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Director of Central Intelligence

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**EUROPE**

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**France:**

**Exploring Oil Contracts With Iraq**

The state-owned firm Total hopes to sign a contract soon with Baghdad to develop the Nahr Umar oilfield, according to press reports.

— Total believes UN sanctions do not prohibit it from signing a deal and beginning technical studies in Paris, the press reports say.

— *The French Government is unlikely to permit Total to sign a formal contract while it awaits the UN Special Commission's latest assessment and as President Chirac labors to improve relations with the US.*

— *Even so, however, France will continue to foster growing commercial ties and, barring any new violations by Iraq, will increasingly lobby to end sanctions.*

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