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WAR IN IRAQ SPECIAL REPORT

Saudi Arabia rejects participation in war against Iraq

Tuesday, March 18, 2003 Posted: 2320 GMT (7:20 AM HKT)

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (CNN) -- Saudi Arabia "will not participate under any condition or in any form in war against our brother Iraq," Crown Prince Abdullah said Tuesday in a televised address on behalf of King Fadh.



Crown Prince Abdullah announced the Saudi position in a televised address Tuesday.

In addition, Abdullah said, "our armed forces will, under no circumstances, step even one foot into Iraqi territory."

Abdullah said he expected that any war would end "as soon as U.N. Resolution 1441 is implemented," meaning as soon as Iraq is stripped of its alleged weapons of mass destruction, chemical, biological or nuclear.

"We do not accept that this war should threaten Iraq's unity or sovereignty or that its resources or internal security should be subjected to a military occupation, and we have let the United States know about our position on this," he said.

"The special circumstances surrounding this crisis over the last 12 years demand that we not get involved in any uncalculated adventure that might jeopardize the security and peace of our country and our people," Abdullah said.

Should the threatened war exceed its original, declared goals, "then we'll have a totally different position, and we'll cross that bridge when we get to it," he said.

Abdullah added that he expected the coming days to see "an active and serious effort to reach a peaceful solution to the Palestinian problem that will be based on an Arab initiative. In other words, land for peace.

"We have informed the international community about our position and, through our communication with the U.S. government, we confirmed in a very clear way that the Palestinian issue is the basis for any and all resolutions in the Middle East and for peace of the Middle East."

Whatever mistakes the Iraqi government may have made over the years, "the Iraqi people should not have to pay the price," Abdullah said. "Iraq must stay united, free, independent -- a principle that we refuse to negotiate or discuss."

Ensuring the security of Saudi Arabia is the job of all Saudi citizens, he said. "We should not allow outsiders and any bad influences to affect our Islamic and Arabic treasures and beliefs, which are the basis of our society and the security and peace of our country."

In the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Saudi Arabia had agreed to join 32 other nations who had allied with the United States against Iraq.

The kingdom was a key base for U.S. operations during the military campaign to rid invading Iraqi troops from neighboring Kuwait.

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