

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 17, 2011

PRESS BRIEFING
BY PRESS SECRETARY JAY CARNEY,
CHAIRMAN OF THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION GREG JACZKO,
AND DEPUTY SECRETARY OF ENERGY DAN PONEMAN

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

12:58 P.M. EDT

MR. CARNEY: Happy St. Patrick's Day, everyone. A lot of green out there -- appreciate that, as a Carney.

I would just start by saying I assume you all got the advisory that the President will have a statement this afternoon. I have, again, brought today some of our experts who can discuss the situation in Japan and, more specifically, our -- what this administration, this government is doing to help the Japanese in dealing with that situation and what the implications are for American citizens.

So I will turn this over to them very briefly -- actually in a minute. I just want to again say that if they could make their quick opening statements, then take questions from you on the subject area that concerns them so that they can then depart, I will stay and take questions on other issues.

I have, just to remind you, with me on my far right the chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Mr. Greg Jaczko, and on my near right, Dan Poneman, the Deputy Secretary of Energy. I will turn it over to them. Greg, why don't you start with a statement, and then we'll take questions.

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, I'll just give you a brief status update on basically three points. One, we have a team of 11 technical experts who continue to work in Tokyo

to provide assistance to the Japanese government and to the ambassador in Tokyo.

Yesterday the NRC looked at the available information that we had. Based on that information, we took a look at how we would deal with a situation similar to that in the United States, and based on that, we recommended that citizens out to about 50 miles should be evacuated. We provided that recommendation to the ambassador, and he issued a statement for American citizens to that effect. And I want to stress that this is we think a prudent and a precautionary measure to take.

And finally, I just want to reiterate that we don't see any concern from radiation levels that could be harmful here in the United States or any of the U.S. territories.

So I'll turn it over to Dan, then.

DEPUTY SECRETARY PONEMAN: Thank you, and good morning. We have continued working very hard in consultation with our great friends and strong allies in Japan as they've come to terms and wrestled with this very challenging situation. I think most of you know that our equipment that we sent over to support them in their efforts has arrived on a C-17. We sent a team of 33 additional people, which were added to the six people we already had out there in Japan. They had over 17,000 pounds of equipment with them. They've unpacked that. They've actually taken the two pods that do the aerial measurement of ground depositions, mounted them -- one on a fixed-wing aircraft, one on a helicopter -- and we flew those aircraft on their first missions. We have been collecting information as they've come back. We're in the process of sharing that information with our Japanese hosts. And while that's still being looked at, the preliminary indications are that they are consistent with the recommendations that came down from the chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which then Ambassador Roos used to make a 50-mile evacuation guideline. So the indications are that that looks like it was a prudent move.

Other countries around the world all continue to do what they can to support the Japanese as they lead this effort to address this challenge. We have had a number of consultations. I have personally been in contact with my counterparts in France and Russia, all of us thinking about

ways in which we can assist the Japanese as they come to terms with this challenge.

That's going to continue to be our focus in the days and weeks ahead. We're going to continue to work very closely with the Japanese and come to do what we can to see a safe path through this in support of Japanese-led efforts to come to terms with this very dangerous situation.

MR. CARNEY: Why don't we begin with questions. Ben.

Q Thanks, Jay. Two questions. First, for Chairman Jaczko, when you talk about the 50-mile recommendation of yesterday being based on the best available information, could you tell us where exactly the United States is getting its information and whether it is -- you would consider it to be hard facts or best guesses?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, we have -- as I said, we have a team of 11 of some of our best technical experts in Tokyo, and they're working with counterparts from the utility in Tokyo as well as other individuals with the government. So that's one of the sources. We're collecting data from as many places as we can to -- as I said, to make the best judgments we can with the information available.

But I would stress that this is a very difficult situation. There's often conflicting information. And so we made what we thought was a prudent decision.

Q So how would you characterize your faith in the accuracy of information you're getting?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, I think the team we have in place is providing us with good and reliable information. And we continue to do what we can to support the people of Japan and to provide assistance and recommendations where we can. This is a very difficult situation, and there will be a lot of work continuing as we go forward to deal with continuing to cool the reactors and to provide cooling to the spent fuel pool. So as we go forward we'll continue that dialogue and discussion.

Q One last question. What is your assessment as we stand, as you stand here today, about where this is headed? Best-case scenario, worst-case scenario?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, I really don't want to speculate on where this could go. I think there's tremendous efforts ongoing right now to continue to provide cooling to the reactors and continue to provide cooling to the spent fuel pool. So we're working to provide assistance where we can with ideas about how to address that, and if necessary provide equipment and other means.

MR. CARNEY: Yes.

