

[Home](#) • [Briefing Room](#) • [Press Briefings](#)

Search WhiteHouse.gov

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 03, 2011

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney, 5/3/2011

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

1:57 P.M. EDT

MR. CARNEY: All right. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I don't have any announcements to make, so let's go straight to questions.

Q Jay, could you talk about the Pete Souza photo that you guys put out that shows the President and others watching in the Situation Room? What were they seeing in the moment that that photo was taken?

MR. CARNEY: As John Brennan, the President's counterterrorism advisor, explained yesterday, the President and his top national security aides in the Situation Room had available to them minute-by-minute updates on the operation, and that photograph was taken during the operation. And they were looking at and listening to those updates. I can't get more specific than that, but this was during the operation and during those tense moments that Mr. Brennan described yesterday and this morning on television.

Q I mean, why can't you get more specific without revealing technology or anything?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I think it's -- I think specifically we don't talk about, with any great detail, how we get our real-time information for a variety of reasons. I mean, those meetings take place in the Situation Room for a reason. Those rooms there are for secure communication.

So I can't get more specific than that. I think it's been said, so I can say, that Leon Panetta, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, was on a screen and communicating with those in the Situation Room and the President. So he was present in that room in that sense as well.

Q So they were looking at Leon Panetta?

MR. CARNEY: Well, again, they were receiving real-time, minute-by-minute updates on the operation taking place in Pakistan at that moment. But they were receiving a lot of information at once.

Q Okay. So Brennan in his briefing yesterday made a couple of I guess misstatements or statements that later appeared to be somewhat incorrect, such as that the wife was shielding bin Laden and it turned out it wasn't the wife and there may not have been a shield and it wasn't clear whether or not bin Laden had a gun. Are you guys in a fog of war in this, or what gives?

MR. CARNEY: Well, what is true is that we provided a great deal of information with great haste in order to inform you and, through you, the American public about the operation and how it transpired and the events that took place there in Pakistan. And obviously some of the information was -- came in piece by piece and is being reviewed and updated and elaborated on.

So what I can tell you, I have a narrative that I can provide to you on the raid itself, on the bin Laden compound in Pakistan.

On orders of the President, a small U.S. team assaulted a secure compound in an affluent suburb of Islamabad to capture or kill Osama bin Laden. The raid was conducted with U.S. military personnel assaulting on two helicopters. The team methodically cleared the compound, moving from room to room in an operation lasting nearly 40 minutes. They were engaged in a firefight throughout the operation, and Osama bin Laden was killed by the assaulting force.

In addition to the bin Laden family, two other families resided in the compound: one family on the first floor of the bin Laden building, and one family in a second building.

WATCH THE VIDEO



May 03, 2011 4:32 PM

[Press Briefing](#)



BLOG POSTS ON THIS ISSUE

January 12, 2013 5:30 AM EST

[Weekly Address: Ending the War in Afghanistan and Rebuilding America](#)

President Obama talks about the bipartisan agreement that Congress reached this week which prevented a middle-class tax hike, congratulates the newly sworn-in members of Congress, and looks forward to working with the new Congress in the new year to continue to grow our economy and shrink our deficits in a balanced way.

January 11, 2013 4:50 PM EST

[President Obama Hosts President Karzai](#)



We'll soon reach a milestone in Afghanistan - when Afghan forces take full responsibility for their nation's security and the war draws to a close.

January 11, 2013 12:00 AM EST

[West Wing Week: 01/11/13 or "The Interests of Our Country"](#)

One team began the operation on the first floor of the bin Laden house and worked their way to the third floor. A second team cleared the separate building.

On the first floor of bin Laden's building, two al Qaeda couriers were killed, along with a woman who was killed in crossfire. Bin Laden and his family were found on the second and third floor of the building. There was concern that bin Laden would oppose the capture operation -- operation rather, and, indeed, he did resist.

In the room with bin Laden, a woman -- bin Laden's -- a woman, rather, bin Laden's wife, rushed the U.S. assaulter and was shot in the leg but not killed. Bin Laden was then shot and killed. He was not armed.

Following the firefight, the noncombatants were moved to a safe location as the damaged helicopter was detonated. The team departed the scene via helicopter to the USS Carl Vinson in the North Arabian Sea.

Aboard the USS Carl Vinson, the burial of bin Laden was done in conformance with Islamic precepts and practices. The deceased's body was washed and then placed in a white sheet. The body was placed in a weighted bag; a military officer read prepared religious remarks, which were translated into Arabic by a native speaker. After the words were complete, the body was placed on a prepared flat board, tipped up, and the deceased body eased into the sea.

That's the narrative that I can provide to you today.

Q In what way did bin Laden --

MR. CARNEY: And I want to make clear that is, again, information that is fresh, and we will continue to gather and provide to you details as we get them and we're able to release them.

The resistance was throughout. As I said, when the assaulter entered the room where Osama bin Laden was, he was rushed by one individual in the room, and the resistance was consistent from the moment they landed until the end of the operation.

Yes.

Q Jay, just to follow up, how did Obama -- excuse me, Osama bin Laden resist if he didn't -- if he didn't have his hand on a gun, how was he resisting?

MR. CARNEY: Yes, the information I have to you -- first of all, I think resistance does not require a firearm. But the information I gave you is what I can tell you about it. I'm sure more details will be provided as they come available and we are able to release them.

