



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
November 29, 2004

Press Briefing by Scott McClellan

The James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

- [Musharraf visit](#)
- [Canada trip](#)
- [Iraq](#)
- [Same-sex marriage](#)
- [Intelligence reform](#)
- [Cabinet/nominations](#)
 - [Reference B](#)
 - [Reference C](#)
 - [Reference D](#)
- [Assassination attempt](#)
- [India-Pakistan](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)
- [Iran](#)
- [Middle East](#)
- [Bahrain](#)



12:56 P.M. EST

MR. McCLELLAN: Good afternoon. Welcome back, everybody; hope everyone had great holidays. Let me begin with one announcement, and then I want to go over the schedule for Canada , and I'll be glad to take questions after that.

The President looks forward to welcoming **President Musharraf of Pakistan** to the White House on December 4th. This will be an opportunity for the two Presidents to continue discussing the war on terrorism and their long-term vision for U.S.-Pakistan relations.

The President tomorrow will **travel to Canada** for an official working visit. He will return on Wednesday. The President begins the visit in Ottawa . His Ottawa schedule will be as follows. He will meet with the Governor General. Then he will participate in bilateral meetings with Prime Minister Martin and selected ministers. Following that, there will be a working lunch with the Prime Minister and his staff. Following the lunch, there will be a joint press availability with the President and the Prime Minister. And then the President will participate in a tour of the National Archives Preservation Center .

This is Canada 's National Archives and an important repository for North American historical documents and cultural heritage.

Following that, the President will meet with the leader of the Official Opposition, Stephen Harper. Then he will participate that evening in a social dinner hosted by the Prime Minister at the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

The following day, on Wednesday, December 1st, the President travels to Halifax to deliver a speech at Pier 21. Halifax and other maritime provinces received nearly 33,000 Americans stranded following the September 11th attacks. This will be an opportunity for the President to personally thank Canadians for helping those Americans who were stranded. It will also be an opportunity to continue to talk about the war on terrorism and our shared commitment to advancing democracy and expanding prosperity and opportunity.

The President has met with Prime Minister Martin on four occasions: in Mexico , at the Monterrey Summit of the Americas ; in Washington ; at Sea Island ; and most recently in Santiago . This will be the first meeting in Canada, and it will be an opportunity to build upon our successful efforts to fight terrorism and enhance the security of our two countries while expanding trade and economic opportunity. It will also be an opportunity to continue to talk about ways to strengthen democracy at home in our own hemisphere and working to expand democracy abroad.

And that is all I have. With that, I will be glad to take your questions.

Q Scott, will you announce any specific agreements during their meeting tomorrow?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, they talked about a number of issues recently in Santiago. I expect they'll talk more at length on those issues, some of which I mentioned in general terms. But let's let those meetings take place, and then you'll hear from the two leaders, themselves.

Q The beef dispute, do you see it getting resolved tomorrow?

MR. McCLELLAN: Right, and I expect that's something that they will talk about. There's a rule-making process that we have in place. They touched on it in their most recent meeting. I expect they'll talk about it a little more in Canada . But we have a rule-making process that we're following. Obviously, our first and most important priority is to make sure that our food supply is safe for the American people.

Q The Canadians are going to serve the President Canadian beef for dinner. Is he eating it?
(Laughter.)

MR. McCLELLAN: I haven't seen -- no, I understand. I have not seen the menu for the social dinner. But the President looks forward to going there and looks forward to participating in the dinner with Prime Minister Martin. Again, I haven't seen the menu, so I couldn't confirm that that's accurate or not.

Helen, go ahead.

Q Why are we killing people in **Iraq** ? There are many men, women and children being killed there. I mean, what is the reason we are there, killing people, continuing. It's outrageous.

MR. McCLELLAN: The reason we are there is the same reason the international community is, is united in helping Iraq -- the international community is united in helping Iraq move forward on a free and peaceful and democratic future. I think

you can look to the recent commitments from the United Nations, from the European Union, from the recent meetings in Sharm el-Sheikh last week, there is a united front from the international community in working together to help the Iraqi people realize a free and peaceful future. There are terrorists and other Saddam loyalists who continue to seek to derail that transition to democracy, but they will --

Q They are fighting for their own country.

