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## The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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### **Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney, 2/24/2011**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

See below for an answer to a question (marked with an asterisk) posed in the briefing that required follow up.

\*The President was briefed on Khalid Ali-M Aldawsari earlier this month and yesterday he was informed that an arrest was likely.

1:18 P.M. EST

MR. CARNEY: Good afternoon, everybody. Sorry I'm late. I apologize.

Q New regime.

Q This is a new leaf.

MR. CARNEY: What, the apology? Gibbs never apologized. I take it back. (Laughter.)

Q There you go.

MR. CARNEY: Before we get started, I have a couple of details about recent conversations that President Obama has had with foreign leaders. First, since the readout was sent last night fairly late, I just want to make sure that all of you know that last night around 8:00 p.m. Eastern, the President spoke with Mexico President Calderón. President Obama expressed appreciation for the strong investigative work of the Mexicans to arrest one of Special Agent Zapata's alleged killers. And President Calderón expressed appreciation for the cooperation of American agencies that

made the arrest possible.

The President said that neither the United States nor Mexico could tolerate violence against those who serve and protect our citizens, as Special Agent Zapata did so selflessly through his own life.

President Obama also said he was looking forward to welcoming President Calderón to the White House on Thursday, March 3rd, to discuss our important bilateral relationship and key global issues.

Also, I'd like to mention that this afternoon the President is scheduled to speak with Prime Minister Cameron and President Sarkozy to coordinate our actions in response to the situation in Libya. We expect additional conversations with foreign leaders on this topic in the days ahead.

With that, I am ready for your questions.

Q Can you talk about the Americans that are in this situation with the ferry that's not able to leave Tripoli? Are there contingency plans to get them out?

MR. CARNEY: The State Department, the government is working very hard to evacuate the Americans from Libya. The details of those operations are available at the State Department, but we are doing everything we can to safely evacuate them from Libya.

Q And with that evacuation still not having happened, how does that complicate the U.S. response to the situation?

MR. CARNEY: Well, as I think you heard the President say yesterday very clearly what our -- what his position is towards the situation, towards the actions of the Libyan government, very clear condemnation of the violence against the protesters there, violence against Libyan citizens, he also is obviously very concerned about the safety of Americans, and that is a priority. That's all I can say on that.

Q Any movement on sanctions, no-fly zone?

MR. CARNEY: Obviously sanctions are something we're looking at. I don't want to get into specifics. We're working very closely with the international community, and we're hoping and believe that the international community will speak with one voice, as I think is often the case. When the international community comes together and speaks with one voice it has a powerful impact in terms of persuading a government like Libya's to do the right thing, to stop the kind of violence it's been perpetrating on its own people.

So we're examining a lot of options -- sanctions are one of them, but I don't want to specify that

one is going to happen and one's not going to happen. But we're working with our partners on that.

Q Will sanctions be on the agenda when the President speaks to Cameron and Sarkozy today?

MR. CARNEY: Well, they will be discussing Libya. And I think that they will be discussing different options that we can take -- the United States, the United Kingdom, France, other countries, international partners -- to affect the behavior of the Libyan government. So I'm sure, broadly speaking, our options will be discussed.

Yes, go ahead.

Q What kind of military options are being considered?

MR. CARNEY: I think what we've said is that there are no options we're taking off the table. But what we're focused on are the options that we can take to affect the situation in the nearer term. And we would like to see the kind of concerted, broad-based international action that can compel the Libyan government to cease and desist from the kind of actions it's taking against its own people.

Q As far as keeping U.S. citizens safe in Libya, who is the -- who are you guys talking to within the Libyan government? I mean, while we're waiting for the ferry to go since the weather is not supposed to change for at least the next few days.

MR. CARNEY: Well, obviously the security of these American citizens is an extremely high priority, and I wouldn't want to say anything from this podium or publicly that would affect their security. So I'm not going to get into what specifically we're doing to make sure they're safe. We are taking -- doing everything we can to evacuate them, to make sure they are safe. But beyond that I don't want to get into how we're doing that.

Yes, Jake.

Q Colonel Qaddafi today in a rambling phone interview with Libyan state television, as well as two days ago, talked about how the protesters had been fed hallucinogens by Osama bin Laden. I was wondering if the administration had any response to anything Mr. Qaddafi has said in the last couple days.

MR. CARNEY: Jake, the way we've approached this, the way the President has approached this, is that our position on the unrest in these countries is not about an individual leader. It's about the responsibility that each government has to not respond with violence to peaceful demonstrators, to not restrict the universal rights that their citizens have, and to move forward with the kind of reforms that will be responsive to the legitimate aspirations of their people. It's not

about personalities.

