

From: "McBride, Lea A."
To:
Subject: FW: Press Briefing by Tony Snow
Received(Date): Wed, 13 Jun 2007 14:57:17 -0500

FOIA(b)6
PRA-P6

From: Hennigan, James R.
Sent: Wednesday, June 13, 2007 3:57 PM
To: McBride, Lea A.; McGinn, Megan E.; Addington, David S.; Patel, Neil S.; Morgan, Derrick D.; DL-OVP-WW; O'Donnell, Claire M.; Landon, Jill R.; Baker, Grey D.; Wilson, Elizabeth A.
Subject: Press Briefing by Tony Snow

Excerpt of Note:

Q I've got a question on something else, unless there's another question on this. What is the process for considering all of these letters and other requests for pardons for Lewis Libby?

MR. SNOW: Again, there's a -- you have a pardon process that goes on within the White House, and it's a standard process where these things are reviewed and vetted and so on. At this juncture, I don't even know that there is a process specific to the case of Lewis Libby. What the President has said all along is that in this particular case, you've got to let the legal process run its course, and it has not. He intends to appeal, and we'll have to see what happens.

Q But there's going to be something of a turning point in the process tomorrow as the judge may decide whether or not to send him to prison immediately or delay. Will that affect the thinking here at all?

MR. SNOW: It's our understanding -- and I may be wrong on this -- but that, in fact, any such rendering would not result in immediately going off to a detention facility. In fact, there is still a process that has to be followed with petitions and reviews that could go on for some time.

Q But does this affect the timing, Tony?

MR. SNOW: Again, I'm not going to -- you're asking me to get into areas that I'm not going to speculate on from the podium.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the President

For Immediate Release

June 13, 2007

PRESS BRIEFING

BY TONY SNOW

White House Conference Center Briefing Room

1:09 P.M. EDT

MR. SNOW: Hello, everybody. Questions.

Q Senator Specter said he wants to negotiate with Fred Fielding about these subpoenas. Is there any negotiating room for the White House --

MR. SNOW: We're going to review the subpoenas and we'll respond appropriately.

Q Your usual response to even the talk of subpoenas is just to say flatly, no. Is there any room for any other --

MR. SNOW: Again, I'm just giving you -- what I'm saying is that we'll respond appropriately. That's what we say. One of the things that you can say is that it does appear -- we have made available to all committees anybody who wants to talk and we have laid out conditions. It seems that right now there is more interest on the media circus; witness the fact that those arriving over your BlackBerrys this morning before we had been informed. So at this juncture, it's clear that they're trying to create some media drama, and I'll leave it at that.

Q But, Tony, on March 14th, the President was in Mexico, he was at a press conference and said, "I've heard those allegations about political decision-making in this matter. It's just not true." How can that be true when now there are emails showing that the White House Political Director was involved in the firings? Wouldn't that suggests politics --

MR. SNOW: No, the White House Political Director -- I think

if you take a look at the White House Political Director, these most recent emails I believe took place after the personnel action had taken place. And furthermore, look, you can assume that when you have political appointees, the Political Office is certainly going to have some conversations. And I believe that the emails you're talking about involve Tim Griffin.

Q Okay. But you're saying you would assume that politics would be involved because there's a political -- but at the beginning of this story --

MR. SNOW: No, no, no, I said the Political Office would have some knowledge of it.

Q Okay, but at the beginning of this story, the President, you, Dan Bartlett, others said on camera that politics was not involved, this was performance-based.

MR. SNOW: That is something -- we have never said that. I think you'll have to take a look at comments that have been made by the Justice Department. What we've said is that people serve at the pleasure of the President. That's the operative principle here.

Q The President said, I've heard those allegations about political decision-making and it's just not true. I mean, he clearly said politics was not involved, right?

MR. SNOW: Right.

Q So now politics was because the Political Director --

MR. SNOW: No. Just because the Political Director is

weighing in on something does not mean that this is politics involved. These are political appointees. Also, if you took a look at the emails that have come out, there was -- at least from the White House side, a very strong effort to say we do not, in fact, want to be impugning the character of these people who have served. And the principle is the same, it's the one that I've been saying from the very beginning, Ed, which is that the President has the authority to remove those who serve at his pleasure. And these were all individuals who had completed their terms as U.S. attorneys.

