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**The White House**

Office of the Press Secretary

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For Immediate Release

February 22, 2011

**Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Jay Carney Aboard Air Force One en route Cleveland, Ohio**

**Aboard Air Force One, En Route Cleveland, Ohio**

10:39 A.M. EST

MR. CARNEY: Good morning, everybody.

Q Good morning.

MR. CARNEY: You guys ready? I just want -- before I take your questions, I wanted to remind everybody why we're here, for the Winning the Future Forum on Small Business. As you know, in addition to the President of the United States, we have Cabinet members attending the event, and that includes the Treasury Secretary, Commerce Secretary, Labor Secretary, Energy Secretary, the SBA Administrator, the CEA Chair, and Gene Sperling, the National Economic Director.

As you know, the President talked about the need for innovation and for businesses in particular and small businesses to be the engine of growth in our economy. And he wants to hear from small business owners in this forum about what drives success and what barriers lie in the way of success.

Cleveland is actually a city that's done a great deal of positive work in positioning itself in both the field of biotechnology and clean energy. It's really poised to be a global leader in the 21st century in these new industries, and the President is obviously very excited about that.

So from here on there will be other events similar to this that Cabinet secretaries will participate in. This is not just a one-time deal. It was a major theme of the President's State of the Union address and will continue to be.

So, with that, I will take your questions.

Q On Libya, can you tell us what is going on behind the scenes at the White House? And also, is there concern that unlike in Egypt, there is nothing that you can really do, there's no real ties with Libya and there's very little the administration can do in that situation?

MR. CARNEY: Well, first let me point you to the fact that on Friday, while we were on this plane, the President issued a statement condemning the violence in Libya, the use of violence against peaceful protesters in Libya as well as two other countries. Yesterday, the Secretary of State issued a very strongly worded statement condemning the violence and expressing our great alarm at the violence used against peaceful protesters. We offer our condolences to the families of the victims in Libya of this appalling violence. And the Secretary of State will speak again today at approximately 2:30 p.m. where she will address some of these issues.

Q Will the President speak about this today?

MR. CARNEY: I don't anticipate that, but we'll see.

Q Do you have a -- can you give us anything on the death of the hostages at the hands of the pirates?

MR. CARNEY: Well, for details about what happened I'd refer you to the Pentagon. What I can tell you is that the President was notified this morning at 4:42 a.m. by Homeland Security director -- or advisor, rather, John Brennan about the outcome in which the four American citizens' lives were lost, the tragic outcome of that event.

The President did, over the weekend on Saturday, authorize the use of force in the case of imminent -- of an imminent threat to those hostages, and that's -- for other details I can refer you to the Defense Department.

Q Are there, do you think, measures that -- the Security Council is meeting today on Libya -- are there international measures that the U.S. can take with its partners to try and affect what's going on inside Libya, or is it a question of lacking substantial leverage?

MR. CARNEY: There is activity at the United Nations Security Council today. We are participating in meetings. We look forward to working with the international community so that the international community speaks with one voice in condemning the violence. And we feel like when the international community speaks with one voice, it can be most effective, so we are obviously participating fully in that.

Q Is the White House having any conversations with other world leaders about -- the President himself having any conversations with world leaders about Libya?

MR. CARNEY: I have no announcements on presidential conversations right now.

Q Oil is at a two-year high. How closely is the President monitoring the situation in Libya?

MR. CARNEY: Well, as you know, when there is unrest in the world and specifically in that region, that can affect oil prices. We are closely monitoring that situation, but I would not speculate on where oil prices would go in the future.

Q Do you think the events of the last few days have shown perhaps that the attempts to kind of rehabilitate Qaddafi -- particularly the Europeans sort of took part in it the last administration as well -- were a mistake?

MR. CARNEY: What I'll say, Steve, is that the future of Libya needs to be decided by the Libyan people. As is the case throughout the region, our policy is -- pertains in Libya or towards Libya as it did -- does to Egypt, to Bahrain and other countries, which is that we call very strongly for an end to the use of violence against peaceful protesters. We call for respect for the universal rights that these -- peoples of this region, as peoples all around the world, have: the right to peaceful assembly, to freedom of expression. And we recognize their legitimate aspirations.

We call on the governments of the region to listen to and respect the legitimate aspirations of their people and to reform accordingly.

Q Jay, there's going to be a labor rally in Columbus about the time that the President is here. There's of course the unrest in Wisconsin. You're also seeing it in Ohio and Indiana, and there's going to be a large protest of teachers in early March over labor rules proposed by that legislature. Is the President going to address any of that today? And does he have any thoughts on this ongoing situation?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have anything for you on what the President will say today. He's focused very much -- with regard to that, he's focused very much on this important forum, small business forum.

And as far as his thoughts, he expressed them in an interview with a Wisconsin television station -- I believe it was last week -- where he made clear that he absolutely recognizes the need that state governments have, governors and legislators, to deal with their fiscal situation; that everyone needs to tighten their belts, and that includes public sector employees. But he also expressed his concern that the efforts specifically in Wisconsin were aimed at going right after the collective bargaining rights of unions.

So -- but that's the extent of the White House involvement.

Q What about Kasich's efforts in Ohio to go after collective bargaining?

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

Q What's his reaction to the House vote at 4:40 a.m. in the morning, Saturday morning?

MR. CARNEY: Look, we continue to believe that we will be able to work out common ground on these issues. I would point you to the fact that all four leaders of Congress, leaders of the House, leaders of the Senate, have expressed their confidence that we can work this out before March 4th, and we believe we can.

Q Does the administration stand by a veto threat if the House-passed package gets to the President's desk with those big cuts?

MR. CARNEY: Well, the White House's position, the President's position was clearly stated in that statement of administration policy. That hasn't changed.

Q Any contingency plans yet? Are you still working on any plans for a shutdown?

MR. CARNEY: I would refer you to the Office of Management and Budget, which is the agency within the executive branch that needs to deal with these sorts of things. And I'd simply state that there have been contingency plans for government shutdowns since 1980, and those plans are obviously updated accordingly, but they've been around for a long time.

Q You said 1980?

MR. CARNEY: 1980 is what I understand, but I'd refer you to Ken Baer at OMB.

Q How confident are you that a shutdown can be avoided?

MR. CARNEY: Well, as I said, we believe, as do the leaders of the House and the Senate, including Senator McConnell and Speaker Boehner -- we agree with them that we do not want a shutdown of the government and that we can come to an agreement that avoids that.

Q Any comment on the Iranian warships going through the Suez Canal today?

MR. CARNEY: Nothing new beyond what I said Friday, I think it was, which was that we monitor that situation closely. And obviously Iranian behavior in the region is something we always watch.

Anything else before we land, which looks to be in about --

Q Any minute.

MR. CARNEY: -- two minutes to three minutes? I don't want anyone to get hurt.

Q Thanks, Jay.

MR. CARNEY: Are you good? Thanks a lot.

END

10:49 A.M. EST

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