And I would simply note that one consistent theme I think you've seen in the way that we have responded to these developments, these events in the Middle East, in the region, has been to make it clear that it's also not about the United States. It's not about the United States dictating outcomes, picking leaders, telling countries who can run, who can be their leader and who can't be -- because what we have seen are legitimate, organic, grassroots risings by the peoples of these countries demanding more freedom and greater opportunity in their lives. And again, it's not about individual leaders and it's about the peoples in these countries.

Q The French Defense Minister has talked openly about imposing a no-fly zone more openly than the U.S. has talked about it. Can you explain why?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I don't want to explain what other leaders in other countries have said or other senior officials from other countries. What we have said is that we're not going to specify which options are on or off the table. We are discussing a full range of options with our partners at the U.N. and elsewhere. And we expect to take action in the near term with the international community to, we believe, hopefully compel the Libyan government to stop killing its own people.

Q Do you have any theory as to why other nations have been allowed by the Libyan government to land planes to extricate their citizens and the Libyan government has not allowed the United States to do so?

MR. CARNEY: Again, for the details on our efforts to extract American citizens from -- or help evacuate American citizens from Libya I refer you to the State Department. I just know that we are doing everything we can to make that happen.

Dan.

Q Thank you. Back to the military options. Has the President been presented yet with a military plan on Libya from the Pentagon?

MR. CARNEY: I'm not going to get into specific options that are under consideration or not under consideration. I would again point out that we want to work with our international partners because we think the most effective action in many cases can be when the international community speaks with one voice and acts in a united way. I'm not -- again, I'm not ruling out bilateral options, but I'm just saying that that is a focus right now.

Q So you're not ruling out that there is a military option?

MR. CARNEY: I'm not ruling anything out.

Q But you won't say if the President has been presented with a military option yet?

MR. CARNEY: No, I won't say that.

Q Is there a list of priorities in terms of what options you would like to attack first? This is -- whether it's sanctions, whether it's no-fly zone, whether it's military -- has the administration put together a list of options in priority?

MR. CARNEY: Again, I think we've -- I've been asked and it's been discussed, the possibility of different kinds of sanctions, different measures that can be taken. That's obviously on the table. I don't want to categorize which options might come in which order, but we are interested in acting quickly because we have a situation in Libya that demands quick action. So we are interested in some of the actions that can be taken in the near term.

Q Any frustration for the administration that this is a country that the U.S. has no real deep ties to, no real financial ties to, and so the options, what's available, what may have been available in Egypt or other places is not available in Libya?

MR. CARNEY: Well, Dan, as we've said, each country that has been affected by this unrest is different. Each country in the region is different. Each country has different traditions, political systems and relationships with the United States and other countries around the region and the world.

So the way we approach our policy positions and make our decisions based on -- in reaction to the events in these countries is obviously affected by those differences, while it's also guided by the principles that we've talked about that apply to -- that guide our approach to all these countries and the unrest in them.

So that's a long way of saying each country is different and we deal with them and their differences as necessary.

Yes, Chip.

Q Thanks, Jay. You said that it's not about an individual leader and you've been saying that all along and it was said during the Egyptian situation also. But at the same time, the President wasn't reluctant or hesitant to use the name Mubarak when he spoke, but he seems reluctant to even mention the name Qaddafi. Why the difference?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I wouldn't read over -- read too much into that because the overlying principle here is that it's not about the individual leaders, it's not about the United States deciding who should or should not lead a country -- that's for the people of the country to decide. And that in many ways is what this unrest has been about, either specific leaders or regimes or the way that

the governments have treated their peoples.

And I would point you, again, to the fact that the leader this country, Colonel Qaddafi, has tried to suggest that the United States was behind the uprisings of its own people or the demonstrations, the peaceful demonstrations, in its own country by its own -- by Libya's own people. And that's clearly not the case. And I think Jake pointed out that now he's searching around for somebody else to blame.

Our focus is on the principles we've outlined -- we've laid out on the need for these governments in the region and around the world to be responsive to the legitimate aspirations of their people, and first and foremost, not to use violence in response to peaceful demonstrations.

Q And on military options, I know you said you don't want to take anything off the table. But my guess is a lot of the American people would like one option taken off the table and that's sending significant numbers of U.S. troops into Libya. Is that an option you can take off the table?

MR. CARNEY: Chip, again, I'll just -- I'm going to go back to my answer. I don't think it's productive for us as we're examining our options to take one option or the other off the table. But I am focused on -- I mean, we are focused on working with our partners internationally to take steps that will persuade or compel the Libyan government to change its behavior.

