



# THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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## Press Briefing by Scott McClellan

The James S. Brady Briefing Room

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1:00 P.M. EDT

MR. McCLELLAN: The President looks forward this afternoon to a meeting with the energy conference committee members here at the White House, and talking about the importance of the conference committee moving forward quickly on a comprehensive energy plan that reduces our dependence on foreign sources of energy and updates our electricity delivery system so that we can prevent the kind of blackouts that we experienced recently in the Northeast and Midwest.

That's all I have. I'll be glad to jump right in to questions. Helen, I see your hand up.

Q Earlier today you said that the President made no connection between 9/11 and Iraq. You said that there was no indication that there was a linkage at all. Can you explain why the American people seem to know -- to believe, according to the polls, that there is a connection? Does the White House have anything to do with that, and are you going to do anything to disabuse the perception?

MR. McCLELLAN: **You're right, if you're** talking specifically about the September 11th attacks, we never made that claim. We do know that there is a long history of Saddam Hussein and his regime and ties to terrorism, including al Qaeda. Secretary Powell went before the United Nations and outlined what we knew back in February. And we have long talked about --

Q What did you know -- that one person was treated in a hospital?

MR. McCLELLAN: Let me finish -- one other point here that's important to keep in perspective in light of September 11th is that one of the most dangerous new threats we face in the post- September 11th world is the nexus between outlaw regimes with weapons of mass destruction --

Q Where are they?

MR. McCLELLAN: -- and terrorists. And the horrific attacks of September 11th vividly brought to light the importance of confronting these threats and confronting them before they reach our shores. There are some dangerous new threats out there, and the President is leading and acting to eliminate those threats so that the American people are more safe and secure from the kind of attacks that we have experienced.

Q Are you -- but are you trying to tell the American people now the truth, that there is no linkage?

MR. McCLELLAN: We know, Helen -- I mean, this is reopening a debate that was never had because the whole entire -- the entire judgment of the international community was that Saddam Hussein was a threat. That's why there were a number of -- the United Nations

Q They never authorized an invasion.

MR. McCLELLAN: The United Nations passed a number Security Council resolutions. You're correct on that point. But when you talk about the threat that Saddam Hussein posed, we know that this was a brutal regime that oppressed the Iraqi people. We know that this was a regime that had a long history of possessing chemical and biological weapons, and even using chemical weapons against his own people. We know that this was a regime that had invaded and attacked its neighbors. So the threat was --

Q I'm talking about linkage with al Qaeda.

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, you jumped into the threat there. Secretary -- again, Secretary Powell went through this. We know that a leading collaborator and senior associate of al Qaeda was in Iraq, al Zarqawi, who was responsible for directing the cell that killed an American citizen in Jordan. He was responsible for the network that developed a -- poisons and toxics labs in northeastern Iraq. There are many things we know about the history of Saddam Hussein's regime and his ties to terrorism, including al Qaeda, and we have outlined all that previously.

Q Scott, Secretary Snow is on a world tour to get money to help finance the occupation of Iraq, and, it's not going that well. Have you received any financial commitments from other countries to help? And if you're running into trouble, what's the President prepared to do about that?

MR. McCLELLAN: **Well, keep in mind**, I mean, there are a number of fronts that we're working on and we're having discussions with other countries in terms of ways that we can broaden the international participation. One way is through more financial assistance. There is a donors conference coming up in October. We will be talking with -- a number of nations will be attending that donors conference and we will be talking about ways that they can help by providing financial assistance --

Q Right, I know that. So what's the problem, and what do you expect out of the donors conference?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I think those discussions are continuing. Again, the donors conference is not for another month, as this point. But we will continue to have discussions about ways nations can

participate. There are a number of nations --

Q Why are you running into opposition? What's the problem?

MR. McCLELLAN: -- there are a number of nations that are already participating in Iraq, and one of the things we're working to do is broaden that participation so that we can accelerate and intensify our efforts to transfer responsibility to the Iraqi people.

Q One other unrelated. What did the President hear in this briefing about the hurricane?

