



THE WHITE HOUSE  
PRESIDENT  
GEORGE W. BUSH



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## Press Background Briefing on Pakistan and Turkey by a Senior Administration Official

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

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3:48 P.M. EST

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I want to talk a little bit about the situation in Pakistan. I want to try and give you a little bit of background, a little bit of sort of our thinking at this point in time about the way ahead. And then I'd be delighted to answer your questions.

We became aware at the beginning of last week that there was emerging concern within the Pakistani government -- one, there was a concern about the direction and what would come out of the supreme court in its decision on President Musharraf's election. But, two, there was also concern expressed to us by Pakistani authorities about the security situation, and what some of the actions by the supreme court, the impact it was having on the security situation.

I tell you this not -- to give you a sense of two things: one, what was told to us that were the concerns of the Pakistani government; and two, that we were advised that they will be contemplating some kind of emergency measure early last week. And we had a very intensive process of interaction with the Pakistan government. Our Ambassador was involved, Secretary Rice was involved in conversations with President Musharraf, I had conversations with my counterpart. As you know, for example, I think from the press, that Admiral Fallon had a meeting with our Ambassador with President Musharraf on Thursday.

And we argued in various forums and various conversations that they should not take this step, particularly not before any supreme court opinion, but also after, because we felt that Pakistan was -- in moving towards a more democratic future that the Pakistani people deserved and wanted. And we were concerned that this would be a step off that path, and a step away from constitutional, democratic government. And so we argued strongly that this was the wrong course for the government to take. The government decided for its own reasons to go forward, notwithstanding our advice.

And you have seen the rest of it in terms of what's been in the press. We have been in contact with Pakistani authorities today, at the President's direction. We had some concerns about the address that President Musharraf gave to the nation, and the fact that that address did not deal with the issue of and the status of the elections that had been expected and are expected in January; did not deal with

the issue of the President taking off the uniform, which he said -- has said in the past that he would do.

And our concerns in that respect were enhanced when we saw the statements that were made yesterday by the Pakistani Prime Minister, when he talked in a factual context about how the current assembly could be extended, I think, for up to a year.

And so this morning, in a variety of conversations, we made the point that -- as we have been saying publicly, that we did not -- we recommended against this action; we were very disappointed that it was taken, that our -- we think it is important for the people of Pakistan that the government get back on a constitutional footing; that the principal vehicle for doing that was for the elections anticipated in January to go forward; that they be free and fair elections; that the international community assist Pakistan in ensuring they be free and fair elections; and that President Musharraf carry through with the assurances he had given, including the assurance that he would take the uniform off here.

We also expressed concerns about the extent of the actions taken under the emergency resolution. We expressed concerns about the large numbers of people that seem to be round up -- rounded up, in terms of political opposition, in terms of members of the Human Rights Commission; the actions that were taken against the press; that we were concerned that this might become a broader action than what we had understood was contemplated, recognizing that we were strongly -- that we were -- advised against this emergency declaration altogether.

This -- that continues -- we've been encouraged by some indications today from Pakistani officials that they intend to proceed with the elections on roughly the time frame that has been anticipated. We encourage the -- that issue and the issue of the uniform and others to be clarified, because we think that would be a good message to the Pakistani people and to the international community. And we are hopeful that we will see some clarification on that in the next several days.

There's been a lot of discussion about the assistance issue, whether the administration intends to cut off assistance. Secretary Rice said we are looking -- as you know, there are various forms of assistance that we have with the Pakistani government, some of them administered by the State Department, some by Treasury, some by the Department of Defense. We are looking at all of those to see if there are automatic triggers that are cut, that have been triggered by the actions taken that would require some kind of cutoff in assistance, because obviously we want to comply with the law, and we need to know exactly what these statutes require.

We are in a situation where, as opposed to the late 1990s, when the United States had very little assistance to Pakistan, had various sanctions on Pakistan, and had very little influence -- that is a different situation than it is now. We, as you can tell, we've had long consultations with the Pakistani government. We regret that we were unable to persuade them not to do that, not to take the action they had taken. We believe that the relationship between the United States is a different one than it was in the late 1990s, and that it is a value not only to the United States but also to the people of Pakistan and the government of Pakistan.