MR. McCLELLAN: -- they will not prevail. And we are there to partner with the Iraqi people as they work to realize a better future, one that stands in stark contrast to the past of Saddam Hussein and his brutal regime.

Go ahead Terry. Let me go to Terry, and then I'll come to you, David.

Q The United States Supreme Court declined to take the appeal from the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts ruling that allowed for **same-sex** couples to get married in Massachusetts . What's the President's reaction to that?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I think that the President continues to emphasize the importance of moving forward on a constitutional amendment that would allow the people's voice to be heard and not allow this issue to be decided by activist judges or local officials who seek to redefine what is a sacred institution. The American people strongly support protecting the sanctity of marriage. I think you can look to the recent elections in 11 states to see the kind of broad support there is for protecting the sacred institution.

And the President remains firmly committed to moving forward on a constitutional amendment that would allow the voice of the people to be heard and involve states in this process. And that's different from allowing the activist judges to redefine this without the people's voice being heard.

Q But the activist -- the judges of the United States Supreme Court, the Justices just said this is something for the states, that we aren't going to get involved in this. And 11 states are doing it. Why does the President want --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I think -- I don't think that they were looking at it from the federal law perspective, but looking at it from the state law perspective of the Massachusetts court. So we need to separate those out. You do have the Defense of Marriage Act in place, which the President strongly

supported. There is some question of whether or not that will be upheld over time. And the President believes that this is an enduring institution in our society. That's why he has fought to move forward on a constitutional process that would allow the states and the people in those states to be involved in this decision.

Q But I'm just wondering why the President thinks that federal judges are going to overturn, or "federalize" the Massachusetts decision to allow same-sex couples to get married. One of the arguments the President made was that a federal court might get involved. Isn't this a strong signal from the highest federal court that this is a matter reserved to states?

MR. McCLELLAN: I don't think I would necessarily look at it that way. Again, I think they were looking at it from the state law perspective, not the federal law perspective. It was not something brought under the Defense of Marriage Act.

Q And so the President's position -- just to get this right -- is that if a state wants to decide through a majority vote that it will allow for same-sex marriages, the President wants to have the federal government smash that down and make sure that no state can decide that, right?

MR. McCLELLAN: No, I think that you're talking about what activist judges are doing right now. The activist judges are seeking to redefine marriage for the rest of society, and the people's voice is not being heard in this process. That's why the President is committed to moving forward with Congress on a constitutional amendment that would protect the sanctity of marriage and allow the people's voice to be heard in this important debate facing our society.

Q But it would only allow -- it would give victory to the people who support that definition of marriage, wouldn't it? Because if the state --

MR. McCLELLAN: There are 11 states that recently voted on this very issue, and they voted to ban same-sex marriages overwhelmingly in those states. And I think if you look at any number of indications, there is overwhelming support across the United States for protecting the sanctity of marriage.

Q Just to get this straight. The President does not want to allow the people of a state to decide to allow for gay marriage. In other words, he wants a federal constitutional amendment that would stop a majority in the state --

MR. McCLELLAN: He supports the constitutional amendment --

Q -- from voting.

MR. McCLELLAN: -- and the constitutional process would allow the state's voice to be heard.

David, sorry, go ahead.

Q There are just days left before Congress adjourns, and hanging in the balance is this **intelligence reform bill** . Can you say specifically what the President intends to say or do or have his surrogates say, who are lobbying on this, say or do to salvage this bill?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, you heard directly from the President within the last couple of weeks. The President made it very clear he wants to get this legislation passed. He said, I want to get it done, I look forward to getting back to Washington and working with members to pass this important legislation. This legislation builds upon the many steps we have already taken to strengthen our intelligence capabilities and better protect the American people since September 11th.

