

War and Politics;
On the Waterfront
October 3rd, 2002

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The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer

MARGARET WARNER: Good evening. I'm Margaret Warner. Jim Lehrer is visiting public TV stations, and on book tour. On the NewsHour tonight, a summary of the news, the House and Senate wrestle with a resolution on Iraq, the story behind the controversy over hormone replacement therapy, and an update on the impact of shutting down West Coast docks.

NEWS SUMMARY

MARGARET WARNER: The Senate formally opened debate today on authorizing the President to go to war against Iraq. Many Republicans and some prominent Democrats are backing a resolution worked out yesterday between House leaders and President Bush. It would authorize the President to attack Iraq if Saddam Hussein fails to comply with UN disarmament and other demands. But there were competing proposals offered by other Senators that would restrict the President more. We'll have more on this story in a moment. On the United Nations' front today, Russia criticized the U.S. push for a new UN resolution on Iraq, saying it would cause an unnecessary delay in returning the weapons inspectors. The United States is insisting on a new, tougher resolution before the disarmament team returns. At the UN, chief weapons inspector Hans Blix said he would delay sending a team to Iraq until the Security Council makes a decision. HANS BLIX: It would be awkward if we were doing inspections and then a new mandate with new change directives were to arise. It would be better to have those earlier. My impression is that there is a good deal of intensity in the talks about that. We hope it wouldn't be a long delay. I think all in the council would want us to go early. We're ready to go at the earliest practical opportunity.

REPORTER: I thought you said you may delay, is that right?

HANS BLIX: If the council puts new suggestions or directives to us, of course, we are in their hands.

MARGARET WARNER: Earlier this week, Blix worked out arrangements with Iraqi officials to resume inspections this month under previous UN resolutions. A man jumped the fence at UN headquarters today and fired seven shots from a pistol. He was quickly overpowered, and no

one was hurt. But UN officials said some of the shots hit two upper floors of the building, and narrowly missed UN employees inside. There was no word on a motive, but the man dropped leaflets protesting conditions in North Korea. Hurricane Lili blew ashore in Louisiana today. Half a million residents had been warned to flee, but the storm weakened as it approached land. It still packed winds of 90 miles per hour and heavy rain, and added to the damage caused by Tropical Storm Isidore last week. President Bush today declared the entire state a disaster area. Republicans asked the U.S. Supreme Court today to intervene in the New Jersey Senate race. They want the high court to overturn yesterday's New Jersey Supreme Court ruling, letting former Democratic Senator Frank Lautenberg replace Senator Robert Torricelli on the ballot. Torricelli quit the race Monday. Republicans argue it's too late to make the switch under state law. West Coast shipping lines and dockworkers resumed contract talks today under federal mediation. On Sunday, the shippers locked out more than 10,000 unionized workers at 29 ports. The economic ripple effects have already forced an auto plant in California to close for lack of imported spare parts. We'll have more on this story later. A manhunt was under way today in the Washington suburbs after five people were shot and killed over 16 hours. The victims were attacked in gas stations, parking lots, and other public places around Montgomery County, Maryland. Police said it appeared the shootings were connected, but they had no motive. They're looking for two men in a white cargo van. That's it for the News Summary tonight. Now it's on to the House and Senate wrestle with Iraq, a hormone therapy update, and the West Coast dock strike.

FOCUS WAR AND POLITICS

MARGARET WARNER: There was talk of war on both sides of the Capitol today as Congress turned its full attention to the use of military force against Iraq. Kwame Holman begins our coverage.

KWAME HOLMAN: A day after President Bush and House leaders agreed on language for the Iraq resolution, several members of the House International Relations Committee attempted to clarify, broaden, narrow, and/or replace the language; but all in vain.

REP. HENRY HYDE: I think this is a poison pill, and I respectfully request a "no" vote on it.

KWAME HOLMAN: For instance, California Democrat Brad Sherman said he wanted the language in the resolution restricted to mention only Saddam Hussein's most egregious acts.

REP. BRAD SHERMAN: If we identify in this resolution a host of crimes of Saddam that are not the reasons for the use of force, then we leave the image that oppressing one's own people or providing money to suicide bombers-- that these are crimes that justify American invasion. And then we pass a resolution that begs the question, "why are we invading Iraq and not Syria?"

KWAME HOLMAN: Fellow Californian Howard Berman echoed the feelings of many colleagues, saying he agreed in principle with Sherman's amendment, but didn't want to tamper with the resolution's carefully-crafted language.

REP. HOWARD BERMAN: So I would argue that if we would come to... start looking at this text

as lawyers and which amendment better defines our feelings about all this, we are defeating the bigger picture, which is to put together a political consensus in this country that says we stand with the administration in his effort in the President's efforts to get the United Nations to take this issue seriously and ultimately if necessary to use force.

KWAME HOLMAN: Outside the committee room, on the steps of the Canon Office Building, some two dozen members of the House staged a noontime rally against what they called the rush to war. Illinois Democrat Jan Schakowsky:

REP. JAN SCHAKOWSKY: I bring to you the communications that I have gotten by mail or email from my district. Now I show you. These are in support: In support of the President's resolution for unilateral pre-emptive strike on Iraq. And this is the mail that I've gotten against from my district.