



THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESIDENT
GEORGE W. BUSH

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Press Gaggle by Tony Snow and National Security Advisor Steve Hadley

Aboard Air Force One
En route Vienna, Austria

12:06 P.M. EDT

MR. SNOW: All right. First, just a read out. I think you're familiar with what's going on tomorrow, but I'll go ahead and give you a read out anyway.

The President tomorrow, the public schedule begins with a meeting with the President of Austria. There will also be a meeting with the Chancellor and a meeting with European Union leaders. For all those we will have stills and host TV at the top. There will be pool available for a U.S.-EU meeting; closed press U.S.-EU working lunch; a U.S.-EU press availability tomorrow afternoon.

Then the President will have a roundtable with foreign students, you guys are all kindly invited, also a tour of the National Library. And then off to the airport and to Budapest. So there you have your quick sort of line up.

Questions.

Q Can you elaborate a little bit more of what kinds of consequences North Korea might face if they do test fire this missile?

MR. SNOW: No. I'll restate what I've been saying the last few days, which is it's our hope that there is no missile firing. North Korea made a commitment back in 1999 at a summit with the Japanese that they wouldn't do it, and certainly there are many options and we are simply not going to tip our hand as to what the possible response should be.

The other thing to keep in mind is it's not us and North Korea. Anything that happens is going to be part of sort of joint operations, if you will, or joint negotiations with the other five nations, or the other four nations that are involved with us in dealing with North Korea in the six-party talks. So we don't want to be drawn into any perception that somehow it's the United States responding solely and unilaterally to anything the North Koreans may do.

Q But, obviously, you bring up the notion of consequences to try and give them, you know, a nudge away from taking this action. So how does that really have teeth if you don't talk about what that

means?

MR. SNOW: Doesn't mean they don't hear it, just means you don't.

Q How are they hearing it, then?

MR. HADLEY: It's interesting, the Japanese have indicated publicly that one of the things they would consider doing is sponsoring a U.N. Security Council resolution. So it underscores Tony's point that there are a lot of actors in this process; a lot of folks are sending messages to the North Koreans this would be a bad idea, they shouldn't do it. And a lot of these countries are going to have ideas about what we do should North Korea ignore the advice of the international community and go forward with this launch.

Q Have they, in fact, fueled this missile? What do we know about what they have done?

MR. HADLEY: It's hard to tell. They seem to be moving forward towards a launch, but the intelligence is not conclusive at this point.

Q Do you think they're trying to take attention away from the U.S. efforts to contain the Iran nuclear program? What's your interpretation of their motivation here?

MR. HADLEY: It's hard to interpret their motives. All you can do is look at the history, and we've seen these kinds of things before in the past. There tends to be a desire to create a sense of crisis; they seem to think that's something that works for them. And they've done these kinds of things to get attention before. They did a missile launch in 1998.

And what we've tried to convince them is that the kind of attention they will get is not attention that will be constructive towards getting back to the six-party talks, getting implementation of the September agreement, and really not conducive to the long-term interests of North Korea or its people.

Q On the soldiers, the missing soldiers, have we confirmed that they're, in fact, dead?

MR. HADLEY: We have not confirmed. We believe that the two remains identified are the soldiers. We believe that's what's been announced by MNF-I out of Baghdad. The remains are being shipped home for positive identification, but we can't confirm it at this point. They've announced out of Baghdad that they believe it is the two soldiers, but we can't be sure.

Q I just wonder what, tactically, you make of that? You know, their abduction and their apparent death. Does it say anything about the tactics of the insurgents and terrorist groups at this point that may be changing in any fashion?

MR. HADLEY: No, I think it's a reminder that this is a brutal enemy that does not follow any of the rules. It attacks civilians for political gain, it provokes sectarian violence and it really follows no rules of warfare. It's a very brutal enemy and it's a reminder to all of us about what we're up against. And,

obviously, any loss of life is a source of great regret.

MR. SNOW: Let me add one other point, which is, David, as you probably read, in the aftermath of this there had been military activity. So maybe the most significant thing is a considerable amount of actionable intelligence has come out of it. We are seeing evidence that the Iraqi people are also sick of this. You saw it in some of the communications that have been aimed towards Zarqawi.