And therefore, we, at this point, want to use that influence we have to get the Pakistani government to do what we think the people of Pakistan want it to do, which is to get back on a -- into constitutional

government, back on a track for elections, and to go forward in the process that we thought was on train to move Pakistan in the direction of greater democracy.

We hope that we'll get some clarification on the intentions of the government in the next few days, and our policy will obviously evolve based on how the facts move on the next several days, because we have to keep in mind what the goal is here. Is the goal just to punish this government? Or is the goal to use our influence -- the fact that they want a good relationship with this country; that we have, as we say, carrots and sticks, to use all of those to try and get the Pakistan government to move to a constitutional -- back to a constitutional path, to get Musharraf to make good on the promises he's made to step out of uniform, to go forward with the elections in January. That's the objective of our policy, and that will be guiding the decisions that the President will make in the days ahead.

There's no secret that there's going to be concern about this activity on Capitol Hill. There's concern here in the United States, in the executive branch, and concerns more broadly. So, obviously, they are questions about the future of our aid and assistance, but what we're looking for now in the next several days, sometime in the course of this week, we would hope, is some clarification on the intentions of the government. And we've made clear the direction on which we think they ought to proceed.

So that's where we are at this point in time, and I'd be glad to answer some questions.

Q Did General Musharraf give Secretary Rice any assurances? What did he tell her that he would do in the near term?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We're going to let some of the statements come out, but I think the statements we've heard in private are consistent with what you're beginning to hear in public, that they do intend to go forward with the elections. There was a statement today from the Attorney General. There was also a statement from the Prime Minister, Prime Minister Aziz, that clarified, if you will, the statement he made yesterday. So we're beginning to think this is moving in the right direction.

Q So you're satisfied with that?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: What we've said is that we've -- as I mentioned in my background, we think it will be important for the government to make authoritative statements as to their intentions -- important for the people of Pakistan, important for the international community. And we hope they will do that over the days ahead.

Q Would General Musharraf make an acceptable candidate in the January elections or should he not run?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The January elections are for elections of parliament and I don't think there's an issue of him standing in those elections. The January -- the point about January is over the course of this and next month, the various assemblies at the national level and in the five principal provinces all go out of business, if you will. And that's what requires then an election and it would be a nationwide election. And we think that is the way out of what has become obviously a constitutional crisis in Pakistan; that the way to get to -- to proceed is to avoid violence, and we've

called for that, for all the political parties to come together and support a way out of this constitutional crisis by elections in January. We think that is the best way to proceed.

Q Why is it that there hasn't been direct consultation between President Bush and President Musharraf? Is that a matter of leaving diplomatic options open so that the ultimate U.S. diplomat can weigh in later?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, I think the -- you know, the President has made clear what message he wants conveyed when Secretary Rice talks when President Musharraf and when others of us talk to our counterparts. I don't think there's any lack of clarity here about how we think is best for the Pakistani people and the future of the Pakistani nation for this to proceed. It's one of those things when, you know, the question is strategy, and who does what, when, in order to optimize the chance of that strategy succeeding. And at this point, I think the President's judgment is that the messaging has been right and, as I indicated earlier, we're expecting some important clarifications over this week, as the President noted in his comments earlier.

Q So there is a diplomatic rationale for the people who have talked to him --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: There is.

Q How do you expect that clarification to come? Is that through Secretary Rice and --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, I think the clarification needs to come from the Pakistani government to their people. And, obviously, what the Pakistani people are going to want to look for at some point is, what's the intention of their President?

Q Can I ask you also -- you've mentioned Capitol Hill and criticisms there. House Speaker --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I didn't mention criticism. I said there's obviously concerns, and as you would expect. There's concerns in the executive branch, there's concern in the Congress, as well there should be.

Q House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has issued a statement in which she said that the Bush administration enabled President Musharraf's delusion, she called it, by ignoring his undemocratic acts and a lack of internal support in exchange for his assistance and efforts against terrorism. How would you respond to this idea that the United States has sort of sacrificed one goal here, democracy, at the -- in order to promote the fight against terrorists, in order to continue this relationship with --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I would say that what we've done in Pakistan is emblematic of the President's strategy generally, which has been in the war on terror, in the short run, to fight against the terrorists; to take the fight to the terrorists; to try and deny them safe haven; to go after their operatives and leadership, all the things you know.

