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The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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## **Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney, 9/14/2012**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

11:42 A.M. EDT

MR. CARNEY: All right, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thanks for being here.

Before I get started, I think you saw our updated guidance. As you now know, the President and the First Lady will be attending the transfer of remains ceremony at Andrews -- Joint Base Andrews at 2:15 p.m. That is for the four U.S. personnel who were killed in Libya. And then he will return here to the White House. And there will be press coverage, pool coverage.

Q Secretary Clinton will be joining the President?

MR. CARNEY: I believe that's the case. I would refer you to the State Department.

Q Any remarks out there?

MR. CARNEY: Yes, the President will have remarks.

And with that, I'll take your questions.

Q Jay, thanks very much. On the Libya attacks, was there any intelligence in advance that some kind of attack could take place, especially because so many embassies were taking precautions because of 9/11? Was there any advance warning at all?

MR. CARNEY: I have seen that report, and the story is absolutely wrong. We were not aware of any actionable intelligence indicating that an attack on the U.S. mission in Benghazi was planned or imminent. That report is false.

Q On the sequestration, I know you all are delivering the report today. Is there any reason that you didn't deliver it last week as the law required?

MR. CARNEY: I think I took this question last week and explained that it's obviously a complex piece of business and that we would have it by the end of this week, and we are releasing it later today.

Q Jay, as you know, the unrest in the Middle East is spreading to other embassies -- U.S. embassies. The President's critics are saying this is an indictment of his handling of the Arab Spring, that this has given rise to further inflamed sentiment among Islamists. What's his response to that?

MR. CARNEY: Let me say a couple of things. First of all, we are obviously closely monitoring developments in the region today. You saw that following the incidents in response to this video, the President directed the administration to take a number of steps to prepare for continued unrest. And I noted yesterday in my gaggle that Fridays have tended to be days when protests are larger in the Muslim world, and we were anticipating that.

When it comes to criticism, I would note that many observers, commentators, foreign policy experts, as well as elected officials -- both Democrats and Republicans -- have pointed out that the criticism in particular from Governor Romney and his team, in what seems to be an attempt to score a political point, has been both factually wrong and poorly timed.

Now is a time when Americans should be coming together. The President is attending a ceremony this afternoon for the return of remains of four U.S. personnel who were killed in Libya as a result of this unrest. And his focus is on ensuring that U.S. personnel and our facilities are protected. That is why he directed his administration to ensure that security would be enhanced around the world at our diplomatic facilities.

He has, as you know, because we've read out these phone calls, had numerous conversations with leaders in the region including the Presidents of Egypt and Libya. He sent a message, a personal message to the leader of Turkey, Prime Minister Erdogan, asking for his assistance to speak out against the violence. And I think you saw that the Prime Minister did that. And the President is very appreciative of these statements and the actions these leaders have taken personally.

President Morsi again today as well as yesterday has spoken out against any violence and committed himself to protecting U.S. diplomatic facilities and personnel in Egypt.

We also need to understand that this is a fairly volatile situation and it is in response not to United States policy, not to obviously the administration, not to the American people. It is in response to a video, a film that we have judged to be reprehensible and disgusting. That in no way justifies any violent reaction to it, but this is not a case of protests directed at the United States writ large or at U.S. policy. This is in response to a video that is offensive to Muslims.

Again, this is not in any way justifying violence, and we've spoken very clearly out against that and condemned it. And the President is making sure in his conversations with leaders around the region that they are committed, as hosts to diplomatic facilities, to protect both personnel and buildings and other facilities that are part of the U.S. representation in those countries.

Q Let me just follow up on the sequestration as well. Members of Congress are pointing to the fact that the report that you're due to release today could spotlight the loss of numerous jobs,

many of them in defense, criticizing the administration for allowing that to potentially happen and potentially weakening U.S. national security as a result. What's your response to that?

MR. CARNEY: I think it's important to step back and look at what the sequester is. The sequester was put into place as part of the Budget Control Act in order to compel Congress to do its job. The sequester was designed to be bad policy, to be onerous, to be objectionable to both Democrats and Republicans. And it is important to remember that Democrats and Republicans voted in majorities in both houses of Congress in support of this. And some Republican leaders who are now decrying the sequester were very vocal in their support of it as part of this package, the Budget Control Act, last year.

