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The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

February 28, 2011

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney and U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan Rice, 2/28/2011

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

3:33 P.M. EST

MR. CARNEY: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. As I mentioned this morning, we have with us today the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice. She was just in a meeting with the President and the U.N. Secretary General, and I would like her to speak about that meeting. And then she'll take some questions from you. And I'll step aside. Thanks.

AMBASSADOR RICE: Thank you very much, Jay. Good afternoon, everyone. I want to start by giving a brief readout of the President's meeting with U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon that just finished a little while ago.

As you might expect, a significant portion of that meeting was devoted to discussing the situation in Libya. The U.N. has played a positive and very important role in efforts to end the bloodshed there and to hold the Qaddafi regime accountable, and support the Libyan people. Indeed, in Libya, the United Nations is demonstrating the indispensable role that it can play in advancing our interests and defending our values.

We'll come back to Libya in a few minutes, but let me just finish with the brief readout of the President's meeting with the Secretary General.

The President and the Secretary General also discussed the situation elsewhere in the Middle East as well as the situation in Côte d'Ivoire. And with respect to Côte d'Ivoire, they expressed their concern about the escalation of violence there and the need to enable the legitimately elected president, Alassane Quattara, to assume responsibility for governing Côte d'Ivoire.

They also discussed the historic referendum that recently took place in Southern Sudan, where the people overwhelmingly voted for independence. And they discussed the vital work that the U.N. and the international community have still to do, along with the parties to the Sudanese conflict, to resolve outstanding issues and ensure lasting peace as the South gains its independence in July of this year.

The President and the Secretary General also discussed their shared agenda to build on the strengths of the United Nations while pursuing and implementing very important management reforms as well as budgetary discipline.

And finally, President Obama reaffirmed the administration's strong belief that the United Nations continues to play a vital role in addressing tough, global and transnational threats, and in doing so, its work enhances the safety and well-being of the American people.

Now, coming back to Libya, as you know on Saturday night in New York, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1970, a tough and binding set of sanctions aimed at stopping the Libyan regime from killing its own people.

As you know, from the very beginning of the crisis in Libya, we've been clear that it's vitally important for the international community to speak with one voice, and it has done so with an unusual and important sense of urgency, determination and unity of purpose.

This resolution that we passed had several important components. First, it refers the situation in Libya directly to the International Criminal Court. This is the first time that the Security Council has unanimously voted to refer a case of heinous human rights violations to the ICC.

Secondly, it includes a travel ban and an assets freeze on key Libyan leaders. It imposes a complete arms embargo on Libya and mechanisms to enforce it. And finally, it takes new steps against the use of mercenaries by the Libyan government to attack its own people, and it facilitates the delivery of vital humanitarian assistance.

These sanctions and accountability mechanisms should make all members of the Libyan regime think about the choice they have before them: Violate human rights and be held accountable, or stop the violence and respect the Libyan peoples' call for change. There's no escaping that critical choice.

Meanwhile, all the members of the United Nations Security Council are united in their determination that these sanctions work and work as swiftly as possible. But the Security Council has not finished its business and will continue to monitor the situation in Libya quite closely.

And I'll reiterate what the President said over the weekend. Now is the time for Colonel Qaddafi to step aside to prevent further bloodshed and to allow the Libyan people to have a government that

is responsive to their aspirations.

I'm happy to take a few of your questions.

MR. CARNEY: I just want to, if I could, just -- I'll call on people. What I'd like to do is do all questions for Ambassador Rice now, and we can get to other issues after that.

But, Darlene, why don't you start?

Q Thank you. Madam Ambassador, can you update us on the status of the talks for instituting a no-fly zone? How far along are those talks?

AMBASSADOR RICE: Well, as Secretary Clinton said today in Geneva, these talks are underway with our partners in NATO and elsewhere. We have made clear that it is an option that we are considering and considering actively and seriously.

MR. CARNEY: Steve.

Q Are you prepared to offer material support to the anti-government rebels in Libya?