Q Then I guess the logic of that is if you won't take that off the table, then sending significant numbers of troops is on the table.

MR. CARNEY: Well, I just will say that I'm not taking options off the table -- we're not.

Q On the Wisconsin -- I'm sorry, on the Wisconsin situation, Congressman Ellison and others have called for the President to come out to Wisconsin and stand with the workers. Is that under discussion?

MR. CARNEY: Not that I'm aware of, Chip. I think what we have made pretty clear is that the President thinks and we think, he's stated this, that obviously a lot of states in the union are dealing with fiscal issues, big problems in their state budgets that need to be addressed. And they need to act responsibly, tighten their belts, live within their means, just as we in Washington, the executive branch and Congress need to do with our federal situation.

Q And forgive me --

MR. CARNEY: But again, he believes very strongly that the way to achieve that, just like the way to achieve it here, is that people need to come to the table, work together, share the sacrifice, and produce the result that the people in the states want and, again, extrapolating to the larger picture here, the whole country -- do the things that we need to do to live within our means so that

we can invest in the future, and I think that's true on a state level.

Q And forgive me if I'm being redundant, I missed much of yesterday's briefing. But you've been asked about what he said about joining the picket lines back in 2007 when he said, "If American workers are being denied their right to organize when I'm in the White House, I will put on a comfortable pair of shoes and I will walk on that picket line with you as President of the United States." Is he ready to put on a comfortable pair of shoes and fulfill that promise?

MR. CARNEY: I think, Chip, that the President, as President, has a -- obviously an ability to be heard when he speaks, and he spoke to the situation in Wisconsin and his views on it last week. And I'll leave it at that.

Q And I know you weren't with him at the time, but do you think he meant that when he said it? Is that a promise?

MR. CARNEY: I wasn't with him at the time, but again, I think that the President has different means of speaking out on issues and being heard, and clearly he did -- he made his viewpoints known on the situation in Wisconsin, the need for people to come together. He takes very seriously the fiscal situation that the states find themselves in -- some of the states -- and understands it because he understands it at the federal level. But he encourages the parties involved to come together and sacrifice together and reach a solution that serves the interests of all the people of the states, just like he's trying to do for the broader nation.

Q Thanks.

MR. CARNEY: Wendell.

Q The inspector general of the Home Affordable Modification Program says it's effectively failed. Does the President disagree?

MR. CARNEY: Hold on a second. I'm not sure I have anything on that for --

Q Spencer Bachus of Alabama.

MR. CARNEY: No, I understand. I understand. I'm just -- okay.

Q Whether or not the President agrees with the IG's report, Spencer Bachus of Alabama plans hearings in the House next week, and he is going to try and cut funding for it. Would you fight that attempt?

MR. CARNEY: I don't want to speculate about what we're going to do in response to a possible action by a senator. So if and when something happens we'll have a response.

Q All right. Would you consider saving 600,000 or 700,000 mortgages when the goal was 4 million to be a success?

MR. CARNEY: Well, look, we've been very clear about the seriousness with which we have been trying to deal with stabilizing the housing market, helping responsible homeowners stay in their homes. The fact is that, as you state, tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of homeowners are in their homes because of the program. And we're working to make sure that those responsible homeowners that can be helped are able to stay in their homes. And it is important to remember that those homeowners have been helped by this program.

Q The Wall Street Journal says you're working on a new program that would have the industry put up a pool of money to reduce the principals of loans that are underwater. Comment?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have a comment on possible programs we may be working on.

Q Can you talk about the Saudi national arrested last night in Texas, apparently trying to construct a bomb and targeting former President Bush?

MR. CARNEY: I can say a few things about that. The President was informed about the operation by John Brennan prior to the arrest. This arrest -- I assume everybody here knows about this story -- the arrest once again underscores the necessity of remaining vigilant against terrorism here and abroad. The President thanks the FBI, the Department of Justice and the rest of our law enforcement, intelligence and homeland security professionals who continue to keep us safe and who, once again, have served with extraordinary skill and with the commitment that their enormous responsibilities demand.

For anything else, I'll have to refer you to the Department of Justice because obviously this arrest has been made and there's an investigation.

Q He was told before the arrest?

MR. CARNEY: Yes, he was aware of it before the arrest.

Q That the arrest was coming or that this was a lone-wolf terrorist out there that they were worried about?

MR. CARNEY: He was informed that the arrest was coming.\*

Chuck.