Q Did he have any weapon?

MR. CARNEY: He was not armed, is what I understand to be true.

Q On the same theme, but to Afghanistan -- do you see the capture of bin Laden affecting the pace and timing of the planned withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan?

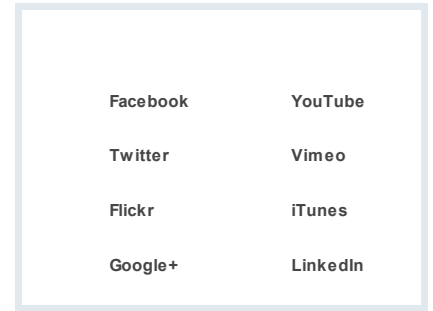
MR. CARNEY: No, I think the President's plan is on track. It is -- you can see the operation that took place on Sunday within the context of this plan that the President put in place for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and within the context of his broader commitment as a candidate and as President to refocus our attention on the AfPak region, which is the home to what they call al Qaeda central, and was until very recently the home to the leader of al Qaeda.

This President was very determined -- as you remember when he ran for office and since he came in here -- to refocus our attention on that region, on al Qaeda. And as you recall in the very carefully deliberated upon plan that the President put forward for Afghanistan, that the number one objective was to dismantle and eventually defeat al Qaeda. Getting bin Laden was very much a part of that plan, but it is not the only part.

As John Brennan and others have said, the President has said, we are continuing the fight against al Qaeda every day. And the focus of that operation, of the U.S. personnel in Afghanistan, is on al Qaeda. The operation continues. The July 2011 transition date for the beginning of a drawdown remains very much in place. The pace of that drawdown will be determined by conditions on the ground.

Q Final question. Any updates on the plans to release video or images?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have any updates on that, except to echo what John Brennan said this morning, which is that we're obviously reviewing information. We've made a great deal available to the public in remarkable time; we're talking about the most highly classified operation that this government has undertaken in many, many years. And the amount of information we've tried to provide to you in this short period of time is quite substantial. We will continue to review that and make decisions about the appropriateness of releasing more information as



that review continues on.

Jake.

Q The Pakistani government put out a statement in which they said that the ISI had been providing information about the compound since 2009, whereas all we know about, in terms of the media, is that we've known about the compound since 2010. Could you explain the discrepancy? And also, has the ISI been providing information about this compound?

MR. CARNEY: Well, what I will do is point you to the comments that John Brennan made, and others have made, which is that the Pakistanis have, in general, been very helpful in many ways in the fight against al Qaeda, and that help was of assistance, in general, in the gathering of intelligence and information that led to the successful operation on Sunday.

I am not aware, and I believe we have said that -- we've been quite clear about our knowledge about the existence of this compound and about the communications we did not have with Pakistan intelligence about this operation.

Q Okay. They also say in a statement that many houses in that region occupied by affectees of operations in the FATA region have high boundary walls as part of a culture of privacy, so high walls in that region -- obviously you got the right house, I'm not questioning that, but is this your cultural understanding of the region, that high walls are actually --

MR. CARNEY: I think this was a unique property within the region. But he clearly successfully hid from sight, at least our sight, for a very long time. And he is not the only high-value target who did that by hiding in highly populated areas. Obviously there was some speculation for many years that he and other high-value al Qaeda targets were hiding in caves or in the mountainous region, small villages, or living a nomadic existence, and in fact, what we seem to have discovered over the course of these years of investigating and finding these high-value targets is that there's a preference, or has been in these cases, a preference for highly populated areas, which, understandably, can sometimes be an easier place to hide.

Q And lastly, the previous administration did release photographs of high-value targets -- Uday and Qusay Hussein as just two examples. What would hold you back from doing it? It seemed to have gone off relatively without a hitch, as far as I know. Why would you not release a photograph of bin Laden?

MR. CARNEY: Well, to be candid, there are sensitivities here in terms of the appropriateness of releasing photographs of Osama bin Laden in the aftermath of this firefight, and we're making an evaluation about the need to do that because of the sensitivities involved. And we review this information and make this decision with the same calculation as we do so many things, which is what we're trying to accomplish and does it serve or in any way harm our interests. And that is not just domestic, but globally.

Q Can you explain sensitivities? Because it's a gruesome photograph, that that --

MR. CARNEY: It's fair to say that it's a gruesome photograph.

Q That it could be inflammatory? That's the sensitivity you're --

MR. CARNEY: It is certainly possible that -- and this is an issue that we are taking into consideration, is that it could be inflammatory.

Q Jay, have you seen it?

MR. CARNEY: I'm not going to get into who and where -- who's seen the photographs or where they are.

Yes.

Q Thanks, Jay. Since, as you said, bin Laden was not armed, why was the decision made to kill him as opposed to capturing him?

MR. CARNEY: As Mr. Brennan and others have made clear, there was -- we were prepared to capture him if that was possible. We expected a great deal of resistance and were met with a great deal of resistance.

Q But he wasn't armed?

MR. CARNEY: But there were many other people who were armed in the region -- I mean, in the compound. There was a firefight.

Q But not in that room when he went in?

