

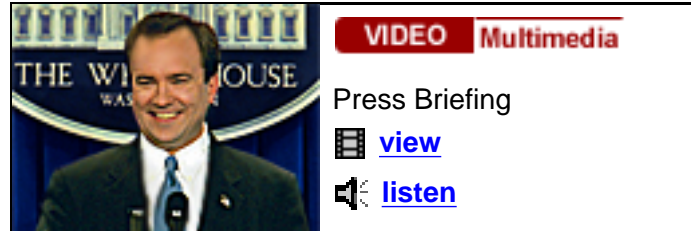


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Press Briefing by Scott McClellan

The James S. Brady Briefing Room

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12:38 P.M. EDT

MR. McCLELLAN: **Good morning, everybody. Let me get started.** The President had his usual briefings this morning. He met with the Secretary of State, and he is having lunch with the Vice President now. And I would like to make note of one announcement that the State Department will be making shortly at their briefing. They will be talking about the -- have some further news regarding the reward for help in locating Uday and Qusay Hussein in Iraq. And that will be coming from their briefing here shortly, under their rewards for justice program and the payout of that reward.

Q A giant check? (Laughter.)

Q Is it in the mail?

MR. McCLELLAN: **And one other thing I'd like to talk about** before we get started -- today's second quarter GDP release, which was stronger than expected, is another positive sign that our economy is continuing to pick up steam. There are signs that our economy is strengthening; GDP growth is up, new orders for durable goods have increased, business investment is up, personal consumption remains positive. And the Federal Reserve's Beige Book Report on Regional Conditions shows -- quote -- "additional signs that the pace of economic activity increased a notch during June and the first half of July."

The President is encouraged by the positive signs, but believes the economy is still not growing fast enough. The President is not satisfied that the economy is growing fast enough to spur the job creation that we need, and the President will not be satisfied until every person who wants to work can find a job.

And that is why the President has acted to help create conditions for job creation and economic growth. The American people are beginning to realize the benefits of having more money in their pockets. Withholding tables have been changed so there's more money in their paychecks. Child credit checks are going out. This is money that can be used to spend on a good or service, which will mean more jobs.

And as the President has said, there's more that we can do to improve our economic security.

Congress needs to act on the President's call for a comprehensive energy strategy that will reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy. That is something that is being discussed in the Senate this week. Congress needs to act on the President's call for personal reemployment accounts so people can have some help to get back into the work force. Congress needs to act on the President's call to stop lawsuit abuse. Frivolous lawsuits costs us jobs, and cost the consumer. And we need to continue expanding trade to open markets to American products.

And with that, I'll be glad to take your questions.

Q Scott, the Ambassador -- the North Korean Ambassador was in Moscow today, and he told the Russians that his party will now agree to multilateral talks on the nuclear program as long as Russia is a party to it. I think he's talking about six nations. This would be a change in North Korea's position. Does the White House have anything to say about that?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, and as you're aware, the President talked to President Hu of China yesterday. The President thanked him for his attempts to bring North Korea back to multilateral talks. We remain in close contact with the Chinese, with the South Koreans, with the Japanese, and with the Russians. We hope that North Korea is willing to agree to multilateral talks. It is important that we continue to move forward, and that North Korea, once and for all, end its nuclear weapons program.

The President expressed optimism in his call yesterday with President Hu that China's efforts will help to convince North Korea to abandon those nuclear ambitions. So we will see where this leads us.

Q You haven't heard anything else other than from this -- have you heard anything directly from any other source?

MR. McCLELLAN: We've been in close contact with our friends and allies, and so we are continuing to be in close contact. And we'll see where this takes us. We'll see where this moves us forward.

Q Should Russia be part of the talks?

MR. McCLELLAN: We want multilateral talks, and we've already indicated that we want to include those others -- including South Koreans, including Japanese, including Russians. So we welcome the multilateral approach.