The whole point of it was to compel Congress to take action to further reduce our deficit, to find \$1.2 trillion in additional cuts -- cuts that should come in a balanced, thoughtful way through policy decisions and not in a kind of across-the-board draconian manner that is written into the sequester.

What has been an obstacle to the achievement of reasonable cuts that would account for the \$1.2 trillion called for in the Budget Control Act has been the adamant refusal of Republicans to accept the fundamental principle that we ought to deal with our fiscal challenges in a balanced way. Republicans have, unfortunately, made clear that they would rather see cuts in defense that could harm our national security, cuts in education and innovation, research and development, in border security, cuts in vital programs and investments that we make as a nation, rather than ask millionaires and billionaires to pay a single dollar more in taxes.

That's not a responsible approach. It is not a common-sense approach. It is not a balanced approach. One thing that the House could do in its few days here in Washington before it goes off again on recess is follow the Senate's lead and pass a tax cut -- an extension of a tax cut or tax cuts -- for the middle class, 98 percent of the American people. These are tax cuts that everybody in Washington agrees on -- Democrats, Republicans, independents. The President agrees with them. Republicans say they want those tax cuts extended. Why won't they pass them? Because they insist that millionaires and billionaires need a tax cut, too.

The President believes we can't afford that. And we can argue about that, we can argue about whether or not the top 2 percent of taxpayers in America deserve another tax cut as part of the election, and then that can be decided by the election.

But why not, for the sake of the middle class, for the sake of economic stability, for the sake of dealing with a large portion of the fiscal cliff, pass the tax cut for 98 percent of the American people today? That would be a very welcome sign I think to the American people that Congress is taking its responsibility seriously and Congress is addressing these challenges in a thoughtful and bipartisan and balanced way.

Jake.

Q My colleague from the Associated Press asked you a direct question, was there any intelligence suggesting that there would be an attack on the U.S. consulates. You said that a

story -- referred to a story being false and said there was no actionable intelligence. But you didn't answer his question. Was there any intelligence, period -- intelligence, period -- suggesting that there was going to be an attack on either the embassy --

MR. CARNEY: There was no intelligence that in any way could have been acted on to prevent these attacks. It is -- I mean, I think the DNI spokesman was very declarative about this that the report is false. The report suggested that there was intelligence that was available prior to this that led us to believe that this facility would be attacked, and that is false.

Q Why was there not adequate security around Ambassador Stevens?

MR. CARNEY: In terms of the security at the Benghazi facility or post, I would have to refer you to the State Department for specifics about what security was there. There was a security presence. It was unfortunately not enough to resist the attacks that we saw and resulted in the tragic loss of life. But there was security.

It is also the case that in reaction to this the President has ordered that we review all of our security arrangements for embassy facilities and other diplomatic facilities around the world. But in terms of the specific security that was in place at Benghazi, I'd have to refer you to the State Department.

Q Wouldn't it seem logical that the anniversary of 9/11 would be a time that you would want to have extra security around diplomats and military posts?

MR. CARNEY: Well, as you know, we are very vigilant around anniversaries like 9/11. The President is always briefed and brought up to speed on all the precautions being taken. But let's be --

Q But saying you're very vigilant and being very vigilant are different things.

MR. CARNEY: Jake, let's be clear, these protests were in reaction to a video that had spread to the region --

Q At Benghazi? What happened at Benghazi --

MR. CARNEY: We certainly don't know. We don't know otherwise. We have no information to suggest that it was a preplanned attack. The unrest we've seen around the region has been in reaction to a video that Muslims, many Muslims find offensive. And while the violence is reprehensible and unjustified, it is not a reaction to the 9/11 anniversary that we know of, or to U.S. policy.

Q But the group around the Benghazi post was well armed. It was a well-coordinated attack. Do you think it was a spontaneous protest against a movie?

MR. CARNEY: Look, this is obviously under investigation, and I don't have --

Q But your operating assumption is that that was in response to the video, in Benghazi? I just want to clear that up. That's the framework? That's the operating assumption?

MR. CARNEY: Look, it's not an assumption --

Q Because there are administration officials who don't -- who dispute that, who say that it looks like this was something other than a protest.

