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## **U.S. and Britain, at U.N., Back French Congo Plan**

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UNITED NATIONS, July 15 — The United States, France and Britain have united behind a French draft resolution that would impose an arms embargo in eastern Congo, increase the ceiling on United Nations peacekeepers in the country and strengthen their military mandate, diplomats from two of the countries involved said today.

The resolution, which will be discussed in the Security Council on Wednesday, is expected to gain the support of the rest of the 15-member group.

"We have a consensus that we feel the Council should give a strong message to the parties," one diplomat said, referring to those involved in the fighting in Congo, including both large rebel groups, the tribal forces who have been attacking each other in the eastern city of Bunia and the leaders in neighboring countries like Uganda and Rwanda.

The resolution is intended to ensure that the United Nations peacekeepers, whose military powers have been limited to self-defense and protection of civilians, at least in the area around Bunia, will have essentially the same broad powers as the French-dominated multinational force.

That force of 1,200 French, British, Belgian, Swedish and South African troops, which is under European Union command, arrived in Bunia last month.

The draft resolution gives the United Nations forces authority under Chapter VII of the United Nations charter, which means the peacekeepers "can use whatever force necessary" to keep the situation stable, one Council diplomat said today.

Over the weekend, three members of local militias were killed in clashes with troops from the European Union's force.

The United Nations force is made up of more than 8,000 peacekeepers, and under the resolution it would increase by about 2,000. Last week, Washington agreed to raise the ceiling for the peacekeepers to 10,000, but at that time the extent of their mandate was unclear.

Strengthening the force's military mandate is intended to ensure that the group of peacekeepers rotating in from Bangladesh will be able to take over the responsibilities not just of the current group but of the European-led troops, should they be pulled out.

Under the resolution, an arms embargo in the east would be instituted for an initial period of 12 months. "It asks all states in the region to take all measures to prevent the supply of arms or related matériel" from reaching the combatants, one diplomat said.

Diplomats here said that the French and British missions had been taking the lead in crafting the resolution and negotiating with Council members.

They have also deferred to the Bush administration's request that it have time to consult Congress. So, diplomats said, final passage of the resolution is unlikely to come much before the end of the month.