Q I've got one -- one just final thing. In the past, North Korea has said they would go along with multilateral talks if they could meet on the sidelines with the United States in a one-on-one. In the past, you've ruled that out. Is that still the U.S. policy, that you cannot have --

MR. McCLELLAN: Our approach is that we want to see multilateral talks, and we believe it's important to include those other nations. They are ones that will -- that are directly affected by this, and we believe it's important for any substantive talks to include those nations. And that's our position --

Q **Scott, West African leaders have just announced** that they've agreed to send peacekeepers into Liberia and to arrive by Monday at the latest. They're also saying that President Taylor should leave the country within three days of the arrival of those troops. How does that impact what the U.S. is doing, our troop deployment? And also does Taylor -- does the announcement that Taylor will be forced to leave within that time frame bode well for U.S. troops going in when they go on the ground?

MR. McCLELLAN: One, I think he has made some comments; we need to see his action in addition to his words. Our position remains the same, that Charles Taylor needs to leave. We are continuing to urge all parties to immediately cease military activity, to pull back, to abide by the terms of the cease-fire and focus all their efforts on the peace talks.

So at this point, we have a U.N. resolution that we are pursuing to authorize the deployment of an ECOWAS force to Liberia and works towards a follow-on peacekeeping force by the U.N. But again, the immediate task is for us to help support ECOWAS get a vanguard force in there and to reenforce the cease-fire and create the conditions where humanitarian assistance can be provided to the people of Liberia.

Q If they're going in by next week now, does that mean that U.S. troops will be there to help them, perhaps even to go in on the ground?

MR. McCLELLAN: We are going to do what we can, what is needed to help support ECOWAS as they go into Liberia. And again, I'm not going to get in a position of the form of that until we've got everything in place and ECOWAS is going back in.

Q Scott, why is it the role of the President to use the legal code to enforce what amounts to a religious interpretation, his religious interpretation of the sanctity of marriage and to say that that excludes the possibility of gay marriage?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, the President believes strongly in the sanctity of marriage, and he believes strongly that marriage is a sacred institution between a man and a woman. And the President is strongly committed to protecting and defending the sanctity of marriage. And there has been a lot of discussion raised recently because of some court cases about this issue. The President strongly supports the Defense of Marriage Act, and the President remains committed to making sure we protect the sanctity of marriage. So we are looking at what may be needed in the context of the court cases that are pending now.

Q Scott, the President is obviously going to campaign as a compassionate conservative this coming -- next year. Can you explain to me how -- his position, how he sees himself as a compassionate conservative when he's against same-sex marriage, he doesn't think that he should allow that for gays? Can you explain that?

MR. McCLELLAN: The President very much respects people who disagree with his view, but this is a principled stand. This is a view he feels very strongly about. And the President will not compromise on that view. But he, again, he respects those who disagree, but this is an important position that he holds based on a principle.

Q So he doesn't feel he's not being compassionate to gays by being opposed to --

MR. McCLELLAN: I think the fact that we may disagree on certain issues doesn't mean we can't work together on areas where we agree. There are a number of important areas where people who disagree with the President can still work with us on his compassionate conservative agenda. We can work together to improve the economy and strengthen the economy. We can work together to improve our public schools. We can work together to take steps that will improve the quality of life for all people. But the President believes very strongly, no matter what your views are, we all should remember that it's important to respect one another, it's important to treat one another with dignity and respect.

Q May I follow up on that? When you say that the President's lawyers are looking to see what is needed, following whatever decisions these courts make, can you just help flesh that out? What do you mean by what is needed? Do you mean that if these courts decide to sort of uphold the Defense of Marriage Act, or not to -- they essentially agree with the President that he's not -- he thinks that there might not be a need for a federal law --

MR. McCLELLAN: I think you do have to look at it in the context of these court cases. And these court cases are still pending. So we are watching those court cases, we are monitoring those court cases to see what may be needed in that context. But until we see rulings on those court cases, it's hard to say what the nature of that may be.

Q What about a constitutional amendment?