MR. CARNEY: Dan, it was a highly volatile firefight. I'll point you to the Department of Defense for more details about it, but it was a -- he resisted. The U.S. personnel on the ground handled themselves with the utmost professionalism and he was killed in an operation because of the resistance that they met.

Q Since everyone here was getting real-time information, was the decision to shoot and kill one that was done there by that unit? Or was there consultation? Was there information flowing back and forth, and it was directed that, yes, go for the kill at that point?

MR. CARNEY: Command -- the operation was run from the ground, or certainly not from the White House. And at the point -- I think Mr. Brennan described this yesterday at the briefing or perhaps on television or maybe in both places -- that at that point the folks in the Situation Room were observers and listeners to an operation that obviously had been carefully thought out, meticulously prepared for. The decision to go was the President's and obviously was a very weighty decision.

Once it began, however, obviously, it was up to those who were taking the action to execute the plan.

Q Yesterday the White House put out a readout of the President's calls to various world leaders. Any additional calls today? And also, have any of these world leaders expressed concern about the U.S. going into another country unannounced?

MR. CARNEY: We did provide a readout. I don't have any new calls to read out for you at this time. My understanding is that the calls were all -- all included congratulations to the United States for their successful operation in capturing and killing Osama bin Laden. I'm not aware of any concern expressed about the issue that you raise, and, in fact, the President of Pakistan has an op-ed in The Washington Post, and they also congratulated us on the success.

Yes, Chip.

Q Thanks, Jay. At one point I think you said the assaulter was rushed when you were describing the situation when bin Laden was killed. Was there just one assaulter in the room with bin Laden? And were both shots fired by one person?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have a detail on the shots and who fired them. My understanding is they entered a room one at a time -- this particular room. But I -- beyond that, I don't know. There was obviously a team in the compound, but I don't want to venture a guess. I always find it better to not do that. So I would point you to the Department of Defense for that.

Q Okay. But it's still believed that a wife of Osama bin Laden was shot --

MR. CARNEY: Yes.

Q -- but not killed.

MR. CARNEY: Shot in the leg.

Q Shot in the leg.

MR. CARNEY: Correct.

Q Not in that room.

MR. CARNEY: On the first floor.

Q On the first floor. Do you know how many -- you said that it was a real gun battle, but my understanding is of the 22 or so people in the room, 17 or so of them were noncombatants. So --

MR. CARNEY: Well, a great number of people, as you know, were unharmed and safely made secure when they -- after the operation was complete and the helicopter had to be detonated. But there was a firefight.

Q Do you know how many people were firing from the other side?

MR. CARNEY: I don't. You'll have to -- again, we're providing you this information as it's made available for public release. The Pentagon is working on this, and will, I'm sure, continue to update the information as it becomes available.

Q Okay. And there was a report sourced for the ISI that the noncombatants had been -- had had their hands tied in preparation for taking them away on the helicopter, which they could not do because one of the helicopters had been damaged. Do you know anything about that?

MR. CARNEY: I don't, and I certainly haven't heard anything like that in this building.

Q Okay. Finally, is there a video of the burial at sea?

MR. CARNEY: Again, I'm not going to get into the --

Q Not whether to release it -- does it exist?

MR. CARNEY: No, I understand. But the visual material that is being reviewed, decisions about it will be made about what, if any of it, can be or should be released. I don't want to get into specifics about what there is and what there isn't. I would just urge you to be patient given how much information has been released, and understanding about why we need to review this and make the appropriate decision.

I would also say there is not, as has been reported, there is not some roiling debate here about this. There is simply a discussion about what the appropriate action should be.

Q Is the President involved in that discussion now?

MR. CARNEY: The President is intimately involved in all aspects of this operation.

Q Do you have a timeline for when a decision will be made?

MR. CARNEY: I don't. I don't have a timeline.

Q Could it be today?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have a timeline.

Mike.

Q Jay, what's the status of U.S.-Pakistani relations today as the White House sees them?

MR. CARNEY: It's a complicated but important relationship. Pakistan is a partner -- a key partner in the fight against al Qaeda and terrorism. They have been extremely helpful, and we look forward to cooperating into the future. We have been in contact at many levels with the Pakistan government -- Pakistani government. And as you know, the President called President Zardari the night of the operation, before he spoke to the American people.

And so while we recognize that there are complicated differences between our two countries and how we approach and view things at times, there has also been a great deal of important cooperation. And that should not be lost. The American people should know that as they view this and try to view the complete picture of that relationship and -- within the context of the successful mission on Sunday.

Q We've heard some lawmakers suggest perhaps freezing aid to Pakistan until they can demonstrate that they didn't know anything about bin Laden's whereabouts. Does the White House have a view on that?

MR. CARNEY: I would just say that it's an important partnership, and Pakistan has been on the frontlines, in many ways, of the fight against al Qaeda and against terrorists. Pakistanis have suffered in large numbers at the hands of terrorists, and they have been -- the government has provided useful and important assistance and cooperation to us in the years of this struggle against terrorism. So I would leave it at that, while accepting the fact that we do need to find out. And as John Brennan said this morning -- we look forward to finding out more information about the support network that did allow bin Laden to hide in this compound in a suburb of Islamabad. And we understand that the Pakistanis are investigating that as well.

Q Mr. Zardari said today in his op-ed, "Pakistan did its part." Did it?