MR. McCLELLAN: **Glad you brought that up.** A few things -- one, he was briefed on what we were doing in terms of the federal government to activate and deploy resources that will be needed to respond in case of -- well, that will respond to its pending landfall.

So let me give you some specifics: Here at the White House, I think you asked about earlier, there are a number of steps that we are taking, as well. We are working to secure items that may be blown away in the event of the high winds here. And so they will be secured by tomorrow afternoon. This could include flags. It could include the awnings around the complex. Those will likely be brought down. We'll be checking the drains in the complex to be sure that they are clear. And we are preparing to respond to any potential damage that could be caused.

But going back to the briefing, the Department of Homeland Security Secretary, Secretary Ridge was in there, as well as FEMA head, Mike Brown. And they talked about the priorities for the federal government in terms of initiating life-saving and life-sustaining operations. They talked about making sure that there is strong and effective state, federal and local coordination of response and recovery efforts, and make sure that there is coordination between all those entities to assess damage needs and ensure rapid recovery after landfall.

But the Department of Homeland Security -- FEMA, being the lead agency -- continues to have video-conference calls with federal, state, and local authorities. They've deployed liaison teams to at-risk emergency operations center to ensure rapid federal response to state needs and, again, activated, as I pointed out yesterday, national and regional emergency response teams, and prepositioned life-saving and life-sustaining equipment and supplies. And they're also assessing potential infrastructure recovery needs in that process. But some of that prepositioning included cots and food and water, generators, things of that nature.

So the President got a briefing to make sure that we are doing everything we can from the federal level to prepare and respond to pending landfall of Hurricane Isabel.

Q Do you hope to get a new U.N. resolution on Iraq by the time the President's visit next week, or is that probably not going to happen?

MR. McCLELLAN: **Well, I don't want** to put any artificial time lines on it. We're continuing to work that process at this point. Secretary Powell had some good discussions in Geneva over the weekend. We're continuing to stay in close contact with members of the Security Council about how we can move forward on a resolution as quickly as possible toward our shared goal of transferring more and more responsibility to the Iraqi people, and realizing a sovereign, free, and democratic Iraq. So we listened to some of the issues that were raised by other nations. We're looking at those issues, and we will be getting back to some of those nations, as well.

Q Is there a consensus within the administration on what the resolution should say, or is there still --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, remember, we put forward some proposed language. And you know how the Security Council process works -- there's always input from others, and we want to always listen to the concerns that they raise or the issues that they think need to be addressed within it. And that's what we've been doing. So we're looking at those and we'll be going back to those nations soon.

Q Why is the President meeting with Powell and Rumsfeld today? Is it about the U.N. resolution? Is it about --

MR. McCLELLAN: **Well, again, I just don't** get into a discussion of those meetings. Those are meetings -- he meets regularly with Secretary Rumsfeld and Secretary Powell. And for your benefit, I'll point out what he's doing during his day. It's just like the National Security Council meetings. We don't give readouts of those meetings. Obviously, they are talking about current events and issues that are going on. But I will leave it at that.

Q How often do they meet on the same day? Does he meet with both of them on the same day?

MR. McCLELLAN: They've done it from time to time. They -- he tends to meet with them at least a couple of times a week in person here at the White House.

Q Scott, frequently when the President is out speaking on the economy in the country, he'll talk about the need for personal responsibility and corporate responsibility. In light of that, what's his opinion of the compensation package of Richard Grasso of the New York Stock Exchange?

MR. McCLELLAN: **Well, I think that that's** a matter for the New York Stock Exchange board to address. You're talking about compensation, and that's an issue for the board to address. Obviously, our SEC has some regulatory role in this and they've made some comments. But the President views that this is a matter for the New York Stock Exchange board.

Q Even though he's out there talking about the need for corporate responsibility, when he sees a guy making \$100 million from the public trust --

MR. McCLELLAN: Remember, this is a compensation issue. Now, you did bring up corporate wrongdoing -- we have taken aggressive action to go after corporate wrongdoers. This specific issue is related to compensation.

