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Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney, 6/16/2011

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

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MR. CARNEY: Hello, everyone. I have no announcements, so we'll get started with questions.

Julie.

Q Thank you. The Libya report that the administration sent to the Hill yesterday seems to have only increased some of the anger and criticism among members of Congress, and Speaker Boehner says he still wants an additional legal rationale for the U.S. involvement in Libya. Are you planning on sending him anything by tomorrow, as he's asked, or are you satisfied with the response in the report?

MR. CARNEY: Well, two things. First of all, we have from the beginning consulted regularly with Congress -- more than 40 times, and 41 at least if you add yesterday's substantial report that we provided to Congress, which included our legal reasoning with regards to the War Powers resolution.

So I don't anticipate further elucidation of our legal reasoning, because I think it was quite clear. And I can go through that with you if you like.

I think -- and let me just say that we absolutely respect Congress's interest in this issue and desire for consultation and answers to their questions, and that's why we have been so responsive, including with the substantial report that we provided yesterday.

I think it's noteworthy that the views expressed in the Speaker's letter stand in contrast to the views he expressed in 1999 when he called the War Powers Act "constitutionally suspect," and warned Congress to "resist the temptation to take any action that would do further damage to the institution of the presidency." I make an observation about that because I think it is worth noting in the current context.

Q So do you think Speaker Boehner is playing politics now by --

MR. CARNEY: I simply think it's important to know what his views were then. And what's important about that, too, is that this was 1999 and he was -- he had concerns about the actions that then President Clinton was taking in the Balkans, and yet despite those concerns, urged Congress to resist invoking the War Powers resolution because of the potential damage it could do to the institution of the presidency.

So I think that the context here is worth noting, that is all. And I think that our legal reasoning, which we provided to Congress, is quite complete and stands alone and doesn't need any addition.

Q If I could just switch to Afghanistan quickly, do you have any update for us on whether the President has met with General Petraeus or plans to do so today or tomorrow on the Afghan withdrawal?

MR. CARNEY: Sure, thanks for the question. General Petraeus was here yesterday. The President met with his national security team, including General Petraeus, to discuss Afghanistan, to review the broad array of issues surrounding the drawdown that will begin in July of 2011, next month. And he will consult further with his national security team and, of course, including General Petraeus in the days coming forward.

Q And did the General provide his recommendations for options for that drawdown?

MR. CARNEY: They discussed a range of options, as I think the General has said in the past publicly, that this was a question of options plural and not option. And that conversation will continue.

Yes, Caren.

Q A follow on Petraeus. When does the President hope to make a decision?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I will cite the President, who said "soon," so I don't have a specific date for you. I don't have a -- I'm not going to get more specific than "soon." Obviously the operative date here is July of 2011, so since the policy that he began to implement in December of 2009 envisions and calls for the beginning of the drawdown of this surge force in July of 2011, obviously it will be in time for that to happen.

Q And what is the process from here? Is there going to be a series of meetings or is he just going to reflect on what --

MR. CARNEY: Well, let's step back a little bit. He meets regularly with his national security team. Afghanistan, for important reasons, including the presence of 100,000 U.S. military personnel, is frequently on the agenda when he meets with his national security team. So these are conversations that occur with some regularity.

He -- in answer to Julie's question, he did meet with his team yesterday, including General Petraeus. Those meetings will continue. There is no process that is similar to the one that the President undertook in the fall of December of 2009 to do a deep dive and review of our strategy in Afghanistan because that process was designed to produce the policy and the strategy that the President forged and announced in December of 2009 and that he has been implementing ever since, he and the team have been implementing ever since. This is -- this discussion, these meetings, and the result, which will come with his announcement, are part of that implementation process.

Q Shifting gears, how worried is the White House about the Greek crisis and what its implications might be for the American economy?

MR. CARNEY: I think we have said that the -- we obviously are monitoring this regularly. We consider it a headwind, if you will, in terms of the global economy, and therefore the domestic economy. So we're monitoring the situation and developments in Greece closely. And we are in regular communication with our European counterparts. We continue to believe that they have the capacity to deal with this, and we believe it is completely within their capacity to do that, and that they will.

So far, Greece has made significant progress in terms of reforms. But it is important that the Greek government carry on with the fiscal measures and reforms that are frequently under discussion with the EU and the IMF.

Yes.