Q You make a good point that these emails were in February, with Sarah Taylor. Can you say from that podium categorically that the White House Political Affairs Office was not involved back in November, October, leading up to the December decision?

MR. SNOW: I think what we've done is we've already released all the emails that are available, and you can draw whatever judgments --

Q From the Justice Department, but what about White House emails?

MR. SNOW: Yes, but the -- those were Justice Department emails, including those that had come from the White House.

Q You don't think that there's any explanation owed to the American people on whether they really performed badly, or not -- over the politics? And what have you got against them taking an oath and having a transcript? What is this administration -- why are you always opposed for someone swearing to their testimony?

MR. SNOW: No, Helen, I think you take a look at a long line of precedence that have to do with the way these -- what we have said is that we will make available to the committees individuals

who are perfectly willing to answer any and all questions.

Q But they won't swear?

MR. SNOW: -- that would be sufficient for the purposes of the committees.

Q Well, what is the objection to swearing, swearing in on this?

MR. SNOW: Again, I'm just -- I'm not going to go beyond --

Q Because you don't have any.

Q Is the President willing to go to court to fight these subpoenas?

MR. SNOW: That is way premature.

Q Why is it way premature? He has said, I believe, in the past --

MR. SNOW: Again, the first thing that we've said --

Q -- said in the past that you would be willing.

MR. SNOW: Well, again, we'll just take a look. At this point, they are going to be reviewing the subpoenas and responding appropriately. It's very early. I can't characterize something that hasn't been fully vetted.

Q I've got a question on something else, unless there's another question on this. What is the process for considering all of these letters and other requests for pardons for Lewis Libby?

MR. SNOW: Again, there's a -- you have a pardon process that goes on within the White House, and it's a standard process where these things are reviewed and vetted and so on. At this juncture, I don't even know that there is a process specific to the case of Lewis Libby. What the President has said all along is that in this particular case, you've got to let the legal process run its course, and it has not. He intends to appeal, and we'll have to see what happens.

Q But there's going to be something of a turning point in the process tomorrow as the judge may decide whether or not to send him to prison immediately or delay. Will that affect the thinking here at all?

MR. SNOW: It's our understanding -- and I may be wrong on this -- but that, in fact, any such rendering would not result in immediately going off to a detention facility. In fact, there is still a process that has to be followed with petitions and reviews that could go on for some time.

Q But does this affect the timing, Tony?

MR. SNOW: Again, I'm not going to -- you're asking me to get into areas that I'm not going to speculate on from the podium.

Q Tony, the attack today on the mosque, what likely impact could that have on the tensions boiling in Iraq to begin with, and what has the administration found about who may be responsible?

MR. SNOW: Well, number one, an investigation is clearly ongoing. A couple of things: First, the President did receive a briefing this morning. It was a scheduled SVTS, the secure video teleconference, with General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. Prime Minister Maliki -- and, by the way, we also had a prior scheduled phone call with Prime Minister Maliki -- he, perhaps understandably, was not available at the scheduled time. It's why I ran out of the gaggle so quickly. But we're trying to get through to him today, as well.

The one thing you have seen is very swift action on the part of the Iraqi government, including the Prime Minister. You've also had key leaders such as Ali al Sistani calling for people to realize that this really does sort of -- at least it fits the al Qaeda profile, which is an attempt to inflame sectarian violence by hitting a holy site. And you've seen Sunni, Shia and other leaders throughout the country calling for folks not to engage in sectarian violence, and, number one, obviously, think about the damage that has been done in this particular case; and, number two, realize that the importance in Iraq is to respect the rights of all.

So it's -- I mean, obviously, we strongly condemn what's going on. And also, I think what happened after the original bombing of the mosque in Samarra, I don't think the Iraqi government or the United States government quite understood what was going to happen in terms of the sectarian reaction. In this case, I think people are acutely aware of what the dangers may be and, therefore, are moving swiftly to address it as rapidly as possible so that al Qaeda cannot have the same kind of success, twisted success it had the first time around, which was in terms of setting off sectarian bloodshed.