MR. CARNEY: Again, I would say that, as I said earlier, that Pakistan did provide and has provided useful intelligence and cooperation over the years, and broadly speaking, provided assistance that helped us build the mountain of information that we needed to build in order to find bin Laden and execute this mission.

Q Jay, just to follow up on Pakistan, Senator Lindsey Graham today said, "You cannot trust them and you cannot abandon them." Do you agree with that assessment?

MR. CARNEY: Look, I don't think it's a question of trust. I think it's a question of the interests that we share and the cooperation that we've forged. It's a complicated relationship. There's no question. And we do have our differences. And I think it's important to note that there are many people in Pakistan and there are many people in the Pakistan government, so it is I think -- you have to be careful about tarring everyone either in the country or the government, because they have provided extremely useful assistance over the years. And we look forward to cooperating with Pakistan going into the future.

And it's vital because, as we have said, that lopping the head off the snake is important, but the body, while battered and bruised because of the actions that have been taken over the years, is still there and we need to bury that body. We need to keep the fight up against al Qaeda. And Pakistan is very important -- a very important partner in that effort.

Q In previous dealings with Pakistan, it seems that you guys have had to deal with them in sort of three separate camps, so if the President called President Zardari, was General Kayani called by Gates? I mean, were other people informed at the same level since it's not quite the same type of government --

MR. CARNEY: We have had contact --

Q On the night of the --

MR. CARNEY: Well, calls on that evening beyond the President's to President Zardari I'm not going to read out from here. But I will say that we have maintained contact with senior members of the Pakistani government regularly.

Q On the issue of the photographs, you say that you're -- that there is some concern about them inflaming some passions. Are you consulting anybody outside the United States on this issue?

MR. CARNEY: No, I would just leave it that we're reviewing the situation. I don't have details on the consultations. I think we're going about this in a methodical way and trying to make the best call.

Q Anything new to add -- yesterday John Brennan wouldn't characterize what was gotten intelligence-wise from the compound. After that there has been descriptions of the amount of data. Do you have anything to add to that narrative?

MR. CARNEY: I don't have a qualitative -- rather a quantitative assessment, but I think what I can say is that there are sort of three areas that we hope the information that was collected, the material that was collected, will provide insight into. First of all, and most importantly, in any case, is any evidence of planned attacks. Second would be information that could lead to other high-value targets or other networks that exist that maybe we don't know about or that we only know a little bit about. And then, third and more broadly, on the al Qaeda network itself and then the sustaining network for bin Laden in Pakistan -- what allowed him to live in that compound for as long as he did.

Q It's my understanding the President got an updated assessment of threat levels close to bin Laden. Can you shed some light on whether --

MR. CARNEY: Well, the President receives regular threat level briefings, so I wouldn't necessarily tie that to the bin Laden operation, although, having said that, I will also say that it is without question that our homeland security officials and everyone involved in counterterrorism has been assessing and was assessing prior to the operation's success what the impact might be on success of our mission to --

Q So far --

MR. CARNEY: So far we don't have any specific or credible threats, which is why -- some have asked about the -- why we haven't raised the NTAS, but we are very vigilant and we take measures that are both seen and unseen to maintain that vigilance, because obviously we anticipated the potential for a backlash, the potential for at least a desire if not the ability to exact some kind of revenge against the United States, American people, or our allies. So we're very vigilant.

Carol.

Q Is the White House concerned at all that a rift with Pakistan over what they knew and when they knew it could harm the relationship, which obviously, as you said, is critical to the United States?

MR. CARNEY: We are working very hard on that relationship and it is an important and complicated relationship that has been tested in many ways over the years and even this year. But we are in communication directly with the President and other senior members of the government and we are committed to continuing the cooperation that we've had because it is so important both to our fight against al Qaeda, but also Pakistan's. And I think we remain confident that that cooperation -- I know we remain confident that that cooperation will continue.

Q But as you look at what knowledge they had about bin Laden in the compound and that plays out in the media and all that, is there any concern in part that that's going to harm --

MR. CARNEY: Well, look, first of all, we don't know yet -- we don't know who, if anybody, in the government was aware that bin Laden or a high-value target was living in this compound. What John Brennan has said and others have said is that it's logical to assume that he had some sort of supporting network, but what constituted

that network is -- remains to be seen.

And, again, there are -- it's a big country and a big government, and to -- we have to be very focused and careful about how we do this because it is an important relationship.

I would also say that the idea that these kind of complications exist is not new. It's obviously -- this is a very sensational case because of who we're talking about here, because it was Osama bin Laden. But this is not an issue that is -- that arrived on our doorstep on Sunday.

Q And then particularly on the debt ceiling, the U.S. is going to hit the debt ceiling next week. Is the White House making any progress on talks with Republicans on how to deal with that?

MR. CARNEY: Well, it's a complicated process -- the debt ceiling. And as you know, the Secretary of the Treasury issued a letter yesterday that actually -- because of the extraordinary measures that the Treasury Department is able to take and other administrations' Treasury Departments before this have taken and because of -- that revenues have come in slightly above expected, that the deadline has been pushed back by three weeks, I think. But that is an estimate, and it is important to remember that it is just an estimate, and the urgency of raising the debt ceiling remains.