Q Jay, Congressman Anthony Weiner is expected to resign in the next half hour or so. Does the White House feel that this closes the chapter? Does it allow you to focus back on jobs, et cetera?

MR. CARNEY: Well, we never stopped focusing on jobs. I think when the President was asked about this he made clear that -- he expressed his opinion, but he also made clear that this is not an issue that he has been focused on because he has obviously much more significant priorities. And I don't really have anything to add to that.

Q Has the President spoken to him in recent days?

MR. CARNEY: Not that I'm aware of.

Q Okay. And can you -- yesterday, Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, the DNC Chairwoman, said that Democrats now own the economy. Do you agree?

MR. CARNEY: We all own the economy. We all work together in Washington to devise policies to improve the economic situation. I think what the Congresswoman was referring to is the fact that the turnaround that we have seen, the turn -- the change in direction reflected in the fact that when the President was sworn into office we were losing 700,000 jobs a month, and for the last just six months, we've gained a million jobs; in the, I think, 17 months, or 15 months, it's been 2.1 million -- reflects a change in direction for the better. The fact that we were contracting severely as an economy by something like 6.4 percent when he took office has been reversed, and that we have grown for seven straight quarters.

We believe that the actions that we took in early 2009 -- some of them controversial, some of them very difficult -- have been responsible, or have certainly helped produce that change in direction. A change in direction does not mean an arrival at a destination. We are not where we want to be in terms of the economy, in terms of job creation. That's why the President is so focused, why he spent so much of his time devoted to discussing the economy with his advisors, talking to outside folks about their ideas, including his Jobs and Competitiveness Council; CEOs and other leaders in the economy for their ideas about what we need to do to continue to grow the economy and create jobs.

Jake.

Q In the six years since President Obama came to Washington, including his Senate career, there have been any number of politicians who have undergone scandal. I can only recall President Obama saying or suggesting that someone should resign or that if he were that person he would resign with Congressman Anthony Weiner, who as far as I can tell has not actually committed any law-breaking as far as has been disclosed as of yet. Why would President Obama choose to speak out on this issue and not, say, Congressman Rangel or Senator Vitter?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I'm not sure I can make the comparison for you. He was asked about it; he didn't come here and announce it or anything. He was not looking to comment on this situation. As he made clear in the follow-up question that was asked by Ann Curry in that interview, this is not something he has had the luxury to focus on. He has been focused on other issues -- the economy, jobs, national security, Afghanistan, et cetera.

However, I think he made clear that he agreed with Congressman Weiner that the behavior he exhibited was

However, I think he made clear that he agreed with Congressman Rangel that the behavior he exhibited was inappropriate, that he had embarrassed himself and obviously his family, and asked the question, he responded. But I don't think he was looking to make a particular point beyond that -- simply responding to the question.

Q And how does he feel about Senator Vitter and Congressman Rangel's behavior?

MR. CARNEY: Well, again, I haven't discussed it with him, I don't know.

Q In recent weeks, Republicans have been attacking President Obama for, in their view, seeming to be out of touch with the economic woes of Americans, whether it's Mitt Romney issuing a video featuring unemployed Americans saying they're not speed bumps; Senator Mitch McConnell of the floor of the Senate yesterday suggested that President Obama was joking about the stimulus not working in that Jobs and Competitive Council event in North Carolina, when he talked about shovel-ready is not as shovel-ready as they had anticipated. Do you guys have any response? Does the White House have any response to this charge?

MR. CARNEY: I think it's patently obvious that the President is focused on the economy; that he takes enormously seriously the hardship that Americans continue to endure as we emerge from the worst recession most of us have ever seen in our lifetimes.

One of the reasons why he asked his office to cull 10 letters a day for him from the 40,000 that are received by this White House, addressed to him every day, is because he wanted to, in their own words, read about the travails that some Americans are going through. And especially if you -- he initiated this practice back in the early part of his administration when we were in an economic freefall.

And obviously that hardship continues. The President feels that very keenly. It is why, again, it is the primary focus of his administration, the primary focus of his waking hours, what he can do, what we can do as an administration, what we can do as Americans, as Republicans and Democrats together, to continue to grow the economy, continue the positive progress we've made, and most importantly continue to create jobs.

Q I'm sure you saw the ABC News/Washington Post poll last week. President Obama was under 50 percent for the first time I can remember when voters were asked whether or not he understands the problems of people like them. Are you concerned at all that the President is conveying the opposite of what you just said?