Q Let me follow on that, because I think some American officials have called this an act of desperation. And I'm

wondering how this is seen as an act of desperation. Does that mean that the terrorists are so concerned that they're sort of being shut down, and that the surge is so effective that they're now desperate to make a statement?

MR. SNOW: Well, I think, again -- a couple of things. It does fit a pattern that we see throughout the region, which is that when you see things moving towards success, or when you see signs of success, that there are acts of violence. We saw that, certainly -- we've seen that in Lebanon, once again, today, tragically. We also saw it earlier in Lebanon. We have seen it on a number of occasions where, when Israel and the Palestinians seem to be getting close to a deal, there are kidnappings and acts of violence.

What you have seen in the last couple of months -- it's well documented -- is, increasingly, Iraqis are turning against al Qaeda. And that has been one of the sort of heartening developments. You've not only seen it in Anbar Province, but you've seen it elsewhere.

So one of the responses one might expect for al Qaeda at a time like this -- when the Iraqi people are turning against them as foreign fighters, essentially invading the country and trying to commit acts of bloodshed against innocents in order to blow the country apart -- that it would be one of those acts of desperation once again to try to get the Iraqis to fight one another, rather than training their sights on al Qaeda.

Q This could actually be read, then, as a sign of success for the American --

MR. SNOW: I don't think you ever call an act of terrorism and act of success. What you have to do is to realize that maybe al Qaeda is understanding that it does not have the kind of freedom of motion or action that it used to. Not only have there been the apprehensions and killing of key members of al Qaeda within Iraq, but, again, most significantly, the Iraqi people themselves -- tribal leaders in Anbar, insurgents and others --

are now making it clear to al Qaeda that they look upon al Qaeda as the enemy of peace and security in Iraq and they're going after them.

Q One last question. How is something like this -- this is such a symbolic site, it's sort of pregnant with meaning -- what kind of possible way of stopping attacks like this can there ever be?

MR. SNOW: Well, it's a good question, and that's one of the things that they're going to take a look at in the investigation.

Again, I would -- you don't really know exactly the mechanics of what happened. You have Iraqi police guarding. Clearly, they have a vested interest in trying to learn from what happened and to defend holy sites, Sunni places of worship and Shia holy sites within Iraq. But, again, I don't -- that's one of those things -- the answer to that question really does depend, Jim, in significant part upon exactly what happened, and we can't tell you for sure what happened.

Q But you could have double the number of American troops in there and you're still not going to stop attacks --

MR. SNOW: Well, you've got to keep in mind, there's a lot of sensitivity about Americans being on Shia holy sites. And so the Iraqis, for understandable reasons, have said, we want to be able to protect our sites. So I'm not sure that that's quite the angle you want to take.

Q How high a risk do you think is there that there will be another wave of sectarian attacks and could it be as bad as last year?

MR. SNOW: We certainly hope not. I mean, again, you can't

say. The one thing we did learn from last year is that after the February 2006 bombings -- it didn't happen immediately, but over a period of time, it unleashed a wave of sectarian violence that set back the progress toward a stable Iraqi democracy. Now, we learned lessons from it; clearly, the Iraqis did, too. And, again, I would point you to the very swift reaction on the part of the Prime Minister and other members of the Iraqi government. So we clearly want to do everything we can to avoid that kind of fate. I don't want to get out a crystal ball.

Q Tony, weren't there some of the same appeals to calm last time around? How is it different?

MR. SNOW: Yes, there were. But I think also -- there were some of the same appeals to calm. I think what you do have is, number one, you have an Iraqi government up and in place. That was not the case in 2006. As you recall, the Maliki government really didn't get up and rolling until May and June of 2006. And so you had a vacuum between that February bombing and the establishment of the government.

