

March 29, 2012

Toby Harnden starts off the coverage of the open mic in Korea.

Caught on an open mic during a photo op with outgoing Russian president Dmitry Medvedev in Seoul, President Barack Obama did something very, very stupid. He got caught committing what is known in Washington as the 'Kinsley gaffe' - being accidentally caught telling the truth - which is, naturally, the most damaging type of all.

'On all these issues, but particularly missile defense, this, this can be solved but it's important for him to give me space,' he told Medvedev, who responded: 'Yeah, I understand. I understand your message about space. Space for you...'

Barack Obama was chatting with outgoing Russian President Dmitry Medvedev during a bilateral meeting at the Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul Obama then cut him off to stress, 'This is my last election. After my election I have more flexibility' before tapping the Russian reassuringly on his forearm. Medvedev indicated that the message had been received loud and clear: 'I understand. I will transmit this information to Vladimir.'

Great. So once the election is over, Vladimir Putin, the incoming Russian president, will know that a re-elected Obama can abandon all his campaign promises about taking a tough line with the Russians blah blah because he will never again have to face voters. ...

Andrew Malcolm enjoys the flap too.

Barack Obama has, like most in public life, made his share of gaffes--the president of Canada, 57 states, the Austrian language, E Pluribus Unum, the pronunciation of corpsman, among others. To be sure, they are stunning signs of ignorance of things that are common wisdom for most, even Harvard alums.

Closet Obama supporters will seek to downplay the incident. But his Monday mis-step is huge politically and may well come to haunt and hurt him as Republican Mitt Romney rolls out the attack plan for this fall's campaign and before. Of all the GOP wannabes, Romney has been Obama's most outspoken critic, especially on the Democrat's "failed leadership" in foreign policy.

A main strain of Romney's assaults has been basically, Given the spending, chronic ineptness and apologies for America, can you imagine what Barack Obama would do in a second term unrestrained by any need to face voters ever again?

That's an effective line because it leaves the worst things possible to voters' imagination. And there is no response. What can Obama say, "My secret plans aren't as bad as you think."

What makes Obama's Monday blunder so bad is that it doesn't come from any sort of dismissable ignorance by someone who spent formative childhood years in Indonesia. It was clearly backstage conniving on Obama's part and feeds directly into Romney's 'Can you imagine' line.

Plus, it fits with [the suspicions of millions](#) that the community organizer has unspoken plans to take America in a transformative direction involving much more government. How else to explain his baldly touting more domestic energy while reducing federal drilling permits and torpedoing the Keystone pipeline? ...

More on this from [Craig Pirrong](#), the Streetwise Professor, who has a more sophisticated understanding of Russia and its place in the world.

... Obama is trying to deceive someone. He is either deceiving the American people, by his refusal to be honest with his intentions regarding missile defense, or he is attempting to deceive Medvedev (and Putin-the "him" referred to in Obama's "give me space" remark), by insinuating that he will make a deal after the election. But even the latter interpretation involves an attempt to dodge the US electorate: if he convinces Russia to tone down its rhetoric on BMD, he takes this issue-and the issue of Russia generally-away as a campaign matter. This relieves him of the necessity of dealing honestly and forthrightly with a potentially contentious issue, and permits him to avoid accountability for the complete lack of concrete results arising from the vaunted Reset. If the Russians continue to be cantankerous about missile defense, the Reset looks like a sham. (Well, it is, but it will be obvious to everyone.) If Putin tones it down, based on Obama's wink and stroke, Obama can continue to claim that he has improved relationships with Russia.

But given the fact that Obama is obviously playing somebody, do you really believe that Putin will conclude that Obama is playing the American electorate, and not Putin? Given Putin's suspicions of the US, I doubt it.

But I think that Americans have to take seriously the possibility that Obama is planning to conceal actively his intentions regarding a second term. If he is willing to be "flexible" after the election-i.e., if he is willing to do things after the election that are contrary to what he says before it-about Russia and missile defense, what else is he being "flexible"-i.e., lying-about?

In other words, this exchange with Medvedev raises serious additional questions about his sincerity and honesty. I don't think he deserves space. He deserves to be pressed repeatedly on his intentions, and this video provides a perfect pretext for the pressing.