We've already acted on 36 of 41 of the recommendations from the 9/11 Commission.

The 9/11 Commission put forward some other recommendations that require congressional action, most importantly, a strong national intelligence director that has full budget authority. And the President is firmly committed to getting this legislation passed and done as quickly as possible.

He has talked with some congressional leaders about this in recent weeks. Congress made some important progress when they returned to Washington a couple of weeks ago. They were only here for a week and they reached -- the conference committee reached an agreement on a number of issues. And now it's time to get this passed by the entire Congress. And the President will be continuing to reach out to members. There's a Republican congressional retreat going on tomorrow and the next day; senior members of the White House staff will be attending that retreat and talking with leaders about how we can move forward, and do so quickly. The President will also be sending a letter up to Congress later this week where he will, again, make very clear his views on this legislation.

Q But if the President wants this so badly -- there were the votes on the House floor and the Senate floor, if you pulled over some Democrats, to get this passed, and yet it was blocked by committee chairmen as part of the Republican caucus. If he really wanted to get this done, couldn't he get those members of his own party in line and get the necessary support from the Democratic Party and get it done?

MR. McCLELLAN: That's why the President is continuing to call on members to act on this legislation and act on it as quickly as possible. The House did not adjourn, they recessed until December 6th. The Speaker, the Majority Leader and other leaders, members of the conference committee, all said that they were going to continue working this matter. We're going to continue working very closely with them. The President is going to continue to urge action on this legislation and he was disappointed that it was not able to be completed when they previously came back to Washington . But we'll continue reaching out in this time period between now and December 6th to resolve any remaining differences and get this legislation passed.

Q But there is the appearance that this President, who claimed so much political capital through his reelection, is allowing House Republicans to have the upper hand here on a measure that he said was so vitally important in the course of the campaign.

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, most people pronounced this legislation dead after Congress recessed for the

election period. And we've seen that significant progress has been made since that time period. Now it's time to take that final step and get it passed, and the President is going to continue pushing it forward.

Q What about the -- the substance of one of the disputes -- Congressman Hunter's concern that the Defense Department would not be able to control the tasking of satellites that would help people who are actually in combat. Is there a solution to that problem? Do you think Mr. Hunter's objections should not hold sway here, or is there a real problem and you have a solution to it?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, those are issues that have been raised previously. We've looked at all those issues. The President would never sign legislation that would harm our troops or hurt our troops in any way. And the President believes that this is important legislation that will further strengthen our intelligence operations and gathering and analysis capabilities, and it's important that we move forward on this legislation. Those are issues that we looked at previously. There were some issues that were raised as we were looking at this legislation. And we'll continue working with Congressman Hunter, Speaker Hastert, Leader Frist, Senator Collins and others to get this legislation moving forward again.

Q What was your judgment on that particular issue? Did you decide that it was not a threat and that the Defense Department did not need to have control --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, we actually spelled out our views in our statement of administration policy that we sent out publicly, as well as a letter to members of Congress stating our views on those issues. Again, those are issues that we looked at. The President would never sign legislation that he believes that would put our troops in harm's -- in any state of harm.

Q So you're saying Congressman Hunter's concerns are misplaced?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, again, he's expressed his views, you've heard what our views are, and now we're going to continue working with congressional leaders to get it moving forward again.

Q And the President's letter -- what does he intend to say? I mean, he's made his argument. It does not seem to have mattered very much to the key members of the House conference committee. What other argument can he make?

MR. McCLELLAN: I think there's -- one, I think that there is strong support for this intelligence reform legislation that is before Congress. There is strong support within Congress. There are some issues that have been raised by certain leaders that they would like to address further. We'll be talking with them about that. We'll also be making it very clear what our views are on some of those issues that remain.

But, again, we've made significant progress from where we were when Congress returned for that one-week time period to where we are today. And the President remains firmly committed, like leaders of Congress, to working this issue and seeing it through to passage.

MR. McCLELLAN: Go ahead, Terry. And then I'll come back to you.