Q Can you say whether the President has asked Secretary Gates to come up with a contingency plan to enforce a no-fly zone or start working with NATO on that respect? There is

some reports that that's taking place. I understand you guys aren't ruling any options out, but are plans being updated at least so that if the President gives an execute order this can happen fast?

MR. CARNEY: Well, Chuck, I think it's fair to say that when we're examining all options, and that option has been tabled, I guess, at least in the press, but certainly been discussed in other venues; that by exploring those options we're looking at the feasibility. And I mean that broadly about all the options that are -- that could potentially be on the table.

So without getting into updated plans for this option or that, exploring the options means just that: examining what our options are and what might work.

Q What kind of consultation has there been with NATO?

MR. CARNEY: I refer you to the Defense Department, but, again, I'm not -- I don't want to go down one lane here on one option and leave you with the impression that ---

Q I understand that, but has there been any consultation --

MR. CARNEY: -- that I'm ranking them. Again, there have been -- we are examining all the options that are available to us, and conversations around that examination are obviously taking place.

Q On the issue of sanctions, can you -- is there a concern that if you -- that some set of sanctions are going to harm the -- I guess the free part of Libya, the eastern -- where Qaddafi doesn't have control? I mean, is there a way to do sanctions that can humanitarily help one part of the country while punishing the government itself?

MR. CARNEY: As we look at the options, we're obviously examining the impact of different options. And our interest is not in causing more harm to innocent people in Libya, the very people we're trying to help, the international community is trying to help by getting -- doing what it can to get the Libyan government to stop its behavior. So I'm sure that is a consideration about how you would execute different options in a way that have the greatest impact towards the goal we're trying to achieve without negative consequences.

Because you raised the humanitarian aspect of this, the Libyan government has a responsibility not only to refrain from violence but to allow humanitarian assistance to reach those in need. And as humanitarian assistance is attempted to be made available to Libyans, that's another responsibility that the Libyan government is going to be held accountable for.

Q Does the government -- does the administration view this as a full-fledged humanitarian crisis taking place right now in Libya?

MR. CARNEY: The administration views this as a serious issue, and that's why we are working -- why Secretary Clinton is traveling to Geneva, why Bill Burns is traveling and engaging in these consultations, why the President is having phone calls with other leaders tonight on this issue and will continue to have conversations with other leaders about it. This is -- has definitely -- is definitely a focus of our efforts right now.

Q One question on the continuing resolution debate, is the President open to signing a short-term continuing resolution that does have some spending cuts in it?

MR. CARNEY: Chuck, there are two broad points to make here. One, the President made clear when he released his budget that he believes we need to cut spending. Democrats on the Hill have also said that they agree, we need to cut spending, as have Republicans.

He wants to work together, the President wants to work together with the leaders of Congress, both parties, to make that happen.

On the issue of the continuing resolution, the short-term funding of the bill, how that process will be negotiated out, I don't want to prejudge different options. But we believe that we -- two things: that we can work something out, and that the American people absolutely want us to work something out, because as the leaders of both houses of Congress have said, Republican and Democrat, as the President has said, it is not in the interests of the American people for the government to shut down. And that's because -- principally because of the impact it could have on our economy. We are still in the stages of recovery here, and the negative consequences of a shutdown, the uncertainty that that would create, could be detrimental to our economy.

Q Is the President encouraged or discouraged by what he's watching take place right now between Speaker Boehner and Senator Reid?

MR. CARNEY: The President believes the leaders of the House and the Senate need to get together to work something out. And he and senior members of the administration are engaged in conversations on the Hill as well. But as you know, there is a congressional process here that has to work. The House passes something, the Senate passes something, compromises are worked out. But we're also participating in that process because we believe we can work together to get something done, and that's what the American people want.

Let me move around a little bit here. Yes.

Q On that, Jay. Last week the President suggested one consequence of a government shutdown would be Social Security checks not going out. During the Clinton shutdowns, Social Security checks did continue going out. Is there reason to believe it would be different this time around?

MR. CARNEY: Well, look, as I said, we're confident that we can find the common ground that we need to find in order to avoid a government shutdown, and that leaders in both parties agree that that's what we need to do.

The President was pointing out some of the consequences, the potential consequences of failing to act, of failing to prevent a shutdown. And some recipients, new retirees, new applications might not receive their checks. If retirees have questions about their checks, if they didn't get their check in the mail, if they have a change of address, all those things could prevent them from getting their check.

So there are obviously consequences that directly affect people who are recipients of Social Security benefits, and there could be. But the broader point is that the uncertainty created by this, the number of consequences that could unfold if this does happen, would create the kind of environment that would be harmful to the economy overall, which would then -- Speaker of the House said yesterday he's focused on jobs and the economy; the President makes clear every day, as he will this afternoon when he speaks with his new council on jobs and competitiveness, that he's focused on jobs and the economy. And we do not want and we do not believe the leaders of Congress and we know the American people don't want actions to be taken in Washington that upset this recovery, set us back, affect growth and affect job creation.