MR. CARNEY: Look, what he does every day is focus on his job and what he can do to help the American people. Polls say a lot of different things. I think that the reality is that when you are worried about losing your job or you've lost your job, or you worry about losing your house or your mortgage is underwater, that anxiety is real and understandable and it affects how you view your own prospects, it affects how you view the overall economy, and it affects how you view your leaders in Washington -- and understandably.

What this President believes is that he came here for a reason, which was to help America, to help change the direction of the country and help, specifically, given the circumstances, the dire circumstances that were here when he took office, to reverse a catastrophic economic collapse that was unfolding as he moved in. That work continues.

We have changed direction. We are growing. The economy is growing; it is no longer shrinking. We are creating jobs. We've created more than 2.1 private sector -- 2.1 million private sector jobs. But that work continues. This recession caused the loss of 8 million jobs. Eight million Americans lost their jobs in this recession. That is a deep hole. And there is no other task that he has been more dedicated to since he took office than to digging us out of that hole -- or climbing out of that hole.

But the work continues. And that's why he says we're not done. We're a long way from done. And that's why we have to make the right decisions -- as we get our deficits under control, as we address our long-term debt, but that do we do these things, these important things, in ways that further our potential for economic growth, increase our potential to create jobs, and do not in any way reverse the progress that we've made.

Yes.

Q Jay, if I could just ask you to respond to -- specifically to Boehner's remarks today on Libya, where he said we're spending \$10 million a day, we're part of an effort to drop bombs on Qaddafi's compounds -- "It doesn't pass the straight face test, in my opinion, that we're not in the midst of hostilities."

MR. CARNEY: Well, I think you have the 30-plus pages that we provided to Congress --

Q But there's only one paragraph on that issue.

MR. CARNEY: Well, no, there's a substantial amount of material there in answer to all the specific questions that Congress had asked -- members of Congress had asked. And on the --

Q Yes, but on the issue of the War Powers resolution there's one paragraph.

MR. CARNEY: And we simply disagree. And we think that -- U.S. forces are playing a constrained supporting role in a multinational coalition whose operations are both legitimized by and limited to the terms of UN Security

role in a multinational coalition whose operations are both legitimized by and limited to the terms of a U.N. Security Council resolution.

As we made clear yesterday, we believe U.S. forces are not engaged in the kind of hostilities envisaged by the War Powers resolution. U.S. operations do not involve a number of elements traditionally associated with hostilities, including sustained fighting or active exchanges of fire with hostile forces; the presence of U.S. ground troops -- let me reiterate -- not a single U.S. ground troop in Libya now or ever. U.S. casualties also lack -- U.S. casualties or a serious threat thereof, or any significant chance of escalation into a conflict characterized by those factors.

Our conclusion, therefore, that these constrained and limited operations do not amount to hostilities under the War Powers resolution is consistent with War Powers resolution interpretations put forward by administrations of both political parties dating back to the statute's 1973 enactment.

I think that that is a comprehensive and thorough legal analysis. Obviously as a lawyer yourself, Chip, you know that there is a long history of legal debate about the War Powers resolution. We do not expect every person to agree with this. We believe that it is accurate and sound legal analysis.

Q Was the President personally involved in formulating what you just read?

MR. CARNEY: Yes.

Q He worked with Bob Bauer --

MR. CARNEY: What I can say is that he certainly -- it is his position and he worked with White House Counsel and his team and, as a constitutional lawyer himself, he is obviously -- he owns this document.

Q And it was his decision ultimately --

MR. CARNEY: Correct.

Q -- and not Bob Bauer's decision?

MR. CARNEY: Correct.

Q Boehner has also called on the President to speak to the American people. Any consideration being given to a speech on this?

MR. CARNEY: Not that I'm aware of. Well, I wouldn't speculate too far into the future, but there are no plans to give a speech on Libya.

Q And on power of the purse, Boehner suggested that ultimately their option may be power of the purse. Concern that Congress could cut off funding for the Libyan --

MR. CARNEY: Well, as we've said in the past, we don't think it's helpful for Congress to send mixed messages, because I think we all agree, the vast majority of the members of Congress, as well as this administration, this President, that the mission undertaken by this broad coalition by NATO and other allies to enforce U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973 has been important, it has protected Libyan civilians, it has saved thousands of lives, and it has helped create space for the Libyan opposition to organize itself, and it has helped put pressure on Qaddafi to see the writing on the wall and to ultimately step away from power.

