Ivanov said.

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell appeared before the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday and presented recordings, satellite photos and informants' statements to prove his case that Iraq has defied international demands to disarm.

Ivanov previously said the presentation only served to show that further inspections were necessary.

Earlier Friday, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Yuri Fedotov said Russia had no current plans to change its position on Iraq but said much will depend on the chief U.N. weapons inspectors' visit to Baghdad this weekend.



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Blix and ElBaradei head to Baghdad this weekend and are expected to report their findings to the Security Council on Feb. 14.

Also Friday, Abbas Khalaf, Iraq's ambassador to Moscow, denied that Iraq had any Soviet-built Scud missiles, saying they were destroyed in 1991-1998 under control of the U.N. inspectors, Interfax and ITAR-Tass reported.

Khalaf also said Iraq would not blow up its oil rigs in case of U.S. attack, as it did during the 1991 Gulf War.

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