AMBASSADOR RICE: Well, we are, first of all, in communication with all sort of elements of Libyan society -- civil society, leaders of all sorts -- to understand their perspectives and be able to be as supportive as we can of the Libyan people's aspirations for freedom and for justice.

It's unclear at this point who will emerge as the critical opposition elements, and we await to see how the opposition will coalesce. In that context, it's certainly premature I think to begin to talk about any kind of military assistance.

Q Dr. Rice, thanks for being here. In an interview with several reporters, Moammar Qaddafi said that he's not going anywhere, he's never used force, all my people love me. And he expressed surprise that the United Nations would impose sanctions and implement a travel ban based purely on media reports. I was wondering if you had any response to any of the things he said in the interview.

AMBASSADOR RICE: It sounds, just frankly, delusional. And when he can laugh in talking to American and international journalists while he is slaughtering his own people, it only underscores how unfit he is to lead and how disconnected he is from reality. It makes all the more important the urgent steps that we have taken over the course of the last week on a national basis, as well as the steps that we've taken collectively through the United Nations and the Security Council.

And we're going to continue to keep the pressure on. You've seen reports about the massive quantity of resources, some \$30 billion that the Treasury Department has seized since the assets

freeze went into effect on Friday -- and this in light of the fact that Colonel Qaddafi and his son Saif say they have no resources out there to be seized; they led a clean and uncorrupt life.

Q Ambassador Rice, when you talk about Colonel Qaddafi slaughtering his own people, he was -- he appeared to be doing that a week or so, even longer, and yet the President stopped short of calling for regime change until this weekend. So if -- why did it take so long for you to call for regime change? The President was saying it's up to the Libyan people. Now you're saying Qaddafi has to go. He's been slaughtering these people for days. Why did it take until this weekend to say he has to go?

AMBASSADOR RICE: Well, first of all, it is up to the Libyan people. And we will continue to be very supportive of their efforts to achieve the universal rights and the freedoms and the opportunity that they are seeking. I think we have been very, very clear about what is right and what is moral in this situation, and what has been unacceptable and inexcusable violence. And we have taken very strong and very swift actions to confront that.

On Friday, we froze the assets of Libya's leaders, and on Monday, \$30 billion -- an unprecedented quantity of resources have been seized in just over the last several days. On Saturday, the Security Council with the U.S. and leadership of others moved at a speed that is, I can tell you from my experience, almost unheard of, to pass unanimously a resolution that not only imposed a travel ban, an assets freeze, and arms embargo, but referred the situation in Libya for the first time on a unanimous basis to the International Criminal Court.

Q What changed from February 23rd? What changed from February 23rd when the President --

AMBASSADOR RICE: Well, first of all --

Q -- did not call for regime change?

AMBASSADOR RICE: First of all, the situation has evolved. We have been, as the President has said, focused very urgently on the protection of Americans and ensuring that Americans are safe. But we have also, as the same time, been actively working and planning to enable the swift and decisive response that you've seen forthcoming from the U.S. government.

MR. CARNEY: Bill.

Q There's been some talk about oil embargos. But does that make any sense now that it appears that most of the oil production is in the hands of rebel forces?

AMBASSADOR RICE: Well, I think, from a sanctions point of view, the United Nations has historically, in recent years, moved away from sweeping measures, and focused most precisely on targeted measures that go after the leadership of the country and isolate those that are responsible

for atrocities. We're in a different world than we were 15, 20 years ago and have learned some lessons from regimes like Iraq and elsewhere that didn't have the targeted effect that was desired and was more scattershot. So I think at least in the context of the Security Council in New York, when we look at sanctions, whether it's on Iran, North Korea, or Libya, we aim, first and foremost, at targeted measures that go after those that are responsible for violations.

Q So in this case, not oil?

AMBASSADOR RICE: We have not had active discussions in New York on oil.

MR. CARNEY: Chuck.

