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**From:** H

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**Sent:** 3/16/2011 10:12:48 PM +00:00

**To:** Huma Abedin <Huma@clintonemail.com>

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**Subject:** Fw: World events test 'No Drama Obama'

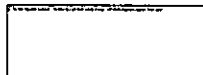
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**From:** Mills, Cheryl D [mailto:MillsCD@state.gov]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 16, 2011 02:26 PM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** FW: World events test 'No Drama Obama'

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**From:** Toiv, Nora F  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 16, 2011 10:39 AM  
**To:** Mills, Cheryl D  
**Subject:** World events test 'No Drama Obama'



## World events test 'No Drama Obama'

By: Glenn Thrush and Josh Gerstein

March 16, 2011 04:33 AM EDT

A dizzying succession of major world events is bombarding a president who insists on controlling his own time, emotions and political message.

With Japan's nuclear crisis teetering on the verge of catastrophe, with Libya and Bahrain in violent turmoil, and with financial markets crashing in response, President Barack Obama has been adamantly sticking to his own political and policy playbook.

That has meant muscling past the red-siren headlines to hammer away at the jobs-and-education message that will be the centerpiece of his 2012 campaign, the kind of discipline that is a hallmark of his new senior adviser, David Plouffe.

And it also meant refusing to scrap a five-day trip to Latin America on Friday that will take him to sun-dappled Rio de Janeiro, among other places, rather than staying home to focus on the increasingly disastrous international news confronting his crisis-weary White House.

"The president is taking this trip because he is committed to growing the economy [and] rebalancing our national security posture," White House press secretary Jay Carney shot back on Tuesday when an incredulous reporter asked if he would consider delaying the five-day swing through Brazil, Chile and El Salvador.

"He remains confident he can fully execute his job when he is on the road."

But Obama's critics have a different take. They say he's exhibiting a failure of leadership on a whole range of matters, symbolic and substantive, ranging from his lukewarm support for a Libyan no-fly zone to his willingness to let others, especially Republicans, take the lead on entitlement reform.

A compendium of clips sent to reporters by the Republican National Committee on Tuesday was headlined: "Hiding from Reality: Obama's noticeable lack of leadership illustrates a president looking out for himself above all others."

And Obama may have given opponents another talking point by following through, despite the alarming news from overseas, on a promise to appear in a nine-minute ESPN segment to share his NCAA basketball tournament picks.

"Most people when it comes to Obama, you know what they're anticipating? His NCAA brackets," Rush Limbaugh fumed on his syndicated radio show Tuesday. "Every year at this time people wonder what the president's brackets are going to be, who he's gonna pick?"

"We got the world on fire. We got Libya and the Middle East on fire and the guy's out playing golf," he added, referring to the round Obama played Sunday.

Republicans say one compelling reason for Obama to stay home, is to work on an elusive long-term budget deal – with a confrontation looming on April 8 when the just-completed three-week stopgap funding measure expires.

"How can @BarackObama say he is leading when puts his NCAA bracket over the budget & other pressing issues?" new Republican National Committee chairman Reince Priebus tweeted Tuesday

All of this dovetails with a larger GOP argument against Obama that was underscored by a Washington Post/NBC poll released Tuesday that showed Americans giving Republicans higher scores on leadership than him by a margin of 46 to 39 percent.

Some questions about Obama's leadership are the results of his somewhat detached style.

On Friday Obama made Japan a centerpiece of his news conference, and he has dispatched a massive deployment of U.S. military and nuclear safety personnel to the region. "I believe I heard him use the phrase today — heartbroken by what he sees unfolding in Japan and the effect on the Japanese people," Carney said at his briefing Tuesday.

But to some, the response has seemed muted.

"It's a gap between the kind of personal reaction that I myself received from my American friends and the somewhat ceremonial, rhetorical statements that Mr. Obama makes... I was taken aback. I have yet to feel any personal feeling coming from Mr. Obama himself," said Yoshi Komuri, editor-at-large of Sankei Shimbun, one of Japan's leading newspapers.

"It seems a bit remote, too official, that's my personal opinion."

Andrew Gordon, director of Harvard's Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies, said Obama's handling of the Japan crisis so far was appropriate, but it would be wise now for him to make a greater overture to one of his country's most important allies and trading partners.

