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Press Briefing by National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley on the President's Trip to Europe

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

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MR. HADLEY: Good afternoon. On Monday, the President and Mrs. Bush will travel to Europe to participate in the summit between the United States and European Union in Slovenia. They will also make bilateral stops in Germany, Italy, the Holy See, France, and the United Kingdom.

The President's trip coincides with the 60th anniversary of the Marshall Plan and the Berlin Airlift. The trip will spotlight the historic U.S. role in supporting the transition from a divided, economically depressed Europe after World War II to a prosperous Europe which is increasingly whole, free and at peace. The United States has supported European integration because we need a strong Europe to partner with us in advancing freedom and prosperity around the world.

At the U.S.-European Union summit, and during his bilateral stops, the President will encourage Europe to work with the United States to confront a series of global challenges that face us both. The agenda for the U.S.-EU summit is a very broad one. As the European Union's role in the world has grown, Europe's leaders are increasingly taking responsibility to ensure that the European Union is capable and willing to take tough decisions and implement specific actions.

At the summit the President will seek to strengthen a transatlantic partnership which promotes democracy, combats terror, prevents proliferation, and addresses global change and global trade effectively.

The President will discuss with European leaders how best to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. The leaders will discuss how to step up our diplomatic efforts, both multilaterally and unilaterally, including imposing greater sanctions under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1803. As you know, there is soon to be a proposal from the so-called

EU3-plus-3, the major countries responsible for discussions with Iran on the nuclear issue. And that will also be a subject of discussion.

The leaders will discuss ways to support democracy in Lebanon, and Lebanon's legitimate government institutions, including through improved enforcement of existing Security Council resolutions which call, among other things, for the disarmament of armed militias.

The leaders will discuss how to advance peace in the Middle East, support the Israeli and Palestinian peace efforts, and strengthen the Palestinian security sector and their own economic development initiatives.

The leaders will discuss how to encourage a democratic Serbia to move along the path toward the European mainstream, as well as how to support an independent, multiethnic and democratic Kosovo. These steps will accelerate the integration of the Western Balkans into the institutions of Europe, and are critical for ensueing the peace and stability in that part of the world.

The leaders will discuss how best to support President Saakashvili and his peace initiatives on Abkhazia, and encourage, in particular, direct talks between the Georgian government and the Abkhaz. We expect the leaders will also join in urging Russia to reverse its provocative actions in the separatist regions and to respect Georgia's

territorial integrity and sovereignty.

The leaders will talk about how we can work with Afghanistan and Iraq to forge stable, secure democracies that help fight our common enemies and promote our common interests in the regions. They will talk about enhancing European energy security by taking concrete steps to diversify the sources and routes of energy into Europe.

The President's meetings will also provide an opportunity to discuss with his European counterparts the importance of achieving breakthroughs in three important areas: the major economies process dealing with global climate, the Doha Round of trade talks, and the world food price crisis. These issues -- a number of these issues will be discussed at the upcoming G8 world leaders summit in Japan, and they will be a subject of the Transatlantic Economic Council.

The President will stress opportunities for working together through the major economies process, to encourage certain developed and developing countries to do two things: one, to agree on a long-term emissions reduction goal, and to commit that their own midterm plans and goals to limit greenhouse gas emissions will be part of a new, internationally binding climate change agreement.

President Bush has said that he will undertake for the United States internationally binding emissions commitments, so long as all major economies, developed and major developing economies, are willing to do the same.

The United States and the European Union have been working together closely to achieve an ambitious agreement in the Doha Round. The President will use his meetings with European leaders to encourage them to do three things: one, to remain committed to an ambitious outcome that results in new trade flows that can help lift people out of poverty; to make the tough political choices that are necessary to reach such an agreement; and to encourage advanced developed countries that benefit greatly from the global trading system to step forward and contribute to a strong, market-opening outcome that will benefit, in particular, the less developed countries.

The President's trip to Europe will provide an opportunity for advancing a three-pronged strategy for addressing the food price crisis. The strategy includes both short- and long-term

elements which will provide assistance to countries vulnerable to food price increases, assist countries capable of rapidly increasing food production, and advance trade liberalization and increased use of advanced agricultural technologies to increase the supply of food. This is an area where the United States and Europe together can provide leadership.

During the trip the President will also be consulting with Europe leaders in advance of the G8 leaders summit in July in Japan. At this year's summit, the President will stress the need for all members to follow through on their previous commitments, such as enhancing development and fighting HIV/AIDS and malaria, particularly in Africa. The President will also be asking the EU and our G8 partners to join with us in two new initiatives that can save more lives -- working to train health workers, especially in Africa, and treating those suffering from seven major neglected tropical diseases.