Q The President has named a **new Commerce Secretary** . He's accepted the resignation of his chief economics advisor. Does he see a need for further changes in his economic team?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I don't think you should look at it as any teams that the President is looking at. The President is looking at his -- as any particular, specific team. The President is looking at his entire team for a second term. We're moving into a second term, and I think over the course of history you've seen this happen before. The President is the one who ultimately makes the decisions about the make-up of his team. And we have a great team in place that has done an outstanding job over the course of the first term to help the President implement his agenda.

You mentioned the economic team. The economic team has done a tremendous job to get this economy growing stronger and creating jobs. We've seen significant job creation over the course of the last year because of the work of the economic team to help implement the policies the President outlined. And there is a Washington , D.C. speculation game that goes on in this town, and this is the time period we're in right now. I fully recognize that, you all recognize that. It's not always fun for either of us. But it's not something I'm going to participate in from this podium.

The President is continuing to move forward on that transition process and make decisions. There are decisions that individual members of his team are making, as well. Some of these members have served for a lengthy period of time. We have had a Cabinet that has been in place for quite some time -- many members of that Cabinet, I should say, longer than previous administrations. And the President appreciates their great work. We'll continue visiting with those members of his Cabinet and make announcements as warranted.

Q Does the different set of challenges for the second term require different talents than you had in the first term?

MR. McCLELLAN: It could, it could very well. It would depend on the issues you're talking about. But those are things that you look at during the transition process, and what is the best team to have in place to help you move forward on those priorities.

Q Are you saying that reports over the last two weeks that **Treasury Secretary John Snow** has been asked to leave are in error?

MR. McCLELLAN: Again, and I've said this repeatedly, I know that you all are going to get into individual names and positions. I'm not going to do that. That's part of the Washington , D.C. speculation game. I would point out that Secretary Snow has been a valuable member of the President's team, and a valuable member of his economic team. We appreciate all that he is doing. And as I said, the President is looking at the team for his second term, and when we have announcements to make, we will do so at that time. But I'm not going to try to get into speculation about it. The process is continuing to move forward. It's not complete, at this point. And the President will make announcements in due course.

Q If I were to write for my Wall Street audience that Snow is going to stay, would that be speculation?

MR. McCLELLAN: Again, you're asking me to get into this process. When there are announcements to make, we will make those announcements. I would be careful of what you read, in terms of speculation. I've seen a lot of speculation out there, some of which is not correct.

Q That's not really what we're looking for, Scott.

MR. McCLELLAN: You've had your turn.

Q Of the four nominations or appointments the President has made, two have been Hispanics. Is this a way of saying thank you for the 44 percent vote that he got?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, look, the President --

Q Or a way of saying "please." (Laughter.)

MR. McCLELLAN: The President believes in appointing the best person to each position. Carlos Gutierrez, who he announced today for the Secretary -- to be the nominee to be the Secretary of the Commerce is someone who is widely respected within the business community and has a proven record of leadership on economic issues. He's someone who is a great success story. And the President appointed him because he felt he was the best person for this position.

The President -- you mentioned another position, Judge Gonzales, that is someone who has been a long-time friend and trusted advisor. And the President believes he would make an exemplary Attorney General. But the President has appointed people of diversity within his Cabinet. And I think you can look and see that for yourselves. It so happens that those are the best people for the positions in the President's mind.

Q Scott, could I ask you another question? I know the Secret Service won't be commenting, but the Colombian government practically said there was an **attempted assassination** taking place in Cartagena when President Bush stopped over. Does the White House have any comment whatsoever?

MR. McCLELLAN: Yes, I saw those reports. And I would say that I would leave any discussion of alleged threats on the President to the Secret Service to discuss. I would also point out that the Secret Service does an outstanding job and we have full confidence in the President's protective detail and the job that they do. We worked closely with Colombian authorities and security forces to make sure that there is a safe and secure trip. And it was a great trip. The President was pleased to go to Cartagena .