Q So no comment on that. And then just to close off the line of questioning Helen was pursuing, can you rule out at this point that Saddam Hussein had anything to do with 9/11, with the attacks on this country on September 11th?

MR. McCLELLAN: **Terry, I think I** made it very clear that we have never made that claim and I'm not saying that now. What I am saying is that there is a long history between Saddam Hussein's regime and terrorism, ties to terrorism and ties to al Qaeda. That's why I mentioned a little bit of that.

Q So in the judgment of the White House there is still a possibility that evidence will develop showing that Saddam Hussein had a hand in 9/11? Or can you rule that out?

MR. McCLELLAN: We have not made that claim, Terry. And I'm not making that claim. What I can do is tell you what we do know. And I've told you a little bit of that; Secretary Powell outlined some of

what we knew previously, as the Vice President said on the Sunday show this weekend. He said that there is more and more that we are learning since we have gone into Baghdad, and we are learning more and more about the relationship between Saddam Hussein's regime and terrorists, including al Qaeda. And he talked a little bit about that. But, no, I'm not at all making that claim, nor have we.

Q Scott, back on Iraq and Saddam Hussein. Saddam Hussein is allegedly now telling people to -- telling the Iraqis to step up their resistance against U.S. troops. And that, as Secretary Cheney said over the weekend, that -- paraphrasing -- that how Iraq is handled could define the election. What is the mandate from President Bush right now in finding Saddam Hussein, either killing him or bringing him to justice, for either terrorism or his friendship or links to al Qaeda?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, first of all, we eliminated the threat that he posed. He is no longer in control of Iraq. He is no longer oppressing his people. We will continue to pursue. We've captured or killed I believe it's 42 of the 55 leaders of the former regime, or people tied to the former regime. We are continuing to go after others. That's why our military is on the offensive. It was a significant blow when they took out his sons. We will continue to pursue him, as well. And he will be found.

Q But what is the mandate specifically for the U.S. troops for Saddam Hussein, as he is once again telling -- allegedly telling his -- the Iraqi people to resist the American troops. American troops continue to die. More troops are dead now than when the war was supposedly -- when we were supposedly in a war.

MR. McCLELLAN: Now, you're talking about the reported tape. I've seen the news reports. I don't have any more to confirm that. Obviously, there are remnants of the former regime. There are foreign terrorists who are desperate because of the success and the progress that we are making in Iraq on behalf of the Iraqi people. And they continue to want to try to carry out attacks. But our military is on the offensive, going after them, taking the battle to them. They will continue to pursue those terrorists and remnants of the former regime, including Saddam Hussein, and they will find them, and they will find him.

Q Scott, if Syria is aiding and abetting terrorists, as John Bolton laid yesterday, in the way that they are, and the President had made very clear that countries are either with the United States or against the United States when it comes to terrorism, why is the United States at least not taking more diplomatic -- more of a diplomatic effort to punish them --

MR. McCLELLAN: **Well, I think that** we're continuing to keep pressure on Syria for its behavior. And there are a number of fronts where -- a number of issues we're concerned about in terms of their behavior. You mentioned one. They need to stop any cross-border infiltration of foreign killers or terrorists coming into Iraq. They need to take steps to address their pursuit of weapons of mass destruction programs. So there are a number of areas that we've raised concerns, and we will continue to make it very clear that that behavior is completely unacceptable and that they need to change their behavior.

Q -- what you think just basically saying that they need to change their behavior, that's all you need to do? You don't need to take further steps, in terms of sanctions or other --

MR. McCLELLAN: We are going to continue to keep the pressure on them, remind them that this is unacceptable -- unacceptable behavior, and that they need to change course in all these areas. And there are several concerns we have --

Q And what if they don't?

MR. McCLELLAN: -- and I'm not going to speculate.

Q You and other administration officials have frequently talked about the people who are attacking U.S. troops on the ground in Iraq as Saddam loyalists and foreign terrorists and other infiltrators --

MR. McCLELLAN: **And criminals**, right.

