

take a look at the novelty of democracy within it, you talk about the importance of dealing with neighbors -- you talk about all of those things in a time where there has been a concerted effort on the part of various insurgencies to blow up the democracy -- not to vie for authority, not to come up with a competing ideology, but simply to create a failed state, and it is obvious that the Prime Minister has an enormous challenge.

We understand it. We also understand the absolute importance of succeeding in Iraq by creating -- by helping Prime Minister Maliki create a government that can defend, sustain and govern itself, that can be an ally in the war on terror, in many ways simply through the sheer fact of its existence and stability. So you put all those together. We understand that more needs to be done. We also understand that it is going to require the resourcefulness and commitment of both sides, and both sides are, in fact, fully committed to it.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: One more question on this topic.

Q Can we please go back to something --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Patiently waiting.

Q Yes, the memo, it says at a certain that despite the reassuring words of Maliki, on the grounds there are reports of non-delivery of services to Sunni areas, an intervention by the Prime Minister obvious to stop military action against Shia targets. So how can you trust him, looking forward, if your own military command show distrust in him?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, I'll take -- and my colleague can add to this -- but subsequent to this, you have, in fact, seen military operations in Shia areas going after militias, and you have also seen very aggressive activity, again on the part of the Ministry of Interior, and that would involve police units that apparently have been involved in collaborative efforts with militias. So if you want to find out -- if you want to do it, you take a look at your own news clippings from the last three weeks.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: And I think one important point on that, when it comes to targeting Shias, there has been high coordination on going after death squad leaders. There are times when there has been -- there could have been better communication about certain operations in which the Prime Minister complained about, but he publicly made clear later that the people we were going after were very -- it was justified, because there were pre-cleared discussions about the specific people. But how and when the operation took place, there could have been better coordination on, and we've recognized that.

That's part of the conversations we'll be having, we talk about operational control of security forces, how these issues are dealt with, because you can't look at a military operation in a vacuum. They have political consequences. And it's to make sure that the political strategy and the military strategy are constantly integrated and linked up. And that's one of the key issues which they'll address, because as you give greater control and autonomy to Iraqi security forces you have a lot of complicated issues with regards to that -- embedded U.S. troops, how they will conduct operations vis-a-vis coalition