Q Sorry, just to follow up Ben's initial question about what kind of -- what level of faith the U.S. government has in how the Japanese are handling the crisis. Is the administration satisfied with or not how Japan is handling it? And how would you categorize the -- and are they satisfied with the level of information being provided by Japanese authorities?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, I'm the head of an independent regulatory agency, so I would defer the questions about the administration's position to the others. But I would just say, again, our efforts are really working to help the Japanese people deal with what is a very difficult and really tragic situation. So that's where we're going to continue to focus and see what we can do to provide them with any assistance we can.

MR. CARNEY: Dan.

DEPUTY SECRETARY PONEMAN: If I could just comment on that. You know Americans, we always want more information and we are constantly trying to find out whatever we can. And as the chairman said, the facts on the ground are genuinely complex, they are genuinely confusing.

We have had a dialogue. We've had our two experts that are already out in Japan; they've been engaging directly with the Japanese. We've had as recently as yesterday, senior-level officials from METI and from the Nuclear Industrial Security Agency in Japan in direct consultation with us. We're going to maintain that dialogue and do whatever we can in support of their efforts to get this situation under control.

Q Mr. Chairman, you said that there's no concern, I guess here, domestically that radiation will be harmful.

In addition to the ongoing measurements I guess that are taken on a regular basis apart -- aside from this disaster, what else is being done to get an accurate measurement that none of this will impact the United States?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, again, I'd probably turn to Dan to answer that question. We're really focused, again, first and foremost, on making sure the plants in this country are safe and then continuing to provide assistance to the Japanese with their efforts in dealing with the crisis there.

Q In addition just to the regular measurements that are taken, have you beefed up that effort to check the quality of the air in the United States?

DEPUTY SECRETARY PONEMAN: Well, there's a continuous effort, as you well know, that the EPA runs to make sure we have detectors all over the country.

Q But in addition to that, has there been anything that's been added?

DEPUTY SECRETARY PONEMAN: I will refer you to EPA for more specifics on anything they're doing. What we have been doing to support them in that effort is to make sure that we have the people at Lawrence Livermore who are working on the modeling aspect of this so that as and when data comes in, we've got the capability and a robust one to analyze that information. That's, of course, something that we do in conjunction with NOAA and Jane Lubchenko. So everything that could be done to be prepared for such time as that mechanism needs to be used has been done. But I would go back to what the chairman has said. There's nothing that indicates at this stage that that's going to be required under the circumstances as we now understand them.

Q So Americans shouldn't be concerned at this point?

DEPUTY SECRETARY PONEMAN: That's him.

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: I just want to stress, I mean, I don't think there's any real disagreement here. The basic physics and basic science tells us that there really can't be any risk or harm to anyone here in the United States or

Hawaii or any of the other territories. So that's something that we feel very comfortable with. It's really just based on the basic facts and science that's involved here.

Q Mr. Chairman, could you tell us, since the three days since you stood there before, why did the situation deteriorate the way it did, the four reactors? Can you explain to us what has happened? We've seen the pictures of the reactors. What's happened since you were here on Monday?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, the situation continues to be very dynamic in Japan. And as we looked at a lot of the available information, we saw greater challenges, I think, with providing cooling to some of the spent fuel pools that had initially not been as much of an issue. So that was really one of the major changes that led us to reevaluate some of our information and come up with the recommendation we did.

Q And the situation as it stands right now? The attempts today to put water in there don't seem to have done much.

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, I would say right now there's continued efforts to do that. They're continuing to provide water into the spent fuel pools as well as continue to provide cooling to the reactor core. And that's really what their focus is going to have to be for some time, is just to continue that activity of cooling and getting water or other means to cool the reactors and the pools.

Q Days or weeks?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: This is something that will likely take some time to work through, possibly weeks, as eventually you remove the majority of the heat from the reactors and then the spent fuel pool. So it's something that will be ongoing for some time. And that's why, as I said, we're continuing to do everything we can to provide assistance to the Japanese as they deal with this situation.

Q You said that the 11 experts, the 11 American experts, are in Tokyo. Does that mean that they are completely reliant on Japanese officials and utility

officials closer to the site to give them the information that they then analyze? Or is there an independent way for them to get information about what's actually happening?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, they're working with counterparts from the utility and other officials there to gather information. And then, of course, they're using their judgment, they're communicating back here with our staff and headquarters; we're reaching out to experts in this country to provide additional ideas if necessary.

Q But are they getting any independent information on their own, or is it all coming to them from somebody in Japan?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, the information is coming to them from sources ultimately in Japan. And again, this is a very dynamic and a very -- I think a complicated situation in Japan. So they'll continue to work with their counterparts there and continue to provide recommendations to us about what we think we can do to help the Japanese.