Now you also have a significantly enhanced Iraqi security force, you have an Iraqi police force in place, you not only have a Baghdad security plan, but I think you also have a much keener understanding on the part of the Iraqis, again, of what the dangers are. And, therefore, those who are going to have influence among the Sunnis and those who are going to have influence among Shia are really taking a more aggressive stand this time, in terms of saying, let us make sure that this does not become another occasion for Iraqis to kill Iraqis.

Q Tony, whenever you, or the President, or anyone in the administration is asked about assessing how the surge is going, you point out not everyone is there yet, it's going to take a while -- 30 or 60 days. Are we going to see any softening of the September deadline for a pivotal assessment on how this is going?

MR. SNOW: You call it a pivotal assessment -- there are going to be regular assessments of what goes on -- what has been

going on in Iraq. And I think in September you will have the first opportunity to have a little bit of a metric to see what happens when you have all the forces in place for the Baghdad security plan. I mean, that I think -- if you want a definitive judgment, I've warned from the very beginning about expecting some sort of magical thing to happen in September.

This is a war, and it is the sort of thing where you want to make sure that the measures that you are taking are producing results. And I think at that juncture you're going to be able to have a little more granularity, as they say.

I mean, what we have seen in recent weeks, again, are increasing cases in which Iraqis are taking the lead in security operations, and also in which Iraqi citizens are becoming much more actively involved in supporting Iraqi forces and coalition forces when it comes to taking on acts of violence. I mean, you had three last week. You had the interception of a female suicide vest attack; you had four truck bombs in Qadima, which were designed to unleash a huge amount of violence -- that was interdicted; and finally, in Mosul, there were two truck bombs that were intercepted on the way to a target -- it cost a number of Iraqi police forces their lives. But the fact is you do see some of these things taking place. But nobody has any delusions about the difficulty of moving forward.

Q What is a realistic time frame for sometime, either thumbs up or thumbs down on whether this is worth it anymore?

MR. SNOW: The cause of Iraqi democracy is worth it.

Q Tony, back on the Gonzales controversy. When do you say when? It seems to continue to snowball. Many are saying Alberto Gonzales is more of a liability now --

MR. SNOW: Whoa, whoa, wait, wait --

Q Wait a minute, no, no, no --

MR. SNOW: -- who is saying it?

Q Please let me finish my question.

MR. SNOW: Okay.

Q Then you also have people who were questioning why not transparency after this snowball that continues to grow bigger and bigger, transparency under oath. When will this administration move forward in that direction? Can this administration allow this controversy to continue --

MR. SNOW: It strikes me that that's a highly slanted way to present what's going on -- number one, that he's more a liability than an asset. No. The President does not regard him as a liability. What does happen is that in the political class, what's happening? They're trying to -- they're going after Alberto Gonzales. Have they found anything? No. What, in fact, has gone on is that the Attorney General and the Justice Department have made extraordinary gestures toward precisely the transparency you asked -- all the emails have been made public. You get to see the emails, they get to see the emails. They have offered to make available for questioning anybody who wants to be there. They are under an obligation to tell the truth.

The fact is all of those gestures have been made. The question you have to ask yourself is, why won't members of the Senate simply take yes for an answer? They have the opportunity to be able to ask all the questions and have access to the documents. This seems to us to be one of these things in which, if you have -- if you really are trying to get the facts, you'll accept access to all the key players and all the key documents. If, in fact, you're looking for something else, such as a media

circus, you're going to adopt a different approach.

Q But transparency under oath would quell the media circus --

MR. SNOW: No, the fact is that anybody who goes and testifies before Congress has an obligation to tell the truth. That's the law.

Q Tony, two questions. One, when President was at G8 and I understand he had an interaction with the Prime Minister of India. Do you think there was any kind of breakthrough in the civil nuclear -- between the two countries during their --

MR. SNOW: Goyal, I don't know the answer to that question, but the fact is when you have interactions of that sort, we also tend not to give you comprehensive readouts. Again, let me just reiterate, we think that a civil nuclear agreement is of vital importance. We look upon India as an important, and an increasingly important ally in this and in a number of other areas. And we want to see it successfully concluded.

