

And we've seen that he's been willing to take some of those steps, particularly in the arrests that I mentioned just a short while ago. That's an indication that he is making some tough decisions that have possible security and political implications for him, but that he recognizes that the situation won't improve unless he moves forward on those fronts.

Q Thanks.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Sure.

Q There was an emphasis when Bush was in Baghdad that the future of Iraq was in the hands of the Iraqis. Do you all worry that Maliki's visit here will again fuel the perception that the United States is holding the reins on this whole thing?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I'm not concerned about that because I think that there's plenty of room for that to be true, while it also to be true that we are heavily invested in the success of Iraq. And so we have enormous interests in how it's progressing and in supporting its government and supporting the Prime Minister in his efforts to be successful.

So I think that the two messages of partnership and commitment on the part of the United States for leaders who are doing the right things, who are making the right choices is compatible with -- ultimately it's up to Iraqis to make the situation in Iraq work. And I think that's more true than ever given the increasing sectarian challenges.

Q I got back in line. You said at the outset of your comments that this is going to be quintessential working visit, not pomp and circumstance, and the opportunity to get some work done. I'm just wondering what is at the top of the President's list of deliverables that he would like to get from Maliki during this working visit?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I would put it, just if I might phrase the question a little bit differently, what is on the top of the President's list in terms of things that he wants to talk to Maliki frankly about and to strategize with him jointly about, and I would put the situation in Baghdad very high on the list. And I would put the efforts at reconciliation right alongside because the two are really intertwined.

Thank you all, thanks for your time, and have a good weekend.

END 5:28 P.M. EDT

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