Q Dr. Rice, two questions. One, can you walk us through what the process would be for the United Nations to recognize the sort of opposition in Libya, or recognize maybe the eastern part of that controlled territory? And number two, is there a message in there for the Iranian government, the government of Bahrain about how swiftly the U.N. seemed to respond in this case, and maybe the lack of quickness they responded to the Iranian uprising a year and a half ago?

AMBASSADOR RICE: The question of recognition is a very complicated one. And to recognize or seat a changed government requires a vote of a U.N. credentials committee. And depending on the murkiness of the situation, that can be more or less complicated. We're dealing now with a request to the Secretary General from Qaddafi to withdraw accreditation for his diplomats in New York who stood up -- his perm rep, his deputy perm rep -- to the regime, and have been very clear in calling for the kinds of measures that the Security Council took on Saturday.

It's too soon to say, in all honesty, how issues of credentials and issues of recognition will be sorted out. Unless and until there's an obvious alternative government, it's hard to give credentials to --

Q How long will this process take? Weeks? Months?

AMBASSADOR RICE: It depends on how it evolves. Unless and until there's an obvious alternative, it's hard to take from one and give to another because there's not a clear other to whom recognition can be given.

Q And the Iran question?

AMBASSADOR RICE: Well, I think when -- what enabled the Security Council to act so swiftly and decisively in this instance was that there was just an egregious and widely reported series of mass killings by security forces on innocents -- not only those protesting, but those who stuck their heads out of windows; going into hospitals, reportedly, and shooting those dead that had already been wounded; shooting people as they came out of mosques.

And all of this I think served to galvanize a sense of outrage and determination on the part of the Security Council and the rest of the international community that action had to be taken. And quite unusually, the first calls came from the Arab League and the African Union, and subsequently the OIC for this kind of action. And the fact that Libya's own diplomats in New York were urging decisive action I think also was an important factor.

MR. CARNEY: Mike.

Q You've reiterated the call for Qaddafi to go, and yet the U.S. does not have significant contact with the Libyan opposition. If he were to oblige and get on a plane and go, what does the U.S. want to see happen next?

AMBASSADOR RICE: Obviously, the United States wants to see a responsible government emerge that respects the will of the Libyan people. They are -- there's a serious institution-building challenge that exists in Libya, as elsewhere in the region. We believe there are universal rights that need to be acknowledged and respected, and processes that are determined by the people in each of these different countries that charts a specific course that's suitable to that country. And it would be wrong of us to sit here with a road map for a political transformation in Libya.

But our consistent message across the region and indeed across the world is that the people deserve the right to chart their own future in a fashion that is -- that enables them to express themselves freely, assemble freely, select their leaders, and do so free of violence and intimidation.

MR. CARNEY: Why don't we get one more for Ambassador Rice?

Margaret?

Q Thank you. Ambassador, two questions. With regard to the military question, I know you're saying it's premature to decide whether to commit troops. Is it the U.S.'s position that that would need to be done through a NATO commitment and not through a U.S. military commitment?

And then, secondly, in the conversations with Ban Ki-moon, is the President discussing more broadly how to do a proactive strategy with the unrest that's sweeping the Middle East? And how do you get ahead of that?

AMBASSADOR RICE: Well, let me come to your second question first. The President and the Secretary General discussed the region broadly and the international efforts, including those led and coordinated by the United Nations, to be responsive to developments in each of these countries. So, for example, the Secretary General reported that he has sent high-level teams to both Egypt and Tunisia to engage those governments about the process of transition and the political support that the United Nations and the international community might be able to provide in support of those political transitions.

With respect to Libya, the Secretary General indicated that he intended to name a senior-level person to coordinate the United Nations humanitarian and political efforts with respect to Libya. That was something that we had encouraged and welcomed. And so there was a real effort discussed and agreed that would help to coordinate and consolidate both the humanitarian response, particularly with respect to Libya, and the political efforts to help support the democratic transformations that we hope are underway in various parts of the region.

Q And the military question?