Having said that, we look very much forward to the discussions that will begin on Thursday with the Vice President in the lead on our fiscal issues that we hope to reach bipartisan compromise on, and we recognize that while we believe it's very important that these are parallel tracks, that this will also be a topic of conversation.

And we are heartened, as we have been in the past, by comments that have been made about the absolute necessity of raising the debt ceiling because we do not want another recession. We do not want to default on America's -- the full faith and credit of the United States government, so we hope that and believe that the conversations that -- negotiations that begin on Thursday will bear fruit in both directions.

Q Can you talk at all about what the President is going to do on Thursday in New York?

MR. CARNEY: At the meeting? I'm sorry -- oh, in New York?

Q No, in New York.

MR. CARNEY: We'll give you a full schedule. It's obviously out there that we will be -- the President will be visiting New York and Ground Zero. But beyond that, I don't have details at this time.

Mark.

Q Jay, can you tell us who wrote the narrative that you read to us?

MR. CARNEY: It was provided by the Defense Department.

Q By DOD?

MR. CARNEY: Yes.

Q Are you able to describe how bin Laden resisted?

MR. CARNEY: Again, beyond what I was able to give you from here, I would refer you to the Pentagon and simply say that we have been -- we have worked very hard to declassify information in record speed to provide as much insight into this operation as we can, as quickly as we can, mindful obviously of the equities that are at stake here in terms of never revealing sources and methods, never compromising our intelligence procedures.

But we are working very hard to provide as much information as we can.

Q Can you say if there has been any change in President Obama's opposition to so-called enhanced interrogation techniques?

MR. CARNEY: No change whatsoever.

Q Were any results of such techniques used in helping to track down bin Laden?

MR. CARNEY: Mark, the fact is that no single piece of information led to the successful mission that occurred on Sunday, and multiple detainees provided insights into the networks of people who might have been close to bin Laden. But reporting from detainees was just a slice of the information that has been gathered by incredibly diligent professionals over the years in the intelligence community. And it's simply strange credulity to suggest that a piece of information that may or may not have been gathered eight years ago somehow directly led to a successful mission on Sunday. That's just not the case.

Q I wasn't suggesting it. I was --

MR. CARNEY: Okay. Others have.

Yes.

Q Did anything come out of last night's dinner that would show there is movement towards a specific agreement on the debt ceiling and deficit reduction? Anything specific?

MR. CARNEY: Not that I'm aware of. This was obviously a big dinner. What I think does help the cause of bipartisan cooperation is sitting down with one another and having conversations and realizing that, through those conversations, that there are shared values and shared goals, and that just the -- having an event like that is useful in and of itself.

Now, I don't want to overstate it because there have been dinners here in the past with bipartisan leaders of Congress. But it is part of an overall effort to bring Democrats and Republicans together so that an atmosphere is created that allows for the kind of really tough work that needs to be done to reach consensus and compromise on very hard issues -- the kinds of issues that haven't been resolved in the past precisely because they're hard and because there is disagreement -- honest disagreement about how we get from here to there, how we get the result in the case of deficit reduction, the result that we -- that both parties and the President agree on, which is, in this case, \$4 trillion of deficit reduction over 10 to 12 years.

So that in and of itself is a unifying point, and the President looks forward to the negotiations that will begin on Thursday at the Blair House, led by the Vice President. Obviously that will be the first of many meetings, we hope. We hope that it's productive and that it will lead to a process that will, in the end, achieve an agreement on some serious deficit reduction. Maybe not all the issues will be resolved, but there certainly should be areas of compromise that we can find if everyone enters the building across the street with the spirit of compromise in their hearts. And that requires an acceptance that we're not going to get everything we want, and nobody is, if we're going to reach an agreement.

Q What areas of compromise is the Vice President going to be bringing to the table?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I will say that the Vice President will bring to the table some serious ideas, but I'm not going to negotiate them from here. But we are committed to this process, and we believe there is room for compromise and reason to believe that because the goal is shared, because the imperative is there, because the American people expect us to do this, that we can actually get a result.

Q Has the administration been in touch with members of the Gang of Six?

MR. CARNEY: Well, we've had conversations with senators in and out of Gangs. But it's safe to assume that we've had conversations -- that members of this administration have had conversations with members of that group, with everybody who is -- takes this issue seriously and is putting on the table constructive ideas about how we can reduce our deficit, get our fiscal house in order in a balanced way, that makes sure that the responsibility is shared, that the prosperity is shared, and that we don't do anything that actually reverses the progress we've made in terms of economic growth and job creation.

Yes.

Q Thanks, Jay. The pool said that there was audible laughter through the Cabinet meeting room door. Can you talk about what the President's mood has been in the last couple days since this mission was successfully completed?

MR. CARNEY: I don't know about laughter. I mean, I think that the -- there's a recognition in this building, as there is across the government and across the country, that what occurred on Sunday evening, or Sunday afternoon, was an historic event and great victory for the American people, and a demonstration of the grit and resolve that Americans have when they have an objective. And when it seems like the goal is unachievable Americans keep working. And I think that that's reflected in the spirit that is felt here and around the country.

