

# Web Memo



Published by The Heritage Foundation

No. 1136  
June 20, 2006

## The U.S./EU Summit: Tensions in the Transatlantic Relationship

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President George W. Bush's June 21 Vienna summit with EU officials takes place amid mounting tension between Washington and Brussels over the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, as well as the growing controversy in Europe over the 'rendition' of terror suspects, and will further illustrate the deep divisions between Washington and Brussels over the war on terrorism. The meeting will likely underscore the widening gulf between the United States and supranational institutions such as the European Union and the Council of Europe in their approach to dealing with the al-Qaeda threat.

The ongoing war in Iraq and the looming Iranian nuclear crisis will also feature on the agenda in Vienna. President Bush should call for greater European support for Coalition efforts to assist Iraq's new government in the wake of the successful termination of al-Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The President should urge the new administration in Italy to reverse its decision to withdraw its 2,900 troops from Iraq later this year and encourage other European powers to do more to assist in international efforts to defeat the insurgency and establish a stable, long-term democracy for the Iraqi people.

While the United States has agreed to join the European Union in entering into negotiations with Tehran over the Iranian nuclear program, Washington must push for the EU-3 (France, Germany, and Britain) to agree to support a tough range of measures against Iran if, as is highly likely, Tehran refuses to halt the enrichment of uranium. These measures should include a strict sanctions regime, interdiction to halt the export or import of sensitive technology or materials, an investment freeze, support for democratic movements inside Iran, and the possible use of military force as a last resort. The tortuous EU-3 negotiations with Tehran, which have already lasted two years, have thus far been all carrot and no stick.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
<http://www.heritage.org/Research/Europe/wm1136.cfm>

Published by The Heritage Foundation  
214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20002-4999  
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### **Tensions Over the War on Terrorism**

The United States faces growing opposition in Brussels to its policies on the rendition<sup>1</sup> and detention of terror suspects, as well as increasingly hostile public opinion toward U.S. foreign policy among European publics. In the latest *Financial Times*/Harris poll of opinion in five of the EU's largest member states – Britain, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy – 36 percent of those surveyed described the United States as “the greatest threat to global security.” In contrast, just 30 percent of respondents cited Iran as the world's greatest threat.<sup>2</sup> These figures pose a major challenge for U.S. public diplomacy and American efforts to sell the war on terrorism in Europe, as well as more aggressive measures to halt the Iranian nuclear program.

The U.S./EU summit takes place against the backdrop of a controversial report released in May by the Council of Europe<sup>3</sup> (which oversees the European Court of Human Rights), which alleges that 14 European countries ‘colluded’ with the CIA in the rendition of terror suspects, including several EU member states.<sup>4</sup> The Council also accused, with wafer-thin evidence, Poland and Romania of harboring secret CIA prisons. The report, which contained barely any new information, sparked a political storm in Europe, significantly heightening transatlantic tensions. The European Parliament is also investigating the rendition issue and has launched a 46-member inquiry into “the alleged illegal transfer of detainees and the suspected existence of CIA detention facilities in the European Union and in candidate countries.”<sup>5</sup>

Washington is also increasingly under fire from European Union officials and legislators over the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. The EU's External Relations Commissioner, Austria's Benita Ferrero-Waldner, has called on Guantanamo to be closed down,<sup>6</sup> and the European Parliament passed a resolution urging the same.<sup>7</sup> The EU's condemnation of Guantanamo echoes

those of the United Nations Committee Against Torture<sup>8</sup> and the UN's hugely discredited Commission on Human Rights, which condemned the Guantanamo facility without even inspecting it.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Monstrous CAP**

Trade liberalization is also likely to be a major issue of contention between Washington and Brussels at the Vienna summit. The EU is strongly resisting U.S. demands for huge cuts in trade-distorting agricultural subsidies, placing in jeopardy the prospect of a revival in the Doha round of trade talks. It looks increasingly unlikely that an agreement will be reached at the World Trade Organization by the end of July as originally hoped.

The U.S./EU meeting will be a valuable opportunity for the United States to call for the scrapping of Europe's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the greatest barrier to free trade in the world, and an end to the protectionist ‘fortress Europe’ mentality in Brussels that is acting as a major brake on economic development in impoverished countries in Africa and Asia.