In February, the President announced that the United States would commit \$350 million to this effort, and the President will urge our partners to join us.

At last year's U.S.-EU summit, we took an important step towards deepening the transatlantic economic integration by creating a special forum called the Transatlantic Economic Council, or TEC, and its purpose is to address a wide range of regulatory issues that stand in the way of closer integration between Europe and America.

There are many issues on the TEC agenda, and we have, together, made important progress on a number of them, including such things as accounting standards and secure trade. Nevertheless, an important test of the TEC's potential is the way it deals with an 11-year-old EU ban on imports of U.S. poultry. Last month, the European Commission committed to put forward a proposal to eliminate the ban. The administration is concerned that the proposal that the EU put forward last week doesn't do the job; it actually adds new restrictions. We hope the Commission will revisit this issue, because getting this issue right is important to improve the vitality -- and prove the vitality of the TEC process. And that will also be a subject of the President's conversations while he's in

Europe.

A broad agenda -- a range of issues that reflect the breadth and depth of the relationship between the United States and Europe, and the extent to which we are working together on a whole range of problems. I don't think you're going to see dramatic announcements on this trip. What you're going to see is working to advance the ball on a range of issues, looking toward forums where formal decisions will actually be taken, such as the G8 forum, such as the major economies meeting, such as the meeting of the Transatlantic Council, as I talked about, and working a range of issues such as the issue of Iran, Georgia and the like, where progress will be seen in events on the ground as we try to -- as the United States and Europe try and confront those challenges.

Ought to be a great trip. I'd be glad to answer your questions.

Deb.

Q Based on his discussion today with the Prime Minister of Israel, how does the administration think that his political troubles are going to affect the Mideast negotiations?

MR. HADLEY: Well, there's obviously a legal process that is going on in Israel involving the Prime Minister; there is obviously a political process that is going on, as well. And we're going to have to see how those sort out.

I think it's interesting that Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas met on Monday to continue the negotiations on an Israeli-Palestinian peace. They have indicated that they want to continue to have those negotiations. It is, after all, a position -- in terms of the Israeli side, these are negotiations entered into by Prime Minister Olmert certainly, but on behalf of the government. It involves participation by other ministers in this process -- Foreign Minister Livni and Defense Minister Barak.

So at this point we follow the lead of the parties, and the parties have indicated that they want to continue this process. And we will, of course, support them in that effort, because I think it is one that both the people of Israel and the Palestinians understand can be in the interest of both peoples.

Q So it didn't come up that much in the discussion today?

MR. HADLEY: There was a discussion and have been discussions about where they are in the negotiations, what the positions of the parties are.

Q No, I'm talking about his political troubles -- did that come up in the conversation today?

MR. HADLEY: You got a sense from -- the conversation was really split in two parts. There was a conversation in the presence of a larger group of people, and then there was a presence in -- a conversation in the presence of a smaller group of people, like the President and the Prime Minister.

Q And you were in the third -- you were in the second --

MR. HADLEY: I was in the first group. I'm not the President or the Prime Minister and, therefore, was not in that second conversation.

Q Can we assume they discussed it at some point?

MR. HADLEY: I think that the sense of the conversation you saw in the statements that the two leaders made at the head of the hour.

Bill.

Q Has the Prime Minister urged the President to take military action against Iran before leaving office?

MR. HADLEY: Obviously Iran is a subject that comes up all the time, and I think one of the things that you've seen

over the last six months, or saw, and I think you saw it on the President's two trips to the Middle East, is increasing concern about Iran and the threat that a nuclear-armed Iran could pose to stability and -- in the Middle East, and to the cause of, quite frankly, freedom, democracy, and fighting against terror.

It is a problem that people are increasingly concerned about. And I think the formula that we have all discussed is we need to increase pressure on Iran -- and that can take various forms -- and at the same time, offer Iran an opportunity, if it is willing, to suspend, come to a negotiation, and enter into and accept the offer that has been tendered to it that would result in a lot of benefits for the people of Iran. And that's where we are.

It is a diplomatic strategy. As the President has said many times, all options are on the table. But the focus of the efforts of the international community and the United States is on trying to achieve that diplomatic strategy.

Q Yes, but that doesn't speak to what the Prime Minister may have urged the President to do. And as you know, there are continuing reports in the Israeli press -- the same reports that we saw on our last trip have resurfaced again in advance of the Prime Minister's trip here, suggesting that he will urge the President to attack.

