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Bush: U.S. personnel will never face global court

From Kelly Wallace

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MILWAUKEE, Wisconsin (CNN) --President Bush, facing criticism from European allies, remained defiant about the United States' refusal to back the new international war crimes court, pledging Tuesday he will never allow American diplomats and soldiers to be dragged before it.

"The International Criminal Court is troubling to the United States," Bush told reporters following a tour at a Milwaukee church. "As the United States works to bring peace around the world, our diplomats and our soldiers could be drug into this court, and that's very troubling -- very troubling to me."

Setting the stage for a major confrontation with European allies, the United States on Sunday vetoed a six-month extension of the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Bosnia. The administration argues that in order for U.S. troops to take part in this and other U.N. peacekeeping missions, American troops must be granted immunity from prosecutions by the new international court.

Bush said Tuesday that his administration would "try to work out the impasse at the United Nations," but he said his team would never sign on to the International Criminal Court.

Ari Fleischer, the president's spokesman, told reporters traveling aboard Air Force One that the United States wants the same protections for its troops that the other nations that have signed the treaty currently enjoy.

"The president wants a level playing field, because those other nations that are signatories to the ICC and are participating under its purview have negotiated similar immunities for their personnel," Fleischer said.

U.S. allies argue the Bush administration, by rejecting the treaty, is pursuing a unilateralist approach and placing the stability of the Balkans at risk.

The president noted how former President Clinton signed the treaty but never sent it to the U.S. Senate for its approval.

"When he signed it, he said it should not be submitted to the Senate," Bush said. "It therefore never has been, and I don't intend to submit it either."

Fleischer added, "The president thinks the ICC is fundamentally flawed because it puts American servicemen and women at fundamental risk of being tried by an entity that is beyond America's reach, beyond America's laws and can subject American civilian and military to arbitrary standards of justice."

The U.S. put forward a possible compromise plan to members of the U.N. Security Council on Tuesday. ([Full story](#))

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