

primarily meeting other Cabinet secretaries in the U.S. government.

On Wednesday, he'll be going up and spending quite a bit of time in Congress, really the first half of the day he'll be up on the Hill. Then he'll spend some time with our troops, and then he'll meet with, again, more Cabinet officials -- DNI Negroponte and others -- and then he'll spend some time meeting with prominent non-governmental people in the Iraqi -- or in the Washington area. And then there's a couple of things still up in the open in terms of what he's going to do for dinner that night. And there's also talk about whether there will be more opportunity for him to talk to the press. And as I mentioned, he will be going to New York on Thursday, and that will be Thursday morning. And his schedule is still being firmed up there, but he's looking at the possibility of making some public remarks up in New York, as well.

So that is the schedule, and if you just bare with me a little bit longer, what I'd actually really like to do is spend just a few minutes talking about the context of this visit. And some people have asked, is this a great time for him to be visiting Washington, and I would say, certainly it's an appropriate time for them to be visiting together. They are, again, building on the relationship that they began to solidify on a personal, face-to-face level in Baghdad in June, and that's been about five weeks, and it's actually -- it's a good amount of time, and a lot of things have transpired in that time for the two leaders to come together and talk about the situation.

Since they met in Baghdad, there's been some progress on a number of the key priorities that Prime Minister Maliki laid out for the President, or sort of identified for the President. I think many of you will remember that the President came back from Iraq, and one of the things that he was most impressed with was that Maliki was able to identify a number of political priorities, and that these struck the President as the right ones, and that also he didn't have a list of 101 things that he was going to do in the first 60 days -- that this, much more, these are the things that are most critical to Iraq's success.

So he's made some progress on those key priorities, and there's been some disappointments, as well. So the idea is for the two of them to get together. And I'm sure the President will begin by reaffirming U.S. support for Iraq and for Maliki's government, and then I expect that they'll get into a pretty hands-on kinds of discussions about some of the key issues.

And just to flag some of the categories, as I mentioned, since the President was in Baghdad, Prime Minister Maliki announced a reconciliation plan, and the Baghdad security plan started around that time, as well. He's also announced an economic plan, and he's embarked on some personal diplomacy to help with Iraq's relationship with some of the Arab states.

And I'll just take a couple of minutes to highlight a few things in each of these areas, really beginning with political reconciliation. The expectation is that on this coming Saturday there will be the first meeting of the National Reconciliation Council, or what they're calling the National Council for Reconciliation and Dialogue. This will be probably the most prominent thing that has happened since Maliki has rolled out his initiative and made reconciliation a priority.

So while we understand that he's gotten a number of groups expressing interest and talking to him about reconciliation and there's been a mixed reaction, but generally a positive reaction from many