

# HAS THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION BACKED OFF ITS PLAN TO RECONSIDER AID TO EGYPT?

In a press briefing on Friday, Robert Gibbs said several times the Administration would be reviewing its aid to Egypt in the upcoming days.

Q You say these legitimate grievances have to be addressed. I'm wondering: Or what? What can the President do if these matters are not –MR. GIBBS: Well, look, first and foremost, this is a situation that will be solved by the people in Egypt. I will say this, that we – sorry – we are monitoring closely the situation, as I've said. **We will be reviewing our assistance posture based on events that take place in the coming days.** So that's certainly part of it. But this is – this will be solved by the Egyptian people. But it is important – and there's a very important opportunity for the Egyptian government to address, again, grievances that have been in place for a number of years.

[snip]

Q What's the United States doing about aid and are reviewing –MR. GIBBS: As I said a minute ago, obviously we will be reviewing our assistance posture based on events now and in the coming days.

[snip]

Q And I believe earlier you said, "We'll be reviewing our assistance posture depending on the events of the next several days." Could you elaborate

on that? Has that been discussed in the meetings with the President?MR. GIBBS: It has. It has.

Q And what kind of change in posture could there be? **Are you talking about cutting off aid?**

MR. GIBBS: Look, I think at this point I would just leave it to the fact that there – **we are watching very closely the images and events that you're watching and how that could very possibly impact our assistance to Egypt.**

[snip]

Q Robert, beyond what you've said today about aid, **how has it been conveyed to the Egyptian authorities that billions of dollars in U.S. help could be in jeopardy if they don't change their ways?**MR. GIBBS: Again, Peter, I don't know every conversation that's been had at every level in this government, but suffice to say **this is something that has been discussed** and we're monitoring.

[snip]

Q And then just to follow real quick on the aid that you're saying you're reviewing, you're confident that prior to you announcing it here, the Egyptians are aware that their aid is under review?MR. GIBBS: Again, I want to be careful, Hans, that – I don't know every conversation that's been had. But suffice to say, I think I was rather clear in what I said.

Q Suffice it to say? Could we call it a warning?

MR. GIBBS: No, it's – again, I think we've been very clear about what needs to happen. Violence in any form should stop immediately, and grievances should

be addressed. We will monitor what is and what has happened and future events as we undertake a review of our assistance posture.

But this morning, Hillary seemed to back off that review of aid to Egypt.

Ms Clinton said there was “no discussion as of this time about cutting off any aid” to Egypt, adding “we always are looking at and reviewing our aid”.

Admittedly, these are not necessarily contradictory statements. When Gibbs said we would be reviewing our aid to Egypt, he may have meant it was a general plan to review aid, without the possibility that we’d withdraw that aid. It’s possible it was meant to be a generalized, empty threat. But it sure seems like Hillary is saying that any review of aid is not one that will result in Egypt losing that aid.

Update: I’ve added the clip from Christiane Amanpour’s question to Clinton about this—will work on transcript (my transcript below). It sure looks like the US did threaten aid, but in light of military restraint so far, they’re backing off that threat.

Amanpour: Has the United States Administration, whether yourself, the President, or Secretary Gates told the Egyptian government specifically that any military crackdown will result in a cut-off of US military assistance.

Clinton: No. Right now, we’re monitoring the actions of the Egyptian military and they are—as I’m sure your contacts are telling you—demonstrating restraint, working to try to differentiate between peaceful protesters, whom we all support, and potential looters and other criminal elements who are obviously a danger to the Egyptian people. We have

sent a very clear message that we want to see restraint, we do not want to see violence from any security forces, and we continue to convey that message. **There is no discussion as of this time about cutting off of any aid. We always are looking and reviewing are aid, but right now we are trying to convey a message that is very clear: that we want to ensure there is no violence** and no provocation that results in violence, and that we want to see these reforms and the process of national dialogue begun so that the people of Egypt can see their legitimate grievances addressed. [my emphasis]

This seems to suggest that Gibbs' comments on Friday were meant to serve as the stick that will not be used so far as the military shows the restraint they've shown thus far in Egypt.