MR. CARNEY: I think there has been news reports on this, Jake, even in the press, which some of it has been speculative. What I'm telling you is this is under investigation. The unrest around the region has been in response to this video. We do not, at this moment, have information to suggest or to tell you that would indicate that any of this unrest was preplanned.

What is true about Libya is that -- well, a couple of things. One, is it's one of the more pro-American countries in the region. Two, it is a very new government; it is a country that has just come out of a revolution and a lot of turmoil, and there are certainly a lot of armed groups. So the fact that there are weapons in the region and the new government is not -- is still building up its capacities in terms of security and its ability to ensure the security of facilities, is not necessarily reflective of anything except for the remarkable transformation that's been going on in the region.

Q Jay, my last question. It was said that what happened on 9/11 was a failure of imagination, failure of American policymakers and counterterrorism officials to anticipate the kind of attack that could have taken place. This would seem to be the exact opposite. Was this a failure by the Obama administration? Did the President and his administration mess up in any way?

MR. CARNEY: Jake, again, what we have seen is unrest around the region in response to a video that Muslims find offensive, many Muslims find offensive. We have seen incidents like this in the past, in reaction to other actions -- cartoons and other actions that have been taken, that have been -- have led to protests and violence in the region. And we have managed those situations, and we are working to ensure that our diplomatic personnel and our diplomatic facilities are secure as we deal with the response to this video, which we believe is offensive and disgusting.

Q So that's a no? Entirely the fault of the filmmaker?

MR. CARNEY: Again, I don't think -- I think you have to understand what is happening currently in the region and what it is a response to. This is not -- this has been in --

Q I don't think I need to understand that. I think the people who protect the embassies need to understand it.

MR. CARNEY: The cause of the unrest was a video, and that continues today, as you know, as we anticipated. And it may continue for some time. We are working with governments around the region to remind them of their responsibilities to provide security to diplomatic personnel and

facilities, and we are ensuring that more resources are put in place to protect our embassies and consulates and our personnel in these parts of the world where unrest is occurring.

Q Thank you.

Q You've mentioned a number of times now that this was in response to a video or a film. Would you not agree, though, that it's moved beyond that? That some are stirring violence by focusing on U.S. policy, or targeting the U.S. in general? That it's no longer just about the film?

MR. CARNEY: Well, the reason why there is unrest is because of the film; this is in response to the film. I don't doubt --

Q Well, that's what sparked it. You think that's what sparked it.

MR. CARNEY: We do think that's what sparked it.

Q Right. But it's moved beyond that, hasn't it?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I don't -- we obviously are not polling protesters to find out what their motivations are. There is no question that there's anti-American sentiment in various countries around the Middle East; that's not a discovery I think we've made today. What is the case is that the protesters in these countries are not representative of the broader sentiment in those countries, at least in the sense that -- sentiment that would say that the reaction, the proper reaction to a film that is offensive is violence. As I said yesterday, that's not in keeping with Islam, and it's certainly something that we do not accept. And we have made clear to leaders in the region that they need to make clear that it is not an acceptable reaction to a film, however offensive it might be.

Again, this is not a film that the United States government had anything to do with. We reject its message and its contents. We find it both disgusting and reprehensible. America has a history of religious tolerance and respect for religious beliefs, and that history goes back to our nation's founding. But there is absolutely -- as I've said, absolutely no justification at all for responding to this movie with violence, and we are making -- we are working, rather, to make sure that Muslims around the globe hear that message.

Q It's my understanding that at least four people have been arrested in the death of the Americans. Does the President think that whoever is arrested for this violence should be tried here in the U.S.?

MR. CARNEY: This is an ongoing investigation. We're obviously working with our -- with the Libyan government on this matter. The President has made clear that he wants the assailants, the attackers to be brought to justice. But I am not going to prejudge outcomes or courses of action as this investigation is underway.

Q And then another question on the phone call that the President had with Benjamin Netanyahu. Is it correct that the President refused to lay down a red line in terms of what Iran shouldn't cross with its nuclear program?