And Pakistan has been an ally in that. At the same time as you've heard the President say a thousand

times, true stability over the long-term requires democracy and freedom, and letting people have a say in their own future; and that the Freedom Agenda is, over the long-term, the antidote to the ideology of the terrorists.

So it has been a policy where we have supported the Pakistani government as they go after the terrorists, while at the same time making clear and encouraging the Pakistani government to respond to their people in moving towards more democracy and freedom.

And the point is that they were moving in that direction. You had seen Benazir Bhutto come back into the political process. We were looking for elections in January. That's all a good thing as Pakistan moves towards greater democracy and freedom, and indeed if you listen to some of the statements President Musharraf has made, he viewed that as a legacy that he could bring to the people of Pakistan. And that's why it's so unfortunate the decision that has been made to step -- seemingly, to step away from that by an action outside the constitution. And that's why our objective and our policy is to get them back on the track to more democracy and freedom. So I would say, with all due respect, it misunderstands the policy that we've pursued with some success.

Q In the run-up to the declaration on Saturday, in the bilateral conversations, how clearly did we -- the government, our government -- make to the regime that the aid assistance would be reviewed, if this action were taken?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We said very clearly. We were very clear on our policy, and one of the things we also said clearly is we would of course have to review, because, you know, the Pakistan government remembers the periods in the 1990s and the sanctions that they were in. And one of the things that has -- questions they have had is whether the United States was prepared to stand with Pakistan and the government and the Pakistani people through ups and downs, or whether at the moment something happened, where they did something that we didn't like, whether we would cut off the aid, because that's what -- that's how they -- I think unfairly -- but that's how they read the 1990s.

So this issue about the aid and assistance has a real resonance to them and that's why it's a card that has to be played fairly carefully. Look, on our judgment, President Musharraf, you know -- who is the leader of his country -- but in our judgment, he's made a mistake. And the question is what do you do when someone makes a mistake that is a close ally? You know, do you cut him off, hit him with sanctions, walk out the door? Or do you try and see if you can work with them to get them back on track? And the President's guidance to us is see if we can work with them to get back on track.

Why? One, because Pakistan is very important in terms of the war on terror; that is true. But secondly, Pakistan is also very important to us as part of the Freedom Agenda, because we think there is a chance, and we think Pakistan was in the direction of greater freedom and democracy, which is good for the Pakistanis and good for the region as a whole. And we don't want to throw that over; we don't want to give up on this proposition. We think there is a lot at stake for us and for the Pakistani people, and that's why we're going to try and work along the lines I described.

Did I -- did you -- I want to get to everybody once before I get through every second time. Did I talk to

you?

Q I do. This is the first time.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Michael.

Q Do you have an assessment, does the government have an assessment of Musharraf's hold on power right now? Is this a situation like Marcos, you know, in the '80s where basically the people have turned against him and it was just a matter of time, to which he's gone? Do you guys have a feeling about that?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: You know, one of the things about these situations is you don't really know till it happens. They're -- we are concerned about it; we get reports obviously from all the various sectors that you would expect. But I think, you know, you don't really know. And what you need to do is have a set of principles and have a set of policies that advance our interests, and then work with a strategy to try and achieve them. And that's what we're trying to do.

Q Still, given everything that's happened, do you regret having backed Musharraf all these years? And is this a set-back for the Freedom Agenda, all that's happened?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We don't know, because we don't know how this story comes out. We're on the fourth day of this crisis. We don't know. And as you say -- as you have heard, we have a strategy and a set of objectives that would keep Pakistan, we hope, as an ally in the war on terror, because it's not a favor they do for us; it is, remember, a -- terrorists have killed many Pakistanis. And so this is something where we have had a partnership in the war on terror. We think, given the location of Pakistan and some of the things that are happening in Pakistan, it is important to both Pakistan and the United States to retain that partnership. But we also think it's important for Pakistan to move on the democratic track. And we are still committed to that. I think it's too soon to say. We're in the opening days of this crisis.