Q Tony, can we go back to Ken's question for a second? Because it sounds like you're laying the groundwork for September to be recharacterized. I mean, it's been my impression that it is a critical moment of measure. The President seemed to accept such a reading in the last time he did a news conference. Are you saying now, not so much on September?

MR. SNOW: No -- if you go back and look at my comments, I've always warned against looking upon this as some great moment. I think the term I used was, like the Wizard of Oz where you go from black and white into color. This, instead, is -- in a time of war, things happen gradually. What you are looking for are firm metrics about what is going on. And it is naive to think, suddenly, boom, you snap a finger and you've got an instant change in the situation.

On the other hand, it is going to be fair to ask, what has the Baghdad security plan accomplished? What has it done in terms of security within Baghdad? How has it affected al Qaeda? And furthermore, what is going on in some of the other areas which are going to be critical -- political progress, economic progress, and all those things? Because while we tend to talk a lot about the military component, it is far more comprehensive than that.

So what I would suggest is, rather than it's sort of a pivotal moment, it is the first opportunity to be able to take a look at what happens when you've got it up and running fully for a period of months, probably a couple of months, and people then can draw judgments about how best to proceed.

Q Tony, the President -- Jim is right -- that in the interview with Reuters a couple of weeks ago, the President, I believe, used the phrase, "critical moment," for September. Now you're saying it's not a pivotal moment. I mean, you don't seem on the same page with the President on that. Is it critical, or not?

MR. SNOW: No, the characterizations -- I'm just -- I think he's talking about a critical moment because it allows people again to take a look at what's happened with the security plan. You know, we have a lot of people saying, the plan hasn't worked. It's not even fully implemented. So I think we're parsing a little bit here. What I'm saying is if you are looking for a report that says, okay, the job is all done, we're complete, you're not going to find that in September. What you are going to find is: Attach preferred adjective here. You're going to have an opportunity to take a look at the metrics of what has happened in terms of not only what's gone on with U.S. forces, but also Iraqi forces, Iraqi police, provisional reconstruction teams, political progress, economic progress, all of those things. And that's an absolutely legitimate thing for everybody to look for.

Q Would you attach an adjective here?

MR. SNOW: No, I'm trying to stay out of the adjectival business.

Q Tony, again, I mean, the President said not just in the Reuters interview, but in others, that in September we will find out whether it's working. He's been very blunt --

MR. SNOW: Well, again, you'll be able to see what's going on at that juncture.

Q -- saying we'll be able to take a look and see -- see what's happening. He has said we'll know whether it's working in September.

MR. SNOW: Okay, but what I'm -- okay --

Q Is that what you think --

MR. SNOW: No, I think my concern is that the expectations that seem to be raised is that suddenly in September there -- there may be an expectation the report says, okay, all the problems are solved. No. But what will happen in September is that we will have an opportunity to assess what's going on. Yes, we will have an opportunity to see whether it is working, whether it is working. That does not mean that we'll have completed all the work, it will not be completely successful at that juncture -- is working where you have it in the motion of a present imperfect I think is fine. So --

Q If I could follow on --

Q Thank you, Professor Snow. (Laughter.)

Q -- the moment, though, for judging -- I understand this is being -- it's not going to be over then, but is it the right time to judge whether the new way forward is working?

MR. SNOW: Again, let's see -- we'll have to take a look. I just --

Q But that sounds like backpedaling.

MR. SNOW: No, it's not backpedaling. It's just -- it seems to me to be such a vast metaphysical question --

Q -- but there is -- wait a minute --

Q But the President has answered that question. The President has --

Q -- hang on. In this town there is --

MR. SNOW: I am hanging. (Laughter.)

Q Not so much you as everybody else. No matter what side of this issue you're on in this town, it has become a commonly accepted premise that in September there will be -- everyone is asking, when are we going to know, when are we going to know -- well, everyone has been talking about September. It sounds like you are suggesting something entirely different right now.

MR. SNOW: No, what I'm saying is in September you'll have an opportunity to have metrics. I think what we have been saying is you'll have an opportunity at that juncture to be able to do a sensible analysis of what happens when you've got all the forces in place for the Baghdad security plan.