MR. CARNEY: This has been an ongoing discussion in the press that's not specific to the phone call -- the one of many that the President has had with Prime Minister Netanyahu. The President's red line has been clear. The President has made clear that he is committed to preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. We are completely in sync with Israel on that matter. There is no daylight between the United States and Israel when it comes to the absolute commitment to preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

We are pursuing a policy that includes incredibly intense punitive sanctions, unprecedented in history against Iran, of sanctions that are in place as a result of diplomatic work that has created an international consensus that did not exist prior to President Obama taking office and that has resulted, again, in unprecedented pressure and isolation for the regime in Tehran.

There is still time and space for that course to be pursued, because the best way to ensure that Iran does not have a nuclear weapon, does not acquire a nuclear weapon is to force and compel Iran to make the decision that it needs to forego its nuclear weapons ambitions, get right with the world, abide by its international obligations under the United Nations, and rejoin the community of nations by doing so.

It is also the case that this President has made absolutely clear that he does not remove any option from the table in terms of fulfilling his commitment to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. And we've also made clear that the window of opportunity here in terms of pursuing the diplomatic course will not remain open indefinitely.

What is a fact is that we have eyes onto the Iranian nuclear program and we would be aware of any so-called breakout move by the Iranians towards building a nuclear weapon. That has not occurred, but that window of opportunity will close at some point. And Iran needs to take seriously its responsibilities and to forego and forsake its nuclear weapons ambitions.

Nancy.

Q I want to go back to Jake's question for a minute because it seems like the point he's asking is not what the cause of the unrest was, but whether there are lessons to be learned by this administration or by the State Department, or by the military about safeguarding diplomatic personnel or restricting their movements, especially in a country as volatile as Libya.

MR. CARNEY: Well, this is under active investigation and it's certainly a reasonable question. And it stands to reason that there may be lessons learned, as there always are when you have investigations into incidents like this.

My point was simply that we are responding to and coping with and dealing with, with countries around the globe, unrest brought about by this offensive video, and taking action to ensure that security is enhanced and augmented at diplomatic facilities around the globe.



Q On Egypt, can you clear up whether the country is an ally or not? The State Department says it is; the President says it's not an ally, but it's not an enemy.

MR. CARNEY: I think you may have heard me, anyway, address this yesterday. Let me be clear: Egypt is a critical, strategic partner of the United States. As you know, the President had an important conversation with President Morsi very early yesterday morning, very late at night in Colorado, about the need to protect our embassy and our personnel in Cairo, and the need to denounce the violence.

President Morsi expressed his condolences for the tragic loss of American life in Libya, and emphasized that Egypt would honor its obligation to ensure the safety of American personnel. The President is very appreciative of the statement President Morsi made and for the actions he has taken to date to secure our embassy.

Let me make clear that the President's interview with Telemundo was not in any way an effort to change our relationship with Egypt. We have had a longstanding partnership with Egypt and have supported their transition to democracy, and we are now working to build our relationship with what is obviously a new government.

Q We were told that the President was blunt and perturbed in that conversation with President Morsi. What was he concerned specifically about when it comes to the way that President Morsi handled the early hours of this unrest?

MR. CARNEY: The President was very clear with President Morsi about Egypt's responsibilities as a host nation to provide security to diplomatic facilities and diplomatic personnel. And it was a very productive conversation, as I said yesterday, and it was substantive and long. I wouldn't necessarily use the adjectives you did to describe how the President felt about the call. In fact, it was a very focused and productive conversation.

Q And on the sequester, can you describe for us a little bit about how the administration -- what the process was that the administration used to compile this report? Who was involved in making the decisions about what should get cut? And how did they decide what should get cut?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I would refer you to a briefing we're going to provide later on the sequester. It is, as I said earlier, a pretty complex piece of business. And the Office of Management and Budget within the Executive Branch is the principal actor when it comes to assessing these things.

Q Jay?

MR. CARNEY: Yes.

Q Folks at State have said that there was a review of security at diplomatic installations in light of the upcoming 9/11 anniversary. Was there also a review in light of the possible impact of the trailers from this film?

MR. CARNEY: I would refer you to the State Department. Again, there is always, annually, as well as other moments -- predictable moments on the calendar, measures taken, precautions taken with regards to security both at our facilities abroad, but, of course, here in the United States. And we've been transparent in briefing you about when those moments occur and some of the things that are done to help enhance security.