What I will say, I was in a meeting on a separate issue with the President for over an hour yesterday, and Sunday's events didn't come up. And what is reflective -- and it was a very serious meeting about a serious policy issue. What I took away from that was the observation and realization that this train never stops. There is work to be done all the time on so many issues, and that's what it -- that's as significant as what happened on Sunday is and how important it is as we -- as the President will on Thursday, to fully recognize the loss that took place on 9/11 and the sacrifices that have been made over this decade in this fight against al Qaeda. There are so many other issues as well that need his attention.

Q So there's not like a visible weight lifted from his shoulders?

MR. CARNEY: Not that I've seen. But I wouldn't say that the weight was wearing on him. I was -- I think I mentioned yesterday that what was remarkable about Friday and that long day we had was, in retrospect, how

capable he was of focusing on the issues he was dealing with in Alabama, the terrible devastation that those tornados wrought on Tuscaloosa and the rest of the state, and then on meeting with Congresswoman Giffords and the crew at Cape Canaveral, and then meeting and speaking to the graduating students at Miami Dade.

Again, in retrospect, to look back and to think that this, too, was weighing on his mind, and he had known that prior to getting on Marine One and flying out to Andrews, he had signed off and said it's a go, is rather remarkable.

Q Can you talk about the push on immigration this afternoon and in the White House the last few weeks, and how it's different from the previous three or four times you all pushed this? And it's --

MR. CARNEY: Well, it's not different. It's just -- again, commitment and resolve. I mean, the fact that we were not, unfortunately, able to get immigration reform in the first two years does not lessen the commitment or the resolve to keep trying. And I think that this President, as you will see I think in coming weeks, is committed to the need for comprehensive immigration reform.

And that's what the meetings he's had and continues to have are about, and the push will continue because he thinks it's important. It's hard, but it's important.

Yes.

Q Jay, can I go back to the narrative just one more time?

MR. CARNEY: Sure.

Q When that assaulter entered the room, you said he was rushed by the woman. Presumably that's bin Laden's wife?

MR. CARNEY: No. No, no, no.

Q Okay.

MR. CARNEY: Bin Laden's wife was on the first floor.

Q Where she was shot in the leg.

MR. CARNEY: Correct.

Q Okay, then on the second or third --

Q That's not what the narrative --

MR. CARNEY: Wait, let me -- stop.

Q Because the narrative -- there was a discrepancy.

MR. CARNEY: I apologize. Even I'm getting confused. In the room with bin Laden was bin Laden's wife. She rushed one of the U.S. assaulters and was shot in the leg but not killed.

A woman on the first floor was killed in the crossfire.

Q Bin Laden's wife was unarmed as well?

MR. CARNEY: That is my understanding.

Q Okay. And there was no one else in room? Bin Laden and his wife --

MR. CARNEY: I don't know that.

Q We don't know that. Okay.

Q Following on that same thing, yesterday Mr. Brennan suggested --

MR. CARNEY: Sorry. Mark, did you have -- let me go --

Q I did have one more general thing, and then -- but I'd be happy to continue on this. The question I had more broadly was do you think that -- or is President Obama concerned that having taken out such a visible symbol of al Qaeda, whether or not it truly degrades al Qaeda as a network, that it will be more and more difficult

for him to make the case to the American people that this effort is worth 100,000 troops, 80,000 troops? And if so, what steps can you take to continue to make that argument to the American people?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I think he will continue to make the argument that we need to remain vigilant and we need to take the fight to al Qaeda. One of the things to remember about the approach here is that it was not solely about Osama bin Laden.

And in fact, while he was focused on it -- as has been evidenced by some of the information we've released, including the memo from June of 2009, the effort itself was not broadly focused on one individual. And again, his approach -- I mean, the increased pressure that this administration has put on al Qaeda in the border region has been reported on in great detail by your newspaper and many other outlets. And that is a function of -- that is a result of his approach to this problem, the focus on al Qaeda that he felt had been lost in previous years when the focus was shifted from al Qaeda in Afghanistan and bin Laden onto Iraq.

And one thing that is always important to remember and bears repeating, because I think that a lot of Americans don't realize, is that more than 100,000 U.S. troops have been withdrawn under this President from Iraq, and that that has freed up -- again, as part of the refocus of our attention on the AfPak region, refocus of our attention on al Qaeda, making that the goal of everything we're doing there, the principal, primary goal, the defeat -- the dismantle and ultimate defeat of al Qaeda, and that will continue.

And there's no question the case has to continue to be made, but we're under no illusion that killing bin Laden removes the threat entirely. We believe that he was an important symbolic figure in this, and that other al Qaeda leaders out there might be reevaluating their safety and security as a result of what occurred on Sunday because they will be hunted down, too. The fight doesn't stop.

Yes, Ann.

Q In the narrative, which of those women was being used as a human shield as Mr. Brennan suggested yesterday?

MR. CARNEY: Again, what I would say about that is that -- to use your phrase, fog of war, fog of combat, that there was a lot of information coming in. It is still unclear.

The woman I believe you're talking about might have been the one on the first floor who was caught in the crossfire. Whether or not she was being used as a shield or trying to use herself as a shield or simply caught in crossfire is unclear. And we're working on getting the details that we can.

Q And when the President called President Zardari, was --

MR. CARNEY: Can I just point out that, first of all, the woman who was shot in the leg physically assaulted the -- or attempted to assault -- or charged, rather, one of the U.S. assaulters, and that every effort was taken, for those who were not engaged in an effort to resist, to protect them -- the noncombatants. And I think it's rather extraordinary the number of individuals who were in that compound who were not posing a threat to the assaulters, that they were made secure and not harmed.

