

GILANI TO BBC: ZARDARI TO REMAIN IN DUBAI HOSPITAL TWO MORE WEEKS

[youtube]http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yxfZ2706b0U[/youtube]

Pakistan's Prime Minister Yousef Raza Gilani granted an extended interview to BBC on Sunday.

Although many important topics were covered in the interview, the subject of the health of Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari was perhaps the most crucial. The health part of the interview starts at around 1:50 of the video. I find it interesting that Gilani states that Zardari has now been moved from the ICU to "his room" at the hospital. If I recall correctly, early reports had stated that Zardari was in the ICU in order to cut down on the number of visitors. Gilani's reference to this move to a regular room appears to be more in the context of Zardari's recovery, so now there is reason to believe that Zardari's health when he arrived in Dubai was poor enough to warrant an extended stay in the ICU.

Gilani rejected outright the rumors that Zardari has suffered a stroke. Those rumors have persisted on Twitter for the entire time that Zardari has been hospitalized.

Most importantly, though, is Gilani's statement that Zardari now will "take rest" and that the rest will be for "about two weeks". Recall that when it was first revealed that Zardari was hospitalized in Dubai, the story was that he had suffered a mild heart attack and that he had undergone angioplasty. In my post about that news, I had this to say:

It should be kept in mind that if Zardari did suffer a mild heart attack and then was treated with angioplasty,

patients in this situation often are discharged from the hospital the next day and are usually free to resume normal activities fairly quickly. Should the hospitalization continue into next week, then either the status of Zardari's health or the status of the political situation should be assumed to be different from what has been reported.

If we were to work only from the assumption that this was a mild heart attack followed by angioplasty, then Zardari remaining in Dubai for two more weeks would seem to point pretty strongly to the likelihood that Zardari has deemed it either not safe or not prudent for his return to Pakistan. However, that interpretation is complicated by Gilani linking Zardari's shift out of the ICU as part of his recovery. A stay of four or five days in the ICU is not consistent with the initial health status that was reported. As a result, it appears that we are stuck in a holding pattern where we cannot fully ascribe Zardari's extended hospital stay as wholly health-dependent or wholly politics-dependent.

The entire video is worthy of a close watch, as the questions from the BBC interviewer are delivered rapid-fire and Gilani seems to have been prepared for each of them.

Here is part of the Express-Tribune's discussion of the interview:

Gilani denied that the president had written a letter of resignation, as claimed by a source in Dubai. "Why should he write it?" asked Gilani. "He has the backing and support of the entire parliament."

/snip/

As the last of US officers left the Shamsi airbase on Sunday, Gilani said that the base is now back in the hands

of Pakistani forces.

The base was constructed by the UAE government and had been used by Americans for many years, he added.

The Americans had been given a 15-day deadline to vacate the base after the Nato attacks in Mohmand Agency on November 26 that killed 24 people.

Stay tuned for further developments.