AMBASSADOR RICE: With respect to the military question, we are in discussions with partners and allies in NATO and elsewhere. We have been very clear that we have a range of options, a wide range of options that we're considering, but it would be premature to say more than that.

Q I'm sorry, but you don't want the U.S. -- it seems like the U.S. doesn't necessarily want a U.S. stamp on any action. The President has taken great pains to say there has to be a unified response. Is that a decision --

AMBASSADOR RICE: I think it's, frankly, quite premature to speculate about any potential military action. We're simply in the process of planning and discussing various contingencies.

Q One more, Jay?

MR. CARNEY: Maybe one more.

Q Okay, thank you. Ambassador Rice, you said something to the effect that we have not actively discussed oil at the U.N. Are you talking about specifically the Libyan issue or the increase, the request to increase oil in other countries like Mexico, Canada and some portions of Africa?

AMBASSADOR RICE: No, I was responding to the specific question of whether multilateral oil sanctions had been discussed actively in New York with respect to Libya, and the answer to that is no. The other issues have not been, to my knowledge, discussed in any formal venue and it's really not the place where that kind of discussion would occur.

Q But also, could you quantify the \$10 million of humanitarian effort that the United States has committed for those refugees who are fleeing into the other countries that are bordering Libya?

AMBASSADOR RICE: Well, the U.S. government has begun to mount a very robust humanitarian response that will include resources to the various concerned agencies like the High Commissioner for Refugees, like the International Organization for Migration. We'll also be looking at other kinds of humanitarian needs. The Secretary General explained to the President today, for instance, that the U.N. is quite concerned about the dearth of medical supplies in Libya and the importance of urgent action being taken to ensure that those kinds of critical humanitarian needs are met. And

we'll be supportive of those efforts as we always are.

Thank you.

MR. CARNEY: Okay, guys, I've got to let the Ambassador go.

AMBASSADOR RICE: Thanks very much.

Q Thanks, Dr. Rice.

MR. CARNEY: Okay, we'll return to our regular programming. Let's see -- yes, sir.

Q Thank you, Jay. The governors have had meetings with the President. What are the requests that they have made that the administration seems likeliest to comply with on short notice?

MR. CARNEY: You mean broadly speaking? If you want me to give -- I can give you a readout on the meeting itself today and the issues they discussed. I don't have any specific -- you know that the President did announce today support for legislation that Senators Wyden, Brown and Landrieu have introduced that would speed up the innovation waiver for states to -- with ideas of their own to pursue health care reform in their states from 2017 to 2014. That was obviously a major announcement he made today.

Q That would be along the lines of the waiver on welfare a few years ago?

MR. CARNEY: I don't know how to compare it to that. But I think if you saw the announcement, and I'm sure you've seen the remarks, the President is very interested in the very good ideas that states might have to achieve the goals set by the Affordable Care Act in different ways. And he now supports the legislation put forward that was originally put out last year and again a few weeks ago that will allow the states three years earlier than planned to propose initiatives that can bring them to -- achieve the goals set by the Affordable Care Act through the innovative ideas that they themselves come up with. And that's the kind of flexibility the President thinks is important and that he wants to give the states when appropriate.

Perry.

Q Jay, did you all ask Republicans in Congress or Republican governors if they liked this idea before he proposed it?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I don't know that -- if you mean the President, that he had any discussions with Republican governors --

Q -- support this idea right now, so I'm curious if you -- other than from Scott Brown -- so I'm just

curious if you've met with anyone to see if they would like it first. It seems like a --

MR. CARNEY: Well, we think that the states will be, and are, interested in this kind of approach to implementing the Affordable Care Act in that it gives them more flexibility to achieve the very important goals that the act lays out in terms of coverage, no costs to the deficit, levels of benefits, and the four items that were laid out. So I think that we expect and hope that there will be support in Congress for this. It's already a bipartisan bill, as you noted, and we -- the President supports it.

Yes.

Q Thanks, Jay. The President warned governors not to denigrate or vilify public employees. Does he think that's what they've been doing?