And you see in the aftermath of an episode like this that the Iraqi people are also stepping forward to try to be of assistance.

Q Mr. Hadley, how does the administration feel about the Japanese announcement today about the self-defense force?

MR. HADLEY: The Japanese ground force, self-defense force was in Muthanna province. As you know, what is happening in Iraq is as the Iraqi security forces get trained up and can take more security responsibility, the coalition has been turning over the lead to Iraqi security forces in increasing portions of the country. That's sort of step one.

Step two is then getting various governance of the 18 governance [sic]* in a position where the provincial governments there are in responsibility to take political responsibility for security in the province. So it's a two-step process. And what we're seeing is that process move forward.

Yesterday the Iraqi government announced that Muthanna would now be returned from the coalition to provincial control of security. That means that the mission of the forces there, the Japanese forces there have been successfully completed. So the Japanese now are doing what we'd all be doing over time -- as the Iraqis stand up, we can stand down -- they're transitioning to a new way of contributing to success in Iraq.

And the Japanese have talked about maintaining and, indeed, expanding their air activities there. They're going to look at providing C-130 service up to Baghdad and elsewhere in support of MNF-I and also in support of an expanded U.N. role. They continue to be very active. They've pledged over \$5 billion to Iraq.

So what we think is useful is it's an indication, it's a measure of the progress, it's an example of what it means, Iraqis stand up, we can stand down, and then our mission then begins to transform and how we can support the government transform. So we think that this is a positive step.

Q I see your point. Do you worry, though, that eventually we're going to become a little lonely there?

MR. HADLEY: No, because as the Japanese have made clear, they're staying in with a mission. They're actually expanding their air role. We think there is going to be a lot of opportunities for countries to change their missions. As you know, we're developing provincial reconstruction teams; some of those are going to be led by the United States. Some of those allies have indicated they're interested in leading, as they've done in Afghanistan. And some of them, of course, Iraqi forces are

going to be taking the lead on.

So I think what you're seeing is a transformation, if you will, of various ways where we can adapt the support we provide, we all provide to the Iraqi government, to the requirements of the government as the situation on the ground changes.

MR. SNOW: Mike, let me add one other point. I don't know if you saw Mr. al-Rubaie's piece in The Washington Post this morning, but he talks about three other provinces where he thinks they're going to be ready -- Maysan, Irbil and Sulaymaniyah -- all of which may follow Muthanna's lead in allowing the Iraqis to take over primary responsibility very soon.

So this is not a bailing out on the part of the Japanese. It's, in fact, responding to conditions on the ground and helping in other ways.

MR. HADLEY: Can I say one other thing about some of the debate that's been going on, on Capitol Hill? I read some of the press coverage today about that debate.

One of the things that's interesting about what we've just been discussing is there's been sort of a suggestion out there that somehow there's an open-ended commitment by the United States to Iraq. And, of course, the President has talked about stand up/stand down so our men and women can return with the honor they deserve. So I don't know what people mean when they say an open-ended commitment of our forces.

Secondly, there's this notion that somehow the Iraqis have to be pressured to take responsibility for their own security. And I think what's interesting about the editorial that Tony talked about is it's further evidence -- and there's been a lot of them -- that the Iraqis want to take responsibility for the security of their country when they're ready to do so. And their concern is that we will move, draw down our forces too quickly, before they're ready. But I think there is no question that the Iraqis want to be able to take responsibility for their security.

And I think, finally, on that report that Tony talked about, what we have is an opportunity now for MNF-I to talk with the Iraqi government -- we have a new Minister of Interior, new Minister of Defense -- and talk about how this process of stand up/stand down can proceed going forward.

Q I want to ask you about Vice President Cheney's remarks yesterday. How can the White House justify him standing by his remarks that the insurgency is in the last throes? Can you just explain that, how that could --

MR. HADLEY: The Vice President explained it yesterday.

Q Well, then I didn't --

MR. HADLEY: You can talk to him about it; I thought it was a good explanation.

Q Why do you think it's a good explanation?