Q Yes, is there -- can you see any scenario where these court cases would rule -- or these courts would rule in such a way that you don't need a federal law here, or a constitutional amendment, to be more specific?

MR. McCLELLAN: Again, I don't know how these rulings will come down. We need to let those rulings take place. But make no mistake about it, the President is strongly committed to protecting the sanctity of marriage and defending a sacred institution that he believes is between a man and woman. The --

Q Scott --

MR. McCLELLAN: Hold on one second. In terms of -- Mark raised the constitutional amendment. Obviously that is something to look at in this context. But we need to see where these court cases come out. And there's speculation that those court -- there may be some court rulings soon on this --

Q Scott, does the President think --

MR. McCLELLAN: -- that's where the President stands.

Q -- that homosexuality is a sin?

MR. McCLELLAN: I think the President believes that we are all sinners. The President believes that we are all -- all the same.

Q But when he said that, we're all sinners --

MR. McCLELLAN: Can I finish? Yes, let me finish. The President believes -- and as he said yesterday, the President believes we're all sinners. The President believes we are all the same in God's eyes. And the President does not believe it's his place to judge others. The President is not one to cast stones. The President believes we ought to treat everybody with dignity and respect. And that's what the President believes.

Q So are we wrong to interpret the fact that he said, we're all sinners, in response to a question about his feelings about homosexuality?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I think that that doesn't fully characterize the question that the President was asked -- and I quote: "Mr. President, many of your supporters believe that homosexuality is immoral. They believe that it's been given too much acceptance in policy terms and culturally. As someone who's spoken out in strongly moral terms, what's your view on homosexuality?"

The President said, "We're all sinners." And the President believes that in the eyes of God, we are all the same. And the President believes that it's not his place to judge other people. So we need to treat one another with dignity and respect, and that's what the President has always emphasized. It's a tolerant approach in terms of respecting one another.

Q Scott, veering slightly off the topic, the Congress is talking about they're considering releasing portions of the 28 pages relating to Saudi Arabia. Is the White House working with them, and would you all be in agreement to releasing portions --

MR. McCLELLAN: I don't know how our position could be any more clear. This is about the national security of the United States. This is about protecting sources and methods. This is about ongoing investigations and not doing anything that would jeopardize those ongoing investigations. There may be -- and the President made it very clear, there may be some point in the future where some of these -- some of this could be declassified, but we need to make sure that it's consistent with our national security and that it doesn't do anything to harm our efforts in the war on terrorism. We are waging a global war on terrorism, and we're not going to do anything to compromise our national security or to jeopardize ongoing investigations.

Q So does that mean that -- well, first of all, has that been communicated to Senator Roberts and the other members of --

MR. McCLELLAN: I think it was communicated to everybody. I think it's been communicated to everybody publicly.

Q And -- but have you, through the NSC or --

MR. McCLELLAN: I don't have any updates on specific conversations, but our views are very well-known. I mean, we -- remember, we worked very closely with the intelligence community, and with law enforcement community on this issue when the 9/11 report was being published. And the vast majority of the report, a 900-page report, the vast majority of it was declassified. But we will not do anything to put our nation's security at risk. And this, again, goes to sources and methods and ongoing investigations. I think our views are very well-known.

I promised Helen I would get to her.

Q Last night, Condoleezza Rice took responsibility for the 16-word snafu in the State of the Union. That's the fourth person to take personal responsibility, including the President of the United States. Does the President still have confidence in Condoleezza Rice, since obviously had one of the last reads on that speech, and there have been a few other mistakes along the way?

MR. McCLELLAN: I don't know how he could have been more clear yesterday, that Dr. Rice is doing a fantastic job for the American people --

Q You're fantastic when you make such a mistake?

MR. McCLELLAN: -- and the country is fortunate to have her service. She is someone who is -- shares the President's commitment to making sure we are doing everything we can to make the world a safer place. And I don't know how more clear the President could be yesterday in his response to that question.