Q Can I follow on that?

Q When the President called President Zardari was he -- was President Zardari aware of any of this action?

MR. CARNEY: I don't know. It was obviously a number of hours afterwards, and I'm not sure if it had become public yet.

Q Would that have been the first phone call that President Obama made that evening --

MR. CARNEY: I don't have --

Q -- before he called President Bush or --

MR. CARNEY: I don't have a chronology on that. I'm not sure that that's the case, but it was one of the early phone calls.

Q May I follow up, Jay?

MR. CARNEY: Can we just -- let me -- I'll get to you. Yes.

Q The events that took place on Sunday, do you think that they changed the atmosphere at all in which the debt ceiling discussions take place in a way that's perhaps more positive for the President?

MR. CARNEY: I think that what happened on Sunday -- and this is very important because it would be a

shame if this became a piece in a partisan narrative, because what I think the President feels very strongly about is that the accomplishment on Sunday was an American accomplishment, and it was not a Republican or a Democratic accomplishment, but the result of incredibly hard work, especially by a lot of unseen and unknown individuals in the military and in the intelligence community. And it was the product of a focus that was brought to bear on bin Laden, on al Qaeda central, and that was -- and then the product of a very risky operation.

To the extent it affects the atmosphere, we obviously hope it affects it positively, because I think it demonstrates the capacity of Americans to do big things when they work together and work on common goals. Obviously nothing changes Washington overnight and it doesn't erase -- a great success like that does not erase the real differences that we have on policy issues. But it does demonstrate I think a part of who we are as Americans. And that's a -- that kind of positive indication we hope will carry through for at least a little while.

Q You mentioned that you hope people will come to the meeting on Thursday with a spirit of compromise on their parts. Do you see any evidence of more spirit of compromise?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I don't want to prejudge. These are tough issues. People have very strong opinions. And we understand how Washington works. It sometimes -- there's a certain amount of theater involved in the practice of politics and policy. In the end, we hope that -- on all sides -- that the necessity of achieving the goals that both parties share outweighs the relative advantages or disadvantages that there might be politically. Because in the end we think that there -- as was the case in the CR debate, as was the case in the tax cut negotiations late last year, and certainly is the case in the execution of our foreign policy, there's an opportunity here for all sides to be winners. And we think that exists in these other tough issues as we negotiate them through.

Q There are some officials from the Bush -- your predecessor's administration who are expressing some concern that they're not -- that their efforts are not being adequately recognized by the administration, have been mischaracterized in a statement you made yesterday about renewing the effort to get Osama bin Laden when the President came into office. Do you have any reaction?

MR. CARNEY: Well, look, I feel very strongly, and more importantly, the President feels strongly that this is not a partisan issue here. When America was attacked on 9/11, the Americans who lost their lives that day were not -- they were Americans first; they were not Democrats and Republicans. And as I said yesterday, those who've struggled over the years in this effort have not been -- have not done it because they're Republicans or Democrats; they've done it because they're Americans. And those who -- the many people who were involved in the operation, both on the ground and elsewhere on Sunday, were involved in their capacity as Americans and not Democrats or Republicans.

So I think the credit for the focus and the fight and obviously the gathering of intelligence over the years is shared by both administrations. On the refocus, the revitalization of the effort to get bin Laden, I mean, that was a promise the President made when he was a candidate and it's one he followed up on. The memo he wrote to his CIA director was necessitated by the observation he made that there was not the kind of focus that there needed to be.

And perhaps that's understandable after so many years where it became perhaps -- where there was maybe a great deal of doubt not just here in Washington but elsewhere in the country that this -- that the day that came Sunday would ever come. But the commitment of members of both administrations should not be doubted -- and we don't doubt them. We think this was a bipartisan -- or rather, nonpartisan success.

On the point -- but having said that, on the overall point, because what's also not the case is that somehow this President and this administration simply adopted all the policies and orientations of the previous one, because that -- to suggest that would not be true either, because he made a very clear point in -- and argument that we had lost our focus, that we had pushed too many resources into the fight in Iraq, and that the real enemy was al Qaeda and was Osama bin Laden. And the action -- that wasn't just rhetoric, because once he came into office he drew down 100,000 U.S. troops in Iraq, he is ending that war, and he has -- with some opposition, that we note -- but he has raised our commitment and increased our presence in Afghanistan because he believes that's where the enemy -- in that region, where the enemy was and is.

Yes, April.

Q Jay, could you talk about the focus now, how it's shifted or remained the same, or maybe even changed a bit when it comes to the message to the Muslim world, especially after what's happened to Saddam -- excuse me, Osama bin Laden?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I would simply echo what the President said the other night, which is that this has never been a war against Islam. President Bush said that; President Obama has said that. Osama bin Laden was not a Muslim leader; he was a mass murderer -- a mass murderer of Muslims, as well as people of other faiths. And it has been our cooperation with Muslims in Pakistan and other countries, as well as Muslim Americans, that has helped in our overall effort to fight al Qaeda and protect Americans, to protect this country.

So I don't think that orientation shifts, and I don't think that anything changes in that regard.