Now, what's going to happen is that some people are going to try to make the argument, if the job is not done and if they haven't perfected it and if they haven't achieved all the -- then it's a failure. I want to guard against that, because I do think that there's an attempt --

Q Guard against, or inoculate --

MR. SNOW: No, I don't think it -- no, because -- this is not inoculation; it is humanly impossible to solve all this before September. All right?

Q But that's never been the --

MR. SNOW: Well, no, but I think what happens is -- no, I do think --

Q -- in that time.

MR. SNOW: No, I do think sometimes in the political framework -- please, one at a time, and let me continue to talk. I worry that sometimes that people are trying to over-hype this so that they're going to try to say, it all has to be resolved. So let me just try to say, no, we are not backing away from anything; yes, you will have an opportunity to see whether it is working, and we will have an opportunity also to judge how things

are -- how various programs are succeeding, in terms of the economic piece, the military piece and so on.

Q But, Tony, more importantly, if it isn't working, it's a time to reevaluate the current strategy.

MR. SNOW: What happens every day, Bret, as you know, because you've covered the Pentagon, is that you reevaluate the strategy constantly. And as we have always said, you try to respond to facts on the ground. For instance, there may be deployment decisions that people would have made on a charge several months ago where you're going to move forces around in a different way within Baghdad, or you're going to deploy to Diyala, or whatever the case may be.

So in point of fact, you are always adjusting, with the ultimate aim of trying to succeed. And I think rather than my trying to make characterizations about not merely what General Petraeus, but also Ambassador Crocker are going to report, let's just see what they have. And, obviously, we're going to have interim assessments and we're going to try to make data available to people so that they can get a fuller sense of what's going on.

Q Do you think that your perception of September and Capitol Hill's perception of September jive?

MR. SNOW: I don't know. We'll see. I mean, I think what Capitol Hill wants to see are signs of progress, and that's what we want to see, too.

Q This idea that you're always adjusting was language that you used a year ago, and then you rolled out a plan in January for a wholesale change. At what point -- isn't September the time when we're supposed to understand maybe not that it's worked, but that this wholesale change is a strategy to go with, or possibly an alternative --

MR. SNOW: Yes, I think that's safe -- I think that's safe to say, sure.

Q Going back to the U.S. attorneys. If the Democrats give in on the oath, are you willing to give in on the transcripts? For example, a transcript could be in the interest of everybody. We all know that if you actually have a transcript, everybody is on the same page, everybody is going --

MR. SNOW: Again, I'm not going to negotiate against ourselves. The point we made originally is, there is going to be pretty clear accounting of what anybody would say behind closed doors, because it is not as if you would simply have one questioner and one questionee. You would have the person being questioned surrounded by a phalanx of committee members and staffers, all of whom would be capable of putting together what we think would be an accurate record of what went on. But I'm not going to get into negotiating against ourselves on --

Q But if they're putting together an accurate record of what went on, then why not have a record-keeper actually put together a record of what went on?

MR. SNOW: It's a wonderful question, and again, I'm not going to negotiate with ourselves.

Q Tony, clarify this, because I'm a little confused. I understand this administration said and the President said, September we'll have a report card about the surge.

MR. SNOW: Right.

Q Okay, all right. Now, in answer to Ken's question, you

said September will be the first opportunity of a metric -- first meeting, in my mind, a series --

MR. SNOW: Well, of course. Not only do we hope that this is succeeding, but -- it is not as if you say, well, okay, final judgment on this. The fact is what we are hoping is that you will have signs of progress that will allow us benchmarks as we continue in support of the Iraqi democracy. Do not think of this as a moment where you pull the plug on the Iraqi security plan -- the Baghdad security plan.

Q I'm not saying pull the plug -- this was supposed to be some grandiose moment where the surge activity would -- that's what we've been told until this point.

MR. SNOW: Like I said, we have tried -- I have tried -- I'm glad you used that term, because that will explain why I've been very careful about how we try to characterize this --

Q -- but you can understand why everyone is asking the question.