Q And I ask that because even the Prime Minister of Japan and certainly the Japanese public have expressed great frustration with the secrecy and lack of transparency coming in particular from the utility. Are you experiencing that same frustration, are your people, that same frustration in getting information?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, they are -- I think the people we have in Tokyo, they are talking with experts there, they're talking with individuals from the utility. And I think they're getting information that is useful to us in making the kinds of recommendations that we need to make. And our focus is really on looking at how would this situation be similar to a situation in the United States, and then providing suggestions for actions we may need to take relative to American citizens.

The Japanese are, as I said, they're dealing with a very significant crisis and they have a lot of efforts focused on trying to deal with the reactors, trying to deal with the situation on the ground.

So we have a small team there, they're getting good information and we'll continue to do what we can to help.

Q And on the 50 miles, are you -- I'm sorry, go ahead.

DEPUTY SECRETARY PONEMAN: I might just add there, that's why it's so important that we get the information that we have now sent the equipment over to collect. And we've had two flights come back with additional data pull there. We sent other detectors over there, other sampling equipment. And so it's not just people talking to people; we're beginning to collect the information that will give us the measurements that will help inform policy.

Q And is that because you're frustrated you haven't been able to get that information directly from the Japanese?

DEPUTY SECRETARY PONEMAN: No, to the contrary.

Q So there's no frustration -- even though the Prime Minister himself just blew up at a press conference over the lack of transparency from TEPCO.

DEPUTY SECRETARY PONEMAN: And as I said, we Americans always want more information. We're striving for that, but we want a combination of data and things that you can get through collection and things that we get from talking to people who are dealing with this. But we're trying to do what we can to support the Japanese in their efforts, and it's a continuing dialogue and I'm sure it's going to continue.

Q On the 50-mile issue, do you agree that it's a strange situation that you can have different citizens from different countries getting different advice on this, and doesn't it need to all be one consistent standard?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, we have different regulatory systems throughout the world and we have different approaches to dealing with these kinds of issues. So we took the available information we had and we looked at how we would deal with a similar situation here in the United States and we made the recommendation about 50 miles.

Q So are American citizens who don't obey that information risking their lives?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: The recommendation is ultimately a precautionary measure right now based on -- what we looked at are some of the risks and challenges going forward in this situation. So we provided the recommendation to the ambassador, the ambassador made that recommendation, and we think it's a prudent measure to take.

Q Right, but you're the scientist. Are people putting their safety in danger?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: As I said, we think it's a prudent measure to follow the evacuation based on how we would handle a situation like that in the United States.

Q Should Japanese citizens follow that prudent measure?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: I think I've answered that one.

MR. CARNEY: All right. Yes, Mike.

Q Mr. Chairman, my understanding is Senators Boxer and Carper have sent a letter to you asking the NRC to review that ability of American facilities to withstand a -- just different types of disasters. The other day it sounded like maybe that review wasn't necessary because we're constantly reviewing our facilities. But have you seen the letter? What's your reaction? What do you think?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, any time there's a significant event like this anywhere in the world, or even something like this in the United States, we're going to take a look at what happened, we're going to do a systematic and a methodical review of the information, and if we need to make changes to our program we'll make changes to our program.

But I want to emphasize and stress that we have a very robust program where we look at the safety and the security of our nuclear facilities on a minute-by-minute basis. And this certainly will be new information that when we have good, credible information about what happened in Japan, we'll take that information and we'll work to see what changes we might need to make, if any, to our system.

DEPUTY SECRETARY PONEMAN: I might just add to that, from the aspect of policy, safety has always been our

paramount concern and we will continue to strive to make sure that all of our energy sources keep that first and foremost. And so we continue to rely on the independence of the NRC and its ability to make those judgment calls as to whether it is operating safely enough. But we will not rest from our perspective at all, because we'll continue to take every data we can into account and continue to improve the safety of our nuclear power and any other energy source that we are advancing.

Q I imagine the one-two punch of a massive earthquake and then a tsunami has to make people in this country concerned about whether our facilities can withstand that, right?

DEPUTY SECRETARY PONEMAN: I would think that we -- we do not need to have that great stimuli to have a continued focus on safety. It goes back decades, as we've discussed. After Three Mile Island, which was a different kind of set of facts than what we are now presented with, we went to school on that situation. We improved the way we do our regulations. We moved toward a more passive design approach when it comes to cooling cores and so forth. And we exercise and we've come up with hypotheticals, and then we take facts in hand as they present themselves. It's going to be a continuous effort and it's built into the management principles of our organization that we're always going to look to do what we can to make sure our activities are all carried out in the safest manner possible.

MR. CARNEY: Chuck.

Q Mr. Secretary, in your opening statement, you said that the aerial footage confirmed the chairman's recommendations. And what the chairman had testified to you yesterday was that he thought that there was no more water in the pool, essentially, there was no more cooling mechanism. Is that what you're finding in this footage?