Q What prompted that strong defense?

MR. McCLELLAN: He was asked a question.

Q Has she been under a lot of pressure?

MR. McCLELLAN: He was asked a question.

Q **The growth in the GDP seems to be fueled primarily** by a huge increase in defense spending in the second quarter, and by consumer spending on items, durable goods, where interest rates are at zero, or only slightly above. Isn't it a little too early to party?

MR. McCLELLAN: I wasn't. I said that it's another positive sign in terms of our economy. But the President is not satisfied. Our economy is not growing fast enough. The President is going to remain focused on the economy, as he has from day one of this administration, to make sure we are doing everything we can to improve people's economic security.

But there are a lot of benefits starting to be realized by the American people now in the form of more money in their paychecks because of the change in the rates; in the form of child credits, some 25 million checks that have -- are going out to the American people. And that's money that those people can put towards a good or service. And that means it will lead to more jobs. And the President is going to remain focused on doing everything we can to improve people's economic security. That is one of his highest priorities.

Q So you really think this is sustainable?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I think that a lot of economists feel that you're going to see -- continue to see a pick-up in the economy over the latter part of this year and next year. But, again, as long as there are people looking for work and they cannot find a job, the President will not be satisfied, and he will continue to do everything he can to make sure that we are improving the economic security of the American people.

Q **Scott, a couple of questions. How does the President feel** about the concept of civil unions as an alternative to gay marriage?

MR. McCLELLAN: Again, I think the President's views are very well-known in terms of his position. He believes that marriage is between a man and woman.

Q But he's asking -- he's asking about --

Q I'm sorry. Excuse me, I'm asking you about a civil union as an alternative.

MR. McCLELLAN: Yes. No, that's -- again, some individual states have passed laws -- a vast majority

of states have passed similar legislation to the Defense of Marriage Act. There are some court cases pending on these issues. But, no, the President believes in protecting the sanctity of marriage. And that's what -- that's what his position -- I'm talking about what he's for and what he supports. And that's his position. I said --

Q So does he believe the issue of civil unions is one for states to decided as they see fit?

MR. McCLELLAN: No, I think that, in fact, if you look at the Defense of Marriage Act, I mean, it states that for federal purposes that marriage is between a man and a woman. And it states that other states don't have to recognize the civil unions or same-sex marriages of other states. So his position is very clear in support of that.

Q **This may be a bit out of the blue, but does the President** have a reaction to this report that China appears to be ready to act in a more belligerent fashion towards Taiwan?

MR. McCLELLAN: What are you specifically referring to when you say --

Q This was a Pentagon study group, I think, report.

MR. McCLELLAN: Yes, but I mean what specific within that report?

Q Well, does the President have any feelings on this? Is the President ready to assure Taiwan of its security, et cetera?

MR. McCLELLAN: Oh, absolutely. We have always remained committed to the Taiwan Relations Act, and we've expressed concerns about the Chinese taking steps to increase their weaponry. So that's something that we've expressed.

Q Is it something that is --

MR. McCLELLAN: And it's important -- it's important that China and Taiwan pursue a dialogue on how to resolve these issues. And that's what our view is.

Q Is it something that more recently has been picked up here?

MR. McCLELLAN: I'm sorry?

Q Is it something that more recently you've been picking up these signals, as well?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, again, I think that we work closely with China on a number of issues -- this being one, North Korea being another. We've made it very clear that China's rapid build-up of weapons, particularly missiles, opposite of Taiwan is something that is destabilizing. And we will fulfill our commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act. But, again, the best way for these two sides to resolve their differences is through a peaceful dialogue. And we encourage the parties to pursue that

dialogue.

Q Yes, Scott. Yesterday, for the seventh time, the Republicans were unable to gather the 60 votes they need to stem the filibustering of the nomination of Miguel Estrada to the D.C. Court of Appeals. What is the next --

MR. McCLELLAN: Not only Miguel Estrada, but I remind you, Priscilla Owen. There are some others that are going through, as well, including Attorney General Pryor, and Carolyn Kuhl. These are highly-qualified nominees with strong bipartisan support. And they deserve a vote, up or down, whatever that vote may be, but they deserve a vote. The American people deserve better. It is time to move past the politics of the past and do what is right for our judicial system and for the people of this country.