Q Any regrets on the fact -- the President has been pretty up-front about backing Musharraf in the face of some criticism.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, I think part of it is, he has been the government of Pakistan. We have provided that government support rhetorically and financially in the war on terror because it had been in our interest to do so. We don't regret that at all. Secondly, we have been pushing President Musharraf to move in the direction -- it's not by accident that he has given his assurance that he would take off the uniform. It's not by accident he had a set of elections set for January. It is not by accident that Benazir Bhutto has returned to the political scene.

So this has been an effort we have had to do both tracks of our policy, both allied with countries who can help in the war on terror, and also try and encourage democracy and freedom.

Q I just want to make sure I'm clear on the aid issue. The President, in his public remarks, said we

want to continue to work with Musharraf to fight terrorists and extremists, which would indicate the funding would continue in counterterrorism efforts. But are you saying that the entire aid package is under review, including military aid?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: What I said was, all of these statutes, these aid programs come in different statutory provisions, and all of them have various conditions. So the first thing you have to do is inventory your assistance, and ask the question, is the legislation written in such a way that there is some triggers that would require some action affecting the aid and assistance. That's what we are doing. That's in the process of what we are doing.

Q But we shouldn't interpret the President's remarks as saying that military aid will continue when he says we want to continue to work with them to fight terrorists?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We clearly want to continue them -- to work with them to fight terror. And so what I said is really two parts: One, we need to find out exactly what the statutes require. Secondly, we need to get a sense of where this government is going over the next several days, what is the way ahead. And third, depending on what that way ahead seems to be, what course they set for themselves, and whether they pursue it, we will know when and how to use the various instruments of influence that we have.

But as I said to you earlier, this issue of assistance is a very neuralgic one with the Pakistanis, given the history. And what we think we ought to be doing is using our various forms of influence at this point in time to help a friend, who we think has done something ill-advised, to try and get back on a course which we think is what the Pakistani people want, and result in greater freedom and democracy in that country.

Q Is the next several days a deadline or a time frame of any sort? How will you know when the story is over?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, we don't -- we won't know the story is over in some sense until whether we see these elections in January and what comes out of that process, and whether we see a return to the constitutional order. What we would hope, and what we think the Pakistanis need to see, and the international community wants to see, is some clarification in the days ahead about what are the intentions of this government. As I said in my opening comments, we got some conflicting signals.

Those are beginning to sort out. You're seeing some of it publicly; we're getting some indications privately. We think it's important for that process to clarify and that the Pakistani government come out very clearly on what they see as the way ahead, which as I said, ought to be a return to constitutional order, elections, President Musharraf makes good on the pledges he's made about the uniform and the like. So we're looking for their intentions to be clarified.

Q Regardless of how Musharraf chose to address it, does the administration believe there is a state of emergency in Pakistan?

**SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL:** The government has declared one and they have adopted an order that appears to be sort of a provisional constitutional order. That's what the document says. That is what they have declared under Pakistani law.

**Q** You talked at the outset about the pending court decision, and you mentioned the security situation. I wonder if you'd elaborate a little bit on the security situation. There are published reports now of Indian intelligence saying that the Pakistani military is demoralized, hemorrhaging troops due to desertions and surrenders to the extremists in Waziristan. Does the United States share those assessments?

**SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL:** As you know from press reports, they have had a tough time in the tribal areas in north and south Waziristan. They have lost a lot of troops. As you may remember press stories, a couple hundred were taken -- Pakistani soldiers were taken hostage. It's a tough situation up there. There has, of course, also been reports of violence inside the country. So they have had these concerns, and we obviously are concerned very much about what happens in the tribal areas, both from the threat they pose to stability in Pakistan, both to the possibility that there are people there who are training and plotting against the United States, and because of the instability that that creates in terms of Afghanistan.

**Q** So how did you get from that to a state of emergency? How do you get from military setbacks, problems in the tribal areas to setting aside the constitutional order?

**SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL:** We don't, as you know. And that's why we recommended against it. What I was trying to give you a sense at the beginning is what we were told by the Pakistani government were their concerns. And as you know, we recommended against it.