MR. SNOW: -- because we don't think there are grandiose moments in this. There are attempts to have sober reflections on what's going on.

Q But, Tony, by its definition, a surge is supposed to be relatively short-term, right, not on and on and on? If you just have like a mini report card and September and say, we need another six months, maybe another six months, it's no longer a surge, right?

MR. SNOW: Well, if you take a look at what Baker-Hamilton had talked -- a surge is not sort of in and out. What you do is you bring forces to bear and you try to finish the job.

Q But then doesn't it become an escalation, as the Democrats said at the beginning of the surge? They said, if you don't put in --

MR. SNOW: Oh, my goodness.

Q Why are you rolling your eyes? Hold on a second. At the beginning, a surge -- the idea was a temporary increase to stabilize things. Now you're talking about --

MR. SNOW: No, Ed, what you're saying is -- what we're talking about is, yes, it will be a temporary increase, but on the other hand, when we get to September, those forces will have been -- all those forces together will have been in theater less than three months. So you need to --

Q Some of them have been there since February --

MR. SNOW: Yes, but the point is --

Q -- after the President announced in January.

MR. SNOW: Yes, and it --

Q So not three months. Some of them have actually been there.

MR. SNOW: Yes, but I -- I know. But I'm saying, you talk about the surge. The surge is not an overnight thing. As you just pointed out, it takes more than four months to get forces in theater. It takes another couple of months to get them fully integrated in theater. And therefore, what we're saying is, now that you've got all the forces in place, really by -- some of these, the forces will not be fully integrated until July or August. So what you're going to get is a preliminary look where you are going to be able to have some metrics about how it works when you've got all the pieces in place.

Q Just a little inside baseball here. The President talked today about Dan Bartlett's -- his role in this administration. There's been a lot of reporting on his influence and access with this President. How big is this shakeup, for somebody who is outside Washington --

MR. SNOW: It's not -- first, it's not a shakeup. I mean, Dan is a guy who has decided to move on. Dan Bartlett has one of the most extraordinary relationships with a politician I've ever seen. He is probably the most selfless aide I've ever encountered, because he gives the -- he and the President have a close, personal kind of relationship, I think probably unlike any aide and any President in quite a long time. And Dan also is somebody who cares enough about this President to be honest, sometimes ruthlessly so, but always in a way that's respectful. And he has decided -- he's got three young kids, he's got bills to pay, and having served the President for 14 years, he needs to move on. But I think he is somebody who is irreplaceable in that sense.

I think what I would suggest that you take a look at bringing in somebody of the quality of Ed Gillespie, it gives you a sign that this White House continues to attract first-rate talent who are willing to support this President. Now, Ed is obviously not going to have the same kind of tight, personal relationship with the President, although he's going to have full access and they are friendly, but that kind of a personal relationship is not something you can duplicate. On the other hand, Ed also brings enormous talents and experience to bear, and he's going to make a terrific addition to the White House.

Q Is part of the job Ed might have is to shore up conservatives who have lost confidence in this administration?

MR. SNOW: No, but I think it is clear that one of the things we're doing is reaching out to conservatives and making it clear that we're all on the same team.

Q On the subpoenas -- how long after a White House official leaves the White House are they covered by executive --

MR. SNOW: I have no idea. That's a question that you'll float to legal counsel, but I'm not an attorney.

Q How soon can Congress expect a response on this?

MR. SNOW: Well, first thing we've got to do is take a look at it. So we'll see. It will be --

Q Does the White House call the shots at this point with Harriet Miers --

MR. SNOW: Again, that's a legal question that -- I think what happens is -- well, I don't know. Get back to us, we'll get you in touch with lawyers. I don't want to try to pretend to be a junior lawyer, because I'll mess it up.

Les, and then Peter.

Q Yes, thank you, Tony. Two questions. The Los Angeles

Times and The Washington Post both report that Dr. James Holsinger, the President's nominee for Surgeon General, has been denounced by homosexual activists, as well as by presidential candidates Edwards and Clinton, because in 1991, Dr. Holsinger wrote that sex between people of the same sex, especially men, could lead to many sexual -- serious health problems. And given the medical accuracy of the doctor's statement, what is the President's reaction to such attacks on this physician who is his nominee?