DEPUTY SECRETARY PONEMAN: Those are two different things. Just to be clear, what we sent out were these pods, and these pods measure deposition of radioactive materials on the ground. And so what our -- what I said was that our preliminary indications -- because the data is being analyzed, it's being shared with the Japanese so they can analyze it, too -- suggest that the prudential measure

that the chairman recommended in terms of the 50-mile radius for evacuation is consistent with what we're finding. It's not related to --

Q So you don't have evidence yet of whether this pool -- because he had testified yesterday that you would fear that there was no more water in this fourth -- in the spent fuel pond. Is that correct?

DEPUTY SECRETARY PONEMAN: If I could just say -- I think I can answer the question. The Japanese themselves have indicated that the level of water in that pond is low and is of concern. And there have been -- we certainly saw the chairman's testimony yesterday, and we're getting whatever data we can on the situation at that pool. It doesn't change what we -- what is important, and that's the Japanese, as they have themselves indicated, need to get more cooling water into that pool. So anything that can be done in that direction, whether it's from water cannons or water drops, that's going to be something they're focused on, and of course, we would do whatever we could to help them.

Q And then just two quick questions, and either one of you -- does the Japanese government still have the capacity to manage this crisis on their own at this point, or has this completely overwhelmed them?

DEPUTY SECRETARY PONEMAN: I'd just make the following point: The Japanese government has tremendous longstanding capabilities in this area. They have responsibly been developing an integrated nuclear industry for decades. It has always been in close cooperation not only with other partnering countries, which certainly includes the United States, but with the International Atomic Energy Agency and international fora.

So they have treated safety as a very important responsibility, and certainly the indications you've seen from the Prime Minister, chief cabinet secretary, speaking to people, show their continued commitment to that. And we, as their close friends and allies and as a country that is also committed to the safe development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes to build a low-carbon energy future, we're going to continue to support them in that effort.

MR. CARNEY: Jonathan.

Q For Mr. Jaczko, the statement that the NRC put out yesterday saying that the protective action recommendations are implemented when projected doses could exceed one rem to the body or five rems to the thyroid. How likely is it in this current situation that those doses would exceed one rem to the body and five rems to the thyroid?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, again, the recommendation was based on the possibility of certain scenarios happening that just haven't happened yet. So we thought given the situation we were seeing, that there was a possibility of the situation becoming worse. And as a result, we thought it was a prudent measure to take the recommendations that we provided.

Q But you don't have dosing estimates, per se, within that radius?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, we've done some very preliminary modeling just to give us an estimate of where we think the likelihood of radiation levels around the plant would be high enough to trigger these kind of protective action recommendations. But right now, again, it's based on a series of prudent assumptions and prudent assessments of what could happen, which is the way that we go about generally doing our protective action recommendations here in the United States. So that was really the way we approached it.

Q And picking up on Chuck's question, a Japanese official today said he did not know if that cooling pool has been emptied. Is it still your assessment that that cooling pond with the spent fuel rods is now empty?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, everything -- when we made the determination the other day, everything indicated that that was the case. And I think as has been said, there's a lot of conflicting information around this. But the bottom line is, is that there clearly appears to be a challenge keeping that spent fuel filled with sufficient water. So it is a very dynamic situation. And again, our efforts are really focused here on helping the Japanese deal with what is a very tragic and difficult situation, and we'll continue to provide recommendations and expertise where we can to help.

Q Will the NRC release the data to the public that it's using?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: We did release the data.

MR. CARNEY: Julianna.

Q One of the questions in the letter that Mike referenced is which nuclear -- U.S. nuclear power plants share similar design features with the affected Japanese reactor facilities. Do you have a tally of the plants that have the similar design features? And also, is there any -- you talked about potential for review, but what about specifically reviewing those plants with those designs or older plants?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, there are about -- there are 35 so-called boiling water reactor designs in this country. Twenty-three of those have the so-called Mark I containment, which is the containment which is similar to the type that's used in the facilities we're dealing with in Japan.

And over the years, we have done studies and assessments of those particular types of reactors. And actually over several decades, actually in the late '80s and early '90s, changes were made to those containments to deal with these types of very severe scenarios.

So again, when we get all the relevant data and we have good, solid data about what happened in Japan, we intend to take a very thorough look at what happened and what changes that we could make. And I understand the President yesterday recommended that this is something the NRC should look at, and it's certainly something that I think we will.

Q But at this point you don't see the need for a specific -- a review of specifically those plants with those design features?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, again, we don't really know exactly what the most relevant information is right now from Japan. So we want to get that information and we want to do a systematic and a methodical look at what changes we

may need to make to those types of plants or possibly any other types of plants in the country.

MR. CARNEY: And we'll just take a few more for these gentlemen.

April.