Yes, Glenn.

Q Jay, there are reports on the ground from Benghazi and other cities of people being killed -- a woman, for instance, I think this was Tripoli, there was a report of a woman being shot for standing on the balcony to sort of look out and see what was going on. There was a quote I think in a CNN dispatch today of a person in a crowd in Benghazi saying, "We are being murdered and the world is just standing by." The President yesterday said the world is watching. What is the message the administration is giving to the people who are being killed right now in Libya about what the United States intends to do to keep this kind of thing from happening to people who are simply exercising their desire for freedom?

MR. CARNEY: Well, we've made very clear that we absolutely support the people of Libya, the people of Bahrain, the people of Egypt, other people who have peacefully expressed their desire for change in their country. Again, I take you back to our governing principles as we approach these problems.

We are working with the international community to take the kind of action that will prevent the Libyan government from continuing to wreak this kind of havoc on its own people. The President has been very clear about how strongly he condemns this action. It's unacceptable. It's reprehensible. It's abhorrent.

Q But how does sending Secretary Clinton to a conference on Monday ameliorate the

situation for people on the ground --

MR. CARNEY: We're interested in outcomes. We're interest in doing -- taking the measures that will actually have the desired effect, which is to get the Libyan government to stop the bloodshed. And the President has been absolutely focused --

Q (Inaudible.)

MR. CARNEY: Let me speak to Glenn here. The President is absolutely focused on this, as is Secretary Clinton and the rest of the national security team.

Q Is there a concern that more forceful -- we've talked a bit about sort of the Americans on the ground -- is there a concern that a more forceful response by the administration could result in more bloodshed against Libyan protestors?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I don't want to speculate about what might happen, but anytime you have a situation like this you have to gauge what the response will be to the actions you take. It's a fluid, dynamic and dangerous situation. And we're committed to getting this right so that the Libyan people are no longer subjected to the kind of violence that they're being subjected to by their government.

April.

Q Can I follow up?

Q Thanks, Jay. Back on the situation with Libya. Protests have just been spreading in North Africa and the Middle East; the result is gas prices going up here in America. Is this administration asking countries in Africa that support -- that I guess export oil to us -- is this administration asking Canada, is this administration asking Mexico, is this administration asking Saudi Arabia to increase their output to keep prices down?

MR. CARNEY: April, whenever you have unrest in this part of the world, there are going to be reactions in the oil markets, and that is obviously something we've seen. The situation remains fluid, but we are monitoring this closely. We're very cognizant of the fact that oil prices can affect the economy and can affect people in their wallets and pocketbooks. But we are in touch with the IEA and oil-producing countries about the developments in the market. We have the capacity to act in the event of a major supply disruption. I don't want to speculate on any particular action and I don't want to, again, speculate that -- predict what may or may not happen in terms of disruption. But the global community has -- global system has a lot of experience in managing the kind of disruption that we've seen, and our focus now is on monitoring this and making sure that we know what our options are if they need to be taken.

Q But it's an issue of supply and demand for the sweet crude. And is the administration concerned that analysts, oil analysts, are talking about the possibility of \$5 a gallon? I mean, we saw \$4.11 a gallon at its height and people were really upset then. The economy was starting to show signs of breaking. So what is happening right now?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I can assure you, April, that we are very closely watching this situation. I don't want to speculate on where oil prices may or may not go or what the effects of unrest in Libya may or may not have tomorrow or next week or down the road on oil prices. But we have the capacity to act in case of a major supply disruption, and we are talking with international institutions and other -- and oil-producing nations to -- as we examine the developments in the markets.

Q Can I follow up Glenn's question real quick?

MR. CARNEY: Yes.

Q Given what Glenn says, that there are people being killed en masse right now in Libya, what is the timeline for the administration's getting the international community together and getting a tangible response to what's going on? What is -- what's the timeframe?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I can assure you we are working on this aggressively, and specifically with the goal of taking action that can be most effective, most efficiently. And I'm not going to tell you that this is going to happen tomorrow and then something else will happen in two or three days because we're talking about actions that we are coordinating with our international partners. And I don't want to preview, again, take options on or off -- take options off the table. But believe me, we are moving very quickly.

Q Coordination -- coordinating an international response to something is basically the definition of herding cats, and it's a very fast-moving situation over in Libya. If you don't want to tell me what the timeline is, is there even a timeline for getting a response in place?