According to a recently released report published by the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD), a 50 percent cut in global trade tariffs and subsidies would add \$44 billion to the world economy.<sup>10</sup> The World Bank has estimated that a successful conclusion to the Doha talks could give a \$300 billion boost to the world economy over the next ten years.<sup>11</sup>

The main obstacle to global trade liberalization is undoubtedly the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, a vast system of farm subsidies that benefit many of Europe's richest farmers at the expense of producers in the developing world, primarily in Africa. It has been described by the British Ambassador to Poland as “the most stupid, immoral state-subsidized policy in human history, give or take communism.”<sup>12</sup>

The CAP accounts for a staggering 40 percent of the EU's €100 billion budget, and European taxpayers are forced to pay over €80 billion in subsidies and higher food costs.<sup>13</sup> The biggest beneficiary has been France, whose farmers receive up to a quarter of EU agricultural subsidies, amounting to over €150 billion between 1994 and 2003.<sup>14</sup>

### **A Europe of Nation-States**

The U.S./EU divide over the war on terrorism, sharply illustrated by divisions over rendition and Guantanamo, is likely to grow wider. There exist irreconcilable differences between Washington and Brussels both with regard to how to confront the threat of global terrorism and the nature of the current conflict. Many leading EU bureaucrats simply do not grasp the magnitude of the al-Qaeda threat. A senior European Union official recently remarked, "We do not have a war on terror,"<sup>15</sup> an extraordinary statement considering that there have been three major terrorist attacks on European soil—in London, Madrid, and Istanbul—in the past three years.

However, tensions between the United States and the European Union and Council of Europe should not weaken Washington's ability to cooperate effectively with individual European nation-states, many of which have strongly supported U.S. efforts in the war on terrorism. Rendition has proved a highly effective tool against Al-Qaeda and has pulled hundreds of extremely dangerous terror suspects off the streets. In all probability, many lives, both American and European, have been saved by this practice.

The United States must continue to pursue aggressively those who threaten the security of the free world and should continue to work closely with allies in the fight against Islamic terrorist groups. Most importantly, the U.S. must resist the temptation to blunt its most effective weapons in the face of criticism from the EU, the UN, and other supranational institutions.

The increasing political centralization of Europe poses a fundamental threat to U.S. interests. Washington must back the principle of national sovereignty in Europe, and President Bush should welcome last year's defeat of the European Constitution in key EU member states such as France and Holland as an important democratic rejection by European voters of the further centralization of power in the continent.

The United States works most effectively when it cooperates directly with national governments, employing a 'coalition of the willing' strategy. Europe is not and never has been a united political entity, and U.S. policy must support a Europe of nation-states. Washington's political capital in Europe must be spent not in Brussels or Strasbourg, but in the national capitals, where America's strongest allies are to be found.

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<sup>1</sup> Rendition involves the capture of terrorist suspects, who are brought to the United States to face trial or are transferred to the governments of their home countries for further questioning. For background on the rendition issue, see Nile Gardiner Ph.D. and James Carafano Ph.D., “The Great EU Inquisition: Europe’s Response to the U.S. Rendition Policy”, Heritage Foundation WebMemo #988, February 6, 2006, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Europe/wm988.cfm>

<sup>2</sup> “US Still Main Threat to Stability in European Eyes”, *Financial Times*, June 19, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> The 46-nation Council is separate from the European Union but works closely with the European Commission.

<sup>4</sup> “Alleged Secret Detentions and Unlawful Inter-State Transfers Involving Council of Europe Member States”, Council of Europe Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, June 7, 2006, at [http://assembly.coe.int/CommitteeDocs/2006/20060606\\_Ejdoc162006PartII-FINAL.pdf](http://assembly.coe.int/CommitteeDocs/2006/20060606_Ejdoc162006PartII-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> “MEPs Scramble for Seats on CIA Prison Committee”, *European Report*, January 18, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> “EU Renews Calls to Close Guantanamo After Deaths”, *The Times*, June 12, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> “EU Parliament Calls for Action to Close Guantanamo”, *Agence France Presse*, June 13, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/19\\_05\\_06\\_torture.pdf](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/19_05_06_torture.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> See Nile Gardiner Ph.D. and James Carafano Ph.D., “The UN’s Guantanamo Folly: Why the United Nations Report is Not Credible”, Heritage Foundation WebMemo #1000, February 27, 2006, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/wm1000.cfm>

<sup>10</sup> “OECD Says Tariff Cuts Worth \$44 Billion”, *BBC News Online*, June 9, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> See Dominic Rushe, “Bush Goes on Trade Rescue Mission”, *The Times Online*, June 18, 2006, and Damien McElroy, “Trade Deal Promises Billions for World Economy”, *Sunday Telegraph*, August 1, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted by Ferdinand Mount, “Blair Should Keep Our Rebate and Give Cash to the EU Needy”, *The Daily Telegraph*, December 16, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> “Charles Bremner and Anthony Browne, “French Farmers, the British Rebate and a European Moment of Truth”, *The Times*, June 14, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in the *Financial Times*, December 14, 2005. The official is not named in the article.