The exchange with Medvedev was also notable for its confirmation of Medvedev as Putin's errand boy: "I will transmit this information to Vladimir." How embarrassing, mainly because Medvedev says that without a trace of embarrassment. He is well and truly whipped. He has his mind right. He knows who is boss.

In fact, pretty much anybody paying attention knew who was boss from day 1. But Obama predicated the Reset on the idea that Medvedev was a rival of Putin's. How's that looking now?
...

[Karl Rove](#) has advice for the GOP on how to handle the open mic.

... Just as Senator [John Kerry](#)'s explanation in 2004 that "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion before I voted against it" exposed the Massachusetts Senator as a pandering flip-flopper, so may Mr. Obama's private-turned-public remarks confirm doubts that he's not shooting straight

with the American people. It may also contribute to a belief that he holds voters in thinly disguised contempt.

Is Mr. Obama also concealing unpopular domestic policies he'll spring on the country in a second term? What the president calls "flexibility" with Russian autocrats, Americans voters will likely view as a lack of candor with them. If that's the case, it could seriously undermine the president's chances for reelection.

This won't all happen by itself. To make the most of Mr. Obama's statement, Republicans will need to raise it again and again in speeches, ads, videos and debates. After all, Mr. Kerry's March 2004 remark became an issue only when repeated endlessly in ads and on the stump by the GOP's surrogates. Then and only then did it become the "a-ha!" moment that shaped perceptions of the Democratic nominee and helped bring about his defeat.

Alana Goodman deals with excuses from Obama and the NY Times.

... Read the New York Times [coverage](#) of Obama's explanation this morning to get an idea of how fast the media is trying to sink this story. The spin is that Obama was simply being pragmatic. Of course he can't deal with an issue as complex as missile defense during an election year, what with all those radical Republicans in Congress trying to sabotage his chances in November, and the media jumping all over every little perceived controversy. "I think the stories you guys have been writing over the last 24 hours is pretty good evidence of that," Obama told reporters this morning. Can you believe the nerve of the press to actually report on the president's hot-mic conversation with Medvedev?

If Obama had been caught on the hot mic saying, "This is my reelection year. After my election, I can actually get something done on this," that might mesh with his excuse today that he can't "get this stuff done" because the politically-charged election year "is not conducive to those kinds of thoughtful consultations."

But Obama didn't say that. He said: "This is my last election. After my election, I have more flexibility." That doesn't sound like someone who is primarily concerned about reaching a bipartisan agreement with Congress. That sounds like someone implying that he can personally offer more after he's no longer beholden to voters (the key words being "my last election"). ...

For a change of pace we have a few items on Mitt Romney's success lately.

Bloomberg News says the GOP is beginning to get behind him.

Republican leaders across the party's ideological spectrum are lining up behind front-runner [Mitt Romney](#) in an escalating effort to conclude the presidential primary battle and close ranks before the general election.

Even as Rick Santorum vowed from the steps of the U.S. [Supreme Court \(1000L\)](#) to continue his challenge to Romney, calls for an end to the contest echoed yesterday across Capitol Hill. Some Republicans fear a prolonged fight could damage their party's prospects in November.

“Every day we continue to have a protracted primary is one less day you can get prepared for the big race in November,” Senator Johnny Isakson, a Georgia Republican who hasn’t endorsed a candidate, said in an interview.

A series of elected officials, business leaders and party activists have raised similar concerns in recent days, urging Republicans to unite around Romney, the former [Massachusetts](#) governor, to avoid further damaging the standing of their nominee against President Barack Obama in the November election. ...

According to [Naomi Decter](#) at Contentions, Romney was a big hit on Jay Leno two nights ago.

Did my ears deceive me? Was that the “Tonight Show” audience Tuesday night giving Mitt Romney big ovations? On everything from foreign policy to health care and the tax code to Rick Santorum?