Q There are new reports out of the region, growing reports that an increasing number of these attacks are, in fact, by Iraqi civilians who are taking retaliation on U.S. troops for their tactics on the ground -- the house-to-house searches --

MR. McCLELLAN: What do you mean, a number of reports? Do you have examples of that?

Q There are a number of newspaper reports -- for house-to-house searches, for --

MR. McCLELLAN: That it's carried out by who?

Q By U.S. troops, for searches of weapons --

MR. McCLELLAN: Who's carrying out these attacks? I've seen newspaper reports that --

Q -- sniper attacks, that various bombing attacks, the sabotage attacks -- that some of them, and a worrying, increasing number of them are in response to tactics of U.S. troops on the ground, searches of women, house-to-house searches, round-ups of security suspects --

MR. McCLELLAN: I don't know specifically what you're referring to. I do know that we are confronting the remnants of the former regime that are becoming more and more desperate because of the success we are making in carrying out -- in trying to carry out attacks not only on coalition forces, but the Iraqi people themselves, and the international community, remnants of the former regime and foreign terrorists. They're criminals that were released by the former regime on their way out. And so those are the threats that we're confronting now. I think that we continue to receive a lot of positive feedback from the Iraqi people. I saw some recent polling where the numbers were very supportive of what we are doing to help build a better future for the Iraqi people within the -- within Iraq itself.

Q So you're not concerned that the tactics of U.S. troops are, in fact, causing at least to some degree, a backlash --

MR. McCLELLAN: I think we always recognize -- we always recognize there are some difficulties and frustrations that happen when you're moving toward transferring this responsibility back to the Iraqi people. We've talked about that this is not a process that just happens in four-and-a-half months after major combat operations ends. It takes time to create the institutions necessary for Iraq to govern itself and run the country.

Q On that point --

MR. McCLELLAN: I told John I'd come to him --

Q Thank you for sticking by your word. In regard to Syria --

MR. McCLELLAN: Not suggesting that I don't, right? (Laughter.)

Q In regard to Syria, I'm wondering what -- about what appears to be a selective application of the doctrine of preemption, and that you exercised that doctrine in Iraq, which, at the time, was not showing any kind of an overt threat against the United States. But here you have Syria, which is harboring known terrorists who are going into Iraq, transiting the border to attack American troops. And I'm wondering, why Iraq and not Syria.

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, again, Iraq was a unique situation. You had a brutal regime that had a history of concealment and denying their history of weapons of mass destruction, defied some 17 U.N. Security Council resolutions. They had a history of invading their neighbors. They had a history of using chemical weapons.

Q But my point goes more toward Syria, which you know fits under the Bush doctrine that if you harbor a terrorist, you're as bad as a terrorist, and also, it would seem to fall under the doctrine of preemption. I'm wondering why you haven't exercised that yet.

MR. McCLELLAN: We've made it very clear that their behavior is unacceptable and that states that harbor or support terror will be held accountable. Obviously, there are different strategies for different situations, but I remind you that Iraq was a unique situation, when you ask about Iraq and the former regime.

Q I'm sorry, I just had one more follow-up on that. So if have different strategies for different situations, what does that say about the doctrine of preemption?

MR. McCLELLAN: I'm sorry? We're making it very clear that any support or harboring of terrorists is unacceptable and you will be held accountable. That's why we are continuing to pressure Syria to reverse course, to change its behavior. Our views are very well-known; they know what they need to do and they know how concerned -- these are very real and serious concerns that we have. And we will continue to express that to the Syrian government.

Q But it's just beginning to seem that the doctrine of preemption was applicable only in one case.

MR. McCLELLAN: I just made it very clear that --

Q It's not applicable in Iran, it's not applicable in North Korea, it's not applicable in Syria.

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, you're getting back to the -- no, no, you're getting back specifically to -- I mean, I disagree. You're getting back to why we went into Iraq and confronted that threat. And we have long said --

Q No, I'm asking why you haven't applied the doctrine of preemption --

MR. McCLELLAN: -- that that was a unique situation.

