

done in a short time frame to produce immediate results, that's true. But whether or not there are any tools left in the arsenal to tackle sectarianism, my answer is, yes, there are. And I would put those in the category some of them are political, and that is forging ahead with the reconciliation plan in all of its dimensions, whether it's the de-Baathification commission I mentioned, whether it's the detainee release program that the Prime Minister has already released large numbers of detainees, whether it's dialogue between the Iraqi government and other parts of society, or whether it's sort of a national dialogue through the committees that I mentioned.

And there's also steps that can be taken in a security situation -- again, the Baghdad situation being so critical -- steps to hopefully improve that situation. Again, it won't be dramatic; it won't be overnight, but that that will have a very real impact on the overall situation in the country.

Q Thank you.

Q I have a question about politics. Can you tell us what the message that the President is trying to send this week to the Iraqi people and to the American people out of this meeting? What's the kind of political message you're trying to send with this meeting?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: What's the message that we're trying to send, or -- I'm sorry, I lost you for a bit there -- or that the Prime Minister is trying to send?

Q No, I was going to try to say, from the American point of view, there's a political message that I assume you want to send both to the Iraqi people and also to the Americans, and I'm wondering if you could describe what that message would be?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think at the most basic level, the message would be one of a continued commitment to Iraq, one of -- kind of a sense of pragmatism, that we are cognizant of the challenges in Iraq -- we, meaning both the Prime Minister and the President -- and that we are working very diligently to constantly assess the tools and the approaches we're using to tackle those challenges, and adjusting them where we're necessary.

So our commitment is still there, that our interest in -- or our major national security interest in a successful Iraq is as essential as ever, and that we are engaged from the President on down at constantly adjusting our strategy so that we have the greatest chances of success.

Q One other question, just on the sectarian violence. Does the President feel that the Prime Minister is doing all that he can to address sectarianism within the security forces and the military in Iraq? And is he going to use this as an opportunity to ask him to do more, or to do anything specifically?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I can't say at this point, because the meeting hasn't happened, whether or not he'll make specific requests of him. I think that the tone of the overall meeting, I expect it to be one -- a definite one of partnership, but also that the President will be pushing on Prime Minister Maliki to take the steps that he can take to address this situation, to underscore that he can be sure of American support for taking those hard steps.