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## Press Briefing by National Security Advisor Steve Hadley

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MR. HADLEY: Good afternoon, everybody. I thought I'd talk a little bit about the President's day. He began early this morning. He had a meeting with his national security principals. For the first part of the meeting, he had on screen, Zal Khalilzad, General Casey, John Abizaid, to get a report on Iraq. Ambassador Khalilzad gave a update on the constitutional process, which is moving forward, in anticipation of this August 15 deadline to have a Iraqi constitution. He received a report from his commanders about the security situation and progress on the training of Iraqi security forces.

The principals then met and Secretary Rice updated the principals and the President on the status of the Iran nuclear issue and recent developments in IAEA Board of Governors in Vienna. She also talked about next steps with respect to the six-party talks dealing with the North Korea nuclear issue, and also talked about preparations for a Gaza disengagement, which will begin next week.

They then -- the President then met with Secretary Rumsfeld, the Vice President and other representatives from the Department of Defense to review current issues. He did that in the morning. There was a lunch and then he met with Secretary Rice and the State Department team. The purpose of that, it would allow the President to do -- to have a little more time and kind of take a step back, look at important issues for the Defense Department and for the State Department. He's done this every year and has found it useful.

In terms of the Defense briefings, they briefed the President on some of the things they are doing to manage the personnel, military and civilian personnel, in the Department of Defense. The President talked a little bit about that this morning -- things that they are doing to enhance the numbers of deployable units, for example, with respect to the Army; converting some billets from military to civilian; improving the procedures for calling up Guard and Reserve -- things of that nature.

There was then a good discussion about the QDR process -- the Quadrennial Defense Review -- the review that's done every four years of key defense issues. That is moving forward this year. The QDR will be completed at the same time that the budget -- that would be February of '06 -- so that the recommendations in the Quadrennial Defense Review can begin to be reflected in the '07 budget that would go up to Congress in February of '06. They talked to the President about some of the issues that they were addressing in that process.

And then, finally, there was a more specific discussion of some of the budget issues that are going to be presented to the Secretary of Defense and that he will be considering as part of the QDR process, but, more importantly, the budgetary process.

These, again, were not decision-making meetings. They were to give the President a better appreciation of the kinds of issues the Defense Department is grappling with, what the Secretary's thinking is on those issues, and what the thinking is of those who support him in that effort, and to get -- they, in turn, can get some indication from the President of his thoughts as they move forward.

There was then a lunch that involved both the Defense Department team and the State Department team, and that was a discussion of public diplomacy, the challenge that the country faces in getting a better understanding abroad of its policies, and some ideas that the State Department is considering about how to enhance the effectiveness of that effort.

And then, after lunch, there was a meeting that the President had with the State Department team, and it was really a review of a range of Middle East issues -- developments in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, a little bit more on developments in Iran and the like -- developments in the region, and then kind of a step-back review of where are we on the freedom agenda and advancing the cause of freedom in the Middle East which, as you know, the President thinks is a critical element in the long-term about winning the war of ideas that is at the heart of the war on terror, and also enhancing stability and progress in the Middle East.

It was a good day, a lot of back-and-forth. It really allowed the President to step back, ask some questions, interact with his two State and Defense teams, and I think it was a good day for all involved.

That's what the President's day was. I'd be glad to answer any questions you might have.

Q When he talks about rebalancing forces, I'm not quite sure I understand what that means exactly. Could you elaborate a little bit?

MR. HADLEY: He's obviously -- Secretary Rumsfeld and his people are better able to do that. One of the things it means is a determination of what kinds of missions should be in the Guard and Reserve, what kinds of missions should be in the active force. But it's also an effort to define what are the real missions that we need to do in the 21st century, and do we have the right priorities. And I think what they're discovering is that there's probably more people and emphasis in some areas, in some mission areas, and with some kinds of forces that are less important in the challenges we face in the 21st century. So it's one of these -- we need a little less of this and a little more of that.