Q But can you acknowledge the fact that this administration was very -- at the very beginning when we started hearing about what happened Sunday night, this administration was very clear to make it known that they were following -- the Navy was following the Islamic customs and traditions. You made it very clear.

MR. CARNEY: Yes.

Q You made it clear from the podium about how he was washed, the procedures for Islamic burial. Also we understand that there is a concern about the photos, that you're concerned about the release because you don't want to inflame tensions that are already there with the Muslim world. So am I wrong in assuming that you are making more of a focus and maybe recrafting your message because of what happened to bin Laden?

MR. CARNEY: Well, no, not because of what happened to bin Laden. I mean, he was -- obviously we were prepared if he were killed in the operation for this eventuality and there was a -- it was viewed as entirely appropriate and necessarily sensitive to proceed with the burial in the way that we did, to be respectful of Islamic traditions and precepts. And then with regard to the release of the photo, that's an issue of I think appropriate concern about potential sensitivities.

Q And because of those sensitivities, who is the administration -- what persons, groups in the Muslim world has the administration talked to about trying to lessen those tensions, lessen the inflaming tensions that are happening now? Some people are saying it should have never happened.

MR. CARNEY: What should never have happened?

Q Going into Pakistan to go get him.

MR. CARNEY: Well, we have -- we make no apologies about that. He was enemy number one for this country and killed many, many innocent civilians. And -- no apologies. But that doesn't mean that we shouldn't be entirely respectful of Islam, which we are, or that it doesn't change the fact the President's very strongly held conviction and expressed conviction that this has never been about Islam, because, in fact, Osama bin Laden represented -- was a mass murderer who killed many Muslims.

And one thing that -- he was a relic of the past, in many ways. I mean, the kind of yearning for individual freedoms -- the people on -- that we've seen protest on the streets of the Arab world in these past few months represent a movement that is in the polar opposite direction that Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda wanted to take the Arab world. And I think that that's an important point to make and to observe because he's not -- he's, in many ways, the symbol of everything that those folks who have been demonstrating on the ground for their voices, for their rights, for their individual aspirations, he's a representation of everything they don't want.

Q Thank you.

MR. CARNEY: Yes.

Q Thanks. Thank you, Jay.

Q One about Prince Charles.

MR. CARNEY: I did promise Connie, and then I'll --

Q Prince Charles's visit --

MR. CARNEY: -- and I'll get Margaret.

Q Can I -- thank you, Jay. Three quick -- can we infer by --

MR. CARNEY: Not three quick.

Q All right, just one. Can we infer by your statement that you plan to ask for the same level, multibillion-dollar level of aid to --

MR. CARNEY: I don't have any announcements about aid.

Q Quick question about Prince Charles.

Q Were you -- was there a video -- were you watching a video of the proceedings, or did you just hear it? Did you just monitor it?

MR. CARNEY: This is regarding the photograph that's been released? Again, I will point you to what I said before, which we're not talking specifically about how the information was conveyed or through what senses. But the -- but they were real-time -- there was real-time information that was being provided to the national security

principals and the President in the Situation Room.

Q Were you in the room?

MR. CARNEY: Was I in the picture?

Margaret.

Q Thank you. I just wanted to clarify quickly a couple of points. Leon Panetta told PBS that neither he nor the President saw the actual shooting. The President has seen the actual photo, or photos, right?

MR. CARNEY: Again, I don't want to get into who's seen the photos or where they are.

Q That seems like -- I would leave it alone after that one. I'm just trying to nail down the President.

MR. CARNEY: Again, I'm not going to get into who's seen them or where they are.

Q Okay. And then, just also to clarify -- it certainly sounded like the U.S. is not -- that your position is not to encourage Congress to defund or greatly reduce funding for aid to Pakistan. But are you taking a position on that?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I just -- I haven't had that discussion internally about funding for Pakistan. We obviously believe what I said earlier, which is that Pakistan has been an essential partner in the fight against al Qaeda and terrorism, and that that -- it is important to recognize these events within the context of that relationship -- complicated relationship, sometimes very divergent opinions. But --

Q But you have a --

MR. CARNEY: But we have an important relationship.

Q And then finally, you said that Osama bin Laden and his family were on the second and third floors of the main building. Have you said which floor he was on? Was he on the second floor?

MR. CARNEY: Let me double-check.

Q It's in the narrative.

MR. CARNEY: If that's in the narrative that's --

Q It's not -- it doesn't specify in that narrative.

MR. CARNEY: If it's not in the narrative, I'm not sure. It just says -- yes. It just says the family were found on the second and third floor and that he was in a room -- in the room with bin Laden. So I don't have the answer to which floor.

Q Can you get that for us, please?

MR. CARNEY: I can try, but I think the Defense Department has that and is developing that information.

Last question. Jon-Christopher.

Q A quick question on His Royal Highness Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, visiting tomorrow. Can you give us any of your thoughts about what the President might want to engage in with His Royal Highness?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I'm sure he will congratulate him on his son's marriage. Beyond that, I'm sure discuss the very special relationship that the United States and the United Kingdom have, and he looks forward to the meeting and the visit -- as do I.

Thank you.

END 2:54 P.M. EDT

WWW.WHITEHOUSE.GOV

[En español](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Copyright Information](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact](#)

[USA.gov](#) | [Developers](#) | [Apply for a Job](#)