I think those are -- that success is something that members of Congress, even those who have concern, would acknowledge. And the importance of continuing that mission is, I think, something that a majority of Congress supports.

Q And finally, yesterday you were asked if the President personally believes the War Powers resolution is constitutional, and you said you couldn't say because you hadn't spoken to the President --

MR. CARNEY: Well, I haven't spoken to him about this, but let me just make clear what we are not saying. First of all, what we are saying is that this -- our current actions in Libya or in this mission do not fall under the War Powers resolution because they do not meet the threshold of hostilities as envisioned by the War Powers resolution.

What this reasoning is not saying is that -- is not addressing the constitutionality of the War Powers resolution. It is not -- it is a very -- it is a limited assessment based on what we are doing in Libya and how it relates to the War Powers resolution. It is not an overall analysis, the likes of which we have seen much of over the past many years since the resolution became law.

Yes, sir.

Q On Libya, the attorneys advising the executive branch, did they all agree that this was within the President's authority?

MR. CARNEY: There was a robust debate, as you might expect in this situation, and that led the President to his view that the War Power resolution's 60-day termination provision did not apply here. But again, going back to what I've said before, this resolution has been -- it would be impossible to have a discussion about the War Powers resolution in a room of lawyers and not have it be a robust debate, because it is a highly debated and debatable resolution. So I don't think that's surprising at all. I hope that answers your question.

Q On the definition of hostilities, if a foreign country were to be lobbing missiles at, say, New York City, is that hostility?

MR. CARNEY: I'm not going to -- I will address the issue here in terms of how it relates to our participation in a multinational coalition in Libya, how our extremely circumscribed and limited role in that coalition and the activities that we're engaged in -- I'm not going to -- not just because I'm not a lawyer, but partly because I'm not a lawyer, I'm not going to engage in that kind of speculation.

Q One quick other one. Any reaction to Zawahiri taking the lead of al Qaeda?

MR. CARNEY: Certainly not surprising. He was identified prior to the successful mission against Osama bin Laden as al Qaeda's number two. It's neither surprising nor does it change some fundamental facts, which is al Qaeda's ideology is bankrupt. The fact is that peaceful movements for change are the future of the region and al Qaeda is the past. That was true before Osama bin Laden's death and is true today.

Q Any plans to send him a congratulatory drone or bunker buster? (Laughter.)

MR. CARNEY: I have no comment on that. Mike.

Q You're not elucidating any further, as you put it, on the Libya --

MR. CARNEY: Did you say elucidating or hallucinating? (Laughter.)

Q Depends on -- is this Friday? (Laughter.) You're not elucidating any longer -- your words. Does that mean you're essentially aware of the political and legislative dynamic on Capitol Hill? It's essentially, "Okay, John Boehner, if you want to put a resolution on the floor, you can go ahead and do it. It's not going anywhere in the Senate. We're through talking about it."

MR. CARNEY: Well, let me answer as I did to Julie, which is that we will continue to consult with Congress. We will continue to answer Congress's questions as we participate in this mission. We've made our legal reasoning clear. We can restate it, but I don't anticipate further legal analysis on this issue from us. But I do anticipate continued consultations with Congress about the mission. And stepping back to something I haven't mentioned today, which is that we obviously do support a resolution similar to or exactly like the one tabled by -- put forward by Senators Kerry and McCain and others -- a bipartisan resolution that we would support and agree with.

Q Just to follow up, yesterday on the debt talk, you didn't specifically endorse the Vice President's deadline -- I think it's July 1st or 4th -- to have something concrete put forward. Does the President agree that that is a viable deadline?

MR. CARNEY: I think that the Vice President is leading these talks; what he says represents where we are on these talks. So I have no -- I'm not disagreeing with anything he said.

Q But you're not specifically endorsing it, either --

MR. CARNEY: I endorse what the Vice President said.

Q Okay, great. And finally, yesterday at the congressional picnic, the pool cameras caught a -- some video of the Speaker, well known to be a smoker; I believe he prefers Camels. The President, I assume --

MR. CARNEY: I was a Marlboro Light guy.

Q Okay, I assume the President is still abstaining from tobacco smoke. Will the President ask him when they golf together to not smoke? And does the venue where they're going to be golfing allow smoking?

MR. CARNEY: I have no -- I don't know about the venue. I'm sure that the President will be a fine host. (Laughter.) I don't --

Q So he won't have a problem with the Speaker --

MR. CARNEY: I don't foresee a problem.