They cheered when Mitt said President Obama shouldn’t have hinted to Dmitri Medvedev – even away from a hot mic – that there would be more “flexibility” on missile defense once Obama was reelected. They cheered when Mitt said that if Vladimir Putin was really on our side, he would be fighting for freedom, not for oppression. They cheered when Mitt said he hopes to be the Republican nominee (and laughed when he spontaneously suggested Santorum as press secretary in a Romney administration). They cheered when Mitt said we should encourage businesses to bring foreign profits back to the U.S. They even cheered when Mitt said it’s a dangerous world, and we shouldn’t reduce the size of our military! Oh, and there was a smattering of applause for Marco Rubio; maybe a few tourists from Florida? ...

[Andrew Malcolm](#) brought us the transcript of the Romney/Leno dialogue.

JAY LENO: Now, this whole election, at least to me, it seems to be about the economy, or it should be about the economy. What would you change about the tax code? What would you do there?

MITT ROMNEY: What I want to do with tax code is create more growth that creates more jobs, and puts more people in a position to have rising incomes, and to pay their taxes. So how do you create a tax code that encourages small businesses to hire?

And the answer is, you bring down the marginal rates, at the same time you get rid of some deductions and exemptions, or you limit them, so that you stay with a code that’s progressive. But you bring down those top tax rates, you get rid of some of the special deals, and by doing that you encourage investment and hiring of American workers.

(Applause.)

JAY LENO: You said something interesting a while back. What is the tax rate for corporations in most of the rest of the world?

MITT ROMNEY: Well, it's in the 20s. Some nations are lower than that. Our corporate tax rate is 35 percent. So I would want to bring that rate from 35, down to 25. Get rid of some of the special breaks and special deals so we keep the same revenue coming in, but have a lower tax rate so it's a more attractive place for people to come and invest. But do you know that 54 percent of American workers in the private sector work in business that are taxed at the individual tax rate, not the corporate tax rate?

JAY LENO: Right.

MITT ROMNEY: So when the President says he wants to raise that tax rate from 35 to 40 percent, he'll kill jobs and small business. And I want to take that tax rate, bring it down to 28 percent so we can create more jobs.

(Applause.) ...

Thomas Sowell has nice things to say about Jerry Rivers. Oh wait, I meant Geraldo Rivera.

It is not often that I agree with Geraldo Rivera, but recently he said something very practical and potentially life-saving, when he urged black and Hispanic parents not to let their children go around wearing hoodies.

There is no point in dressing like a hoodlum when you are not a hoodlum, even though that has become a fashion for some minority youths, including the teenager who was shot and killed in a confrontation in Florida. I don't know the whole story of that tragedy, any more than those who are making loud noises in the media do, but that is something that we have trials for.

People have a right to dress any way they want to, but exercising that right is something that requires common sense, and common sense is something that parents should have, even if their children don't always have it.

Many years ago, when I was a student at Harvard, there was a warning to all the students to avoid a nearby tough Irish neighborhood, where Harvard students had been attacked. It so happened that there was a black neighborhood on the other side of the Irish neighborhood that I had to pass through when I went to get my hair cut.

I never went through that Irish neighborhood dressed in the style of most Harvard students back then. I walked through that Irish neighborhood dressed like a black working man would be dressed -- and I never had the slightest trouble the whole three years that I was at Harvard. ...

Turns out popcorn is a very healthy snack. At least that's what the **Daily Mail** says. As well as being a great diet food, popcorn also contains a high level of antioxidants, which help fight harmful molecules.

Plain popcorn has already been hailed as a great diet food for its low calorie content but now a group of scientists claim it may even top fruits and vegetables in antioxidant levels. Antioxidants - known as polyphenols - have huge health benefits as they help fight harmful molecules that

damage cells. Popcorn was found to have a high level of concentrated antioxidants because it is made up of just four percent water while they are more diluted in fruits and vegetables because they are made up of up to 90 percent water.

Researchers discovered one serving of popcorn has up to 300mg of antioxidants - nearly double the 160mg for all fruits per serving. ...

Daily Mail, UK

[Barack Obama's hot mic 'flexibility' gift to Republicans](#)

by Toby Harnden

Caught on an open mic during a photo op with outgoing Russian president Dmitry Medvedev in Seoul, President Barack Obama did something very, very stupid. He got caught committing what is known in Washington as the 'Kinsley gaffe' - being accidentally caught telling the truth - which is, naturally, the most damaging type of all.