Q I want to go back to what Julianna asked about the plants that are similar to the plants in Japan that are having problems. With the ones that are similar, and going back to what you said about the teaching moments, the plants that are here that are similar, some of the ones that you are looking at, are they along fault lines? And have you tested in any kind of way if there was a possibility of an earthquake how would these cooling systems be able to handle shutting the nuclear reactors down?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, all the plants in the United States are designed to deal with a wide range of natural disasters, whether it's earthquakes, tornados, tsunamis, other seismic events. We require all of them to deal with those. And what we really look at is we look at historically what are the largest kinds of events that we've seen happen, and we then add a little bit of something extra to that just because we know we don't know everything. And from that we design the plants to be able to withstand that kind of activity.

Now, as I said, over the years we've gone a little bit beyond that as well, because we know that sometimes there's limitations in our knowledge. So we've looked at what we call severe accidents, which are these kinds of very catastrophic situations, and the plants over the years have made modifications that deal with these very catastrophic types of events.

And finally, following September 11th, the agency ordered all the nuclear power plants in this country to basically pre-stage equipment and materials and have procedures in place to deal with a situation very similar to what we have in Japan, where you have a catastrophic loss of power in a very catastrophic situation at the nuclear power plant. So we've inspected that -- that all the plants have those procedures and they have that

equipment in place. So we think that there's a very robust program in this country to deal with those things.

MR. CARNEY: Last one, Margaret.

Q How many -- wait, I want to follow up. How many of these nuclear facilities are on fault lines in the United States?

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, all the nuclear power plants in this country are designed to deal with seismic events. We tend to think about it at the NRC not in terms of what's near a fault line but in terms of the different types of seismic activity. So, in fact, every plant in the United States is designed to deal with whatever seismic activity is likely for that.

Q I understand, but how many are on fault lines? That's the question. I'm not trying to be funny, but it's a serious question because there is concern about some of these nuclear reactors in California.

CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, certainly with the plants in California, they are designed to a very robust seismic standard, and for the ones that are on the coast they're also designed to deal with a very significant tsunami. And in fact, after the 2004 tsunami, we took a look at the programs we have in place to deal with the tsunamis, much as I expect we'll do here with the situation from Japan.

MR. CARNEY: Thank you, guys.

No, wait, I'm sorry, I did say Margaret.

Q I just wanted to quickly clarify about the new aerial measurements that have come back. Those came back, in fact, after you made the 50-mile radius recommendation, right? Is what they showed is that the Japanese have underestimated the radiation? Is that what the new data has shown?

DEPUTY SECRETARY PONEMAN: No, first of all, we're analyzing the information and we're sharing it with the Japanese. The preliminary look at it has indicated that the measures that have been taken have been prudent ones from all of our perspective. What we monitor from the U.S. side is the guidance that comes out from the ambassador,

which is informed by the chairman's recommendation on a 50-mile radius. And we have no reason to question the assessment that had been made or the recommendation that had been made by the Japanese authorities.

Q So the measurements don't suggest that the Japanese best guess earlier was an under-guess?

DEPUTY SECRETARY PONEMAN: The preliminary indications suggest that all the measures that have been recommended either by the government of Japan or by the government of the U.S. have been prudent and appropriate.

Q Did you gentlemen brief the President today?

Q You can answer. (Laughter.)

MR. CARNEY: I answer for them. As you know, Chairman Jaczko briefed the President yesterday. He has not personally briefed the President today. But they're both part of a team that is being constantly tapped by the National Security Advisor, the Homeland Security Advisor, Deputy National Security Advisor. I know, because I was with them, that Chairman Jaczko was here at the Situation Room until very late last night. So this is a highly coordinated effort and the President is getting very regular updates on the information that they gather and provide.

Q What's he going to announce?

MR. CARNEY: I don't want to get ahead of the President. (Laughter.)

Q You walked into that.

MR. CARNEY: But I think we said that he would have something to say about Japan.

Q Right.

MR. CARNEY: Ben. I'll do this -- let's just say -- let's move very quickly on these other issues. Ben.

Q Very quickly, going back to the big picture here, does the President have full faith that Japan is handling this crisis appropriately and forthrightly?

MR. CARNEY: The President, as you know, spoke for a long time yesterday evening with the Prime Minister of Japan. He is very concerned about the situation in Japan and wanted to make sure that the Prime Minister knew that the United States is fully committed to the alliance, to our friendship with the Japanese, and that we are committed to do everything we can to help them get through this very critical situation.

The coordination between the Japanese government and the international folks, including the United States, who are there providing assistance, is very robust. I think -- I should just refer you to the statements that Chairman Jaczko and Secretary Poneman made, which is it's a very fluid situation. There's a lot of information. It is not particularly easy to get information from the site because of all the reasons that have been cited about the potential radiation emissions and the damage done.

So it's not a question of satisfaction beyond the fact that we are craving information, and I think the way Secretary Poneman described it, as Americans we always want more information. But the cooperation is there, the data is being shared, and we look forward to continuing to work side by side with our Japanese partners in helping them and assisting them deal with this problem.