Q Back on the **transition and the changes in the Cabinet** . This is not speculation. The First Lady said, just a couple of hours ago, that there will be "a lot" of changes. What does that "a lot" mean, and how --

MR. McCLELLAN: That's interesting. The President said there would be changes a few weeks ago.

Q But she said, "a lot."

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, there have been some changes made. And, again, I point out that --

Q She said, "a lot."

MR. McCLELLAN: April, the President said there would be changes. I don't know what your question is.

Q The question is, what are these, "a lot" of changes, and how long will this "a lot" go on for? Will it go on beyond inauguration? I mean, you say it's a process. How long is this process?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, he's moving forward in a quick and deliberate manner. There's not a time frame put on it, as I discussed a week ago when we were all here. The President is looking at his team and looking at the makeup of his team for a second term. He's continuing to make decisions. There continue to be conversations with members of his team to see what their thoughts are, as well.

Q And also, back on Jacobo, you can't help but think about legacy as you're seeing who is now going to be appointed or nominated to be heads of some of these departments. You're seeing minorities, you're seeing Cuban Americans, you're seeing African Americans, you're seeing Latino Americans. This administration has been known to be a very -- the most diverse Republican administration. Is this part of the President's legacy? Is he trying to build more upon that or go beyond what he's already done?

MR. McCLELLAN: The President, as I said, is someone who appoints the best person for the positions. And he's also proud of the diversity within his team. He believes we should welcome diversity within the administration. And he has. He has a proven record of appointing a diversity of individuals to various positions. But these individuals, I would point out, are the people that he believes are the best person to fill those positions. And they have done an outstanding job, all of the members of his team.

Q I have a personal comment first, before my question. It was a great message, Thanksgiving message from the President. Also, pardoning one turkey in the White House. But I hope next year thanking the, whatever, God, or (inaudible) or the turkey, I hope that next year he will pardon all the turkeys for one day, at least nobody will eat turkey.

My question is that President Musharraf is again coming to Washington --

MR. McCLELLAN: It was a stand-in, so he really pardoned two. (Laughter.)

Q But I hope next year all will be pardoned for a day.

Q But he did eat turkey, right?

MR. McCLELLAN: What's your question?

Q My question is, **India and Pakistan** are thankful to President Bush for bringing them on the table, negotiating table and peace in the region. But I see a report here now in India Globe that U.S. is offering sophisticated weapons to both countries, India and Pakistan , and U.S. is offering more to India now. On the one hand, we are trying to bring peace between two countries, on the other hand, we are selling sophisticated weapons to both countries because those weapons will be used against each other, as history shows in the past. So what will President claim now when President Musharraf comes in the White House that -- how this peace negotiation will continue?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, first of all, there has been a lot of progress made to reduce tension in the region. There have been positive steps being taken by India and by Pakistan to reduce the tension in the area. Secretary Powell has been very involved in those efforts for quite some time. It's something the President talks directly with the two leaders of those two countries about on a fairly regular basis. These are issues that come up in their discussions and in their meetings. And the President will continue to talk with them about those issues.

We are also working with these countries to wage a global war on terrorism. There are many common security challenges that we face in the 21st century. And there are a lot of ways we can work together to enhance security for all civilized countries in the world. And that's what the President will continue to do.

Certainly, when it comes to the sharing and gathering of intelligence, we've worked very closely with Pakistan on those issues. And it has led to some real results.

Q And just to follow that, the President of Pakistan has announced that they are withdrawing troops hunting Osama bin Laden. Is the President going to ask Mr. Musharraf to -- that he has not given up on Osama bin Laden?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, again, we work very closely together in the global war on terrorism. And we work together to go after those al Qaeda member and Taliban remnants who remain in that Pakistan-Afghanistan area, those are issues we discuss very closely with Pakistan. And we have a very good, cooperative working relationship to address those security challenges and to go after those terrorists.

Q Just one other question on diversity. Clearly, there has been when it comes to race and ethnicity. Can we expect any philosophical diversity in the weeks ahead in the **Bush Cabinet** ?

MR. McCLELLAN: As opposed to?