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Forgetting the microphone is still on: Obama got caught committing the 'Kinsley gaffe'

Barack Obama was chatting with outgoing Russian President Dmitry Medvedev during a bilateral meeting at the Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul. Obama then cut him off to stress, 'This is my last election. After my election I have more flexibility' before tapping the Russian reassuringly on his forearm. Medvedev indicated that the message had been received loud and clear: 'I understand. I will transmit this information to Vladimir.'

Great. So once the election is over, Vladimir Putin, the incoming Russian president, will know that a re-elected Obama can abandon all his campaign promises about taking a tough line with the Russians blah blah because he will never again have to face voters.

Obama, who has made no secret of his desire to be remembered for helping rid the world of nuclear weapons, has never been a fan of missile defence, which is most associated with Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush.

As Baker Spring of the Heritage Foundation points out: 'What is now clear is that whatever commitments he [Obama] makes to the American people regarding ballistic missile defence in the coming months will be jettisoned in favor of commitments to the Russian government to curtail US and allied missile defense capabilities following the election.'

On the campaign trail, a number of Republican candidates - but most notably Newt Gingrich - have emphasised the danger of re-electing Obama because there would be no check on him during a second term - he'll be shooting for his place in history (something we know he cherishes) rather than hewing carefully to what Americans want.



Strategic gain: This gaffe may have been putty in the hands of potential GOP candidates



Quick off the mark: Mitt Romney has said that Obama's words have 'raised serious questions'

Come the general election, Mitt Romney - the likely GOP nominee - will be able to hold Obama's feet to the fire on this issue, most particularly during the debate which covers foreign policy. How can Obama be trusted to protect America's interests, many voters will wonder, if he's already telling Putin that he'll surrender ground once that pesky election is out of the way?

Romney was quick off the mark with a statement, saying that the 'revealing and unguarded moment' raised serious questions. 'President Obama signalled that he's going to cave to Russia on missile defence but the American people have a right to know where else he plans to be 'flexible' in a second term.'

Investors.com

[Obama's 'secret' plea to Russia plays right into Romney's meme](#)

by Andrew Malcolm

Barack Obama has, like most in public life, made his share of gaffes--the president of Canada, 57 states, the Austrian language, E Pluribus Unum, the pronunciation of corpsman, among others. To be sure, they are stunning signs of ignorance of things that are common wisdom for most, even Harvard alums.

Closet Obama supporters will seek to downplay the incident. But his Monday mis-step is huge politically and may well come to haunt and hurt him as Republican Mitt Romney rolls out the attack plan for this fall's campaign and before. Of all the GOP wannabes, Romney has been Obama's most outspoken critic, especially on the Democrat's "failed leadership" in foreign policy.

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That's an effective line because it leaves the worst things possible to voters' imagination. And there is no response. What can Obama say, "My secret plans aren't as bad as you think."

What makes Obama's Monday blunder so bad is that it doesn't come from any sort of dismissable ignorance by someone who spent formative childhood years in Indonesia. It was clearly backstage conniving on Obama's part and feeds directly into Romney's 'Can you imagine' line.

Plus, it fits with [the suspicions of millions](#) that the community organizer has unspoken plans to take America in a transformative direction involving much more government. How else to explain his baldly touting more domestic energy while reducing federal drilling permits and torpedoing the Keystone pipeline?

The Etch-a-Sketch line by a Romney aide played into the meme that he might remake himself for the general election, something every successful primary candidate does to reach the broader audience necessary to win beyond one party. In 2008, the autumn Obama promising a centrist fiscal policy was a far cry from the spring primary fellow vying with Hillary Clinton for union support.

Now, Obama's gaffe suggests to opponents their suspicions are credible about the Democrat's hidden agenda that he sought secretly to discuss with the Russian.

Many leaders at the nuclear summit in Seoul schedule bilateral side meetings. Obama had one with Dmitri Medvedev, the outgoing Russian puppet president who's been a placeholder for Vladimir Putin, the former KGB guy sitting out four years as required by term limits. After questionable elections, he returns to power in May.

As reporters were allowed in for the end of their meeting, Obama leaned forward to confide something to Medvedev. Not realizing their microphones were transmitting back to the White House press room, Obama said:

"On all these issues, but particularly missile defense, this, this can be solved but it's important for him (Putin) to give me space."

