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Daily Press Briefing

Richard Boucher, Spokesman

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TRANSCRIPT:

12:35 p.m. EST

MR. BOUCHER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I don't have any statements or announcements, so I'd be glad to take your questions.

QUESTION: Wait. Really? You have no statements or announcements? The Secretary is going to be in Washington on Monday and Tuesday?

MR. BOUCHER: What? (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Maybe I missed it, but have you made an announcement about the Secretary's travel next week?

MR. BOUCHER: Yeah.

QUESTION: Oh, okay. Sorry.

MR. BOUCHER: Yeah, the Secretary is going to --

QUESTION: Okay, never mind.

MR. BOUCHER: -- the Mexico Bi-National Commission meeting next Tuesday. It's a major event. We announced it well in advance so that everybody would know about it. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: I must have missed it.

MR. BOUCHER: And he very much looks forward to the trip. He'll go down Monday afternoon, the meeting's Tuesday, and there will be six additional members of the U.S. cabinet working down there with him with his Mexican counterparts on all the various issues.

QUESTION: Can you give us a --

QUESTION: See, now I get to ask the first question.

MR. BOUCHER: George. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Can you give us a succinct description of the issues he's going to discuss in Mexico?

MR. BOUCHER: No. (Laughter.) And the reason is --

QUESTION: You disappoint me.

MR. BOUCHER: I know. (Laughter.) These meetings are of a very unique nature in that our relationships with Mexico and Canada as well are so deep, so broad and involve so many things. You know, water, bridge crossing, trucks, trade, energy, strategy, Latin America, democracy in the hemisphere. I mean, it's from the biggest of the regional issues to the smallest of the cooperation issues, and that's why we do something as unique as bringing six or seven cabinet members from each side together once a year to try to just go over all these issues in great detail direct with our counterparts.

And so what we're going down there for is to move forward a very deep and broad agenda with Mexico, to talk about the issues that are important to us and them in order to deepen the relationship and to talk about everything from the hemispheric to the very local and specific.

QUESTION: Well, you didn't mention -- I'm sorry George. Go ahead.

QUESTION: The issue, I think, on the minds of both, more than others, is migration. The President announced the proposal last January --

MR. BOUCHER: Exactly.

QUESTION: -- about which almost nothing has been heard.

MR. BOUCHER: Yeah.

QUESTION: And now we're after the election --

MR. BOUCHER: I meant not to say yeah to that part of it, but he announced the program in January and --

QUESTION: All right. And is the Secretary --

MR. BOUCHER: Certainly migration is a very important issue for these discussions. It's an issue that the President has made a proposal; the President wants to move forward on his proposal. We'll be working with the Mexicans, working with the Congress, to see how we can move this forward. And that's something they'll certainly be discussing with the Mexican counterparts next Tuesday.

QUESTION: And just on the other issue that has cropped up in the last two of these is a big, kind of a -- a problem, which -- is the water debt issue -- has that been settled? I know last year here there was talk of tentative agreement to work on it. Is that something --

MR. BOUCHER: There has, indeed, been progress on water and the Secretary has regularly discussed it with Minister Derbez in their conversations. I don't have the actual accounting to know if we have resolved all backlog issues.

QUESTION: Do you know if you expect a final resolution at this meeting or any time in the -- or more progress towards reaching --

MR. BOUCHER: We'll certainly discuss water, but I don't know exactly whether it's at that point or not.

QUESTION: Could you take the question, which would help those of us who --

MR. BOUCHER: I'll see if I can get you some water this afternoon.

QUESTION: Great, and if they're in arrears, and, if so, how much.

MR. BOUCHER: Yeah.

QUESTION: South Asia?

MR. BOUCHER: Ready to move on? Yeah.

QUESTION: Richard, one, Deputy Secretary Mr. Armitage is in South Asia, or going to be there. Any reason that this time that he is going to make a trip to India or something to do with the Kashmir issue or the new Administration and a second term?