Q -- to countries that clearly fall under --

MR. McCLELLAN: No, we made it clear to them that it's unacceptable and that they will be held to account. We do have new and dangerous threats in the post-September 11th world that we will confront and we will address on a number of fronts. We are going after the war on terrorism in a number of

different ways. We are confronting these issues in a number of different ways and we will continue to do that.

Q The debate over a U.N. resolution seems to revolve around the question of the pace of returning sovereignty to the Iraqis. The U.S. has made it clear, as you indicated, that it does intend to do that. There is some desire on the part of the Security Council members to have something laid out in terms of a timetable. Is the U.S. willing to specify in the resolution that is ultimately voted upon some sort of timetable for the return of sovereignty to the Iraqis?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I don't think that timetable should be set by any country, it should be set by the Iraqi people. The Iraqi Governing Council should be the one, as representatives of the Iraqi people, setting timetables and putting forward a constitution. That's exactly what they're working to do, move forward on a constitution. Our proposed language that we put forward included language in there specifying that the Governing Council would be the one to set the timetable for a constitution and free elections and report to the Security Council, again, broadening that U.N. role, because they have a vital role to play. But that should be set by the Iraqi people. And it needs -- obviously, it has to be realistic, you have to base it on creating the institutions necessary to assume that responsibility and govern your country.

Q -- today said that he wanted "significant" moves in transferring power to the Iraqi Governing Council in the short-term, and said the problems of security are huge and it is in large measure because Iraqis are not involved in security issues.

MR. McCLELLAN: More and more Iraqis are becoming -- I mean, who's the second largest number of people involved in the security of their country? It's right behind the United States, it's the Iraqi people. And that's growing. There are some 60,000 people involved in the security and stability -- Iraqi people involved in the security and stability of the country. Another more than 10,000 that are in training to participate in those security efforts -- police forces, border control and so forth.

Q One other thing, if I could, on a slightly different topic. Did the administration ever get to the bottom of this claim by Senator Clinton that the EPA misinformed the public about the dangers of contaminants in the air after 9/11?

MR. McCLELLAN: **The EPA did respond** to her initial letter and addressed those issues. We have addressed this repeatedly. We have also -- I believe a second letter was sent and we've indicated that the Chairman of the Council of Environmental Quality will be happy to sit down and meet with her. We're working on those details. And we'll be glad to sit down and meet with her to talk to her about the steps that we took to protect the health and safety of New Yorkers, specifically workers, in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, including providing respirators for those workers and encouraging those workers to wear those respirators.

Terry, you had a question.

Q To what extent does the United States think that Saudi Arabia supports Islamic charities linked to Hamas?

MR. McCLELLAN: **Well, a couple** of things. One, you're talking specifically about the Saudi Arabian government? Saudi Arabia has been working closely with us and cooperatively in the war on terrorism, including cracking down on terrorist financing -- one of the issues you just mentioned. We have made a lot of progress.

Saudi Arabia recognizes that terrorism is a global problem, that attacks have been carried out in their own land, and they recognize the importance of working cooperatively to win the war on terrorism. We have made significant progress. Obviously, there's more to do. We will continue working together to take additional steps. So that's what we will do. But they've been very cooperative in working with us to win the war on terrorism and crack down on terrorist financing.

Q And the issue of charities, do we think that Saudi Arabia is supporting these charities that are linked to Hamas?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, that's why I just said that they've been very cooperative in working with us to confront terrorist financing and crack down on terrorist financing. I think the Saudi government addressed that issue that you brought up and said that that was not the case.

Q Scott, in the tape that was played today on the Arab network Al-Arabia, it seems to be the voice of Saddam Hussein. It also seems to be very recent, during the month of September. The U.S. government has over a \$25 million reward for capture or for information that will lead to the capture of Saddam Hussein. Why is this reward not yielding any results? Do you think it's not enough?

MR. McCLELLAN: I think we're continuing to gather more and more intelligence and get more and more information from the Iraqi people on remnants of the former regime. That will be helpful. We are continuing the pursuit, and it's a matter of time before he is found and brought to justice. But the one thing that I do know is that there are remnants of the former regime, there are foreign terrorists that are trying to intimidate us. And we will not be intimidated. We will see this through because this is important to making America more secure and making the world a safer place.