MR. CARNEY: Well, as the President said several weeks ago now, he is very sympathetic to the need that governors and state legislators have in dealing with their budget issues, to have sacrifice at all levels; that everyone needs to come together, tighten their belts, and deal with their budget shortfalls, and that includes public sector employees. But he does not believe that it is helpful to denigrate or vilify public sector employees in a way that brings you no closer to resolving the problems and sows division instead of creating the kind of unity that you need when everyone sits at the table to solve the issues together.

Q So he would characterize what's been happening as a denigration and vilification?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I would refer you to his speech. And I think that it's fairly clear from what he said in the past that he does not think that an assault on public sector employees or the collective bargaining rights of public sector employees is the way to go. Rather, that everyone needs to come together, share the sacrifice, and resolve the issues that have led to these budget shortfalls.

Q Can I also ask a Libya question? You've said a few times and Dr. Rice just said that the administration is in contact with all members of organized civil society, and leaders of various stripes. And it's hard to see what the organized elements of civil society and what those leaders could be, since Colonel Qaddafi has tried so hard to squelch all of them. What's there? Who's there? What are the organizations to talk to?

MR. CARNEY: Well, you make a good point about the situation in Libya, and it goes to the broader point that we've made about how every country is different in the region, the countries that have experienced unrest.

Without specifying particular individuals or groups that we are reaching out to -- and reaching out to through both diplomatic means but through businesses and NGOs -- I would say that we are having those conversations, finding out where these groups stand in terms of the desire for a process that is democratic and inclusive and responsive to the desires and aspirations of the

Libyan people. But I'm not prepared to identify this group or this individual at this point.

Q Just a quick follow-up on that.

MR. CARNEY: Yes.

Q The Crown Prince of Libya last week asked international assistance to Moammar Qaddafi. Are you in touch with him? Are you going to -- because his flags are -- their flags have come up with the rebels.

MR. CARNEY: Again, I'm not able to specify individuals that we're in touch with. And I want to emphasize that the channels we are using are not just government channels; they are also through the business community and NGOs and other channels that we can use to talk to these groups who are interested in democratic reform and being responsive to the aspirations of the Libyan people.

Yes.

Q Jay, thanks. Do you have a deadline today for Qaddafi to leave? Because he doesn't seem to leave. He's still there.

MR. CARNEY: Yes, he is. The President made clear, we've made clear, Ambassador Rice made clear that Colonel Qaddafi needs to step aside, to step down. He has lost all legitimacy in the eyes of his people, most importantly, and in the eyes of the world community. He is no longer in a position to credibly lead his nation. And he is, in the meantime, inflicting horrific violence on the people he claims to serve and the people he claims love him -- which is quite a claim indeed. So I won't put a deadline on it, except to say now would be good.

Savannah.

Q To the extent there is this urgency, do you think that this effort to have Qaddafi leave would be helped along by a strong statement from the President along the likes of the one we just saw from Ambassador Rice? She didn't mince words.

MR. CARNEY: No, she didn't. And neither has the President in his statements, or neither has Secretary of State Clinton or other government officials. And we have worked assiduously behind the scenes to bring about the kind of dramatic objectives in terms of the action at the United Nations and the unilateral sanctions that we've implemented that are putting, we believe, great pressure, and will put great pressure on not just Colonel Qaddafi, but the Libyan regime. I mean, if you are now a member of the Libyan government, you have to think very, very seriously about whose side you want to be on. Because if you stay with Qaddafi, if you stay with this regime, if you accept and act on orders to murder your own people, you will be held accountable. And the action

taken by the United Nations to refer this to the ICC is a very dramatic statement about the accountability we expect those perpetrators to be held to.

Q But who is going to hold them accountable? I mean, it's one thing to say we hold them accountable, but who is going to do it? Are we?

MR. CARNEY: Bill, the history -- recent history has examples to show you that bad actors who treat their people in this manner can be held accountable, and we intend with our international partners for that to be the case.

Jake.