Q The Senate is going into summer recess. What is the next step? Are the nominations still going to be held up? All the nominations are going to still be supported by the President?

MR. McCLELLAN: We're going to continue to urge them to put aside the politics of the past and do what is right for the American people, and do what is right for our judicial system, and give these nominees, who are highly-qualified and enjoy strong bipartisan support the up or down vote that they deserve, instead of playing politics with this situation.

Q Scott, the Presidential Postal Commission is recommending that every piece of mail, business and private, be tracked, recipient and sender, as well. In addition, it suggests that the Postal Service do this in conjunction with the Department of Homeland Security. Is this something that the President believes is feasible, and would he support --

MR. McCLELLAN: I haven't taken a look at the Postal Commission's recommendations. I know that they've made some. Let me take your question.

Q Thank you. First of all, on the job situation, can the administration do anything about jobs that are being exported overseas? That's hurting a lot of workers in this country, especially white-collar workers.

MR. McCLELLAN: Yes, I think some of this came up in the context of a question yesterday, and the President addressed some of that in his news conference yesterday.

Q Are you taking specific steps?

MR. McCLELLAN: There are a lot of steps we are taking to address the work force issues, in terms of community colleges, in terms of technology and the technological issues involved there, in terms of job training. But the President is focused on doing what we can to create conditions for job growth and economic growth here at home. And he's taken a number of steps to do that.

I would, in fact, point out that had we not taken some of the steps that we did, that -- well, the steps that we did take reduced unemployment rate by nearly one percentage point, increased the number of

jobs by as much as 1.5 million, and increased GDP by as much as 2 percent. This was after we had the recession; this was after we had the national emergency. So we took these steps and it reduced the unemployment rate. It would have been far worse had we not taken these steps.

Q On North Korea, what would be so terrible about meeting North Korea unilaterally, face-to-face, if that would help them save their face?

MR. McCLELLAN: Bilateral talks have not worked. North Korea did not keep their commitments over the past. We're pursuing this in a multilateral way.

Q Scott, let me just come back to Jeanne's question. I don't think we got the definitive answer. They're talking about some partial release of these 28 pages --

MR. McCLELLAN: I understand.

Q Do you oppose release of every single word that's in there?

MR. McCLELLAN: We made it very clear that we do not believe that this information should be declassified at this time because of the national security concerns that the President expressed the other day. We've made

Q All of them?

MR. McCLELLAN: -- that very clear. That was our position, yes.

Q Scott, on the gay marriage issue, after the Texas Supreme Court decision came down, the President said that he didn't know that it was necessary to have to change law in response to it. Now he seems to --

MR. McCLELLAN: I think he said that lawyers would look at the ramifications. But there's some other cases, too, at the state levels that raise this issue. So I think you have to --

Q -- these other issues --

MR. McCLELLAN: You obviously want to look at any of these court rulings that could have an impact on things, and so that's what we're doing.

Q Scott, the Palestinian Authority's web site quoted Mahmoud Abbas in Cairo as declaring -- quote -- "cracking down on Hamas, Jihad, and Palestinian organizations is not an option at all." And my question, and I have one follow-up: Since the disarming of terrorist groups like Hamas is a specific requirement of the road map, never carried out by Abbas, why are we continuing to send \$200 million and what the New York Times reports may be increased to \$1 billion to the Palestinians?

MR. McCLELLAN: The President believes that Prime Minister Abbas is committed to improving

security in the region, that he is committed to ending terrorism. The road map makes it very clear that we need to dismantle these terrorist organizations and that everybody has responsibilities to do that, including Arab nations in the region. And we are making some progress. There is more to be done, but the security situation has helped improve over recent weeks and since Aqaba. But there's more that we need to focus on and we need to get the parties to take steps to do.