With regard to the specific preparations for 9/11, I would refer you to the State Department for -- as it applies to diplomatic installations.

Q Are you suggesting the impact of the film was less predictable?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I'm saying that the fact that the film was about to inspire this reaction -- well, again, I don't want to -- this is all under investigation, so I don't want to get that far ahead of -- or get ahead at all of the investigation. I would refer you again to the State Department for whatever precautions were taken for diplomatic facilities in the run-up to the 9/11 anniversary.

Q There's also a lot of attention on how the President gets his daily briefing, at least in recent days. And the indications are that it has been in written form in the past week or so. Is it your sense that a briefing in person is no more efficient, no more effective than giving the President his PDB in print?

MR. CARNEY: Well, let's be clear, because it's selective representation of the facts about the last few days. Just in the last 24 hours, the President has been briefed numerous times, directly, by National Security Advisor Tom Donilon, by Deputy National Security Advisor Denis McDonough, by Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Advisor John Brennan, and others, including a secure call at 2:00 p.m. yesterday and another briefing at 10:00 p.m. yesterday. And he did, as he does every day, obviously have a presidential daily briefing today, and constant updates from his team.

I would say that this debate, when you say there's been some criticism, the quarters from which that criticism come are pretty clear, and who occupies those quarters is pretty clear. And I would simply say that this President is a absolutely responsible and voracious consumer of the presidential daily briefing and of the information provided to him by his national security team. His record of evaluating and acting on intelligence I think speaks for itself. And I'll leave it at that.

Q Is the criticism less valid because of the quarters from where it comes? The question remains whether --

MR. CARNEY: He gets his -- but what is the question? He gets his presidential daily briefing every day. He has --

Q The crisis -- the President speaks directly to his national security advisor. Obviously, the suggestion here is that's a more efficient way of communicating than getting a written briefing.

MR. CARNEY: No, he gets both. He does both. He does both all the time -- all the time. And when he is here in Washington he has briefings in person in the Oval Office with his national security team regularly. And when he is on the road, he has phone conversations that supplement and augment the briefings he receives on paper that are specific to the so-called PDB. I hardly think that is different from previous Presidents. And again -- well, I'll leave it at that.

Q You, in answering the previous questions, have said there was no actionable intelligence with regard to the facility in Benghazi, the consulate in Benghazi itself. Can you say the same with regard to the rest of Libya and the rest of the Middle East?

MR. CARNEY: I would refer you to the DNI and to others. The report was -- I mean, I just -- the report was specific to Benghazi, and we know for a fact that that report is false.

Q But, I mean, the Cairo embassy was breached as well. Was there any intelligence that would --

MR. CARNEY: I haven't asked that question, so I'll have to take the question.

Q There was an indication that the President around the U.N. meetings would be meeting with President Morsi on the periphery as these things go. Is that meeting still on?

MR. CARNEY: Well, you just asserted something that was on that you said there was some discussion about, so you kind of did two things in that questions.

The President has no bilateral meetings scheduled at this time while he's in New York.

Q Formal or informal in any way, shape, or form?

MR. CARNEY: None that I have to announce at this time.

Q And on a larger sense, does the President or does the White House feel that relations with the Muslim world in general and the Arab countries in particular are better now than when he took office?

MR. CARNEY: We have witnessed historic change in the region in just the last few years. This President's approach to what has been called the Arab Spring, to this unrest has been to lay out a set of principles and support for human rights, and to make clear that we support a process of non-violent, political and economic change and reform in the region. That looks different in different countries.

There are countries where the transition has occurred or is occurring, like Egypt, Yemen, Libya, and Tunisia. And in those countries, we are working to help those new governments consolidate their democracies, deal with security needs, and stabilize their economies. In other places like Syria that are still in the throes of a revolution, we have vocally opposed the brutality of the regime and are supporting the aspirations of the people.

You've heard us document and discuss the non-lethal support we're providing to the opposition, the over \$100 million in humanitarian aid that we're supplying to the Syrian people, and the diplomatic support that we've provided them.

This is a circumstance of dramatic change that has come because of a fervent desire by people of the region to have greater rights, greater freedoms, greater control over their lives. And we have actively engaged in the region to support non-violent democratic transition, to support governments that profess and demonstrate support for civil rights of all peoples, both genders and minorities. And we are working with these countries to help them progress in a way that is better for the people of those countries and better for the national security interest of the United States.