Carol.

Q Thanks. What's the White House's reaction to the ethanol subsidies vote that's going to take place in the

Senate?

MR. CARNEY: Well, we oppose the full repeal of that subsidy, but as you know, we are focused and have been focused on a broad strategy including increasing domestic development of oil and gas but also aggressive development of alternative fuels including biofuels, and also improving our efficiency, our fuel efficiency. And as part of our overall strategy, we would like to see reform that would reduce costs in terms of the subsidy in question here, but not -- we were not -- we did not support the full repeal.

Mr. Knoller.

Q Do you know what the venue is for the Saturday golf game?

MR. CARNEY: I do. If we haven't put it out, I'm not going to announce it from here.

Q Nothing's out.

MR. CARNEY: Then my lips are sealed.

Q Were you discussing the golf game with Speaker Boehner yesterday in your chat with him?

MR. CARNEY: We discussed a lot of things. I've known Speaker Boehner for a long time since I covered Congress in the mid-'90s. I consider him a friend and had an enjoyable conversation.

Q And the legal arguments in the Libya document yesterday, are those the same legal arguments that Justice will use in answering the lawsuit filed yesterday by members of Congress?

MR. CARNEY: I don't want to prescribe how lawyers might -- actions they might take, but I certainly think the legal reasoning we put forward yesterday, the analysis we put forward yesterday, would be a foundation for a response.

Q Just to follow up on Caren's question, is the President receiving any special briefings on the Greek debt crisis right now?

MR. CARNEY: He has been briefed specifically on it.

Q Today?

MR. CARNEY: Not that I'm aware of today, although he did get, as part of his overall briefing, I'm sure it included paper on Greece. He may have gotten something specific on Greece today; I'm just not sure.

Q And also, any updates on the government reorganization plans and when that might be released?

MR. CARNEY: Yes, I can -- I do have something on that. As you know, the President called for a reorganization of the government in his State of the Union address because he believes that government should be retooled to meet the needs of the 21st century. This set of recommendations is part of an overall effort to streamline government, cut waste and duplication, increase effectiveness so that we can create a system that will help Americans and businesses compete.

The analysis, options, and recommendations were submitted to the President by Jeff Zients and Lisa Brown on June 9th, as directed. The President will review the recommendations submitted to him over the summer and discuss them with his team. And when he completes his review I expect he will make a public statement about it.

Q Does that mean the review isn't expected to be completed until the fall?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have a timeline on it. The submission of the recommendations was made on June 9th, as directed by the President. The President will review it over the summer, so sometime within the post-review period, I'm sure he will, as he meets with his team, make a public statement about the recommendations.

Yes, sir.

Q What's the road map between the meeting today on the Hill with the Vice President and July 1st?

MR. CARNEY: I anticipate more meetings. I don't have an announcement yet to make on when those meetings will take place, but we continue to look to intensify the process as -- deliberately, we've been unspecific about the progress that has been made, but consistent in describing what has transpired as progress -- and not just us, but other participants -- and we continue to believe that they've made important progress in those negotiations and are optimistic about the prospect of an agreement.

Q Back to the Petraeus meeting. What's the rationale for waiting a day to acknowledge that and the fact that

there were National Security Council --

MR. CARNEY: The meeting happened after the briefing. I was asked yesterday; it hadn't happened.

Q I mean, you seem to repeatedly stress that this is not part of a wholesale reevaluation of strategy. Are you trying to purposely, like, downplay this whole notion that we're going to give a big announcement, big speech coming?

MR. CARNEY: No. No, no, no. But what I think happened is that -- I'm just simply saying, because people -- most folks here reported on that rather unique and unprecedented process that the President oversaw and initiated -- initiated and oversaw back in the fall of 2009. And I simply didn't want people to expect a repeat of that unique and unprecedented -- that's probably redundant -- but unprecedented process.

So that's all. I'm not trying to downplay it. We think it is very significant that he is doing what he said he would do to some degree of skepticism back when he announced this policy. Remember, the inclusion of the July 2011 date as the beginning of a drawdown of those surge forces that he was sending into Afghanistan was viewed by some, in some quarters, as not serious. It was deadly serious.

