



Cheney: Arab leaders worry about Iraq

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(CNN) -- Arab leaders are not unalterably opposed to U.S. military action against Iraq and share American concerns about Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, Vice President Dick Cheney said Sunday.

Cheney, who returned last week from a trip to 10 Arab countries, downplayed suggestions that he encountered strong resistance to any military action against Iraq.

In an interview with CBS' "Face the Nation," Cheney said he did not come away from his visit with the impression that Arab leaders would oppose action against Iraq if it became necessary.

And in an interview with CNN's "Late Edition With Wolf Blitzer," he said, "Our friends and allies in the region know we're deadly serious and that we do need to find a way to address this problem.

"[Hussein] is actively pursuing nuclear weapons at this time, and we think that's cause for concern, for us and for everybody in the region," Cheney said. "And I found during the course of my travels that it is indeed a problem of great concern for our friends out there as well."

Cheney told CBS that "the notion of a Saddam Hussein, with his great oil wealth, with his inventory that he already has of biological and chemical weapons, that he might actually acquire a nuclear weapon is, I think a frightening proposition for anybody who thinks about it."

"Part of my task out there was to go out and begin the dialogue with our friends to make sure they were thinking about it," he said.

Cheney said his talks with Arab leaders included discussions of how to deal with Iraq, with much of the focus centering on diplomacy through the United Nations.

But the vice president pointed out that a U.N. resolution passed at the end of the Persian Gulf War already obligates Hussein to get rid of his weapons of mass destruction.

"He's signed up to it." Cheney told CBS. "It's not been enforced or complied with."