



# Executive Memorandum

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## HOW THE U.S. SHOULD RESPOND TO A SHIFT IN FRENCH POLICY ON IRAQ

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Mounting evidence suggests that the people of Iraq may be liberated by one of the biggest strategic and diplomatic coalitions of modern times. Even France, despite its decade of appeasement of the Iraqi regime, is likely to join a U.S.-led military coalition to remove Saddam Hussein from power. French strategists increasingly are taking the view that a war against Iraq is inevitable, and Paris has signaled its intent to send troops and an aircraft carrier group to the Gulf should the regime in Baghdad fail to disarm voluntarily.

The Bush Administration should welcome French efforts to join a military coalition to confront Saddam Hussein. This will limit the likelihood of opposition to military action at the United Nations Security Council. French participation in an Iraq war would greatly reduce the possibility of Russian and Chinese backing for Iraq.

However, while it is preferable that France actively take part in a regime change in Baghdad rather than sulk from the sidelines, the U.S. must be wary of French designs to assert a further foothold in the region. Washington must emphasize to Paris that French forces taking part in any military action against Iraq will be placed under an overall U.S.-British command structure, as they were in the first Gulf War in 1991. French participation in a post-war security force must also be firmly controlled.

It is imperative also that France not be given its own sphere of influence in a post-war Iraq. Otherwise there could be a repeat of French peacekeeping efforts in the Balkans, which in some cases have aided the escape of war criminals and hindered NATO operations. A division of Iraq into different Allied zones, on the model of Kosovo or Germany, must be avoided.

**Why France Will Fight.** If it does take part in a regime change, Paris will fight primarily to secure its long-term economic and strategic interests in the region. In addition, as a fading power still clinging to its Gaullist delusions of grandeur, France will use an Iraq war to enhance its position on the world stage.

The recently elected conservative administration led by President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin has jettisoned much of the overt anti-American rhetoric that was a foreign policy hallmark of Lionel Jospin's socialist government. President Chirac has wisely chosen to avoid the

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pacifist route taken by Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's German administration by keeping his options open. Chirac believes that he can wield far more influence over Washington by standing alongside President George W. Bush than by openly criticizing him.

France has made an important contribution to the war on terrorism since September 11. Over 4,000 French military personnel have participated in Operation Enduring Freedom, including 500 troops in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

The value of a French military contribution in Iraq, however, would be largely symbolic. The French Army would struggle to mobilize even 5,000 combat-ready troops—just a fraction of the number of British troops (20,000–40,000) being prepared for deployment to the Gulf—and is constrained by its growing military role in the Ivory Coast.

#### **What the Bush Administration Should Do.**

Given the realities of the current situation, the Administration should take several actions. Specifically:

- **Develop a consensus with France that the Allies do not require a second United Nations resolution to proceed with military action against Baghdad.** Iraq is already in material breach of U.N. Resolution 1441 and is acting in clear violation of international law.
- **Seek a unified command and control structure for all Allied (including French) forces, both during an Iraq conflict and in the years following the removal of Saddam Hussein.** A post-war security force must not be placed under U.N. authority.

- **Strive for American operational control of all forces in Iraq,** with French and other Allied forces under their own national commanders.
- **Oppose the division of Iraq into administrative sectors run by different allies.** Instead, individual allies should be encouraged to contribute specialized units capable of serving in any area of the country.
- **Increase cooperation with French intelligence agencies to crack down on terrorist cells operating in French cities.** With a Muslim population of 5 million (nearly 10 percent of France's total of 60 million people), France is a potential hotbed for Islamic extremism and a fertile breeding ground for al-Qaeda sleeper units.

**Conclusion.** French involvement in an Iraq war is in the interests of the United States, but it should be managed carefully. There is a danger that Paris (and possibly Moscow) will press for the internationalization of post-war security operations. This should be avoided at all costs in order to secure America's key war aims. These aims include totally dismembering the Baathist regime, destroying all of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, prosecuting war criminals, and establishing a successful Iraqi federation that represents the country's major ethnic groups. Ultimately Washington, and not the United Nations, should oversee the emergence of a liberated Iraq.

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