And the President is doing, as he tends to do, exactly what he said he would do. And he is implementing the policy and the strategy that he put in place in December of 2009. That strategy has met with some significant success, and he is reviewing the situation and will make an announcement relatively soon, as he said, about the pace and slope of the drawdown that will begin next month.

Q Well, I'll ask again because I've been asked several times already today. Is the President still intending to have some sort of formal speech to present the particulars of the immediate drawdown and the early stages of the plan?

MR. CARNEY: Well, when you say, "still" intends to, I don't know that we've ever suggested that he would make a formal speech. We haven't decided yet on the venue or the format by which he will make the announcement, but he will address it in his own words, I'm confident of that. But I don't have an announcement about venue or form.

Ann.

Q Jay, why wasn't the Petraeus meeting on the schedule?

MR. CARNEY: Not every meeting the President has is on his public schedule, as you might expect.

Q Normally, though, something like that is on his schedule.

MR. CARNEY: Not all of them. But I --

Q But your routine National Security Council meetings in the Sit Room typically are on the schedule.

MR. CARNEY: The monthly meetings are. The weekly meetings with Secretary Gates, Secretary Clinton are, but not all the meetings he has are. This was not a -- this was an additional meeting to the routine meetings. We didn't put it on the schedule, but when asked, I've answered the fact that he did have this meeting.

Yes, Ann.

Q Thanks, Jay. On Libya, what happens now? You say the President disagrees with Congress. Speaker Boehner says he wants an answer tomorrow on whether the Office of Legal Counsel agrees with this assessment of the President. You say you're not going to give any more legal assessment to Congress. What happens in a deadlock like that? Who wins? Does the President win?

MR. CARNEY: Look, I think the important thing here is not about who wins in terms of partisan politics, Ann. It's about does the --

Q No, who wins on policy?

MR. CARNEY: Well, we are continuing with the mission and our participation in it. We continue to consult with Congress. We continue to answer questions when they have them. We have provided the legal analysis that was sent yesterday to Congress. And the process moves forward. Again, I think as I answered in response to a question from Mike, we would support and endorse the -- a vote on the resolution put forward by -- the bipartisan resolution put forward by Senators McCain and Kerry and others. And so we continue.

And the important thing is that we understand what is happening in Libya, the tremendous progress we've made, the fact that the President has done exactly what he said he would do -- again, to some degree of skepticism evinced by the very people I'm looking at now -- that he would do what he said he would do, which is have the United States military take the lead in this operation in the initial days because of our unique capabilities, and then within days and not weeks the U.S. would step back and other partners would take the lead in this mission. That is

what happened, and it has been true ever since.

He said that there would not be U.S. ground forces in Libya. He meant what he said. And he has said that our mission there is described by and limited by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973. And he meant what he said.

So this mission continues and it continues to be successful. It saved thousands of lives, prevented what was likely to be a massacre in Benghazi. It has given time and space to the opposition to organize -- an opposition that we have worked increasingly closely with as we have gotten to know it and dealt with it. We have worked hard to free up funds that have been frozen that -- Qaddafi regime funds so that the opposition can use those funds for assistance. And we believe that the Libyan people will have the opportunity to decide their future, their political future.

Q So on current military policy, the President won't budge?

MR. CARNEY: Again, I can't improve upon the substantial report that we sent to Congress yesterday. And we are continuing with our supporting role in that mission.

Yes, Abby.

Q Putting aside the legal justification for just a second, the report says that the mission has current -- has cost about \$700 million up until this point. It projects that by September it will be \$1.1 billion. That's a lot of money in the context of the budget cutting and trimming of programs that already exist. How do you justify that to the American people, and when do you expect the money to stop flowing?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I think the President has justified it clearly in terms of why it is in the interests of the United States to participate in this mission in the form that he has our forces participating in it. It is also important to note that the money that you mention is coming from existing funds. There is no request for a supplemental. And it is money that would have been spent on other things like training missions that are being fulfilled by the actual missions being performed. So this is not new money. And we believe that it continues to be in the U.S. interest to participate in this mission in the limited manner that we are participating in it because it is in our interest, within this multinational coalition, to continue to protect Libyan civilians, to continue to enforce the no-fly zone and an arms embargo to give the opposition the time and space that it needs to organize.

Q Is the expectation going to be that we'll be operating in the same capacity until September?

MR. CARNEY: I can't predict the future, so it obviously -- a lot depends on what's happening on the ground. But NATO recently I think in the last couple of weeks extended its mission for 90 days -- is that correct? Ninety days. And obviously we are participants in that mission. But to anticipate what Libya will look like in September is something I'm not prepared to do.