So we will continue to stay on the offensive from a military standpoint. We will continue to move forward aggressively to accelerate and intensify our efforts to transfer responsibility to the Iraqi people so that they can realize a sovereign, free, and democratic Iraq as quickly as possible.

Q Scott, can I follow up on that, in a sense? What kind -- how would you characterize the feedback the President is getting in his \$87 billion request?

MR. McCLELLAN: **The feedback?**

Q Yes, from members of --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I think that members recognize that it's important to move forward quickly on the request, because this is about providing all the necessary resources that our military needs to achieve their objectives, and it's about providing the resources necessary to bring stability and civility to Iraq as quickly as possible. And when that happens, then we can get our troops home sooner. So I think that members of Congress recognize the importance of moving forward with this request quickly. And, in fact, I expect we will be sending up the request today.

Q Actually, the reason I asked that, of course, is because some Republicans have expressed concerns, they're hearing from constituents who do not believe that the full \$87 billion should be spent on Iraq, and particularly they're concerned, I guess, about \$20 billion that would go towards the rebuilding efforts. They're hearing from constituents, they say, who don't like that idea because they believe that kind of money should be spent in the United States.

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, first of all, we're meeting our priorities here in the United States. The

President is committing to -- committed to winning the war on terrorism abroad, which this is part of, and it's central to, the highest priority for the American people, the long-term safety and security of America. That's what we're working to do here, because Iraq is a central front in the war on terrorism.

We're also meeting our priorities at home, whether it be taking steps and actions to strengthen our economy, or improve education, or move forward on prescription drug coverage for our seniors, which is a high priority, or passing comprehensive energy legislation. So that's why the President outlined these steps in his budget and set clear priorities and made sure that we're meeting our highest priorities, while making sure that we're meeting these priorities both at home and abroad.

But this -- but Iraq is an important effort to making the world safer and making America more secure for future generations. And the \$20 billion you specifically referenced in terms of going toward the reconstruction and stability of Iraq, again, I would emphasize that that was looking at the overall needs of what we needed to provide. Ambassador Bremer went and looked at this extensively, came back with his recommendations. So this was the overall need for reconstructing Iraq and bringing about a civil society in Iraq so that the Iraqi people can have a sovereign, free, and democratic country, and we can get our troops home. So if we can move forward quickly on this, that will speed up those efforts, accelerate those efforts.

Q -- one package?

MR. McCLELLAN: I'm sorry?

Q Still want to get one package?

MR. McCLELLAN: Yes.

Q Scott, I just want to confirm, so the President is sending the request for the full \$87 billion up today?

MR. McCLELLAN: Today. That's correct. And I expect we'll have a background briefing later this afternoon. So we'll get you information -- it will probably be a conference call.

Q Secondly, three senators have now placed Leavitt's confirmation on hold. How long is the President willing to wait and will he make a recess appointment?

MR. McCLELLAN: **Well, we hope that** -- we are continuing to talk with senators. Governor Leavitt is a highly-qualified individual, particularly for the post of EPA administrator. He has a proven record of building consensus and bringing people together to achieve meaningful results that improve our environment, that improve our air quality, that protect the land, that improve our water quality. So the President will continue to urge the Senate to move forward quickly on his nomination because this is an important position, and we need to get him in there. He's highly-qualified, long record of experience, and will do an outstanding job.

Q Scott, just a quick follow-up on the \$87 billion. I guess what you're saying is the President isn't concerned about polls that are showing an increased belief by Americans that the federal government will have to make some sort of domestic cuts to the budget, that they would -- in fact, won't be able to do both the war in Iraq -- or rebuilding Iraq and the spending priorities that you've --

MR. McCLELLAN: That's why they need to move forward on the budget that we outlined, which slows --

Q He's not worried about the polls which think that --

MR. McCLELLAN: -- which slows -- which slows -- well, I think there's a lot of support for the President's leadership, and the fact that he is acting to address our policies abroad when it comes to national security, and he's acting to address our priorities at home when it comes to the economy and the environment and energy and education, just to name a few.