And that's basically -- the other thing they've talked about, as you know, is to try and identify those missions that you really need military professionals to do, and those missions and activities that, in fact, civilians could do just as well, and probably more cheaply. And so it is an effort, then, to rebalance the force both within combat and non-combat, within military and civilian, within active and Guard and Reserve, to have the force more tailored to the challenges of the 21st century.

Q Is this an effort to shorten deployments in Iraq, to move more people in and out of there?

MR. HADLEY: That wasn't talked about. One of the things they are trying to do is to get more predictability in the call-ups for the Guard and Reserve so that people, their families, their employers can plan. And that is something that they've improved on, and are going to continue to do, to make improvements on.

Q He talked a little bit about how he was pretty certain that the constitution charter would be actually drafted by Monday. How could he be so sure about that since it's only a couple of days away? And can you expand a little bit more on the federalism -- the problems they were dealing with the federalism, and there was one other -- religious -- yes, role of religion?

MR. HADLEY: She asked, why could you be confident that the deadline of August 15th will be met, and what's the status on issues about religion and federalism.

There's been a lot of work done. There has been a drafting committee involving Sunni, Kurds and Shia that have produced a draft. There's actually several drafts around, but they are trying to focus on specific language. But there are probably six or eight issues that are kind of issues of principle which are well understood, and the options under each have sort of been well fleshed out. And they've now put together a small group of leaders from the various communities to try and address in a systematic way those issues. And they're literally meeting around the clock. And everybody knows the issues, everybody knows what the options are. There's some efforts to bridge some compromise. And I think their belief is, once they can get those leaders to agree on a compromise, that turning it into text is not going to be a particularly difficult problem.

Secondly, they have been working these issues for a while, and I think Ambassador Khalilzad believes that some of the compromises are coming forward. And what they're really -- I think is going on is a sort -- on some of those issues, they're going to go back to agreed language that was in the transitional administrative law. On some of those issues, there's a compromise around -- it looks like it can get a following from all three communities. And on some issues, they really don't need to be decided now in terms of a constitution and there will be an opportunity to address them later.

So Zal's view is that everybody understands the urgency of coming out with a draft by August 15, so we can keep the schedule of getting it out in the country. One of the things he briefed us on was the numbers of forums and discussion sessions and the degree of public participation already in the debate over the constitution. And that's a very important part of making sure that any constitution coming out of this process is widely supported in the country and will, therefore, pass on the referendum on October 15th. So there's the desire to keep the schedule which was set out in the transitional administrative law, and that's one of the things that's keeping them focused on trying to get the August 15th date so they can keep on this schedule of events. And his assessment is, he's optimistic that they will be able to do that.

Q Is it bad if they don't? What if they don't?

MR. HADLEY: Well, one of the things -- deadlines have a very, sort of, useful forcing function to force

people to compromise. And we've seen that with respect to Afghanistan; we've seen that in early dates when we had discussions about slipping election dates because preparations were going to take a while. And I think the President's view has generally been stick to the deadline; it has a wonderful way of getting people to be serious and bring the negotiations to a close.

And secondly, the other reason, of course, to do it is to keep on the political schedule that is in the transitional administrative law, because they're going to need, then, a couple months to get the constitution out to Iraqis to allow reasonable time for debate and discussion so that people can do the referendum on the 15th of October.

I think he's -- like any of these documents, when you get a document up there, will probably be some technical changes that need to be done afterwards. This is true with legislation in Congress all the time. But at this point, the parties, themselves, the Iraqis have decided they want to meet the August 15 deadline. As you know, they passed up an opportunity, which they could have had under the transitional administrative law, on August 1 to extend it for another six months. And they decided not to do that, and stick with the TAL. And, of course, we support that decision. And the Ambassador is being very active to try and facilitate the dialogue among the leaders of the communities to try and come up with a document by August 15th.

Robert.

Q What did Karen Hughes have to say about public diplomacy? Did she have any new ideas, and how is she going to approach her job in the State Department?