MR. SNOW: You know what? I haven't asked him about that, so I don't know.

Q Wait a minute. The National Organization of Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays has issued a statement that the denunciations of Dr. Holsinger are bigoted. The President, in supporting him, would not disagree with this, would he?

MR. SNOW: Again, I'm not going to speculate on that, Les.

Q As you know, Secretary Leavitt is going to hold court on this report. Can I ask you a question on one facet of it?

MR. SNOW: Yes, if I can answer it.

Q All right, thanks. It's called a report on issues raised by the Virginia Tech tragedy, but one issue that is not covered that has been raised is the issue of changes in gun laws. Why didn't they take that up at all in -- there's a lot of calls for communications and training and better information sharing.

MR. SNOW: Well, actually, there is discussion in there of gun laws, and specifically trying to do background checks.

Q Right, but that's --

MR. SNOW: So what you're asking is, should this -- why did they not consider gun control?

Q Yes.

MR. SNOW: Because that really wasn't within the purview of what they decided that they were going to look at. I mean, it's pretty clear the list of things that they're going to take a look at, which is to examine the system, figure out where there were flaws that, in fact, could have prevented this from taking place, and therefore -- for instance, in terms of information, you had some people really inhibited in such a way that you couldn't pass on information that might be relevant and could have saved some lives.

So I think what they were doing is taking a look at the laws as they now stand and where, in fact, there may have been misunderstandings or unnecessary barriers to try and make this situation better. Some of those other issues, for instance, gun control, that tends to be an issue for Virginia, and I know that the Governor of Virginia has got his own separate inquiry.

Q What would the President accept regarding immigration reform? And does he think he will get an immigration bill this year?

MR. SNOW: Sarah, can I just please beg one and all to stop asking us how we're going to negotiate things? I mean, it's -- the idea of somehow I'm going to negotiate from the podium, I'm not going to do it. We certainly hope and expect that we'll get immigration reform this year. We think it's an important issue, we think it's an important problem, we think we've come up with a serious solution to that problem. We look forward to input not

only from senators, but eventually from members of the House. But certainly, I am not going to sit up here and bargain about it.

Q Tony, just a clarification on the bombing in Iraq today. The military spokesman in Baghdad is on the record as saying this was an inside job by the Iraqi police and the Iraqi army. You were saying, if I understand you correctly, that you're not sure about that. So which is --

MR. SNOW: No, what I'm saying is, you've got to let the investigation be completed. I'm not trying to cast dispersions on them. The fact is, when we came in here, we had not received a full accounting, and people are taking a look at it. If it's an inside job, then obviously, you attack it in a certain way and you try to figure out what's going on. I think what I said is, you try to ascertain the facts on the ground and respond appropriately, and that remains the case.

Q Tony, a question on Iran. As far as Iran is concerned, one, they have not given up their nuclear program, and two, they are not only supporting terrorism in Iraq, but also now there's a report Iran is supporting terrorism in Afghanistan. So where do you think President is stands now? What steps he can take now because it's not going to go --

MR. SNOW: Well, first, one thing we have said is that it is unacceptable for Iran to continue supporting terror, whether it be in Iraq, or recent reports, and Secretary Gates confirmed it not so long ago, a lot of Iranian weaponry making its way into Afghanistan.

We also believe that the best way to proceed is through diplomatic means. That was a topic of conversation at some length with our partners at the G8 summit. And we continue to try to find ways to put pressure on the government of Iran so that it not only suspends its progress, or what we think is progress toward a nuclear program, but also plays a constructive role within the region.

Q Tony, is the watch the President displayed today the same watch from Albania?

MR. SNOW: Yes, it is -- actually, it is. (Laughter.) It is -- yes, he -- thank you for saying that. He pointed it out to us in the Oval today. That is, in fact, the watch that he was wearing in Albania.

END

1:44 P.M. EDT

#110-06/13