MR. BOUCHER: The Deputy Secretary, as you know, has regularly kept in touch with leaders in South Asia and elsewhere, and he's doing that through his trip this time. There are always a lot of issues on the agenda, including the progress that the two nations have been making with each other and starting to address things like the Kashmir issue. And so I'm sure that in his discussions in the region, he will be encouraging that progress and looking for ways the United States can continue to support it, as well as dealing with very important bilateral relationships that we have individually with each country in the region.

QUESTION: And second, Richard, do you have any comments to reports that Usama bin Laden may have sneaked in India or on the border? One report is saying that he may have sneaked to India, and another report is saying that according to the Pakistani officials that he may be in Afghanistan. But as far as tapes are concerned from him, as recent as a few weeks ago, they are all delivered to the Al Jazeera offices in Pakistan, either in Karachi or Islamabad. So what do you read from all of these messages and reports?

MR. BOUCHER: I guess we read that we don't know exactly where he is.

QUESTION: I mean --

MR. BOUCHER: And the general tenor of the reports has been that he is in that area, in the Afghan-Pakistan border, but I don't have any further information on his location for you.

QUESTION: And if Mr. Armitage tiptoeing there, it could be a discussion about if Usama bin Laden may be in India or --

MR. BOUCHER: The war on terrorism is always part of his discussion with countries in the region, but I don't say -- that's not the reason why he's making this trip.

QUESTION: Richard, you may not know where bin Laden is, but perhaps you can enlighten us as to where the Deputy Secretary is and where he will be, at least in stops that are not so sensitive as to be classified.

MR. BOUCHER: I know you've asked me to do that yesterday. Our inclination, I have to say, is just to put out the stops as he makes them. He is in --

QUESTION: UAE.

MR. BOUCHER: -- UAE, United Arab Emirates, today.

QUESTION: Can you tell us --

QUESTION: Well, this is interesting. So is it just -- is it the regions that he's going to or are these trips -- are trips by senior officials now going to be routinely kept secret?

MR. BOUCHER: They're not routinely kept secret.

QUESTION: No, I'm asking you if they're going to be.

MR. BOUCHER: I'm up here talking about it. I talked about it yesterday, talked about it today.

QUESTION: But you're not telling us where --

MR. BOUCHER: I'm just not putting it out in advance. I'm putting it out when he gets there. There's nothing secret about the fact that he's there. Where he's going, his itinerary, calculating various stops at various moments, is something that, unfortunately, we don't really feel comfortable doing in this context, this particular trip. It's not a rule --

QUESTION: Okay, because --

MR. BOUCHER: -- but I think you're aware that sometimes when our travelers go out, we don't put out the schedule in advance.

QUESTION: Okay. Is that because of South Asia?

MR. BOUCHER: No.

QUESTION: Is there -- is there a security problem in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka that would prevent you from saying that he's actually going there?

MR. BOUCHER: I -- no.

QUESTION: If, in fact, he is going there?

MR. BOUCHER: I will put out what information we have when we can, but it's not a single destination, it's not a single trip. He's going to two regions, and whether the sensitivities are in one or the other, the more we provide about onward destinations, the more we have to deal with the issue of intermediate ones that we may not wish to talk about for security reasons. That's as much as I can tell you at this point.

QUESTION: Richard.

MR. BOUCHER: Sir, please.

QUESTION: If I could follow up on Matt's question. I mean, I guess what I don't understand is you seem to be very forthcoming with the Secretary's schedule and here you have somebody --

MR. BOUCHER: Thank you.

QUESTION: -- who is below him -- yeah, I try and say something nice. But when it comes to the Deputy Secretary, you're much more secretive. That seems counterintuitive to me that for somebody who is actually, you know, a lower ranking position, that you would be more secretive. And I guess what I'm trying to figure out is, is that -- was that decision made at the Deputy Secretary's request or did the Secretary request this? How did this come about?

MR. BOUCHER: It has been our practice that with all travelers of whatever rank to certain locations and destinations that we're very careful about putting out information in advance as to when they might be there. When you have a trip that involves those destinations, then each trip you have to look at sort of the total itinerary and decide whether, by putting out all the other stops, you just let people decide, okay, well, then on Tuesday he's going to be in Location X because you've listed where he's going to be Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. And that doesn't depend on a single region. There are a couple destinations like that and so our tendency in those cases has been to err on the side of caution.