Q Is the cost something that President Obama is considering when he's making decisions about how involved --

MR. CARNEY: I think that President Obama made the decision about the level of our participation based on a number of factors regarding our -- serving the American people's best interests and our best national security interests. And one thing that is certainly factually true is that the limited nature of our participation has reduced the cost of it.

More importantly, in terms of its success, the multinational nature of the mission has ensured that this has not been something that the United States owns; that it is a broad coalition, including Arab partners, that are responsible for this, that decided collectively to take this action. And we believe that doing it in that way enhances the prospects of a positive outcome for Libya.

April.

Q Jay, two questions, one on the economy. Last week the Labor Department came out with a report on the black labor force in the recovery, and the Secretary -- Labor Secretary said the President and the Vice President did see this report. What next? What's the next step as the black labor force has been hurting for decades in this country?

MR. CARNEY: No question. And this is a matter of significant concern to this administration, as is the overall situation with employment. Unemployment is too high. We are working every day to bring it down, to make sure that Americans who are looking for jobs -- minorities and non-minorities who are looking for jobs -- can find them. So this is -- there is no higher priority here. And we are working hard to address overall our economic growth and our job creation.

Q And also, on the other question, on the War Powers Act -- the President wants to keep calm waters between the branches. Why didn't he just have a conversation and just say, look, this is what we're intending? Why didn't he do that to Congress?

MR. CARNEY: The President has consulted with Congress on this. Members of his team have consulted with regularly on Congress -- with Congress on Libya. Again, I think this is now somewhat stale, so the number of engagements is higher. But more than 40 occasions that this administration has engaged with Congress on Libya, both in closed and open session, and in larger and small meetings, and in direct consultations, and we will continue to do that. So the President has had this discussion, and members of his team have had this discussion with Congress.

Q All right, I will quantify it -- more than 40 occasions prior to the action in Libya?

MR. CARNEY: No, no, no. Prior to -- I mean, since the action, and including prior to it, but within the context of the action.

Q Okay. What I'm saying again is why didn't he just -- in efforts to stay above the fray and to keep peace, why didn't he just go to Congress and say, look, this is what I'm thinking about doing? I want to join --

MR. CARNEY: Well, he did. He did have -- he did, as you know, have leaders down here before the mission began, first of all. Second of all, the President's goal is not to keep the peace and stay above the fray. That is not the mission of his presidency. He saw an urgent need that needed to be addressed; an imminent massacre; a unique set of circumstances that allowed for a broad multinational coalition that was willing to take action; a significant resolution passed by the United Nations Security Council. And that -- those factors combined to lead the President to believe that he took -- that the action he took was the right action to take, and he consulted with Congress about it.

Yes, sir.

Q Jay, twice you said that Congress shouldn't send mixed messages on Libya. Why not?

MR. CARNEY: Well, because I think that it is important that -- well, first of all, because I think Congress does share our goals in -- broadly, our goals in Libya, and that it's important to make it clear to Qaddafi and others that that unity of goal -- in terms of the shared goals exist. And we are not in any way suggesting that Congress shouldn't express its opinion or have these discussions -- and we are in these consultations regularly. But I think that -- it's a just a broad point that we share these goals, we have consulted regularly, we've answered these questions. We understand there are concerns, and we continue to answer those concerns.

Q Well, if you're not questioning Congress's right to ask questions about it, what's the mixed message?

MR. CARNEY: I think that they are sending more than one message about how they view Libya, about our -- whether our goals are the right ones, and how we achieve them. But again, I don't want to suggest that -- and I'm not -- that they are not well within their rights to express concern or objections and raise questions.

I wanted to ask Sam, and I just -- I wanted to ask you if you noted that Josh Beckett had a masterful performance yesterday, a one-hitter with 97 pitches -- a shutout.

Q It was beautiful. Am I supposed to ask my question now?

MR. CARNEY: No, no, that's all. I just wanted to make sure -- (laughter) -- I thought maybe they were playing this afternoon, because I saw your head down. Maybe you were --

Q No, no, I'm updating my fantasy team. (Laughter.) Can I ask a question?

MR. CARNEY: Yes, please.

