

Many of the joint collaborations that I and my fellow senior administration official have referred to have taken place subsequent to the writing of this memo.

Q I'm sorry?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The joint committees that were formed in the video conference -- that the two agreed to form, those activities have been ongoing. The bulk of those have occurred since the writing of the memo.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I'd also add that in many respects, the administration and the embassy, as well as commanders on the ground, wouldn't be doing their job if we didn't raise these types of probing questions and assessments. Anytime you're doing a fundamental assessment, as we are, you're going to, of course, ask these questions. But if you read carefully in the memo, based upon some of the recommendations that the memo suggests, as well as some other -- where it says that reporting shows that he is actually willing to address his party politics and his issues within his political constraints

-- I think demonstrates that the assessment we have made is that it is a capability issue. And that's why that's a bulk of the memo, in the back discusses about increasing his capability.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: And speaking of which, I know we're kind of doing a Mutt and Jeff act here, but we'll try to get you as much as we can. If you take a look at the memo, some of the actions that are already mentioned and contemplated within the context of the memo have taken place. For instance, Iraq has supported renewal of the U.N. MNF mandate, which was renewed yesterday. I've already mentioned the discussion about de-Baathification. It is clear that Prime Minister Maliki has begun taking a very hard look at the Ministry of the Interior, particularly with regard to police forces.

So a number of the action items mentioned in the memo already, for public consumption, have begun to take place. So keep in mind that when you have a situation -- when you're in wartime, you're going to ask tough questions. You're also going to start outlining actions that you take in response to challenges that are ongoing, and they continue to do that.

Q How is it anything other than a slap at al-Maliki to say that there are three possibilities and one of them is that he is ignorant of what's happening on the streets of his own country?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Because the bulk of the memo demonstrates that the judgment is that it's a capability issue. Just because you raise the range of possibilities doesn't mean you're casting judgment in declaring that one aspect of that range. And the evidence is contrary to that, when you look at the bulk of the memo and the assessments we have made very clear, publicly, as well as, as we said, the itinerary or the key agenda item for this meeting -- is not to say it's a slap in the face, but it's, how do we grow his capability.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Furthermore, you have to address questions that have been raised in the public square, and simply because one says you have to ask the question does not mean