We're glad to say when he gets there. We're glad to say what he's doing there. We all know certain arrangements have to be made on the ground at each of these stops including, sometimes, press arrangements. And so some of your colleagues in the field may know, but we don't think it is in our interest or the security interest of the traveler to start publicizing in advance the stops of a trip because if there's a hole, somebody is going to figure out where it's going to be.

QUESTION: Can we move on?

MR. BOUCHER: Yeah.

QUESTION: Do you have any information on Yasser Arafat's health? And do you take any position on where he ought to be buried?

MR. BOUCHER: No, I don't have any further information on his health. We're following the bulletins and the information that's coming out. We're certainly in touch with Palestinians on the questions there. And as far as funeral arrangements, that's something for the various parties to work out.

QUESTION: Can I ask a --

QUESTION: Can I follow on that?

MR. BOUCHER: Sure.

QUESTION: While I understand it's something for the parties to work out, since there is currently a dispute between the Palestinians and Israelis, have any American diplomats, either at the Consulate General or the Embassy, gotten

involved at all or been asked to get involved by either side?

MR. BOUCHER: As I said, it's something for the parties to work out. I'm sure we keep in touch with the Israelis, Palestinians and others on -- just to keep track of what's going on and who is talking to whom, but our view at this point is that it's for them to try to work out.

QUESTION: Can I just go back to the travel issue that's somewhat related? Is Assistant Secretary Burns accompanying the Deputy Secretary on his mystery tour?

MR. BOUCHER: Assistant Secretary Burns is accompanying the Deputy Secretary on his much-discussed travel to the Middle East. He won't go on to South Asia with him.

QUESTION: Okay. And then just on another travel thing, yesterday you talked about the Secretary going to the EU-U.S. ministerial in Europe in early December and the NATO meeting. I'm wondering if he might like to take that opportunity to finally travel to Greece, where I'm sure he would be very welcome now since he's canceled three trips there in the last two years.

MR. BOUCHER: I don't have anything new on the Secretary's travel and we're not ready to put out an itinerary yet for his future travel.

QUESTION: Is there any discuss at all underway of a possible trip to Athens?

MR. BOUCHER: As you know, the last time the Secretary decided he was unable to go to Athens, at that point we did say we'd try to make a trip at some future date, but there is no discussion now of setting that date.

Sir.

QUESTION: Mr. Boucher, the Prime Minister of Greece is -- was furious today. He even said that your action is not a friendly act. Any comment?

MR. BOUCHER: Oh. There is a question. No. I think we explained our action yesterday. It's not directed against any other country. We very much value our relationship with Greece. We are very much committed to working with Greece on all aspects that our two nations as allies and friends have in common and that the question of what we call Macedonia is not something that's in any way directed at Greece.

QUESTION: The Greeks are saying, Richard, on this that they will veto any -- or oppose any -- I don't know if they can actually veto -- any attempt for Macedonia to join the EU or NATO until the resolution -- until this name issue is resolved. What's your feeling about that? Do you think that the Greeks --

MR. BOUCHER: I didn't see a statement like that and I'm, frankly, not quite sure where they stand on some of those things.

QUESTION: Well, your Greek counterpart said that.

MR. BOUCHER: The -- I think the important thing is that we, too, believe that it's important for the parties -- for Greece, Macedonia -- with the help of the United Nations to try to come to a positive solution on this and we'll continue to encourage that.

QUESTION: But are you of the opinion -- is the United -- not personally, but is the United States of the opinion that Macedonia should now join under its name to become a third partner in that?

MR. BOUCHER: Our view has been that Macedonia, you know, is part of Europe, is part of the transatlantic community, and we have all been working with Macedonia. Where exactly they stand on this track towards the EU, I don't know, and it's probably not good for us or anybody else to start speculating at this point on, you know, "what if" and "when they're ready" kinds of questions.

QUESTION: Well, let's leave aside the EU since you're not a member of it, although you have opinions on it, and talk about NATO.

MR. BOUCHER: I'll check where they are.