Q And also just a related thought --

MR. McCLELLAN: He outlined a budget that set clear priorities and held the line on discretionary spending for that very reason. But these are -- there are number of important priorities that we are acting to address. And that's why it's important for Congress to hold the line elsewhere in the budget. And they did set a framework that was within what the average family spends, which is what the President said, of 4 percent growth, so -- on the discretionary side.

Q On a related question about whether the President is concerned -- you made it clear that you didn't make any connection between September 11th and Saddam Hussein. But Americans are not quite -- they're a little bit more confused on that issue. Is the President at all worried that they aren't -- that they don't have as clear an idea of what happened as you do?

MR. McCLELLAN: That they don't have a clear idea of what happened --

Q Well, in terms of the connection.

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I talked about September 11th bringing to light the need to address threats that we face, the new threats that we face. And I said one of the most important dangerous new threats that we face is that nexus between outlaw regimes with weapons of mass destruction and terrorists. And in terms of the specific question you asked, we have not made that claim and I'm not making that claim.

Q Thank you. On the \$87 billion, there are proposals on Capitol Hill to fund the Iraq supplemental by shifting money away from other foreign aid programs. Would the President support that strategy?

MR. McCLELLAN: Foreign?

Q Other foreign aid programs. For example, there's an economic package --

MR. McCLELLAN: I don't know. I'm sure there will be -- I'm sure there will be a lot of discussion in Congress. We're sending it up today. There will be a lot of discussion, I'm sure. We just hope members would move forward quickly on this package. I'm not going to get into specific negotiations or discussions about that here. We're just now sending that proposal to the Hill.

Q Scott, the Constitution's Article II, says, "The President shall take care that the laws be faithfully executed" with no stipulation that this applies only to federal laws. But in California's Ninth Federal Circuit Court of Appeals, whose rulings last year were overruled in 75 percent of its cases before the U.S. Supreme Court -- you, Scott, as the President's top spokesman --

MR. McCLELLAN: Uh-oh. (Laughter.)

Q You have refused comment because you claim this is a state issue. And my question --

MR. McCLELLAN: Are you talking about the California recall?

Q Yes -- since this postponement of California's recall election, why only three federal judges will, if allowed to stand, cost California and candidates many millions of dollars, how do you believe Californians will react to no leadership and no help on this from a President, who in 414 days, wants them to vote for him? And I have one follow-up. (Laughter.)

MR. McCLELLAN: How long is it? (Laughter.)

Q No, this is much shorter. But how do you feel? I mean, shouldn't he speak to this? This is the law --

MR. McCLELLAN: There is always an appeals process, that's the legal process if people disagree with decisions, and they can pursue that appeals process.

Q Does the President know that of these California federal judges who ruled that voting machines that reelected Gray Davis are now illegal, one was appointed by Jimmy Carter and the other two by Bill Clinton?

MR. McCLELLAN: Yes, I'm aware of the makeup of the judiciary.

Q He does know that? Is that surprising?

MR. McCLELLAN: Sarah.

Q Thank you. Scott, I have two questions, short. (Laughter.) The leaders of France, Germany and Great Britain are meeting in Berlin this weekend to talk about Iraq. Was the United States invited? And, if not, is this causing a further problem?

MR. McCLELLAN: No, there are always a number of different discussions that occur when you're talking about diplomatic efforts at the United Nations. And as I mentioned yesterday, the President and Prime Minister did touch on this meeting. So there are a number of discussions that are going on between countries, between groups of countries, and that's to be expected when you're going through a Security Council process like this. So Prime Minister Blair will be meeting with Chancellor Schroeder and President Chirac this weekend.

Q There are reports from Manila that trained terrorists will try to assassinate the President when he's in the Philippines next month. In view of this, should he cancel his trip there?

MR. McCLELLAN: Cancel the trip that we haven't announced yet? Look, we take -- Sarah, we always take any threats very seriously. Obviously, if you have any specific questions about something of that nature, I would direct it to the Philippine government or security agencies here in the United States. I don't have anything on that.