Q The lack thereof? (Laughter.)

MR. McCLELLAN: I think the President -- the President has had that throughout this administration.

You go back to the President's press conference he had right after the election. And he talked about how he wants strong-willed people around him who have broad experience and can come into the Oval Office and tell him what he needs to know, not what he wants to hear. And the President has always been someone who welcomes a wide diversity of views. And you can go back and look over the course of his leadership in Texas , to the course of his leadership here in Washington , D.C. And he's someone who wants members of his team to express their views clearly and strongly. And he has had a very strong team in place. He will continue to have a strong team in place as we move forward on a second term. But he welcomes a diversity of views. And that's what he expects from members of his Cabinet.

Once the decision is made, the President believes it's important that we all work together to implement that decision.

Q Scott, on **Northern Ireland** ?

MR. McCLELLAN: Go ahead.

Q Could you please tell us what the President said to Gerry Adams? And other than using his good office, what can the President do to move forward the Northern Ireland situation?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, he'll stay in touch with leaders in the area on the peace process. The President, when he spoke with Mr. Adams, expressed the same thing that he did to Dr. Paisley last week. The President talked about the importance of moving forward on the peace process, and moving forward on the agreement that was proposed by Prime Minister Blair and Prime Minister Ahern. The President said last Friday that he was willing to do his part to help move that process forward. And he urged both these individuals to provide the kind of leadership needed to move forward on the process and get it done.

Q Is there any need for accelerated U.S. mediation in the Northern Ireland situation?

MR. McCLELLAN: There's nothing else, I think, to add at this point. I mean, you've got leaders like Prime Minister Ahern and Prime Minister Blair who are working very closely on this issue. We stay in close contact with them on the peace process, and the President said he wants to do his part to help move it forward. And that's why he was making these calls to these two individuals.

Q Two calls to each of them, or one call to --

MR. McCLELLAN: No, he spoke to Dr. Paisley last Friday, I believe, and then Mr. Adams yesterday, when we were leaving Texas .

Q One time or two times to Gerry Adams.

MR. McCLELLAN: One. It was one to each of them.

Q What is the White House on the negotiations with **Iran** over nuclear matters?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, we appreciate and welcome the efforts of our European friends to get Iran to stop its enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, and stop its nuclear weapons activities. What's important and critical now is the implementation and verification. There's a verification process in place. We will see over time if Iran is firmly committed to complying fully with its commitments. We have seen over the course of the last year-and-a-half that Iran has failed to comply time and again with their commitments. And we hope that the international community -- we hope and believe the international community will remain resolute in making sure that Iran abides by its commitments.

Q Do you have any objections or reservations about the current agreement they have and the fact that they will not have on-site monitoring of the nuclear reactor research efforts, but rather just cameras and so forth?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, there is a verification process in place, and we expect Iran to fully comply with that verification process, with the IAEA, as they continue to verify the implementation of the agreement by Iran . The international community is speaking very clearly with one voice. We are all concerned about Iran 's intent on moving forward on nuclear weapons. That's why the European 3, as they are referred to, worked to get Iran to come into compliance with their commitments.

As I said, Iran has time and time again deceived and denied -- deceived the international community, and we will see over the course of time through the verification process if they are fully complying now with their commitments. And we have long said that noncompliance by Iran , which they've shown over time, is an issue that should be looked at by the United Nations Security Council. That has been our position for quite some time. But you now have an agreement in place, a verification process to make sure that Iran abides by that agreement, and we will see over the course of time.

Q So I gather from what you're saying that even though you have always thought it should be taken to the Security Council, that now that there is an agreement in place, you will wait to see if Iran actually complies with the details of that agreement before pushing the issue before the U.N. Security Council?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, we always reserve the right as a member of the Security Council to take that matter to the Security Council. I think we've made our views very clear about Iran 's noncompliance with its commitments. What's important now is that there is a strong verification process in place to make sure Iran is fully complying with its commitments. So we will continue to look at the verification process. If there are violations of those agreements, or noncompliance with those agreements, then that matter will be reported back to the IAEA members to consider additional action.