QUESTION: No, well what's -- do you have any position on this?

MR. BOUCHER: I think, as I said, we don't think it's useful to start speculating at this point on, you know, "what if," "when they're ready."

QUESTION: Oh, okay. Well, if you don't think it's useful to start speculating on that, is it useful for the Greeks to threaten to veto -- to try and stop Macedonia's entry into various multilateral institutions?

MR. BOUCHER: I'm not -- we'll see what happens when it comes.

QUESTION: Can I go back to the Middle East?

MR. BOUCHER: Yeah.

QUESTION: Have Arafat's health problems triggered anything on this end with respect to future U.S. steps with respect to Middle East peacemaking?

MR. BOUCHER: George, I think the U.S. commitment is very clear. We -- the President stated again yesterday at his press conference the United States is committed to trying to help the parties move forward on peace in the region. The President is committed to his two-state vision that he enunciated two years ago to try to achieve a democratic and peaceful Palestinian state that can live side by side with Israel.

To get to that point we have developed and stuck with the roadmap as the best means to get there. It has very clear obligations for both sides, practical obligations that can help us move forward.

And furthermore, as the President said, we see the Israeli disengagement plan from Gaza and from some of the settlements on the West Bank as being a step that can lead us in that direction. So I'd say the United States commitment is very clear and the kind of steps that have been identified to get there are the steps that we think that we'll continue to encourage by the parties.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Richard, may I go back quick on Usama bin Laden, please? Let's say now we have a new government in Afghanistan and Afghans are now living under democracy first time in their lifetime. And Usama bin Laden was, or had a brutal regime there, so he must be very unhappy and so he may be now in the area --

MR. BOUCHER: I hope he is.

QUESTION: So that's why maybe he's in the area so try to disrupt again the democracy in Afghanistan. Any comments he may try or be there?

MR. BOUCHER: I have no idea what's in Usama bin Laden's mind. I certainly do believe that he has been trying to disrupt the lives of the people of Afghanistan and that the Taliban and al-Qaida brought multitudes of hardship and suffering to the people of Afghanistan, and we're very glad that he is no longer in a position with the others to do that sort of thing to the people of Afghanistan. And it's a fact that the Afghan people turned out in record numbers -- 8 million people -- to vote, I think, is a sign of their very clear rejection of that history and their very clear embrace of a different future for their country.

QUESTION: The EU-3 is meeting with Iran today. Now, I know that you're not directly involved in the negotiations, but you do keep in touch with the Europeans. Have you, prior to this meeting, reinforced your view that there shouldn't be any kind of compromise with Iran given that it's negotiations; it's give and take?

MR. BOUCHER: Well, we do keep in touch with the Europeans and for that reason we know the EU-3 meeting is still going on with the Iranians. I think we have made very clear our view, they have made very clear their view and the Board of Governors has made very clear its view at the International Atomic Energy Agency that Iran needs to comply with the requirements of the Board. The Europeans are talking to Iran about how Iran can do that, should do that, must do that. The proof will be whether Iran does it or not. So that's what we're looking for.

QUESTION: So is it fair to say that you wouldn't accept any deal that fell short of the Iranians indefinitely suspending enrichment --

MR. BOUCHER: I think it's clear to say what the Europeans have said, what we have said, what the Board of Governors have said: that Iran must meet all of those requirements.

QUESTION: Related to this, what's the status of your representation at the IAEA now that the Senate scotched Mr. Cunningham's nomination?

MR. BOUCHER: I, frankly, don't know who's out there as chargé, but I'll check.

QUESTION: So that as far as you know, there hasn't been a new nomination?

MR. BOUCHER: I'll have to check.

QUESTION: And also on Iran, yesterday you were asked about -- I believe it was a question having to do with a lawsuit that Shirin Ebadi filed about translation of her book. Did you get an answer to that?

MR. BOUCHER: No.

QUESTION: No?

MR. BOUCHER: We didn't get an answer on that, did we?

A PARTICIPANT: What's that?

MR. BOUCHER: The translation, the question of the translation of the Ebadi book.

QUESTION: It's really, it's a Treasury thing, but --

MR. BOUCHER: You might check with Treasury. It might be faster.