MR. CARNEY: Well, look, I would point you to the fact -- look at the international reaction. This is a case where what Libya has done has garnered very little support around the globe -- quite the contrary. The international community is speaking almost with -- entirely with one voice in condemning what's happening there. And so I don't believe this is a case of herding cats. I believe that this is an opportunity to act in a concerted way with our international partners.

Q So no timeline for a specific --

MR. CARNEY: I'm not going to give you a timeline. Right.

Let me -- yes, Mike.

Q On the -- sort of following up a little bit on April's question. Several Democratic members of Congress have asked the President to consider releasing oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to keep prices from rising too much. Is this something that he's considering? How does he react to these members' of Congress request?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I think I would just repeat what I said, which is that we have the capacity to act in case of a major disruption. Right now we don't -- we're simply monitoring the situation and discussing with the IEA and oil-producing states what's happening in the markets, but I'm not going to preview what might happen if a further disruption happens and what our options are.

Q President Obama back in August of 2008 advocated using oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve back in August '08 when the price of oil was about \$120 a barrel. At what price would President Obama want to release oil?

MR. CARNEY: I think what's important about that to remember is that the causes of the surge in oil prices in 2008 were quite different from the circumstances that we're seeing now. And then I would say that we are examining our options and we have the capacity if necessary to act in case of a major disruption. But again, it's important -- there's not a one-size-fits-all response when the actual circumstances are quite different.

Q Can we do another topic, Jay? Please, Jay?

MR. CARNEY: Let me -- all the way in the back. Yes, ma'am. Yes. Yes, I'm sorry. I don't know your name with the glasses.

Q Thank you. My name is Sarah.

MR. CARNEY: Sarah.

Q Yes. My question is if we should have a government shutdown, would the people still get paid, or -- I was going to ask about Social Security, because obviously that would affect me. (Laughter.) Is that -- what you just said, that's not going to be touched? Or you don't know yet, or what's going to happen?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I would -- first of all, part of the problem is the uncertainty that it creates. But there are what I -- the point I want to make very clearly is that we believe we can work together with Congress to avoid a shutdown because we all agree that a shutdown would be disruptive to the economy, affect our capacity to grow and create jobs. That's an outcome that no one -- we certainly don't want, the President doesn't want and the American people don't want. So I don't want to predict what might happen in a circumstance that we very much hope to avoid.

All the way in the back. Yes, sir.

Q Thank you, Jay. About the uprisings. You've said that all the nations are different and all the relationships are different. So then what metrics is the administration using to evaluate that an uprising in one country is different from an uprising in another country and that the response should be different from one country to another?

MR. CARNEY: Well, because each country is different there -- you have to measure that. But we're guided by these principles that I talked about yesterday that were enunciated by the President in his speech in Cairo, about the need for the countries in the region to respond to the aspirations, the democratic aspirations of their peoples, because they had a problem on their hands. And that still pertains, that is our approach: no violence; respect for the universal rights of your citizens; and actions, reforms, that respond to the demands and aspirations that are legitimate of the people.

And in terms of how you evaluate, again, these are events that are happening from the ground up. And we've all seen them -- in Egypt, how the people on the streets represented all walks of life in Egypt. And obviously we look at that in each country and how broad-based the unrest is.

Fundamentally, peaceful demonstrations should never be responded to with violence.

Q Some other topic, Jay? Jay, some other topic?

Q Another international story, is there any comment from the White House about the extradition of Julian Assange to Sweden?

MR. CARNEY: I have no comment on that because it's an ongoing investigation.

Jonathan.

Q The Vice President is meeting with Richard Trumka today, along with Hilda Solis, and I'm wondering why the President was not on that list and does -- did the President drop in on that meeting?

MR. CARNEY: I don't believe the President did, but I will double-check. And if he did, I'll let you know. But I don't believe he did and this was a long-scheduled meeting. As you know, the Vice President meets with labor leaders periodically. This is -- has been scheduled for quite a while.

Q But, I mean, we're right in the middle of a big labor fracas. Is the President trying to keep his distance from this?

MR. CARNEY: The President made very clear, as all of you wrote about and many of you made more of than what was actually the case, his view on the need for public sector employees to

tighten their belts just like everyone else in these -- as we all try to get control of our budgets at the state level and the federal level -- but his concern that what not happen is that the fiscal problems that states find themselves in be used as an excuse to go after the fundamental bargaining rights, collective bargaining rights, the sort of underlying foundation of unions. So I think he made his position on that very clear.

Sam.