Q Can you comment on reports that U.S. naval warships are repositioning themselves in the Gulf to prepare -- I don't know where they would position themselves -- in the Gulf or in the Mediterranean -- to prepare for action against -- any possible military action against Libya?

MR. CARNEY: What I will say, I believe the Defense Department has commented on that, that this force is being positioned. But this is part of, A, making sure that all options remain on the table for us; and, B, positioning our assets in a way that can be helpful in the cause of bringing humanitarian relief to the Libyan people. So that does not necessarily signal an intent to use military force -- although, as I said, we are leaving all options on the table.

Yes, Julianna.

Q I just want to go back to Savannah's question. At what point would it be appropriate to hear directly from the President calling on Qaddafi to step down, beyond readouts from phone calls or descriptions of conversations that he had with other officials?

MR. CARNEY: I'm sure the President will address this issue again. It's not a matter of -- presidential action comes in many different ways and you just heard from our Ambassador to the United Nations, who just emerged from a meeting with the President and the U.N. Secretary General. She discussed in very clear terms the President's position on the situation in Libya, on the Qaddafi regime. And I'm sure the President will address that again. But I'm not here to make any announcements on future statements by the President, but you can be sure that he has been incredibly active in dealing with this, as have all the principal members of the national security team. Secretary Clinton, I'm sure you all saw today, was in Geneva, and again, Ambassador Rice here.

Let me get to the back. Yes, sir, with the glasses and blue tie.

Q Thank you. I'm interested -- is anybody considering to offer Mr. Qaddafi an easier way out? I mean, of course, I also want to see him held accountable -- if he has only the alternative to stay in

Libya in power until he will be forced out by the rebels and shot like Ceaucescu, or he goes to the criminal court in the Hague, then that's not very attractive. Shouldn't one -- if you want to stop the bloodshed, wouldn't it be best to give him the opportunity to find a way into exile and stop it that way?

MR. CARNEY: I mentioned this morning -- I'm not sure you were here --

Q No, I was not.

MR. CARNEY: -- that exile is an option. And we -- it would be a quick option and it would comport with our desire to see him step down and remove himself from power. We are most interested in the end of his treatment of his people, the end of the violence against the Libyan people. And if exile is a quick option to make that happen, we would support that. But he and others will be held accountable for their actions regardless.

Q Jay, in a different part of the world, the Irish general elections were held on Friday. Do you have any reaction to the results from the election with Gerry Adams now taking his place -- the first time he's been in Irish parliament?

And also, there are reports that the President is now going to add Ireland to his visit when he goes to the G8 summit in May. Do you have any confirmation of that?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have any scheduling announcements to make in terms of presidential travels, and I'm afraid I don't have a reaction to the elections for you. I'm sure the State Department would be one place you could go for that.

Yes, Chuck.

Q Jay, I want to ask about something Secretary Gates said on Friday when he said that a future Defense Secretary would have to have his head examined if he recommended a land war like Iraq or Afghanistan to another Commander-in-Chief ever again. What does the President say to a parent of a soldier in the battlefield right now in Afghanistan who might be wondering, well, the Secretary of Defense says they need to get their head examined, then isn't it time to start withdrawing sooner rather than later?

MR. CARNEY: I haven't seen the Secretary's comments or the context of the comments, but what I would say, Chuck, is that the President takes his responsibility as Commander-in-Chief enormously seriously and he -- that is why, with regard to Afghanistan, for example, he engaged in this intense, deliberate process to review our policy to make sure that it was the best possible policy towards the aims that -- the objectives that he set out, because he believes that asking our men and women in the Armed Services to serve in harm's way is a heavy, heavy duty that needs to be done with utmost seriousness. And he -- again, I can't -- in comment to the Secretary's remarks, I just --

Q It's a pretty -- I mean --

MR. CARNEY: Again, Chuck, I --

Q -- I know, it's a pretty wildly -- I mean, I guess the -- can you -- I mean, does the President -- he must have -- this is his Secretary of Defense who questioned the entire premise --

MR. CARNEY: Well, again, I'm not sure of the context --

Q -- the idea of a war like this again.

