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Exchange With Reporters in Baghdad, Iraq
April 7, 2009

President's Visit to Iraq

Q. Sir, can you tell us what your primary purpose is in being here?

The President. To say thank you to the troops. They are doing extraordinary work. General Odierno has been helping to lead a very effective operation here. We want to be fully briefed, and nothing does that better than face-to-face meetings.

I'll have the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Maliki and President Talabani while I'm here. Obviously, we've spent a lot of time trying to get Afghanistan right. But I think it's important for us to remember that there's still a lot of work to be done here. And in addition to thanking our troops, I also want to send a strong message to our diplomatic corps and our civilians that they're going to be critical to our success here.

We've made significant political progress. You've seen a greater willingness on the part of all the factions in Iraq to resolve their issues politically and through nonviolent means. But with the national elections coming up, many of the unresolved issues may be brought to a head. And it's very important for us to use all of our influence to encourage parties to resolve these issues in ways that are equitable and fair. And I think that my presence here can help do that.

Okay. Thank you, guys.

Not to mention, Chip [Chip Reid, CBS News], I thought you guys hadn't been on the road long enough. [*Laughter*] I know that you didn't feel like going home. We had underworked you, so I figured one more stop.

Meeting With Iraqi Leaders

Q. Did you say you're meeting with or talking to——

The President. I will be meeting with them face to face.

Q. Face to face?

Q. Will that be here, Mr. President?

The President. Yes, in the near vicinity.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:24 p.m. in Al Faw Palace at Camp Victory. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Forces—Iraq. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: Baghdad, Iraq.

Locations: Baghdad, Iraq.

Names: Maliki, Nuri al-; Odierno, Raymond T.; Talabani, Jalal.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. policy review; Armed Forces, U.S. : Service members :: Service and dedication; Iraq : Democracy efforts; Iraq : Elections; Iraq : President; Iraq : President Obama's visit; Iraq : Prime Minister; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment.

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