MR. HADLEY: She's got a lot of ideas, a lot of energy, and I don't want to scoop her on those. I can give you some of the things that she has been thinking about. One thing she's done already is she's done a lot of listening and reading. There have been a lot of reports over the last two or three years on public diplomacy. She has mined those for good ideas. She's been a lot of -- doing a lot of discussion with ambassadors overseas and people in the State Department.

And the kinds of issues that she's thinking about are, one, what kind of priority does public diplomacy have in the minds of ambassadors and in the minds of foreign service professionals? Do they see this as a really important part of the war, the role for our diplomatic personnel? And how do we raise the profile and importance of that issue?

Secondly, some of these issues really need to be done on a regional basis because we're into regional communication, Mark, that's -- and regional challenges. And so one of the questions is, how can we get our embassies in the field to work together more closely on developing public diplomacy themes.

Third issue is how do we react more promptly and flexibly when stories get out that get, then, picked up and distorted in ways that hurt our country; how can we, in a more active and prompt way, deal with that issue. And finally, I think it's partly in the wake of the -- establishment of USIA, how do we really show to the men and women in our Foreign Service that this is a respected career path, this is an important part of the mission.

So she's struggling with all of those issues -- how much should we do through the government; how much should we do in public-private partnerships; how much do you really have to leave to the private sector and to private citizens to do; what is the -- and finally, how can we do a better job of treating public diplomacy not just as a State Department issue, but much more as a governmental-wide issue, since we have public affairs office in all the major departments. How can we make sure we have a more coordinated effort in advancing the interests of the country.

She's got a good handle on the issues. She had a good discussion. I got some -- she has a number of ideas, and I think she'll be putting them together, in terms of a plan that she and the Secretary of State will bring to the President, and then will try and get out through the interagency.

Q Steve, has the President made clear to Rumsfeld and Myers that he prefers they not use euphemisms for the word "war"? He's not shy about saying the U.S. is a nation at war.

MR. HADLEY: I think you saw the President, today, standing up in front of his national security team, making very clear it's a war on terrorism, how he sees it. You know, everybody has heard it and I think there's actually no disagreement that there's a war on terrorism. It is a terribly important struggle for the United States. And there is obviously -- and to be successful, we have to integrate all elements of national power. And part of that is, obviously, military action against terrorists; and part of it is also, of course, progress in the war of ideas, in spreading democracy and freedom.

Everybody knows that's part of the war on terror, but nobody is under any illusions that it is a war. All you have to do is look at the litany of death and carnage that has occurred before and after 9/11. And, of course, the American people are under no misapprehension about that.

Q Was the President at all miffed when in recent weeks Secretary Rumsfeld and General Myers keep using euphemisms for that word?

MR. HADLEY: Look, the President today and over the last two weeks has made very clear how he sees it. And this is a team that -- Secretary Rumsfeld and General Myers don't need any reminder that there's a war going on. And the President made very clear how the issue needs to be framed for the American people, and that's how it's going to be framed.

Q Steve, what was the thinking on Iran? We've heard some disturbing information from Secretary Rumsfeld this week about very sophisticated, powerful bombs being smuggled from Iran into Iraq. We've seen Iran now restart uranium enrichment. We've seen Iran say that the Paris Accord is now defunct. The IAEA has passed a resolution condemning the activities and calling for more talks. What kind of communications, either directly or through channels, has the U.S. government had with Iran about its activities and along the border with Iraq? And is there any kind of a connection that might be drawn between the posture the Iranian government takes in both areas?

MR. HADLEY: The question was about Iran, what's going on

-- what's happening on the nuclear front and what's happening on reports of Iran -- perhaps, let me put it this way, weapons coming across the border from Iran into Iraq and are they related.

I don't see any relationship between the two. I think where we are on the nuclear issue in terms of Iran is this: They have -- they have indicated and taken steps to begin the conversion. They have not done anything on reprocessing or enrichment; they have done something on conversion. They have asked the IAEA to remove the seals and they have removed the seals. It is still being done under IAEA observation. But the EU 3 have taken the position, and we agree with it, that that activity is inconsistent with the Paris Accord and is one of the things that the Iranians agreed to freeze or suspend as part of that Paris Accord. And so they are in violation of that Paris Accord, and that is what the EU 3 has said.