Q Does the President believe it was right for the Saudi Arabian government not only to harbor, but to provide a car and chauffeur for Idi Amin of Uganda, who murdered at least 200,000 blacks?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, Les, I think that the President views Saudi Arabia as someone who is a friend and ally and that is helping us in the global war on terrorism --

Q Does he believe it was right for them to do this?

MR. McCLELLAN: -- he believes they're cooperating in our efforts. And we're --

Q But was it --

MR. McCLELLAN: -- going to continue to work with them on the war on terror.

Sarah.

Q -- harboring this man?

MR. McCLELLAN: Sarah.

Q **Scott, we have -- the Homeland Security Department -- loophole** in the immigration policy that allows North Americans to -- in the U.S. as long as their final destination is elsewhere. What else is the President going to do to combat what he calls the real threat of future hijackings --

MR. McCLELLAN: You're talking about the transit without visa program. That is something the Department of Homeland Security is reviewing. At the same time, I think steps are already being taken by the Department of Homeland Security to make sure that passengers on these international flights receive closer scrutiny during the screening process. But there are still people, killers, members of al Qaeda that want to harm America and want to harm the American people. That is why we are waging a global war on terrorism.

The best way to address this threat and to address these issues is to go after these killers where they are and bring them to justice before they can reach our shores and carry out such attacks. But we have taken a number of steps to improve aviation security. We have strengthened the cockpits by putting in bulletproof cockpit doors, reinforced doors. We have taken steps to improve the screening process by hiring federal screeners and passenger screeners. We have also taken steps by putting federal air marshals on flights, as well, so that the American people can know that we're doing everything we can to protect them from these kind of threats.

Q Scott, if I may follow, we still live in fear of terrorism. One day a report that there is a threat of terrorism, the next day a report everything is fine. What message does the President have for the small businesses and also travelers? Because now a lot of traveling will be taking place since we are in summer. And also, last week, there was a conference attended by a number of congressmen that basically three democracies are under attack, including suicide bombers in the United States, Israel and India. And they are calling on the administration of the President. And, of course, they are saying the President has taken steps, and they are glad for that. But more could be done. Those three nations must join now to fight against terrorism because they are the victims.

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, on the first part, I think we're doing two things. One, we're making great progress in winning the war on terrorism, taking the battle to those who would seek to do us harm, which is the best way to confront threats. Two, we have taken a number of steps to improve our homeland security and strengthen our homeland security so that the American people at home are better protected. So there are a number of steps that we have taken.

We're improving information-sharing amongst our intelligence agencies and law enforcement agencies through such things as the Terrorist Threat Integration Center. We created the Department of Homeland Security, where 22 -- the largest reorganization in the last half-century of the government that brought 22 agencies together that made their number one priority the protection of the American people, our homeland security. We have transformed the FBI to where its number one priority is homeland security. So there are a number of steps that we have taken abroad and at home to address this issue.

Q Scott, to what extent has the commitment of the military to --

Q On my other question --

Q -- Iraq affected the search for Osama bin Laden?

MR. McCLELLAN: I'm sorry. Repeat that first part.

Q To what extent has the commitment of certain, especially specialized forces to Iraq affected the search for Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, Pakistan, or wherever he is?

MR. McCLELLAN: We're dedicating the necessary resources to both efforts. Both of these are essential parts of the war on terrorism. And we will continue to make sure that the necessary resources are dedicated to pursuing terrorists, wherever they may be, and we will bring them to justice. So we are making sure that that is addressed on all fronts.

Q Well, it's been reported that certain troops with specialized language skills, reconnaissance skills, had to be sent to Iraq for the war, they have not been redeployed to Afghanistan to search for him.