Q Yes, a different topic, following yesterday's decision by the Department of Justice to drop its defense of DOMA, members of Congress have reintroduced legislation to actually overturn the law. Considering that the administration now has a position that DOMA is unconstitutional, will we be expecting support from the President for these pieces of legislation to make the law inoperative?

MR. CARNEY: The President has long believed that DOMA, the Defense of Marriage Act, is an unnecessary and unfair law. He supports the repeal of the law. As for its constitutionality, obviously he made clear his views on that in the decision he made that was announced yesterday. But he does support the repeal, yes.

Michael.

Q Jay, why did the President tell us that Ray Davis --

MR. CARNEY: There's a lot of Michaels in here. You're next.

Q Why did the President tell us -- why did the President tell us that Ray Davis was a diplomat?

MR. CARNEY: Look, Mr. Davis was received by the government of Pakistan as an employee of the embassy and he was granted diplomatic immunity under the Vienna Conventions. And what we are saying very clearly is that he needs to be released in accordance with those treaties, which apply to the personnel of countries -- not just the United States in foreign countries, but Pakistan's employees in the United States and around the globe, and every other country that are participatory -- that participate in those important treaties. And it's a fundamental principle that can't be compromised.

Q So it's not misleading in any way for the President to say this man is a diplomat, when he in fact was working for the Central Intelligence Agency?

MR. CARNEY: What he said -- what we're talking about here is the fact that he was received by the Pakistani government as an employee of the embassy, of the United States embassy, and had the protections of the Vienna Conventions. And that needs to pertain and needs to hold true and he needs to be released according to that.

Michael.

Q Given the President's commitment to transparency, is there any guidance White House officials get about when it's appropriate to meet off campus with a lobbyist and when a lobbyist meeting should be on campus?

MR. CARNEY: This administration has taken extraordinary actions to be transparent. I think this question stems from a story that, frankly, was absurd. We release hundreds of thousands of records voluntarily, a policy instituted by this President because of his desire for transparency -- something no administration had ever done before. The decisions about where -- and those records are available to every American citizen online to be reviewed, and all different types of people come to the White House complex for meetings on issues. And our level of transparency and disclosure is unprecedented because the President believes deeply in it.

What I would say is that, as any of you who have walked around this complex know, been in the West Wing -- not like the TV show; very small space, very few meeting rooms. The Old Executive Office Building -- the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, a third of which has been under renovation since we've been here -- very limited space. Jackson Place is a White House conference center -- so designated -- and therefore when we have large meetings sometimes we use that space if there are no spaces here.

So that's --

Q But would you agree that there's effectively a transparency loophole here, if the goal is to show when lobbyists, powerful interests, are meeting with White House officials, that right now it's routine for White House officials to meet off campus with these people and there's no daylight on that?

MR. CARNEY: It is routine for the White House officials to meet with all types of people, including lobbyists, and frequently here. The suggestion that we're not being transparent is laughable given the unbelievable precedent this administration has set in its -- closing the door, the revolving door, and releasing these records. There are no -- the WAVES system, which is the system that produces the records, operates in certain buildings and not others. And for those decisions, how that operates and why, I refer you to the United States Secret Service. But the principle here is the unprecedented level of transparency that we have provided because we believe deeply in it.

Q Would it be inappropriate for a White House official to intentionally arrange a meeting off campus to not be caught by the WAVES records?

MR. CARNEY: Look, we have meetings with all sorts of people. We have them here. Those records are available.

Q But would it be appropriate if you choose to go off campus because you didn't want it to show up in the files? It's yes or no.

MR. CARNEY: The guiding principle here is transparency, and we believe that -- nobody is, that I'm aware of, is hiding where they're meeting. The meetings that happen at Jackson Place, it's a big meeting place and that's where --

Q If it's so big, why not change the policy and release those names --

MR. CARNEY: We do not control where the WAVES is. And I'm not going to -- in terms of --

Q You could release them separately. You could change the policy.

MR. CARNEY: Well, Chip, look, I'm not aware what policies might be instituted in the future. But what I think is fundamentally important to remind you of is that we release information that has never been released before. I think you probably remember, you were covering the previous administration. They went to court, to the Supreme Court, to prevent the disclosure of people who were meeting with the Vice President. We voluntarily release the records that are available to us. And we never said that there was a way to get every name in every meeting. The principle is disclosure, and we have gone to extraordinary lengths to make that happen.

Q Would you consider changing the policy to increase disclosure?

MR. CARNEY: Again, I don't want to predict about future policies that may be put in place. I just want to remind everybody about what we've done and why.

Q Jay --

Q Jay, on this side?