"Even compared to what people were thinking Friday or Saturday, by Tuesday this is a considerably graver event, so for Obama to do something - in public and visibly - probably wouldn't be a bad idea, whether that's Obama going to visit the Japanese Embassy or inviting the ambassador to the White House ...to sort of lay out some ongoing commitment," he said.

The White House dismisses criticism that the president hasn't been sufficiently engaged, pointing out that Obama has been immersed in back-to-back meetings all week on the emerging crises, culminating with a Tuesday afternoon gathering of his national security team to discuss a dwindling set of options for Libya.

And they argue that the president's take-it-in stride approach reflects his calm temperament, the demands of a modern, multi-tasking presidency and his refusal to lurch from crisis to crisis.

They also say that breaking routine could, in itself, constitute a breach in leadership by proving he's too willing to let circumstance derail from his objectives.

More important than the optics, Obama has also refused to make any major policy shifts in response to events over the last several weeks.

Despite criticism from conservatives pressing for aggressive action by the United States, hawks, he's waited for NATO and United Nations to approve a no-fly zone for Libya, a plan that seems less likely than ever given the rout of pro-democracy rebels this week.

Nor has he heeded demands by some fellow Democrats, including Reps. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and Ed Markey (D-Mass.), that he embrace a moratorium on the construction of new domestic nuclear plants as a result of the Japanese disaster.

"I think it's very important to make sure that we are doing everything we can to ensure the safety and effectiveness of the nuclear facilities that we have," Obama said in an interview with a local TV station in Pittsburgh on Tuesday.

But he refused to shelve expansion of the plants, which are a key part of his energy strategy, pledging instead to increase efforts to ensure that nuclear power is safe.

"I've already instructed our nuclear regulatory agency to make sure that we take lessons learned from what's happened in Japan and that we are constantly upgrading how we approach our nuclear safety in our

country," he said.

Carney told reporters that Obama essentially views events in Japan as a crisis afflicting a foreign country, passing along the views of Nuclear Regulatory Commission officials that even under a worst-case scenario, the Fukushima nuclear plant poses next to no health risks to U.S. citizens on the mainland or in Hawaii.

Given recent events, it's hard to believe that it was barely two months ago that David Axelrod, Plouffe's predecessor, told POLITICO on his way out of the White House that he finally saw a "clear field" for Obama to focus on the sole issue he believed would decide the 2012 election – jobs.

Since that time, Obama has seen a succession of challenges and cataclysms not seen since the financial meltdown he inherited when taking office in January 2009:

A rolling series of bloodless revolutions and bloody civil wars have spread through Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain and Libya; a rebellion by Tea Party Republicans who threaten to scuttle his plans for a big bipartisan budget deal; and then the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear debacle in Japan, a one-of-a-kind chamber of horrors that melds a humanitarian tragedy with a terrifying atomic threat.

In the days ahead, Carney promised, Obama will monitor "all major issues, all the time" wherever he is.



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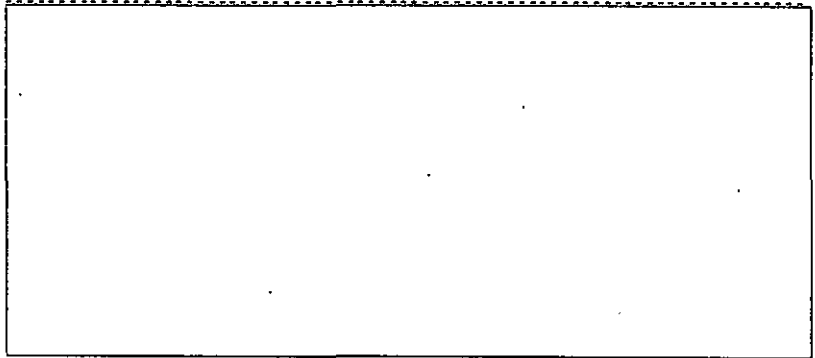


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From: H <HDR22@clintonemail.com>  
To: Huma Abedin <Huma@clintonemail.com>  
Date: Wed, 16 Mar 2011 18:12:48 -0400  
Subject: Fw: World events test 'No Drama Obama'



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