Q Before you refer me to the Department of Justice -- (laughter) -- Senator Lautenberg sent a letter to the White House yesterday expressing disapproval with the lack of action on gun policy from this administration and calling for more presidential leadership, not Department of Justice leadership. So I'm wondering what the reaction is from the White House. And how do you push back against the notion that nothing has been done on guns when the records show that nothing has been done on guns?

MR. CARNEY: Can I refer you to the Justice Department? (Laughter.)

Q No, you cannot.

MR. CARNEY: I'm not aware of the letter. So I don't have a reaction to it, Sam. So I think you know the President did have an op-ed about --

Q Well, that was many months ago.

MR. CARNEY: -- gun policy in the wake of the terrible shooting in Arizona. I don't have an update for you on the actions that we've taken.

Q Is the pen mightier than the gun?

Q Can I email you the letter and get a reaction later, perhaps?

MR. CARNEY: You are welcome to do that.

Q Thank you.

Q Jay?

MR. CARNEY: Jon-Christopher.

Q Last night, UK Chancellor George Osborne endorsed a plan to separate retail banking from investment banking activities as part of a response to the global financial crisis. Since the U.S. is a part of the same global financial marketplace, does this administration believe this may affect competition between the U.S. and the UK in the financial services market?

MR. CARNEY: That's the kind of question that I think the Treasury Department is best suited to answer, so I'd refer you to the Treasury Department -- especially on the second part. Overall, I think it's important for us to note that as countries around the globe have dealt with the crisis that occurred in 2008, the financial sector crisis and then the recession that ensued -- obviously every country is different and the way they deal with it is different.

We have, because of the President's leadership, took very significant action to pass financial reforms, financial sector reforms, and we continue to implement those. But again, each country addresses these issues differently.

Q Is this the kind of thing he'd discuss with the PM, Prime Minister Cameron?

MR. CARNEY: Not that I'm aware of.

Toshi.

Q I have a question on the job creation. On Monday, at Cree in North Carolina, the President laid out a new initiative to train 10,000 new American engineers to compete, I guess, with the other countries. And could you elaborate a little bit how it would work? And also how -- it is said that it's a private sector-led initiative, but how is government really involved? I mean, will the government provide any -- or would not provide anything?

MR. CARNEY: I believe it is a private sector initiative that we support. Why don't you come up to me -- I do have -- the way this job works, on Monday I could have told you so many things about that, and now it's been displaced by Libya and other things -- (laughter) -- my bandwidth being limited. But you're correct, it is a private sector initiative.

And look, we are looking for ways -- actions the government can take, actions the private sector can take. This is an all-hands-on-deck situation, as it has been, since the moment we took -- we came to the White House. So we were -- the President was very encouraged by the Jobs Council meeting and the ideas that were generated there -- I think two dozen ideas, many of them very promising, he thinks. And that was just one of them.

George.

Q Thank you. You just mentioned your personal friendship with the Speaker. In this week of golf games and picnics, can you talk about the value of --

MR. CARNEY: I have no plans to play golf with anybody.

Q Talk about the value of building personal relationships between the President and leaders from the other party in Congress.

MR. CARNEY: Look, I think he and I have addressed this before. He feels that it is a very useful thing to do; that -- and I know the Vice President, whom I also work for and worked more directly for in the past, feels very strongly about this, too, that part of what's happened in Washington has been that the normal human interactions you have with people that you might disagree with on policy have become far and fewer between, and that that's not particularly helpful for constructive dialogue, because we have big issues.

And the nature that we need to solve and the nature of our system is that for better or worse -- and we think for better because we think it's an awfully good system, the American system -- it requires bipartisan cooperation to get anything significant done. That is almost always the case. And it is certainly the case when you have one party in the White House and the other party in control of one or both houses of Congress.

So these kinds of meetings, this kind of communication are, I think, very helpful. They don't necessarily produce tangible progress on legislation, but they do produce the potential for a better atmosphere in the room when important things are discussed and negotiated. So that's why the President has encouraged the kind of encounters that he's had with members of Congress. with the leadership. with Speaker Boehner and Senator

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McConnell, for example, as well as Democrats; why he asked the conferences and caucuses of each house to come to the White House earlier this year; and why he invited the Speaker to play golf this weekend.

Q Thanks, Jay.

Q Does it make it easier for him to cut through his staff and just pick up the phone and call somebody like the Speaker --

MR. CARNEY: Yes, no question, no question.

Thanks very much. I know you guys got somewhere to go at 2:00 p.m., right?

END 2:02 P.M. EDT