QUESTION: Well, but the reason that I'm asking is because a while ago, several weeks ago, I asked and there was a taken question or taken, there was an answer given about an OSC -- an OSCE letter to the Secretary complaining about restrictions on --

MR. BOUCHER: I'm sorry. I didn't get an answer yesterday. I'll check more today and see if I can.

QUESTION: No, no, no, well, I'm not asking you for an apology. I just want -- can you look and see, when you do get an answer, or if you do get an answer, if it has anything -- if there is any relation to the OSCE complaint?

MR. BOUCHER: Okay. I couldn't get an answer to the simple question. Now I'll try to get an answer to the more complicated one, but maybe I can do both.

QUESTION: Often that's the best way to get a response from the government, right?

MR. BOUCHER: This is a test. Yeah. Okay.

David.

QUESTION: A different subject?

MR. BOUCHER: Sure.

QUESTION: Another one on Iran, please. With your effort in Iran and nuclear bomb is concerned, according to a report I have seen, one, it's a pretty dangerous regime there in Iran and they can have a nuclear bomb within a year. Do you have any comment on that?

MR. BOUCHER: I don't have any estimates for you, but we certainly expressed for many years now our very strong concern about Iran's nuclear programs as well as many other dangerous behaviors that they have engaged in. And we are, I think, gratified the international community has come together over the last year or two to make clear to Iran that they have to stop these covert nuclear programs, that they have to abide by the requirements of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

QUESTION: But are you satisfied that IAEA and the UN is doing whatever the best they are --

MR. BOUCHER: Well, we're working with all of the countries that are involved and I think various countries are trying in various ways. We have made the point, again and again, the international community needs to be very clear on these requirements, as it has been now, and needs to take the appropriate action if, at the end of November, we find that Iran has not come into full compliance. That appropriate action, as we have said many times, is to refer to the United Nations Security Council and have the Council then take up the issue.

Yeah, David.

QUESTION: Officials up at the UN have made it known that Secretary General Annan has sent a letter to President Bush, Prime Minister Blair, Prime Minister Allawi, essentially cautioning the parties that an assault on Fallujah would disrupt the election process. And I was wondering if that's your understanding of the case and what your response might be.

MR. BOUCHER: I don't want to speak for the Secretary General, but I would say that he has conveyed his concerns about the situation in Fallujah and the steps that are being taken to restore the security and stability throughout Iraq.

In this regard, frankly, we differ. The Iraqi Government has made very clear that they do have a strategy for resolving the problems of these towns like Fallujah. It's a strategy that has worked in some cases already in Najaf and Samarra and a few other places. It's a strategy of reaching out politically to local leaders, of reasserting Iraqi Government control and of moving militarily where that needs to be done, Iraqis and coalition forces together.

The situation in Fallujah remains difficult and unstable. Restoration of peace in Fallujah and other towns is very important to them and to us, and it needs to be done soon for the sake of the people who live there, for the sake of the people who live there who deserve a chance to participate in the political process, who deserve a chance to participate in the elections, who deserve a chance to participate in Iraq's future and not be held hostage by terrorists and thugs.

And that is a strategy that the Iraqi Government has that is being supported by the United States, and we think that while there may be all kinds of different factors that enter into these decisions that these difficult places need to be dealt

with for the sake of the people who live there. And I think if you look, for example, at the reporting out of places like Najaf, after the government control was reasserted, you saw what had happened in that town while the town was outside of government control: deaths and persecutions and other difficulties for citizens who live there.

And that demonstrates, I think, once again, why these problems need to be dealt with. And the Iraqi Government has a strategy for dealing with them. The coalition is working with the Iraqi Government on that strategy and it is one that involves negotiation. Prime Minister Allawi and the government have been in discussion with people in Fallujah, but nonetheless, it's been a -- it's remained a stronghold for those who propagate violence and terror.

QUESTION: Has the Secretary responded in any way to the -- I mean to this?

MR. BOUCHER: I don't think there has been a formal letter back. The Secretary, though, has talked with the Secretary General, frequently talks to him about Iraq, among other subjects, and has made -- has talked to him about our views.