Q All great intentions at this moment, embassies across the region are under siege, so it appears that the message isn't getting through.

MR. CARNEY: Well, I appreciate the question, or the statement, rather. But the unrest that we've seen is in reaction to a film with which the United States government had no involvement, which we have denounced is offensive.

And as I said yesterday, obviously, it can be difficult to understand in some countries why the United States can't simply eliminate this kind of expression. But as you know, it is in the absolute core of our being as Americans that we allow freedom of expression that is written into our Constitution and is one of our fundamental principles. And protecting speech, even offensive speech, is a foundational principle of our democracy. But we can nevertheless denounce and condemn expressions of speech that we find offensive, and we have made that clear around the world, as well as here in the United States.

Yes, Jared.

Q I think you just answered my question.

MR. CARNEY: Excellent.

Q The Muslim Brotherhood in both Egypt and Tunisia has kind of suggested they want the U.S. and the Obama administration to apologize for this video. Is that something you all have considered doing or have done?

MR. CARNEY: Absolutely not. We have made clear that we find it offensive and reprehensible and disgusting, but we -- I mean, if in that sense, you mean we have denounced it, we have said we find it offensive and reprehensible, but we will not -- we cannot and will not squelch freedom of expression in this country. It is a foundational principle of this nation.

Q Jay, freedom of expression issues aside, do you know of any government agencies who are trying to get to the bottom of who produced this video? Is there any reason --

MR. CARNEY: I don't. I've seen a lot of reporters attempting to find out its origin, but I have not heard of any. But I just -- you would have to direct that at some other agencies. But not that I'm aware of.

Q Do you see any reason for any federal agencies to look into it?

MR. CARNEY: I don't. I think based on what I've just said, the issue here isn't -- we all know what the film is and its contents and understand why it is offensive to Muslims. We also understand that there is no justification for violence and reaction to that, and have made that message clear around the world.

The President has made statements, the Secretary of State. We have consulted with leaders -- Muslim leaders around the world and asked them to make clear that violence is not an acceptable response to this film.

Q Was the President made aware of this film before or after the violence?

MR. CARNEY: Made aware of the film?

Q Right. Because it seems like you're pinning a lot of this on the film. I'm just curious when the President was aware of a film that could be potentially incendiary.

MR. CARNEY: I would have to take the question. I'm not aware of -- I certainly wasn't aware of the film before there was unrest related to it.

Q Okay. And if I could just follow up on -- you earlier said the cause of the unrest was a video, then you repeated something similar later on. And I just want to be clear, that's true of Benghazi and Cairo?

MR. CARNEY: I'm saying that that -- the incident in Benghazi, as well as elsewhere, that these are all being investigated. What I'm saying is that we have no evidence at this time to suggest otherwise that there was a preplanned or ulterior instigation behind that unrest.

Christi.

Q Jay, did the White House ask YouTube to take that video down?\*

MR. CARNEY: I'm sorry, I'd have to -- I don't believe so, but I'll have to take that question.

Q Or anybody in the administration?

MR. CARNEY: We'll have to take it.

Q And on the Chicago teacher strike --

MR. CARNEY: I believe -- I mean, it wasn't -- again, I'm just -- based on press reports, it was taken down in the region, right, not everywhere?

Q I just wondered if the -- anyone from the administration had intervened or made a request or anything like that.

MR. CARNEY: Let me take that.

Q On the Chicago teacher strike, has the President weighed in with the parties to those talks in any way?

MR. CARNEY: We have been very clear that we hope and expect both sides to resolve this in a manner that is positive for the most important affected party here, which are the students, the children of Chicago. That's the position we've taken. I can't say that there's -- I don't know whether there's been phone conversations with various people involved. I can tell you that we believe the party should come together and resolve this in a way that is best for Chicago's students.

Q So he may have called, did you say?

MR. CARNEY: No, I just -- I don't have any phone calls to report out. What our position has been is to make clear that we want this resolved in a manner that is best for Chicago's students.

Q He's got ties to labor and management, obviously. Does he feel like it's his role to get involved in any way?