MR. McCLELLAN: In terms of the specific troop elements, I mean, I think you need to talk to the

military. But we are going to finish the job in Afghanistan, we're going to finish the job in Iraq. This is all part of the war on terrorism. It's all one effort to ensure that America is safer and that the American people are better protected. And we are dedicating the resources we need to those areas to helping with both the search for terrorists, as well as the reconstruction in those countries, as well.

Q Getting back to the gay marriage issue for a moment. It seems pretty clear that, depending on how these court cases go, it's likely that there will be some sort of an administration action, whether it's backing constitutional amendment or something like that. Are we correct in reaching that conclusion?

MR. McCLELLAN: Again, I think you need to see where these court cases come out. I think that's where things stand. So we are looking at it, and we're looking at it in the context of these court cases and we need to see what the rulings are before jumping ahead on that.

Q Is the bottom line of the President's response to the question about the morality of homosexuality that he has no intention of answering that question because he doesn't want to stand in judgment of others?

MR. McCLELLAN: I think I made it clear earlier today that someone's sexual orientation is their personal business. The President is not someone who believes in politicizing someone's sexual orientation.

Q Scott, generally when the President is prepared to go down to Crawford for his vacation, it's a way of getting away from some of the controversies that are swirling in the beltway, at least to some extent --

MR. McCLELLAN: I think he looks at it as a way to get out into the country and get out into the heartland and talk to the American people directly, and get away from Washington, D.C. (Laughter.)

Q -- \$2,000 a plate. (Laughter.)

Q If that's the fact, Scott, two days ago the Waco Tribune Herald had an editorial calling for the resignation of Vice President Cheney over this Niger hoax. It seems like folks down there are a little riled, he might be getting a different kind --

MR. McCLELLAN: Oh, I don't think so. I think the people in Texas and across this country strongly support the action that we have taken to confront the new and dangerous threats that we face, and to eliminate those threats.

Q Do you think he's going to have to be a little more proactive this vacation because of the situation?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, first of all, the President of the United States is President of the United States 24/7, wherever he may be. We have a Western White House that is in Crawford, and he continues to do his duties from there. But he spends a good bit of August going out and talking with the American people about his agenda and listening to what's on their minds, as well.

This is a time when he can get away from Washington, D.C. and listen to the American people and talk to them about what we're doing, rather than sitting here in Washington, D.C. I mean, members of Congress are going on a break, too, and going back to their districts. The President is going to travel around this country and talk about some important priorities -- conservation and our efforts to preserve natural resources, and his economic agenda, as well.

Q Scott, does the President still support the nomination of Glen Bower to be tax court judge, given the --

MR. McCLELLAN: He does. I think that he brings some strong experience to the table in tax policy, and if you look at his background, I think he is a highly-qualified nominee. The President does support him.

Q Scott, speaking of taking breaks in Texas, you know we've got some Democratic senators who are hanging out in Albuquerque. (Laughter.) When the President was governor, he put great stock in bipartisanship. What's his reaction to all the vitriol going on in Texas right now?

MR. McCLELLAN: I think that as with any other state, that's a matter that's being discussed within the Texas -- within the state government. And those are issues that you need to address to the state of Texas.

Q The President is a Texas resident. I mean, he must have some opinion of what's going on.

MR. McCLELLAN: Again, I think that he's President of the United States. We'll let individual states address those matters.

Q Scott, do you have any information at all on the owner of the house in Mosul where the two sons of Saddam Hussein were found? We understand he may now be in the United States.

MR. McCLELLAN: Who may be in the United States?

Q The man that owned the house where the two brothers were found.

MR. McCLELLAN: I don't know. I don't know his status, where he is.

I can take one more.

Q The Cabinet meeting tomorrow. Can you tell us what the purpose is of that meeting?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, he meets regularly with the Cabinet. I think that they will spend a good bit of their time focused on the economy. And so, you all will be able to get more on that after the meeting has taken place.

Q Is that what the President's statement is likely to be on, Scott?

MR. McCLELLAN: I think that the focus of the meeting will be on the economy.

Thanks.

END 1:14 P.M. EDT

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