Q Well, just quickly, to follow up, I understand that the coordination is there and that these events are fluid, but I ask that because I think the American people are trying to figure this out and they're looking to the government, our government, to say, should we have faith in the Japanese government that things are going to be handled. So I'm still trying to figure out whether --

MR. CARNEY: Well, but, Ben, here's the situation. This is the Japanese government, crisis in Japan. They are obviously in the lead. There's not -- I'm not sure what the question implies, that we would take over the effort --

Q No, no, no, I'm just -- the question is just about whether President Obama has faith that the Japanese government is able to handle this.

MR. CARNEY: President Obama has great faith in the idea that the Japanese are fully aware of the severity of

the crisis that they're dealing with. How could they not? And they have a tremendous amount of capacity of resources to deal with this very difficult problem, but it is a crisis significant enough that a lot of countries, including the United States, led by the United States, have come in to offer further aid and assistance and expertise to help them deal with it. But it is a crisis in Japan that the Japanese obviously have to take the lead in dealing with -- and they are.

Yes, Matt.

Q I'm sorry, on Libya, what's the reason for the administration's shift from what was earlier very lukewarm support for the idea of a no-fly zone and now seems to be backing for something as extreme as air strikes on Libyan ground forces? And is this still -- are these such measures, if approved by the U.N., enough to stave off defeat for the rebels?

MR. CARNEY: Is that your analysis that it's a shift or is it something you believe that any American official said?

Q It's pretty clear that that has shifted. I mean, your -- we've gone through days of briefings in which --

MR. CARNEY: What we have made --

Q -- no-fly zone has been knocked down.

MR. CARNEY: But here's the thing. What Secretary Rice -- or rather, Ambassador Rice and Secretary Clinton have been doing have been working -- Ambassador Rice in particular at the United Nations -- on negotiating with our partners on the Security Council on a resolution that would support a more effective international response to the situation on the ground in Libya. The President has instructed his team to play an active and leading role in these negotiations, which are aimed at producing a result which would help protect civilians and increase the pressure on the Qaddafi regime.

Now, broadening out, in terms of -- we have made it clear from the first time you and others asked me about this question of a no-fly zone weeks ago, that we are actively considering it and it is an option the President

insisted would be on the table. The fact that we have also discussed that we need to look at a broad range of other options, that we want to make sure that the options we choose and pursue will be effective at protecting civilians and putting pressure on the Qaddafi regime, are not contradictory. That remains our position. And we are certainly looking at a resolution that will authorize the -- taking action on a variety of measures that include but go beyond a no-fly zone. It is not our feeling that, as apparently it is -- has been from some others, that a no-fly zone is a snap-your-fingers, one-size-fits-all solution to a problem. And what we want is action on a variety of items that can improve the situation in Libya.

Yes, Dan.

Q As the President is being briefed on not only what's going on in Japan but the review that's ongoing here in the United States of nuclear facilities, is he conveying a sense of urgency that all of these experts need to really sort of step up their game to ensure that facilities here domestically are indeed safe and that an accident that we're witnessing in Japan cannot occur like that here?

MR. CARNEY: Yes, he is. He is making sure that there's a sense of urgency. And he made clear in some interviews he gave the other day that he has requested and asked that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which is an independent body, take into account the information we're getting about what happened in Japan and the ramifications of that on the nuclear facility there; that it takes that information, analyzes it, and then applies the lessons learned to its analysis of the security and safety of the reactors here.

Now, that is the NRC's mission, and I would say that the fact that the President has made that request himself only adds to the urgency of that mission.

But we should remind Americans that the NRC exists precisely for that reason, and that it is -- it's a daily mission for that agency to play out scenarios, evaluate data, and make changes in the security procedures and structures at the nuclear facilities in the United States on a regular basis as it deems necessary to maintain the highest possible security and safety at those facilities.

Q One quick question on Libya.

MR. CARNEY: Yes.

Q Is there a timeline that the administration is looking at? There's been talk now for several weeks about options -- we're looking at various different options. At what point will you really start executing some of these options?

MR. CARNEY: Well, Dan, we've executed an enormous array of options, as you know, in response to -- both unilaterally and with our partners internationally -- in response to the situation in Libya, and we moved very quickly out of the box within, I think, nine days to get some of those actions in place. Nine days.

And the resolution that may emerge from the United Nations, whether -- I think Ann asked me when, and I would refer to my colleagues up in New York on the timing of that. But whether it's today or tomorrow, whenever it is, it will be at a time that, comparative to any similar action taken by the United Nations in its past, will be with remarkable speed, unprecedented speed. So the urgency has been there.