QUESTION: Today? Since the letter?

MR. BOUCHER: When did he last talk to him? Over the weekend, right?

QUESTION: So since the letter was --

MR. BOUCHER: Yeah, since the letter was received, he's talked to him about the letter.

QUESTION: And does the United States read anything other than a concern about Iraq into the contents of the letter?

MR. BOUCHER: That's what the letter was about. I don't see any reason to read anything else into it.

QUESTION: Because there are some who think that it was intended to affect the election here. You don't have any reason to think that?

MR. BOUCHER: I wouldn't speculate at all.

QUESTION: So is it the opinion of the U.S. that should the strategy fail, these people in Fallujah wouldn't be able to take part in the elections?

MR. BOUCHER: No. It's the strategy -- first of all, it's our intention to make it possible for all Iraqi citizens to take part in the elections and to reassert government control in these cities. I don't want to speculate exactly where we'll be at the moment of the elections, but the elections -- I think it's the intention of the Iraqi Government, the Iraqi Election Commission, which is -- excuse me -- preparing for the elections, as well as the coalition, to make it possible for all Iraqi citizens to participate. That's certainly what we encourage and welcome.

QUESTION: So is the aim of the planned assault to free up the citizens so that they can vote or just to remove

the intimidation, meaning that were there not to be an assault, they could still vote but they may be intimidated to vote a certain way?

MR. BOUCHER: I think it's speculative to say exactly at what point we'll be when it happens and I don't quite know how to describe it. The aim of the operations that have been conducted and are being conducted against various -- at various places in Iraq is to reassert government control, to put the cities firmly back under civilian control, to let the people of those cities participate in the life of Iraq -- the political life and the future of Iraq -- and get out from under the violence and terror that have prevailed in those cities, to give them a chance at the new life that all Iraqis deserve, including voting in elections.

QUESTION: New subject. Yesterday, Richard, a statement was released from here in your name that, again, denounced Cuba and their human rights violations. And I'm wondering if -- why, since there didn't really appear to be any particular reason or any particular event that this statement was tied to, why it was put out yesterday or if you figure that just any time is a good time to bash Castro.

MR. BOUCHER: Any time is a good time to express our continuing concerns about Cuba, about the people who have been jailed there, about the people who are being mistreated there, and, in particular, it related to the people who were rounded up about a little more than 18 months ago now. And so we felt it was an appropriate time to restate those concerns.

QUESTION: Did it have anything to do with the visit of a delegation of European parliamentarians to Cuba?

MR. BOUCHER: That is one of the issues we mentioned in the statement.

QUESTION: No, no. You mentioned the ones that got -- who were thrown out. There was another visit by some -- from the European parliament that ended yesterday who are apparently a little bit more sympathetic to Castro than the United States is.

MR. BOUCHER: I would not tie it to that particular visit. I would just say that the question of Cuba is one that we're -- we know various governments are always considering, and from time to time we feel it's important to remind people of the facts.

QUESTION: Are you concerned at all that the European Union might -- might ease its recent -- its policies --

MR. BOUCHER: I think you have to ask the European Union what they may or may not do, but we do think --

QUESTION: No, I'm asking if you're concerned that they might.

MR. BOUCHER: I think it's important for everybody to remember the facts as they consider policy towards Cuba.

QUESTION: But are you concerned that the EU might waver in its --

MR. BOUCHER: I think it's important for everybody to remember the facts as they consider their policy towards Cuba.

QUESTION: Richard, the big question. Yesterday after the cabinet meeting, Secretary Powell, who is a most famous person around the globe as far as diplomacy and foreign policy is concerned, if any decision has been made by the Secretary if he is going to stay, which mostly the foreign governments want him to stay. What mind do you think he has made up so far or if President ask him or not?

MR. BOUCHER: We discussed this yesterday. One of the things that I said is I don't think it's very useful for us to discuss it every day. And since there's nothing to say, I think the best thing to do is to say nothing. There's no news, nothing new.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: I have two brief ones. One, can you elaborate at all on your Public Announcement yesterday in Uzbekistan and potential imminent terrorist threat there?

