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MR. FLEISCHER: Well, the president has held a series of meeting with his National Security Council and has discussed the various legal issue involved in the applicability of the Geneva Convention. In all cases, the president will reflect a policy that is a given with American's traditions of treating military detainees well, treating them humanely, giving them full rations of food, three meals a day, medical treatment. All of that will be a given no matter what decisions the president makes, because that's a reflection of the values of the United States and the way our military treats people.

The legal issues that are involved in terms of the applicability of the Geneva Convention, particularly given any distinctions that may or may not be made between the al Qaeda and the Taliban, are issues that have been a subject of discussion with the National Security Council, and that's something that you will hear from at the appropriate time.

Q What role did international pressure play in the deliberations?

MR. FLEISCHER: You know, this has only been a discussion that was centered around the thoughts of the national security team. And that national security team, as you know, has always said that these detainees should not be treated as prisoners of war because they don't conform to the requirements of Article IV of the Geneva Convention, which details what type of treatment would be given to people in accordance with POW standards. And that's a very easily understood, legal doctrine of Article IV. For example, the detainees in Guantanamo do not wear uniforms. They're not visibly identifiable. They don't belong to a military hierarchy. All of those are prerequisites under Article IV in the Geneva Convention, which would be required in order to determine somebody's a POW.

There's a broader issue about the important principles of the Geneva Convention and the president's belief in the Geneva Convention as an important government document. And you will hear more about it.

Q (Off mike.)

Q Ari.

Q Sorry, just one more, if I could. What do you lose if Taliban fighters are declared eligible under the full provisions for Article IV of the Geneva Convention versus the status that they enjoy right now?

MR. FLEISCHER: Well, that's not an issue under discussion, John, because the determination has already been made that neither the Taliban nor the al Qaeda are prisoners of war. You've heard that repeatedly from the Department of Defense, from this podium, so that's not under discussion.

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Q Ari.

MR. FLEISCHER: Francine.

Q Ari, why is the president sending the vice president to the Mideast?

MR. FLEISCHER: The vice president is going to travel to the Middle East and other nations from March 10th to March 20th at the president's request. He'll visit U.S. forces as well as he'll have meetings with heads of state and governments and foreign ministers in Kuwait, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Turkey, Oman, Jordan and Israel.

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