And the timeline has simply -- has been driven by, from our perspective, making sure the actions we take are the right ones and that we do not pursue an action that sounds good, only to find out it's actually not achieving a purpose that we wanted it to achieve. And that is why the actions that Ambassador Rice is negotiating in New York will hopefully address the problem and the situation on the ground in a way that can be effective.

Yes.

Q Have we gone from considering actively those options that you speak of that would be in the U.N. to actually advocating them?

MR. CARNEY: All I'll say on that is that the President has instructed his team in New York to play an active and leading role in the negotiations with the goal of protecting civilians. And they are obviously working on a resolution which will contain hopefully within it a variety of new options that the international community can

take action on that will affect the situation on the ground; protect civilians in Libya. So I think that answers your question.

Q Jay.

MR. CARNEY: Yes.

Q Earlier today Senator John McCain told Sky News that he had some major concerns; that the situation in Bahrain could in fact turn into a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Does this administration share those concerns?

MR. CARNEY: The concerns that we have about the situation in Bahrain have been, I think, very clearly expressed by the Secretary of State, as well as by me here at the podium, which is we find the use of violence against peaceful protestors to be extremely unfortunate, abhorrent and simply not the kind of actions that will lead to a resolution of the political problems that exist in Bahrain and that exist in countries around the region. We urge maximum restraint on the government of Bahrain and everyone else in Bahrain as they deal with this situation. We urge political dialogue, peaceful political dialogue aimed at bringing about the kind of reforms that will respond to the legitimate grievances that Bahrainis have expressed on the streets of their capital city.

Q But outside interests don't concern this administration?

MR. CARNEY: We are obviously always concerned about the behavior of Iran. We've been very clear about our general suspiciousness of their motivations. But the guiding principle we have in looking at the events in Bahrain and the principles that the President of the United States expressed to the King yesterday, as I read out from here, are that we believe that all sides need to exercise maximum restraint, refrain from violence, and come together in a national dialogue that resolves these issues in a way that will in the end benefit the people of Bahrain, the country of Bahrain, and will provide in the long run the kind of stability that I'm sure Bahrain wants and its people deserve.

Q To follow on that, Jay, on Iran?

Q On nuclear --

MR. CARNEY: Yes, sir.

Q How important has the promise by Arab nations to take part in any military intervention, not simply support it, been in the administration's --

MR. CARNEY: It's extremely important. We feel, as we've said many times, that the actions taken by the Arab League over the weekend, the statements that they put out, were very significant in making clear to the regime in Libya, to the people around the region, and to people around the world and governments around the world, that the international community is united in its opposition to Qaddafi and his actions against his own people, and that the international community is united as it moves forward to take action -- more action -- aimed at protecting civilians in Libya and eventually removing Qaddafi from power.

So the -- and in terms of participation, we think that is very important because of the signal it sends that this is not a Western action, not an American action, but an international action with the support of the governments and the people in the region.

Q On Israel, Jay?

MR. CARNEY: Let me move -- yes, sir.

Q Thank you, Jay. As Qaddafi intensifies his attacks on rebel-held areas, how concerned is the President that by the time the United Nations decides to act it would be too late to save lives and too late to set back the advances of Qaddafi towards these areas?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I would say that we are very concerned about the situation in Libya and the violence that is being perpetrated by the Qaddafi regime against its people. We are acting with a great sense of urgency, together with our international partners, to take the kinds of actions that we believe will protect Libyan citizens and move towards a situation where Qaddafi is no longer in power -- which is what we believe the Libyan people want.

So again, I would just refer you to the fact that the actions that we -- the international community with the leadership of the United States -- have taken are unprecedented in their speed and their sweep and their scope, and the actions that the United Nations may take as it -- when it emerges from -- the Security Council emerges from its negotiations, will again be unprecedented in their speed and scope.

Let me --

Q Would one vote, even if it's one of the permanent members, which of course, can veto the Security Council -- would one vote then move -- prevent the United States from taking any action?

MR. CARNEY: I don't want to prejudge what will happen at the United Nations. We are working obviously very closely in partnership with other members of the Security Council to craft a resolution that can --

Q Do you think a strong vote in support even if there is one holdout --

MR. CARNEY: Again, I don't want to prejudge it. I can just say that we have been acting in concert with our international partners in a variety of ways since the beginning of this situation in Libya and will obviously continue to do so. But I do not want to in any way prejudge the outcome at the United Nations.

Q On Israel --

MR. CARNEY: Sorry -- Abby.

Q A quick question. Is the President going to take any questions in the Rose Garden today?

MR. CARNEY: I believe it's -- he will be just issuing a statement today.

Q And given -- a quick follow-up -- since he won't be -- I won't have or anyone won't have an opportunity to ask him, he said that he'd asked the Pentagon last week whether the treatment of Bradley Manning was appropriate. I'm just wondering if he believes personally that the treatment of Bradley Manning is appropriate, and what we

can read from the fact that just a day later they changed the conditions under which he was being held.

