

Q Well, I mean, you've been consulting --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, let me put it this way.

Q -- with the Iraqis. They've been telling you what they think their capabilities are. Do you think they have that capability?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yes. We wouldn't be talking about this if we didn't think they had the capability. Furthermore, there has been a pretty clear assessment -- and you'll see this reflected in some of the fact sheets that you will get -- in some of the problems with some of the Iraqi military and some of the police force: absenteeism, those sorts of problems. So there's been a very clear-eyed look at what it takes to make it more professional. So there is training, there is embedding -- one of the Baker-Hamilton commission recommendations was considerably more embedding. And so what you're going to see is U.S. forces embedding deeper down to the company level, so that you are going to be working on the real basics, in terms of fitness and professionalism and that sort of thing within the forces.

So this is an effort where we're going to be working at much closer levels, making sure that they're properly equipped -- Barry McCaffrey has talked about that. So there are a whole lot of different pieces here. This is not simply U.S. forces going in following the Iraqis. There are much more determined efforts, in terms of training, coordination, development of capability when it comes to logistics, communications, intelligence on the part of the Iraqis; and also, again, underlined three times, the importance of coming up with rules of engagement that are going to be consistent with making it clear that the law applies to everybody, and furthermore, the forces are going to be able to do the essential jobs, because you cannot move on to complete the political business until you've taken care of the security situation.

Q One more. Are any other countries adding to their forces levels there?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Other countries are going to be involved, and the President will be -- he will not be talking about other countries' military commitments, but it is clear that a very important part of what's going on here is the continued engagement and involvement of other countries in the region, because this, again, is the central front in the war on terror, but there are important other considerations. And I think people in the neighborhood increasingly understand the importance of a successful Iraq.

Q -- are you talking about Iran and Syria?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The President will talk about Iran and Syria, absolutely.

Q I was referring to the current coalition countries -- are any of --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Again, no announcements on anything like that, and that's not part of the discussion.