Medvedev: "Yeah, I understand. I understand your message about space. Space for you..."

Obama: "This is my last election. After my election I have more flexibility."

Medvedev: "I understand. I will transmit this information to Vladimir."

Then, Obama patted the Russian's arm in appreciation. Now, two people do not lean closer in conversation so that *more* people can overhear them. (Scroll down for video.) So, what was the American leader trying to convey to Russian leadership that he didn't want his countrymen to hear?

That deals are possible after his reelection, "particularly (on) missile defense"? And after his reelection, which Obama publicly discusses as a given, what could the Democrat possibly need "more flexibility" for, other than to make new concessions on defense that he does not want to make public before U.S. voters pass judgment on his shaky first term?

About 30 months ago with no Russian concessions, as part of his vaunted "reset" of relations with Moscow, Obama unilaterally caved on the planned missile defense system in Eastern

Europe as a gift. The system was to protect against missiles from Iran, but Russia saw them as a threat to its regional hegemony and strategic interests.

Eastern European allies signed onto the original system at some risk, annoying their powerful next door neighbor. Obama did not consult with Poland et al before leaving them hanging, and substituting a smaller, partly sea-based system. Which the Russians also don't like.

So what did Obama's good-faith concession get in this re-set? Russian pressure on Iran to halt its nuclear weapons development? Uh, no. Russian pressure on Syria for regime change? No again. In fact, Russian troops have arrived there to help Bashir al-Assad quell the bloody uprising.

Asked Tuesday (Seoul time) about the overheard exchange, Obama waved it off as over-simplification of the "extraordinarily complex, very technical issues" of arms control. In an obviously prepared 420-word response, Obama reviewed recent arms talks, said he was committed to reduced reliance on nuclear weapons, underscored the complexities and claimed the current Washington was not conducive to "thoughtful consultations."

He did not explain what he meant in his plea to Russian leaders for "space" or his assurance of "flexibility," two words we are very likely to hear much more of in the remaining 224 days.

Streetwise Professor

Should *We* Give Him Some Space?

by Craig Pirrong

Per usual, the Russians have been throwing hissy fits over US ballistic missile defense plans, which the Russians believe are directed at them. Medvedev has been warning that the time is fast closing for a deal to be done. Rogozin has been venting about BMD. And on and on.

And apparently Obama wants to deal, but feels constrained by, oh, you know, the fact that the American electorate is not nearly so enthusiastic.

[In one of the most remarkable videos I have seen in a long time, before a live microphone Obama gives Medvedev the wink-wink, nudge-nudge, say-no-more routine:](#)

President Obama: On all these issues, but particularly missile defense, this, this can be solved but it's important for him to give me space.

President Medvedev: Yeah, I understand. I understand your message about space. Space for you...

President Obama: This is my last election. After my election I have more flexibility.

President Medvedev: I understand. I will transmit this information to Vladimir.

The body language is even more amazing than the words. Look at Obama's reassuring grasp of Medvedev's arm.

Obama is trying to deceive someone. He is either deceiving the American people, by his refusal to be honest with his intentions regarding missile defense, or he is attempting to deceive Medvedev (and Putin-the "him" referred to in Obama's "give me space" remark), by insinuating that he will make a deal after the election. But even the latter interpretation involves an attempt to dodge the US electorate: if he convinces Russia to tone down its rhetoric on BMD, he takes this issue-and the issue of Russia generally-away as a campaign matter. This relieves him of the necessity of dealing honestly and forthrightly with a potentially contentious issue, and permits him to avoid accountability for the complete lack of concrete results arising from the vaunted Reset. If the Russians continue to be cantankerous about missile defense, the Reset looks like a sham. (Well, it is, but it will be obvious to everyone.) If Putin tones it down, based on Obama's wink and stroke, Obama can continue to claim that he has improved relationships with Russia.

But given the fact that Obama is obviously playing somebody, do you really believe that Putin will conclude that Obama is playing the American electorate, and not Putin? Given Putin's suspicions of the US, I doubt it.