MR. CARNEY: I would refer you -- I would not expand beyond what the President said in terms of his personal reaction to the question. And I would point you to the statements the State Department and the Defense Department have made on that.

Yes.

Q What's the U.S. strategic interest in Libya? Why is the President contemplating a policy to possibly put U.S. forces in danger for what is essentially right now a civil war?

MR. CARNEY: As I've made clear from here, and others have, that the United States believes obviously that the actions of the Qaddafi government against its people are reprehensible and abhorrent, and we have called on him to cease and desist.

We have worked together with our international partners -- not alone, but with our international partners -- to take measures that we believe will put the kind of pressure on Qaddafi that's necessary to get him to cease and desist and eventually leave power. And we think it is in the interest of the United States to take the actions we have taken with our international partners to do just that.

Q Does the President not believe that this is a civil war?

MR. CARNEY: Again, I don't want to -- the terminology is not the issue here. The actions on the ground are obvious. The calls that we and others have made that they cease have been clear. And the actions that we will take -- that we have taken and we will take going forward -- are aimed at affecting that situation positively.

Q Does it hurt the President when he -- and you, also from the podium -- continually call for Qaddafi to leave power, to give up power, and yet he is still in power? Does it in any way hurt the strength of the President in terms of issuing those types of --

MR. CARNEY: Well, I would simply remind you again that we are talking here about an event that is only weeks old. So to suggest that somehow we could -- anybody could snap their fingers and when a leader in a country takes action that the international community condemns -- that leader, if he or she decides that they're going to hunker down and stay in power, that days pass and they haven't left is some measure of the impact of the international community, that's I think a silly standard to set. Because what we are seeing here is remarkable cooperation at the international level, with leadership by the United States, to put immense pressure on the regime in Libya to cease the violence, to stop killing its own people, and to give up power.

Let me go all the way in the back. Yes, sir.

Q With the dangers of the reactor in Japan, what real effect has that had on any U.S.-led efforts for humanitarian rescue, relief, anything like that, to people that are still very isolated from any sort of support?

MR. CARNEY: Well, in terms of the specifics, I'm not sure of the question. We have -- the United States government has in very quick fashion made resources available to the Japanese to help in the rescue effort, to help in the -- in humanitarian efforts that are ongoing, obviously, in Japan.

I think, if I could, that the total obligations that -- this is a USAID-led effort. The total obligation at this point is over \$10 million. Obviously those numbers will go up because of the presence of teams and equipment that keeps coming -- keep coming in. But it's a multifaceted effort that the United States is making on behalf of the Japanese people.

Q But have radiation concerns dampened any efforts to actually move assets into any of these areas?

MR. CARNEY: I would have to refer you to USAID, Defense Department, Department of Energy, in terms of that. I don't have answers to those questions. But I can say that a great deal of effort is being expended to assist the Japanese.

Q Follow-up, Jay, on that.

MR. CARNEY: Sorry, let me move -- Bill.

Q Jay, after -- in light of what happened in Japan, Germany yesterday shut down seven nuclear reactors; the head of the E.U. said they were going to do an immediate review of every reactor in 27 different countries. Why hasn't President Obama demanded the same thing for reactors in this country?

MR. CARNEY: Bill, I think I answered this question a couple of times already, and I think Chairman Jaczko has answered it, too. We, the United States of America, have an independent regulatory agency whose sole mission is to constantly review and evaluate the safety and security of the reactors in the United States, which provide 20 percent of the electricity that Americans consume.

Q So he has full confidence in the NRC and believes in it then?

MR. CARNEY: He has full confidence that the agency charged with this responsibility is fulfilling its responsibility, and he has tasked that agency to take into account all of the information it is gleaning from the events in Japan and evaluate that information and apply it as responsible -- as would be responsible and necessary in evaluating the security and safety of the reactors here in the United States.

All the way in the back. Yes.

Q Jay, a couple of weeks ago, the President of Mexico was standing with President Obama, and the President of the U.S. says Mexico has a successful story against war on drugs. But yesterday you had FBI director, Mr. Mueller, went to Capitol Hill and he was asked about it. He says he cannot say it's a successful story because the level of murders and atrocities. So what's the real position of the U.S. government?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I think what the President said is he commended Mr. Calderón on his bravery and his commitment to taking on this enormous challenge. And I think it's obviously a very difficult situation and it takes a great deal of bravery and commitment to do what he's doing, and I think the President was commending him on that. He was not

evaluating a success of it, but commending him on the remarkable efforts that he's taken.

Q So he agrees with Mr. Mueller, it's not a successful story?

MR. CARNEY: Again, I don't -- I'm not familiar with the FBI director's remarks and I would point you to what the President said.

Q Thanks, Jay.

MR. CARNEY: Thank you.

END

1:50 P.M. EDT