Q Are you still planning to host King Abdullah at Camp David tomorrow? Is the weather going to have any effect on that?

MR. McCLELLAN: Yes, that's right, arriving tomorrow and then the press avail would be on Friday. Whether or not it changes some of the timing, that remains to be seen at this point. But the President -- the schedule will go forward at this point. If there are any updates to it, I'll let you know.

Q Two quick ones. One, we are still living under the threat of terrorism and we're getting so many letters now again from Saddam Hussein or Osama bin Laden. One, we just had second anniversary of the 9/11, and most of the world leaders will be gathered next week in the U.N. So where do we stand as far as terrorism threat is concerned, level of threat and colors and all that and how --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, in terms of the war on terrorism, we have made significant progress. Again, we have removed the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. We have removed the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. We have -- we are dismantling and disrupting terrorist networks globally. Law enforcement is working cooperatively. Many countries are -- many countries' law enforcement agencies are working together to confront it from the law enforcement standpoint; arrests are being made. We're continuing to crackdown on terrorist financing, there's a number of important steps there. Two-thirds of the leadership of al Qaeda has been captured or killed.

So we've made significant progress. But there is more to do. This is a global war on terrorism. Nations have come together to address it. It is a war that will take -- require patience and take time, but we will pursue it to the end.

Q And second, any comments on the 150,000 or more Chinese troops on the North Korean border, is a threat to the U.S. 35,000 or 37,000 troops there, and if the U.S. is worried about the buildup by China?

MR. McCLELLAN: You might want to direct -- if you have questions about military troops in a specific region, you might want to direct that to the Pentagon.

Q On the energy bill, does the administration feel that with respect to tax incentives, they should be limited mostly to energy efficiency and energy conservation incentives, or should -- or is there room in the budget to also have incentives for production and possible encouragement of nuclear production?

MR. McCLELLAN: **Well, we've put** forward -- in our energy plan we put forward a comprehensive plan in a detailed book that put forward what our priorities are. Secretary Abraham sent a letter to Congress saying what our priorities are in this legislation. What we need to do is have a comprehensive plan to reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy. That means diversifying our energy supply. It means increasing energy efficiency, as you mentioned, and promoting renewable energy, as well. It's a comprehensive approach, and we need to move forward on all those fronts.

Q Thank you. I didn't get to ask all my questions yesterday on the Korean energy situation. When will the KEDO executive board convene? You say it will convene soon. And where will it convene?

MR. McCLELLAN: **You could direct** those questions to KEDO. But as I said, that money was provided for the administration of KEDO. That's where that money is going. What we -- in terms of North Korea, where we need to keep our focus is on the multilateral approach that is making some progress to get North Korea to end, irreversibly and verifiably, its pursuit -- or its nuclear weapons program. We are making some important progress through the multilateral approach. We are continuing to pursue that. And at this point, that funding was strictly provided to support the administration of KEDO.

Q KEDO, despite its \$3.72 billion, is not terribly cooperative. Is there any way you could please get for us -- give us some idea of when the meeting is going to take place?

MR. McCLELLAN: I'll see if there's any more I have on it.

Q You've said several times that the threat of al Qaeda or al Qaeda has been thrown out of Afghanistan in the war on terror. But they just crossed the border into Pakistan. Are we pleased with the lack or what appears to be a lack of effort by Pakistan to take control of those tribal areas?

MR. McCLELLAN: **Pakistan is a strong** ally in the war on terrorism. They have been working closely with us to go after terrorists that may be crossing the border. But they are a close ally in the war on terrorism, working with us to go after those threats.

Q But there doesn't seem to be much action. We're getting an awful lot of Taliban coming across the border from Afghanistan. They're recruiting again --

MR. McCLELLAN: You have some remnants -- you have remnants of a regime that we removed, that was an oppressive regime, that is desperate -- more and more desperate every single day, because of the progress we are making on many fronts in Afghanistan.

Thanks.

END 1:41 P.M. EDT