**Q** What is your ideal time line from here on out? I mean, you mentioned the transition from a state of emergency into a situation with free and fair elections. How -- what's the transition point there?

**SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL:** Politics doesn't work really on a sort of timetable. And what I think -- what we've talked about is, we think in the days ahead there needs to be some clarification of intentions, and we think the key thing is these elections, which they're looking to in mid-January. Again, there's no fixed date, there's some very -- it's a complicated process to fix the election date, specific date, but we think, and we've made very clear, that they ought to go forward in that time frame, which is sometime around January.

**Q** Just to clarify, you knew about this at the beginning of the week. Did the President at any point call -- that is before the declaration of emergency? And related to that, do you feel -- how do you feel that you can have some influence on what happens next when you seem to have had very little influence on persuading him not to take this step?

**SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL:** Can't say very little influence, but didn't work. You know, we don't -- we are the United States of America; we're very powerful, we have a lot of influence, but we don't dictate. And they made a different calculation. Other countries have made different calculations that we have made. We think this one was a mistake and we are trying to get them back on to a path.

We have some advantages in trying to persuade them to get back on a path -- one, because they do think of us as a strong ally, an ally they want to keep and maintain. Obviously we have a complicated relationship of cooperation in the war on terror and financial assistance. And those things give weight to your opinions. That doesn't mean you're always going to prevail. And we want to use that weight to try and get them back on a constitutional track.

Q Did the President make any call last week? Was there any call before this?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: He did not. He did not.

Q A year ago when President Musharraf came here, President Bush said that he trusted him. Now he's not --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: And I would say to you, on the President question, none of us recommended that he call President Musharraf. As I say, we had a way forward that we thought was the best way to pursue our interests, and none of us recommended that he call President Musharraf. I think that was the right decision.

Ann.

Q When Musharraf came here last year, President Bush said that he trusted him. If Musharraf does now take off the uniform, as you all keep saying, how does that make a substantive difference? Who takes over the military? Do you have any sense of trust in that individual? And do you have any reason to believe that things would change if Musharraf takes off the uniform?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Look, this is a story that we're in the opening chapters of. And we don't know how it's going to work out. We don't know what is going to be the attitude of a new parliament elected in January.

Q What do you want, then, to happen if he removes his uniform and --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: What we want is a set of principles, and we want to go back to a constitutional order. We want to go back to democratic and free elections. We want to have the political process within Pakistan commit to move forward on a democratic track. That's what we want.

Now, how that's going to work out, in terms of who has what positions, I think it is too soon to say. We just really don't know. We're going to have to see how this plays out.

For the moment, President Musharraf seems to have been elected by the past parliament. That is a constitutional way of proceeding. We're obviously now in a situation where we have a, if you will, a suspension of the constitutional order. We need to get back on track. And then they're going to have to -- the various parties are going to have to work out a political situation for a way forward for Pakistan. And it's going to take weeks to do.

Q The President a few minutes ago said that they tried to kill Musharraf three times. Was that a misstatement? Because I thought that he -- that published reports had said that assassination attempts, there were only two of them.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We can check that for you. My recollection is with the President, that it was three. But we will try and get that for you and provide it to you.

The fact is, probably one is more than you'd like. (Laughter.)

Q What's your assessment as to the timing of this declaration of emergency, assuming, that is, you don't accept the Pakistan government's explanation that --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I didn't say we didn't accept it. I simply gave you --

Q I assume you --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I gave you what they said to us, and I gave you the advice that we gave them.

Q What's your reading as to why it's happened now?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think there was -- I can tell you what they say to us. They were concerned about the activities of the supreme court, which they thought was really acting beyond its mandate. And they indicated concern about stability in the country going forward. That's what they said.

Q The supreme court was going to, they were assuming, ask him to remove his uniform, which is what you're asking him to do.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, I don't think that's what the -- there were a number of alternatives that the supreme court had in front of it. One was simply to disqualify him from being President altogether and strip him of his presidency.

Q -- clearly hasn't removed his uniform.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No. There was the uniform issue, but there was also, as you know, a constitutional provision that would require someone to be out of government for two years before they can run for President.