MR. HADLEY: All I can say, really, is that we've talked a lot about Iran and about the options that are available. And the strategy we are on is the one that I described. And that's the one that we think offers the best prospect for success.

Q Mr. Hadley, today Barack Obama told AIPAC that he believes Jerusalem should remain the capital of Israel, and also that Jerusalem should remain undivided, something that obviously the Palestinians will not be happy to hear. Do you think comments like that help you and the President in the efforts at peace in the Mideast right now?

MR. HADLEY: There are all kinds of comments that people have offered. I think the point is, and what -- and the thing to keep focused on, is that the parties now have undertaken to try and negotiate the full range of issues: borders, refugees and Jerusalem. And there are lots of opinions I'm sure they're going to get a lot of advice. The point is that the parties have taken this on, and in the end of the day what's going to matter is what the parties can work out on that issue.

Q But since that's not U.S. policy, since you have now the person who is the Democratic presumptive nominee saying that should be the case, it might carry more weight, do you have any fear that that could interfere?

MR. HADLEY: There are a lot of expressions of views. The parties have this issue, and I think if you understand and talk to the parties, they will -- I have been very clear that they are going to work out something that they think is in the interests of the Israeli people and the Palestinian people, and I'm confident that's what they'll do.

Q Did the Prime Minister ask the President to authorize the sale of F-22 Stealth fighters to Israel, and is that something that the United States would be willing to consider?

MR. HADLEY: There is -- you know, there are a lot of countries who have expressed interest in the F-22. As you know, there's legislation that prevents it from being sold abroad, that's on the books.

Q Following up on the issues that you spoke about, Ahmed Qureia, the Palestinian negotiator, said, yes, they're all on the table, we're discussing all of them, but big gaps still exist and it will take a -- pardon me -- and there will be no agreement this year "unless there is a miracle."

MR. HADLEY: Well, some people would say, given how long the Middle East conflict has gone on, any agreement reflects a miracle. I think you can take that position.

Look, I think if you look at what's -- I guess -- I think it's helpful to put this into a little perspective. If you look back sort of a year or two ago, when people talked about the creation of the Palestinian state, there was a lot of discussion in the press about how, well, the Palestinians want a Palestinian state that reflects all of the territory occupied in 1967, and the Israelis are taking about a "Swiss cheese" state that might involve 40 percent of the territory on the West Bank. You remember all those reports.

I think if you look at the public statements and the discussions now, it is much more a focused discussion. The

parties, I think, are much closer together than what they have been historically. Are there issues that still divide them? Sure. Are those difficult issues? Absolutely, on something that's been going on -- that has gone on this long, sure. But is there a prospect for the first time, I think in a long time, to get an agreement? I think there is, and I think if it wasn't the case, the parties wouldn't be at the table.

Now, is there a lot of public statements and jostling and a little bit of posturing going on on both sides? Sure. This is a negotiation like any other negotiations. But I think what's important is what is going on in the room quietly when the parties get together. They are meeting; it is intensive. Our assessment is they're making progress. But these are obviously difficult issues.

Q Are you saying that Qureia's assertion that it would take a miracle to reach an agreement this year is posturing?

MR. HADLEY: No, I'm not. I'm saying that it is obviously difficult. There are areas of agreement. I think in these kinds of negotiations people go from periods of enthusiasm sometimes to being a little less optimistic about what can be accomplished. I think the position that Abu Ala and Abu Mazen have taken, on the one hand, and the position that the Israelis have taken is, they would like to try and get it done this year. I've not heard any formal statements from them suggesting any different. I think, we -- these things go up and down. People get more confident at progress, more enthusiastic at progress. There obviously are times when people get, and parties get discouraged. And I think you're going to see that in the public statements of the parties.

But I think the interesting thing is Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas met on Monday, the parties continue to negotiate. When the President was in the Middle East he heard both from Prime Minister Livni and from Abu Ala about those negotiations. He met with the Palestinian team, and the sense we got is, it's difficult, these are hard issues, the parties still seemed committed to trying to reach an agreement this year. And we will obviously give them full support in doing so.

Q Late last week the candidate that this White House would like to see succeed President Bush seemed to be under some confusion about the number and the level of troops in Iraq. Has the White House begun giving Senator McCain daily intelligence briefings, or on some regular schedule, if not daily?

MR. HADLEY: Not to my knowledge, no. I don't believe we are providing intelligence briefings to any of the candidates at this point. There obviously is -- particularly once the two candidates have been -- receive the nominations of their parties, there are procedures in place for the commencement of intelligence briefings. That's been the past practice. Obviously we'll have to look at it again, but my -- to my understanding there are no current briefings being given.