MR. HADLEY: It's a good explanation, it speaks for itself. I think it points to the fact the significance of what has happened politically over the last two years, that as he said, we are at a point where we have a duly-elected government, a constitution drafted and ratified by the Iraqi people, that is a unity government that has a plan for going forward. And I think you've seen in the last two weeks a lot of efforts by that new government to provide leadership. They're moving forward with a security initiative in Baghdad. They've talked about their objectives going forward, in terms of electricity and security. We are making great progress on this international compact, which you've been writing about.

I think what the Vice President was saying is things are happening that give in evidence, as our prior discussion does, that this new Iraqi government is stepping forward and taking responsibility. That's a good thing.

Q I'm sorry, how does that comport with the insurgency being in its last throes, all of what you just said?

MR. HADLEY: The Vice President talked about the significance of what we're talking about and what it will mean over time for the insurgency. It's what I think Tony showed, the fact that the Iraqi people are tired of it, they're ready for peace, they're talking about a reconciliation process, but a reconciliation process in which people lay down their arms.

They've also got a government that's stepping forward, taking responsibility for security and the leading of that reconciliation process. I think that's a big development of 2005, 2006, very important as we look forward in Iraq.

Q Just to be clear, the President would agree with the Vice President that the insurgency is in the last throes?

MR. HADLEY: What I said was the Vice President has explained his comments yesterday, and I have tried to provide a little bit more context for that explanation.

MR. SNOW: Let me add another point. He's not saying the war is over. You need to be clear about that. But, again, Steve is just pointing out you're seeing increasing evidence of assertiveness on the part of Iraqi citizens and the Iraqi government. You've got Operation Forward together, it involves 50,000 Iraqi police and military forces going into Baghdad. You've got other operations around the country.

You do have -- and our military commanders have talked about it -- increasing intelligence. We had another key al Qaeda operative who was taken out, I believe it was yesterday or today. General Caldwell was briefing on that this morning. The fact is that we're getting intelligence at a level that continues to increase and continues to be useful in going after them. Are they gone? No, of course not. But on the other hand, it does -- you do have a very clear sense that the Iraqi people are speaking not only at the ballot box, but also in cooperation with U.S. forces. And now that you've got Iraqi forces, they feel an even greater comfort level in talking with Iraqi forces and saying, [to their security forces]

okay, you can find them [insurgents] over here.

Q The President said a couple weeks ago that he expected Iran to reply to the incentives package in weeks, and not months. Do you get any -- are you concerned at all that this is going to just drag out and they're going to stall and we're going to get into this, you know, kind of extended period of a cat-and-mouse game? And is there something that the U.S. and EU can do tomorrow, you know, some sort of message to be sent that this -- you know, Iran needs to come forward and accept this deal?

MR. HADLEY: Well, I think you've heard it from U.S. spokesmen and also others involved, that it is weeks, not months. And why do you say that, why do you get that out early? And we got that out pretty early. It was to set a marker down that we need to hear from the Iranians a response to this offer. And I think that's been something that has been clear by statements we've made, and others made, and it was one of the things that Secretary Rice talked about and got an understanding that the EU3 - U.K., France and Germany, and also Russia and China -- in the meeting she had in Vienna.

Q Are you confident that all the Europeans are with you on this demand that the Iranians must completely shut down their centrifuges before?

MR. HADLEY: Yes, we are, actually. And they've been good on it. One of the things -- people forget about it is, of course, the suspension was part of the Paris agreement from November of 2004, that the Iranians subsequently walked away from. And the requirement for return to suspension is actually a EU3 requirement, not ours. It was a requirement that was affirmed by the board of governors of the IAEA -- the International Atomic Energy Agency -- and also is reflected in the U.N. Security Council Presidential Statement.

So this is something that reflects not just our position. In some sense, we've adopted and followed the lead of the EU3 on it. And so far, in terms of what we've seen publicly and what we hear privately, people are pretty firm about it.

Q And when the President talks about progressively stronger sanctions, could you elaborate a little bit on that? Will he use this trip to try to build support for that?

MR. HADLEY: Well, we've already got an understanding, as we've said, that if Iran does not accept this offer, then we return to the U.N. Security Council. So I think that's all a part of the way forward.

What we want to emphasize, though, and what the President tried to emphasize yesterday is the opportunity for the Iranian people, if their government will take this offer that is before them it can result in avoiding this crisis, it can result in strengthened relations and economic relations that will have a real benefit for the Iranian people. There's a terrific opportunity here. And what we've been focusing on is urging the Iraqi [sic] regime to take advantage of the opportunity before it.