MR. CARNEY: The woman in red.

Q What is the level of concern in the White House about the nine metric tons of mustard gas that are currently stockpiled in Libya?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have anything for you on that.

Q Jay --

MR. CARNEY: Yes, ma'am.

Q Jay, you said that it's important for us to move quickly on Libya today. But the President

said yesterday, Wednesday, that Secretary Clinton will be going to Europe on Monday to consult with the Human Rights Council. That's five days. A lot of Libyans can die in five days.

MR. CARNEY: Well, first of all, Secretary Burns is also traveling to deal with this issue. Secretary Clinton, the President, officials at every level of the national security team are working on this full time. I can assure you.

Q Also, in addition -- I haven't quite finished -- in addition, my other question was, you said it's very important for us to speak as one international voice. Some of the European counterparts are already calling for sanctions.

MR. CARNEY: And we're discussing options with --

Q So why not join in with them?

MR. CARNEY: Well, we are absolutely interested in examining sanctions as a possible option. But we're examining all options and we will have -- we will take action as soon as possible.

Q Jay, on that?

MR. CARNEY: Let me go to Jared. Yeah.

Q Jay, on the European counterparts, you said at the top of the briefing that Cameron and Sarkozy are getting calls from the President. Is there any outreach to Hu and Medvedev to get the other members of the U.N. Security Council P5 for something on that level? Is that on the table?

MR. CARNEY: Not that I'm aware of. I think the President will be discussing, having conversations with other foreign leaders going forward. I don't have anything on who, specifically, or what contacts the State Department might be making or our ambassador at the U.N.

Let me go here, sorry. Yes.

Q When the President makes phone calls like the two that he's going to make today, there's always some groundwork before them. So would you describe this as a decision call on what's going to happen next with these two other leaders, or is this just continuing the consultations?

MR. CARNEY: I wouldn't want to characterize beyond what I've said.

Q Now, on the assets of Qaddafi and his family, the Swiss government today has frozen the assets of Qaddafi, his sons and the rest of the family. Are the wheels in motion for that to happen here?

MR. CARNEY: I would simply say that we are examining a variety of options and that we will move as quickly as possible to implement them.

Yes.

Q Jay, on the arrest in Texas, does the White House believe President Bush was a target?

MR. CARNEY: I don't want to get into the details of this investigation, so I'm not going to comment on that.

Q Has President Obama spoken to President Bush about this?

MR. CARNEY: I don't believe he has, but President Bush was notified.

Q Can I ask a follow-up on that? Jay, can I ask a follow-up on that? There are a lot of allegations that this student, who is a Saudi who was arrested, should not have been in this country. Is there a loophole in the immigration system? Should the screening process be tightened to screen out potential jihadists?

MR. CARNEY: Well, again, I don't want to comment on this investigation in any capacity, so -- I mean, in any detail. Questions about immigration I direct you to DHS.

Q Three other topics, please?

MR. CARNEY: Connie. Three? No, let's just do one.

Q I'll go real fast. Okay, well, can I do one quick on New Zealand and one on the pirates? Thank you -- on New Zealand, any chance the President will visit New Zealand when he goes to Hawaii in September?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have any announcements on presidential travel.

Q All right, on the Somali pirates. There's been nothing said in the few days since the Americans were slaughtered. There are some increasing calls to bomb the headquarters of the Somali pirates. Do you have any sort of strategy? What are you going to do with them?

MR. CARNEY: I would not and could not speak about operations that may or may not happen. I don't want to suggest that anything is happening, Connie, but it's not something I would talk about.

Q Anything in public?

MR. CARNEY: Well, we -- obviously outraged by the actions of pirates that result in the deaths of American citizens. And the President, as you know, I believe has expressed his sincere condolences to the families of the victims. But beyond that I don't want to get into details.

Q Thanks, Jay.

MR. CARNEY: Thank you. I'll take one more. Yes, sir.

Q Given the fact that the Libyan government has seemingly already abandoned sort of rational reasoning and behavior by turning on its own citizens, is it realistic to think that sanctions and international efforts would convince it to stop doing so?

MR. CARNEY: I don't want to predict what the Libyan government will do. But what I do know is that this administration, leaders of governments around the world are outraged and appalled by what we've seen happen in Libya and will take and are taking the actions that they believe will be most effective in changing the behavior of the Libyan government.

Q Would any sanctions be partly designed not necessarily just targeting Qaddafi, but family members, other power centers that might kind of convince them to try and peel away from Qaddafi?

MR. CARNEY: I would only say that we're examining a variety of options.

That's it. Thanks, guy.

END

2:11 P.M. EST

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