MR. BOUCHER: I think the simple answer is no, but we did -- you've seen the statement, and I think that's as much as we can say of the threat and the possibilities.

QUESTION: And --

MR. BOUCHER: We did say -- I want to make sure I saw the final version.

QUESTION: Yeah, in the near future.

MR. BOUCHER: What was the first sentence?

QUESTION: Near future.

QUESTION: The near future. (Inaudible).

MR. BOUCHER: We did say where the information came from. Did we say where the information came from?

QUESTION: No. Would you like to say that now? (Laughter.)

MR. BOUCHER: No, I don't think I would, sorry. (Laughter.) But we did have information that indicated that there was a threat against U.S. interests in --

QUESTION: Was or is?

MR. BOUCHER: Well, there was when we issued and there still is today.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. BOUCHER: Against U.S. interests in Uzbekistan in the near future, and we felt it was important as we evaluated that and as we, ourselves, took appropriate steps working with the government to counter it --

QUESTION: Okay. The reason --

MR. BOUCHER: -- for people to know.

QUESTION: Okay. The reason I ask is because the day before, Wednesday, the Embassy in Tashkent had put out a Warden Message talking about possible violence in bazaars and shopping areas having to do with protests or demonstrations against a new law on how people can sell imported goods. This doesn't have anything to do --

MR. BOUCHER: This is a different thing, yeah.

QUESTION: It doesn't have anything to do with that?

MR. BOUCHER: Not that I'm aware of, yeah.

QUESTION: Okay. And on a related issue, has the Embassy in Syria assessed its -- reassessed to its satisfaction their security posture?

MR. BOUCHER: I, frankly, didn't check because they're closed today anyway because of the weekend, so we'll have to check on Sunday when they would normally open up.

QUESTION: Back on Uzbekistan. Was the information about the threat the same sort of information as you got for the last Travel Warning in August, then you specified there might be problems in late September, or was there some kind of lull where you weren't getting this information in October and now it's back, that there is a new threat?

MR. BOUCHER: I can't really describe the kind of information we're getting in that much detail other than to say that we do have information that indicates there is a threat now. There was information about threats in September. That period, as we know, has passed. Unfortunately, there have been some incidents in Uzbekistan in recent months and we do have information that there is a threat at this point.

QUESTION: Again, the warning that was issued in Qatar for hotel -- a threat against hotels in Doha has been rescinded now. Is that because the potential threat was thwarted or it just never materialized?

MR. BOUCHER: Thwarted. The Warden statement they put out in Doha today and from our Embassy in Qatar was that, "We are rescinding the warning to avoid major hotels. We note that the Qatari Government was responsive in providing increased security measures."

QUESTION: Well, right. But responsive in providing increased security measures, but did they actually prevent a

planned attack from happening or do you not -- or is it just --

MR. BOUCHER: I think we feel that the security measures that have been taken are adequate to prevent against the kind of attack that might have been anticipated, and that's --

QUESTION: So you are not aware of any actual arrests or kind of, you know, actions --

MR. BOUCHER: I hadn't checked into it at that level. You'd have to ask them in any case.

QUESTION: May I have one more, please?

I know it's an old story. But if Secretary ever made any statement or what are you thinking about that when the comments were made by the former Foreign Minister of India, Mr. Jaswant Singh, about the Secretary's taking credit in an interview and all that about, as far as most of the people are concerned in India and here, the Secretary was the one and the President, who played the key role as far as India-Pakistan's relations or the talks and dialogues were concerned. But Mr. Singh was saying that the Secretary was not the one or he made very unpleasant comments and all that. So do you think Secretary knows about this or what he thought about it?

MR. BOUCHER: I think we've discussed this at the briefing before. I stand by what we said, which is the Secretary's account was accurate and the Secretary does indeed know about the situation, yes.

QUESTION: Because Mr. Singh made it -- announced again after what you said, so that's why I'm saying this. Why all these things are going on when two countries are on the table talking and -- India and Pakistan -- and still all these negative comments?

MR. BOUCHER: All I can say is the Secretary gave an accurate account, and if you want to know why others are saying things, you'll have to ask them.