Q Until then --

MR. McCLELLAN: But we stay in close contact with our European friends, the British, the Germans and the French, on this issue. We appreciate all their efforts to get this agreement in place and to get a verification process in place.

Q But, just to be clear, until there is movement one way or the other, until they comply or don't comply, you don't really intend to take any further action?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I don't think we take things off the table, Jim.

Q Scott, to follow on that a little bit. The administration had sought, you know, stronger measures. Does it consider this agreement to be workable going forward, in a practical sense --

MR. McCLELLAN: It would depend on the verification. As I said, implementation and verification is critical. And that's what we'll be watching. We'll be watching to see if Iran fully complies. And it's important that the international community continue to be vigilant in making sure that Iran fully complies with its commitments.

Q Scott, a two-part. When Governor Bush was running against Vice President Gore, both The Washington Times and World --

MR. McCLELLAN: Can we make this one-part, because there are a lot of hands up there in back, and I'm trying to keep this moving.

Q But they had six parts. And just -- two questions, two quick ones.

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, let's go to the questions, and not the statements.

Q They quoted Mr. Bush as saying, for many years the Boy Scouts have conducted jamborees and other events on public lands and provided thousands of volunteer hours to help maintain our national parks. I hope that President Clinton and Vice President Gore respect the role the Boy Scouts play in our society; I will not allow them to be shut out of federal lands. And my question, has the President, in any degree, changed his mind on this issue, to the point that as Commander-in-Chief he will not resist the ACLU, which wants the Boy Scouts banned because they believe in God?

MR. McCLELLAN: The President's views are pretty clear on this issue, and his view that the Boy Scouts are a private organization. I think the President has spoken to this issue previously. I don't have anything else to add to that at this point.

Q Since the [new head of the PLO](#), Mahmoud Abbas, is not only a denier of the holocaust, but an advocate of the alleged right of return of all Arabs who left Israel in 1948, and he's met with Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and they are both on our country's list of terrorists -- and my question, doesn't the President oppose all of these Abbas positions, and wish that still Secretary Powell had, as well, in his Jericho press conference on November the --

MR. McCLELLAN: The President thinks it's important to end terrorism in the region. I think he's spoken very clearly about that. He also believes it's important to help the Palestinian people move forward and put the institutions into place that are necessary for a viable, democratic state to emerge, because if you have those institutions in place, the leaders will emerge to fill those positions.

Q When have the leaders ever done anything from the PA? When have they ever done anything?

MR. McCLELLAN: If you're going to make comments, that's fine -- you've heard the President's views on this, Les. We can sit here and shout over each other, or you can ask the questions, and I can give you our response. I'm going to keep moving for now.

Go ahead, over here.

Q Is the White House concerned about human rights in **Bahrain** , especially when it comes to political prisoners and the Shiite? And will the President discuss this issue with the King today?

MR. McCLELLAN: The President tends to discuss those issues with all the leaders he meets with. And so King Hamad is someone that we have a close relationship with, and I expect the President will talk about the importance of moving forward on reforms in the Middle East region, and certainly talk about the importance of protecting individual rights. That's something that we hold very dearly in this country. But let's let the meeting take place.

Q Shortly after President Bush nominated Dr. Condoleezza Rice to become the highest ranking African American woman in American history, fourth in line to the presidency, a liberal radio talk show host referred to her as "Aunt Jemima," The New York Times and The Washington Post ran a political cartoon that portrayed her as a racial stereotype, and a well-known White House reporter referred to her as "a monster and a g-d damn liar." The silence from all those who condemned Trent Lott has been deafening. Even the White House denounced Trent Lott's statements at the time. They've had no comment on any of these things --

MR. McCLELLAN: What you refer to is totally inappropriate.

Q Thank you.

MR. McCLELLAN: Thank you.

END 1:32 P.M. EST

Return to this article at:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/11/20041129-6.html>



CLICK HERE TO PRINT