The Board of Governors adopted a resolution calling on the Iranians to come back into compliance with the Paris Accord, to suspend any further conversion activity. They've called it a matter of great seriousness. They've asked the Director General to make a report on the 3rd of September. And there is an opportunity for Iran to do what the EU 3 and we, and I think most of the Board of Governors hope they will do, which is come back into compliance, stop the conversion activity, and then to resume discussions and negotiations with the EU 3 about a more permanent arrangement.

And it's interesting that while they have resumed this conversion activity, they have still done it under IAEA supervision. And we had the President of Iran indicating that they would have some ideas and that there would be further negotiations. We think that is the right step, to have -- for Iran to come back into compliance with the Paris Accord, and to resume the negotiations and discussions with the EU 3. We've made that clear publicly. We, of course, have our ambassador at the IAEA. He has said that in the IAEA discussions. So we have, I think, good communication with the Iranians on that issue.

In terms of the border issue with Iraq, obviously, we and the Iraqis monitor closely the activities of Iranian representatives in Iraq. We try and ensure that from both of the borders -- the border that Iraq has with Syria and the border it has with Iran -- that there are not flows of fighters or armament or anything else that will make the situation in Iraq more difficult. Iraqis have called on both Syria and Iran to support the democratic process and to support their efforts to defeat the terrorists in Iraq by ensuring that there isn't any of this activity going across their borders.

We've been very concerned about Syria as a staging area for foreign fighters coming into Iraq. We have raised this issue repeatedly with the Syrians. We have been monitoring, and the Iraqis have been monitoring, the Iranian border, and the concern is that there are -- there may be IEDs and other munitions showing up that seem to have a footprint similar to that of devices used by groups that have historically had Iranian support. That's the concern we have.

And whether the Iranian government is directly involved, we don't know. But it's a concern we've had. We've raised it publicly. Other allies in the coalition have raised it publicly, and the Iraqis are now aware of it, and they've indicated that they will look into, as well.

But we're all in agreement that Iran and Syria need to control their borders and make sure that there is nothing going across those borders that will compound the security situation in Iraq and lead to not only coalition forces and Americans being at risk and killed, but also, of course, Iraqis, because scores of Iraqis are dying. They are the principal victims of this terrorism.

Q -- IEDs, improvised explosive devices, but Rumsfeld talked about very powerful, sophisticated, professionally manufactured devices. And you say groups that have had support from Iran -- are you suggesting a distinction between Iran and the government itself? Is it a suspicion that these are coming from terrorist organizations that are somehow linked?

MR. HADLEY: We don't know. We're looking into it. And under the heading of IEDs, there's a wide range of them, from very simple devices to more sophisticated. And of course, the ones you're more concerned about are the more sophisticated devices because they tend to be more effective and more lethal.

Q Steve, before you leave, can you tell us about your meeting last Saturday with Mrs. Sheehan and what you told the President about it?

MR. HADLEY: Sure. Joe Hagin and I were pleased that Mrs. Sheehan met with us. We expressed our condolences to her and her family and our sympathy for her loss. We told her that we wanted to hear what she had to say and hear her views. And she expressed those views. She has said to the public she thinks that the war is wrong and should be ended and the troops should come home now. And obviously, as the President said today, he respects her right to have those views -- respects them, understands they are deeply felt, but believes they're wrong, and that what we're doing in Iraq is terribly important for the security of our country in the long-term. And he just respectfully disagrees.

As you know, he's very sensitive to the -- the loss that is being sustained by families who have sons and daughters, husbands and wives who are being killed or injured in Iraq. He meets with -- he's met with families of over 200 of the fallen. As you know, he meets at Walter Reed and elsewhere with those that are injured. He understands very clearly the cost in terms of lives and pain that Americans are -- are feeling. But he believes that they are engaged in a noble cause and it's terribly important for the safety and security of our country. And he respects her views, but respectfully disagrees.

That's all I've got. Thanks a lot.

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