Q Iranian regime.

MR. HADLEY: Iranian regime, sorry. Thank you.

Q Steve, you talked last week about the meeting tomorrow being sort of a chance for the President to shore up, make sure that everybody is on the same page. And I don't remember your exact words when you were talking about --

MR. HADLEY: I talked about -- people were asking whether there was going to be big news coming out of this. And I think my answer was that the framework that we're operating under is already fixed. I mean, the President will obviously have conversations about it. But, one, remember, this is with the President of the EU Commission and the President, if you will, of the Austrian presidency as the leader at this point of the EU. The French, the Germans, the U.K. are not there. So the parties with whom we've been doing this Iranian initiative are really not going to be there.

So I think sure, there will be some discussion about it, but the framework is clear. What is missing is a positive Iranian response. And that's, of course, what we're looking for.

Q You make it sound like Iran really isn't a big piece of the discussion tomorrow.

MR. HADLEY: I think that's correct.

Q Can I ask you a quick question about your earlier comments about the open-ended commitment in Iraq? What's the furthest you've gone, or what's the most you've said about the likelihood of bases in Iraq for as long as we can foresee?

MR. HADLEY: I'm sorry?

Q Permanent military bases in Iraq, do you expect those?

MR. HADLEY: We haven't talked about that. What we've really been focusing on is this process of training, turning over responsibility for security at the military level, and then the taking of responsibility by political authorities in Iraq. That's what we really need to be focusing on, and that's what we focused on, and the progress, we hope, that that will afford in dealing with the security situation there. That's really what we've been focusing on.

Q I could be completely wrong about this, I think there was a New York Times story about bases not too long ago, and I don't think you guys have ever tried to dissuade us of the idea that there likely will be troops of some sort in Iraq for as long as we can foresee.

MR. HADLEY: We're going to have a relationship, we would hope, with a free and democratic Iraq for a long time. Iraq has an opportunity to come and be part of the family of nations, as the President -- of the democratic family of nations, as the President said, the example in the region and an ally in the war on terror. Does that mean that we expect to have good relations with Iraq going forward for a long time? You bet. Obviously, over time, it will become the kind of normal relationship we have with countries.

Q Can I ask you a question about trade? Is the President bringing any new -- anything new to advance

the Doha talks to the table? And, if not, what can you expect to accomplish there?

MR. HADLEY: Well, he will of course underscore the importance of Doha and the opportunity we have to close out this round by the end of the year.

You know, the great beneficiaries of the Doha round are the developing countries, and what trade can contribute to raising people out of poverty. This is why it's the development round of Doha. And we will want to keep focusing on that.

The President made a very bold offer, with respect to agricultural subsidies that you all know about. It was an effort to jump-start the negotiations. And what we really need to see is a response from the G20, the group of 20 countries, and from the Europeans that is comparable to this offer. If they can move in that direction, we're going to be in the zone of getting an agreement by the end of the year. And I think you will see the President encourage everyone he talks to on this trip not to miss this terrific opportunity to advance trade and advance development and help raise people out of poverty.

Q Which countries have not followed through on their pledges to help the Iraqis, the monetary pledges?

MR. HADLEY: Look, I don't want to get into specific names, but it is something we --

Q Are they European countries?

MR. HADLEY: You know, if you go through the list, there are countries in every region of the world that have made pledges.

Q They know who they are. (Laughter.)

MR. HADLEY: Some of them have done better than others, and some are clearly lagging. And we will remind countries if they have forgotten about their pledges, and the importance to get this money to this new government now. Because the opportunity this government really has is to show for the Iraqi people that it can make a difference in their daily lives. That will strengthen this government in a way as few things will. And these resources getting to the government now can make an enormous contribution and we will try and remind people of that and urge them to seize this opportunity we all have.

Q Do you want to set up the Hungary speech now, or are you going to brief tomorrow?

MR. SNOW: We'll brief on it tomorrow.

Q You were nice to do this. It was very interesting and helpful.

MR. HADLEY: Nice to see you.

Q Can you just tell us on background what some of the names of some of the countries --

MR. HADLEY: I don't want to do that.

END 12:29 P.M. EDT

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