MR. CARNEY: I think that we -- what's important here is that the two sides here and all the parties that are stakeholders come together, work out a resolution that gets -- makes sure that the children of Chicago are back in school getting an education, and that everybody involved is guided by a desire to do what's best for the kids, because that's what's most important.

Yes, Jon-Christopher.

Q Jay, it seems like the unrest has now spread through the Sudan as of this morning. Can you shed any light on any conversations the President has had with his closest allies -- for example, Great Britain's Prime Minister Cameron, President Hollande of France, or Chancellor Merkel in Germany?

MR. CARNEY: About the unrest?

Q Yes, any conversation they may have had very recently.

MR. CARNEY: Well, I don't have any other foreign leader conversations to read out. We've read out a number of them in the last 24 to 36 hours, but I don't have any other --

Q They didn't include those top allies?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have any calls with any other foreign leaders to read out.

Q Will he be talking to them over the weekend do you think?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have a schedule to announce of foreign leaders calls. It's always possible.

Leslie.

Q Can you go back a little bit on the call that he made to the President of Egypt? Was there anything in particular that prompted that call? And apparently they've erected a new fence -- a wall overnight, a concrete wall. Was that discussed during the call with the President? Is that something --

MR. CARNEY: I don't think specific measures were discussed. The point of the call -- remember, he made several -- he has made several calls to leaders in the region -- was to discuss with them the unrest and the measures that these countries are taking to ensure the security of diplomatic facilities and American personnel. And that was the crux of the conversation with President Morsi.

Q Did he express displeasure with the initial reaction from the Egyptian government and ask them to --

MR. CARNEY: We gave a readout of the call. I don't really have more for that -- more on that for you. I think he made clear that we have an important strategic partnership with Egypt. We are working very closely with Egypt and the government there to assist it in helping it stabilize the situation in the country and helping its economy improve as it transitions to democracy.

But the President also made clear that Egypt has obligations, as do other countries in the region and countries all over the world, to ensure that diplomatic representations in those countries are secure. The whole point of embassies and diplomatic facilities, the purpose behind them is to allow for the peaceful interaction between nations to build relationships, build partnerships, and to avoid conflict. And that is why it is so important that embassies, consulates, other facilities, and personnel are protected.

Yes, Alexis.

Q Jay, you were talking about the U.S. experience with reactions to either accidental or purposeful anti-Muslim -- burning of Qurans, et cetera. So my question is, are U.S. personnel who are abroad, who are seeing this erupt now over what you're saying is, as far as we know, just based on a film reportedly by anti-Muslim folks -- is there a concern in the U.S. government that this would encourage others who have these motivations to continue trying to inject these thoughts into that part of the world where this reaction could be predicted? And is the United States or the government making any additional effort to either surveil to protect American personnel or monitor this information, or to consider this almost like an act of war, to be continuing to inject that kind of thought into that region?

MR. CARNEY: Alexis, I think we have as a nation been in a posture, especially since 9/11, but even prior to that, where we have monitored and been aware of anti-American sentiment in that region of the world and elsewhere. And obviously, we are absolutely vigilant and continue to be, and that is the work of many agencies, in particular the intelligence community.

Since 9/11, we have seen periods like this where there has been an unrest in reaction to specific incidents, including Danish cartoons and including other incidents that have taken place that have offended Muslims in different countries and led to unrest directed at either the West or specifically at the United States. And this is something that both this administration and the prior administration have had to manage.

In terms of policy, we continue to make clear that in this case, we find the video reprehensible and disgusting. We continue to try to get the message out as broadly as we can that this video is -- has nothing to do, is not in any way related to the American government. It does not represent who we are or what we believe.

And we continue to pursue policies in the region that are aimed at helping these countries that are in transition, through this traumatic transformation that's happening, towards democracy, towards a better future, and towards -- we hope and are working for -- a strong, better relationship with the United States.

Goyal.

Q Two questions. One, as far as this 9/11 anniversary and violence around the Middle East is concerned, last week there was a peace walk by the interfaith community walking from Cathedral to the Mahatma Gandhi statue in front of the Indian Embassy. And they all spoke -- Muslims, Hindus, and Christians and Jews -- all faiths from around the globe, they were there -- hundreds of them. They all spoke for peace and unity, and they were saying that President Obama has brought peace in the Middle East. And they spoke against violence in the name of religion. But still, we have this violence around the globe, or in the Middle East or in Libya in the name of --

MR. CARNEY: Do you have a question, Goyal?