MR. CARNEY: But, Chuck, I'm not sure of the context of the comments, and I think that -- I'm sure the Secretary feels, as we all do, that war is a terrible enterprise that you pursue when -- only when your national interests demand that you do it. But beyond that, I don't have a comment.

Mr. Knoller, did you still want to ask me a question?

Q Sure. How do you reason with a foreign leader who may be delusional?

MR. CARNEY: Well, delusional is a very good word and it's the word that Ambassador Rice used.

Q Right.

MR. CARNEY: I don't think we're attempting to reason with him beyond to make -- beyond making the choices he faces starkly clear. And that goes for not just Colonel Qaddafi but those around him who -- the circle of people in the regime around who make up the protection that keeps him in power. Every one who is a member of that support network is placing himself or herself at great risk of being held accountable in a very serious way. And many of them have now had a substantial amount of their assets frozen by the actions taken unilaterally by the United States, announced by the Department of Treasury. And again, the consequences of their actions are being felt and will continue to be felt, and we would certainly urge those around Colonel Qaddafi to reconsider their position.

Q Jay, a follow-up to Mark?

MR. CARNEY: Yes, April.

Q If he is delusional, is he -- in all seriousness, if he's delusional, is he capable of understanding the magnitude of what is happening and what the world community is requiring and requesting of him and saying?

MR. CARNEY: I can't psychoanalyze Colonel Qaddafi and I -- I would simply say that we in the

international community are making very clear what he needs to do and what our position is. And I am sure that he and others around him understand very clearly what our position is and what choices they face now with this kind of united international opposition to what he's doing and to his government.

Yes.

Q Jay, the characterization of Libya -- a delusional leader literally suppressing his people facing sanctions -- it sounds an awful lot like Iran, as well. We equivocate about calling for the ouster of Ahmadinejad. Why do we do that?

MR. CARNEY: What I will say very clearly about what we've seen in Libya is, unlike anything we have seen in the unrest in the Middle East thus far in terms of the mass brutalization of people, the random killings, as the Ambassador mentioned, shooting people in windows, in hospitals, protestors -- unarmed, peaceful protestors on the street.

We have also condemned the violence that other governments, including the Iranian government, have used against peaceful protestors in no uncertain terms. And we do it again today. And we note with continued astonishment the hypocrisy of the Iranian government as recently as today where the foreign minister, I believe, claimed that there was absolutely no comparison between the protests in Iran, the peaceful broad-based pro-reform protests in Iran that were brutally suppressed, and the protests that they claim to support in other parts -- in other countries in the region. So that hypocrisy is clear for everyone to see.

Q Why can't you just come out and call for Ahmadinejad's ouster? I mean, you're drawing --

MR. CARNEY: Again, I think we've made very clear why the situation in Libya demanded the response that we've given it.

Q May I follow on that?

MR. CARNEY: Yes.

Q Did, in the Rice-Ban Ki-moon meeting, did the situation in Iran come up, and including the recent actions against human rights activists, journalist and bloggers, but also the protests and the government statements?

MR. CARNEY: In the meeting with the U.N. Secretary General, I don't have a readout that reflects that they discussed Iran. They might have. But I can say that we obviously are -- find the detention of opposition leaders to be unacceptable and we call on them to be treated well and released.

Q And is there a concern that the turmoil in the Middle East may be empowering Iran? There is

some talk that it may be doing that. What is the White House view of this?

MR. CARNEY: Our view is that peaceful protests by populations in different countries that are representative of broad interests and broad segments of society in a demand for peaceful, democratic change are inherently good things; that the governments there need to respond peacefully to them, to listen to the aspirations of their people, to engage their people in the political process; and that when real democracy is strengthened, when real democracy takes root, I think that's good for the people of the region. It's good for the rest of the world, and it's good for the United States.

That's it.

Q That doesn't really answer my question.

MR. CARNEY: Thank you very much.

END

4:14 P.M. EST

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