So it was a whole series of challenges, and I can't give you the detail on them, but the most serious of which would have denied him the presidency.

David.

Q You've spent a good part of the past few years trying to convince President Musharraf at various moments to be more aggressive against both al Qaeda and the Taliban. If he spends the next year consumed in whatever political upheaval is going on there, even if they do get back on track with the elections, to your mind, is this likely to reduce their commitment to dealing with al Qaeda and more specifically with the Taliban, who they feel a little bit less threatened by than al Qaeda?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We'll have to see. In the short run between now and the election in January, assuming that goes forward, it's obviously going to be a very chaotic time and there are going to be people have a lot of -- lot of things that they are watching. And we obviously have concerns about that in terms of what may be going on in the tribal areas. And we will be addressing those concerns with the appropriate agencies in the Pakistani government.

I'm encouraged by some of the things that Benazir Bhutto has said about the importance to Pakistan to fight terror and her view that more aggressive efforts need to be made and that that is part of her program, not as a favor to us but as part of her program for the Pakistani people. And we would hope that one of the things in this process that they're going into as people could come together on, is the proposition that they need to be more aggressive in the war on terror for the purposes of the long-term stability of Pakistan.

Q If I could just follow that. If you come to the conclusion that they are not or they are not capable of doing it while they're trying to sort themselves through this, does that change your calculation about how you would operate from the Afghan side of the border with U.S. forces or special forces, who so far you have, at least publicly, kept out of those territories?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: There are a lot of factors that enter into a judgment about how we would fight the war on terror.

Anything else?

Q The aid review that you're talking about --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We going around for second rounds. Anybody not had a first round? Alright, we're going to do these three for the second round and then we're going to quit. Okay?

Q The aid review that you're talking about, is that limited to money governed by automatic trade triggers, or are you looking at things, levers that you could push yourself? Or is it just --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: What I said as a first point: We've got to inventory all the laws under which various kinds of assistance are provided to the Pakistani government. And then on that inventory it says, do any of them have provisions that are triggered by the events that we've seen? If so, what are they, and what's the fall out? Are they waivable? Are they not waivable? When do they cut in? We've got to do an inventory and get a sense of what the territory is before we know where we might go in terms of the consequences of that review.

And that's going to depend heavily on what we hear, obviously, from the Pakistani government in terms of their intentions, this week, and that is not a threat in any way. It is simply a statement of fact that we are going to have to take a look at those various pieces of legislation to see what they require by their terms. And secondly, we are hopeful that the Pakistani government will clarify their intentions here in the days ahead.

Q You mentioned in response to Ann's question that it was too early to tell who comes next if Musharraf takes off the uniform, as the administration hopes. The most likely guy is General Kiani, I understand. Can you tell me, do you have -- does the administration have a view on him?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, I think the Pakistanis have made clear that if Musharraf takes off the uniform, which again doesn't affect his holding the presidency but does mean he's no longer chief of staff of the army, I think the current vice chief of staff is General Kiani, and I think a number of people expect that he would step into that position. He's someone that we've worked with a lot because of his former position as head of the security services.

Michael, last question.

Q Can I just get in a question about Turkey? Did the Prime Minister ask President Bush for anything specific in terms of concrete actions that he wanted either the United States or the Iraqi government to take? And did the President offer anything concrete beyond the strong words of support that he gave when he came out and met the press afterwards?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: There was a discussion between the two of them, just as there had been in various levels of our governments as we interact on this, both with the United States, Turkey, the Iraqi government, and the Kurdish regional government. We've spent the last week or so looking at concrete steps that might be taken that would help the situation. We had some ideas. The Turks have had some ideas. The Iraqis have had some idea. The Kurds have had some ideas. And one of the things for the structures the two leaders talked about is to provide a framework for deciding which of those things ought to be made to go forward. I'm not at this point going to go into any of that publicly, but it was -- the answer to your question is yes, some specific things were discussed.

Q And do you feel about the crisis has passed? Do you think that with this visit, the chances of Turkey staging a military operation on their own in the next week or two has passed?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We've just had this conversation. There will be some follow-up conversations. I think that that process needs to run before we know where we are.

Thank you very much.

END 4:26 P.M. EST

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