QUESTION: I'm sorry. This just popped into my head again. On the security threats, in Afghanistan a day or so ago, there was a Warden Message talking about information that you guys had that terrorists might try to infiltrate NGOs and other organizations, befriend staff and then use them, and then use their contacts to attack.

Do you have any evidence that this actually happened?

MR. BOUCHER: I don't know.

QUESTION: It came out yesterday.

MR. BOUCHER: Yeah, I don't know about that one.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. BOUCHER: Hold on. We've got one more in the back.

QUESTION: Mr. Boucher, in this coming the referendum in Skopje this Sunday, in case of instability, who will be in charge for the security of this state?

MR. BOUCHER: The Government of Macedonia is responsible for security.

QUESTION: Any involvement by U.S., NATO, any other force vis-à-vis to the area since you have a lot of forces --

MR. BOUCHER: I'm not going to speculate on instability. The United States is -- NATO and the European Union have helped out when the Macedonian Government felt it was appropriate and necessary for us to help out, but they have the responsibility there and I'm sure we'll continue to help them if it's necessary.

QUESTION: You asked me yesterday to get in touch with the European Union, who I did gladly. And they told me that they do not recognize FYROM as "Republic of Macedonia," as you told us yesterday more than 40 times, but only in those talks in New York City -- you are laughing, of course, it's a matter for laughing -- only if in New York City those talks are going to succeed.

Why the U.S. Government has decided to make that vice-versa because with this way that you decide yesterday, it totally as blow-up for the efforts in New York City under Matthew Nimetz.

MR. BOUCHER: For all the reasons that I explained yesterday. The simple answer to why.

QUESTION: Why your Ambassador to Greece, Tom Miller, what's necessary to brief first the leader of the opposition, George Papandreou, and not the Greek Government under Kostas Karamanlis?

MR. BOUCHER: I don't know that he did. You'd have to check with the Embassy as to who he reached and when he reached them.

QUESTION: Well, can you take this question because he has been advised to make those contacts on a diplomatic level because of the --

MR. BOUCHER: You'd have to check with the Embassy as far as when he was able to reach people in terms of the people that he wanted to talk to.

QUESTION: And also, Mr. Boucher, can you take this question on this map of the DOD, because *inter alia* sayings of which a diplomatic word is coming from the State Department, "Challenges have been made that the Macedonians originate from the Greeks in the south, the Bulgarians in the east, the Albanians in the west, and the Serbians in the north. The clearly Macedonian area occupies a sector of the original Macedonia that dates back to Alexander the Great and his being with country with regard to its history. It has become increasingly important. The Greeks contest the names,

the Bulgarians protest the language, and the Albanians, the Serbians threaten the survivability of this new nation. And also, however the Macedonians and Albanians are extremely passionate about the language, (inaudible) was given first to the ethnic groups."

Could you please take this question because I was told specifically this text, it was drafted by the Department of State and not by the Department of Defense?

MR. BOUCHER: I'm sorry, but I am not going to try to explain somebody else's Marine Corps Manual. And I'll stand by State Department products, but I'm not here to explain somebody else's product.

QUESTION: But Mr. Boucher, but the other day, on October 14, you said me specifically here, when I asked you if any Secretary is doing something, and specifically the Secretary of Defense, Mr. Rumsfeld, who was in Skopje on October 11th and made an agreement, signed actually the documents as Republic of Macedonia, who specifically told us yesterday. And you told us that you had the last word in many diplomatic exchanges vis-à-vis even to the Pentagon.

So in this particular case --

MR. BOUCHER: I'm sorry. But I can't characterize a Marine Corps Manual as a diplomatic exchange.

QUESTION: But about, but who drafted this?

MR. BOUCHER: I don't know.

QUESTION: No, no, I'm saying, it's a diplomat text. I was told it was a diplomat --

MR. BOUCHER: I'm sorry. I'm not here to explain a Marine Corps training manual.

QUESTION: But can you take this question --

MR. BOUCHER: No, I'm sorry. I won't.

QUESTION: Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 1:15 p.m.)

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