Q -- said that during this trip President will be discussing Palestine and the terrorism problem in the area. Many think tanks are saying that -- coming from Pakistan and also here -- that unless you solve the problem in Pakistan, stable Pakistan is good for Afghanistan, good the region, good for India, and good for the U.S. How can you bring the stability in Pakistan, because so many -- (inaudible) -- are going on in every direction at this time under the new government since they have democracy now, and we have to encourage it.

MR. HADLEY: I would add to your question, it's also good for Pakistan, progress on the terror issue. And one of the things -- we've been heartened recently by statements out of the new Pakistani government, the democratic Pakistani government, that they see that terror in the region -- in Pakistan is a threat to Pakistan, first and foremost, and that they have a responsibility to deal with it. That is in Pakistan's own interest. It isn't a favor that they do to the rest of the international community; it's something the leaders in Pakistan understand is very important for the future of their own people and the stability of their own country.

Now, they have enormous challenges in terms of what's going on in the tribal areas. They have -- are looking at a mixture of pressure and activities and also negotiations. We've -- there have been a lot of discussions, public discussions, about the character of those negotiations. We think it's very important that they result in not only a cessation of attacks in Pakistan, but also a cessation of any attacks across the border into Afghanistan. Otherwise there will not be stability in the region.

So it is something that we've been clear about and -- in our discussions with the Pakistani government. But I think we have to give them some time to try and sort their way through and develop a strategy for what is a very difficult problem.

Q Steve, a couple questions for you. One is, the President recently said that he would not let Iran just "stall"; use the negotiations that are going on over their nuclear program to "stall" while it pursued a nuclear weapon. At what point do you decide that they are just stalling? What progress can you point to in, say, the last six months that would suggest that they're not just stalling?

MR. HADLEY: Well, really, there haven't been much of negotiations for the last considerable period. I think what's interesting is that you've had reports in the press about the Iranians preparing a proposal, and as I mentioned in my opening remarks, the three European countries, plus China, Russia and the United States, are also in preparation of a somewhat revised offer which Mr. Solana will be taking to the Iranians. So we'll see where we are in terms of negotiations, whether this offers some new promise or not.

In the interim, and in part to make those negotiations more successful, there have been a lot of public calls for greater pressure on Iran that we agree with. And we are urging -- we are taking action ourselves and urging other countries to increase pressure on Iran. We think that's an element of the solution.

I've got to go, I'm afraid. One last question.

Q Senator Obama also today basically accused the administration of turning diplomacy into something that is kind of looked down upon, and said that diplomacy can be tough; and also, blamed you guys for making the U.S. and Israel less secure by invading Iraq instead of dealing with Iran. How do you respond to those accusations?

MR. HADLEY: Well, I mean, I -- look, I do not want to intrude on the campaign at all. Let me just sort of talk generally on the points. If you're Israel, and if you talk to Israelis, the ones we have talked to, and you say, where is Israel now as opposed to where it was 10 years ago, Saddam Hussein, which was a real threat to Israel -- who, as you remember, was subsidizing and paying the families of suicide bombers who had killed Israelis -- Saddam Hussein is not in power. And a new government is in power that is committed to fighting terror, and does not threaten Israel. That's an enormous strategic improvement in their situation.

In 2000, you had an intifada that was raging. And go back and take a look at the frequency of suicide bombings in Israel proper that were slaughtering civilians -- it was very high. Those are dramatically down. There are serious shelling coming out of Gaza into Israel, so it's not to say that it's quiet or the threats are gone, but the kinds of suicide bombings we saw in the intifada are not going on now. That is an improvement in Israel's security.

You also have a portion of the Palestinian community now that has denounced terror, is willing to sit down with Israel and negotiate the contours of a Palestinian state that is democratic, that is willing to live at peace in Israel, and is willing to fight terror. That is a major improvement and offers the prospect of even further improvement and -- for the security from the standpoint of Israel. So I think if you look at where they are now from 10 years ago, I would say, and I think Israelis would tell you, it has dramatically improved.

In terms of diplomacy, you know, you just have to look around. We're, in some sense, being criticized in some forums for the six-party approach to the issue of North Korea's nuclear activities. We are working through diplomacy with the international community and with the three European countries, plus China, Russia and the United States, to try and deal with the problem with Iran. I can give you -- we are trying to support the negotiations with the Israelis and Palestinians. There's a lot of diplomatic activity going on, and the United States is working in tandem with a lot of countries to try and achieve common objectives through diplomacy.

Thank you very much.

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