Q -- in the name of religion. My question is that you think the President needs another message for those people who are being misguided and misled in the name of religion?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I think we've spoken a lot today about the message that the President is carrying, the message that the Secretary of State is carrying, and you'll hear more about that. But I mean, that's -- I really can't go beyond that.

Q And second, if I may, as far as Iran's nuclear is concerned, do you believe that the President has any information that the Chinese companies are helping Iran as far as their nuclear ambitions are concerned? And also, Chinese companies are supplying some weapons to the terrorists?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have any response to that question.



Dennis.

Q Thanks. Can you talk a little bit about how the decisions are made about who the President is talking to? I mean, we saw reports from Tunis and Khartoum just before you came out here. For example, would he not speak to the President of Sudan versus Yemen, Egypt, India, for example, about events and risks in those locations?

MR. CARNEY: I'm not sure exactly what you're asking. He has made a number of phone calls, had a number of conversations with leaders in the region. I'm not precluding other phone calls and other conversations that he might have. I think he's reaching out in order to make clear our position and make clear our expectation of these countries and their governments in terms of their obligations to provide security for diplomatic facilities.

Q So is Donilon or Brennan advising or suggesting specific --

MR. CARNEY: Well, certainly, those two men are part of his -- are very key members of his national security team, but I don't think it's limited to those two.

Q Jay, can you clarify something?

MR. CARNEY: I could try.

Q You've taken about four or five questions during the course of the briefing. Can you be sure to pump the actual answers that you come up with to those out -- to the full press list and not just have them disappear somewhere, as they tend to do sometimes? (Laughter.)

MR. CARNEY: Well, I promise to follow up on those questions I took. If I don't have answers that I can provide, I --

Q Well, can you distribute them to the press list the way you would the transcript of the briefing, et cetera? Because we all share the same questions.

MR. CARNEY: If we have the answers that are responsive to the questions, yes. (Laughter.) I mean, again, it depends on what the question is and whether I'm able to answer it.

Q Jay, notwithstanding your explanations today for the reasons for the violence in the Middle East, there are Republicans -- Donald Rumsfeld, John McCain -- who say the attacks on our diplomatic posts in the Middle East are a result of perceived American weakness. Do you want to respond to that?

MR. CARNEY: I'll just go back to what I said, which is that this is a time when it's in the best interests of the country to focus on the four personnel, the four Americans that we lost in Libya and who are returning home today, and on the measures that we need to take as a nation to deal with the unrest in the region and deal with the security of our diplomatic facilities and personnel abroad.

We are happy to debate -- and there is certainly ample time and appropriate times to debate foreign policy approaches, this President's record on foreign policy, and contrast it to other approaches and other records.

And there will actually be a formal occasion in which foreign policy will be debated as part of the presidential campaign debates. And I'm sure there will be much discussion of it prior to and after that debate. We're very proud of the President's record on foreign policy and are happy to make the case at the appropriate time. Thank you all.

Q Jay, one last question -- while we were sitting here -- Secretary Panetta and the Vice Chair of the Joint Chiefs briefed the Senate Armed Services Committee. And the senators came out and said their indication was that this, or the attack on Benghazi was a terrorist attack organized and carried out by terrorists, that it was premeditated, a calculated act of terror. Levin said -- Senator Levin -- I think it was a planned, premeditated attack. The kind of equipment that they had used was evidence it was a planned, premeditated attack. Is there anything more you can -- now that the administration is briefing senators on this, is there anything more you can tell us?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I think we wait to hear from administration officials. Again, it's actively under investigation, both the Benghazi attack and incidents elsewhere. And my point was that we don't have and did not have concrete evidence to suggest that this was not in reaction to the film. But we're obviously investigating the matter, and I'll certainly -- I'm sure both the Department of Defense and the White House and other places will have more to say about that as more information becomes available.

Q Thank you.

MR. CARNEY: Thanks.

Q Week ahead, Jay?

MR. CARNEY: Do we have a week ahead? I don't have one yet, so we'll have to put it out on paper. Thank you.

END

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