But I think that Americans have to take seriously the possibility that Obama is planning to conceal actively his intentions regarding a second term. If he is willing to be "flexible" after the election-i.e., if he is willing to do things after the election that are contrary to what he says before it-about Russia and missile defense, what else is he being "flexible"-i.e., lying-about?

In other words, this exchange with Medvedev raises serious additional questions about his sincerity and honesty. I don't think he deserves space. He deserves to be pressed repeatedly on his intentions, and this video provides a perfect pretext for the pressing.

The exchange with Medvedev was also notable for its confirmation of Medvedev as Putin's errand boy: "I will transmit this information to Vladimir." How embarrassing, mainly because Medvedev says that without a trace of embarrassment. He is well and truly whipped. He has his mind right. He knows who is boss.

In fact, pretty much anybody paying attention knew who was boss from day 1. But Obama predicated the Reset on the idea that Medvedev was a rival of Putin's. How's that looking now?

Speaking of missile defense, over the weekend Rogozin the Ridiculous tweeted that "Russian missile systems are able to overcome missile defense of any kind." To which I responded: "So then why are you so fussed about US ABM system? You should welcome us wasting \$ on it. So which is it?"

Which means that Rogozin is also attempting to deceive. Either his fulminations against US missile defense are deceptive (because these really pose no threat to Russia because its ICBMs are invulnerable) are dishonest or his claims that Russian missiles are invulnerable are lies.

Sad to say, Rogozin didn't reply. I'm shocked. But a troll did claim that Russia was fussed because "it is indicative of NATO's arrogant disrespect for Russian sovereignty." Uhm, American missiles or ABM facilities- on Polish, Romanian and Czech violate Russian sovereignty how, exactly?

Fox News

[Why Obama's open mic slip could seriously hurt his reelection hopes](#)

by Karl Rove

Captured by open microphones, President [Barack Obama](#)'s private conversation with Russian President [Dmitry Medvedev](#) on Monday in Seoul could have a big negative impact on Mr. Obama's re-election.

By telling Mr. Medvedev and his patron, the once-and-future Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#), that he will have "flexibility" after the American election on Russian demands opposing a US missile defense for Europe, Mr. Obama is in effect saying he is ready to do something the Russians will like but that the American people won't.

Mr. Obama has shown Russian leaders, and now the entire world, weakness.

He's willing to bend to the demands of America's international rivals as long as his appeasement becomes public only after he's safely back in the [White House](#) for a second term. But he is apparently unwilling to share with the American people his "flexibility" with the Russians, perhaps concerned about the criticism such concessions to Moscow might draw from America's European allies.

The effects of Mr. Obama's remarks in Seoul go beyond foreign affairs. If the president believes it is important to his reelection to conceal from Americans his response to Russians demands to halt development of a missile defense for Europe, voters have every right to ask: What other surprises does he plan to spring on us if he's reelected?

Just as Senator [John Kerry](#)'s explanation in 2004 that "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion before I voted against it" exposed the Massachusetts Senator as a pandering flip-flopper, so may Mr. Obama's private-turned-public remarks confirm doubts that he's not shooting straight with the American people. It may also contribute to a belief that he holds voters in thinly disguised contempt.

Is Mr. Obama also concealing unpopular domestic policies he'll spring on the country in a second term? What the president calls "flexibility" with Russian autocrats, Americans voters will likely view as a lack of candor with them. If that's the case, it could seriously undermine the president's chances for reelection.

This won't all happen by itself. To make the most of Mr. Obama's statement, Republicans will need to raise it again and again in speeches, ads, videos and debates. After all, Mr. Kerry's March 2004 remark became an issue only when repeated endlessly in ads and on the stump by the GOP's surrogates. Then and only then did it become the "a-ha!" moment that shaped perceptions of the Democratic nominee and helped bring about his defeat.

[Karl Rove](#) is a former senior adviser and deputy chief of staff to President [George W. Bush](#). He is a Fox News contributor and author of "Courage and Consequence" (Threshold Editions, 2010).

Contentions

Obama's Weak "Hot Mic" Explanation

by Alana Goodman

The president is trying to brush away concerns about his disturbing comments to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, but [his excuse](#) is a lot of the same spin we've been hearing from the White House since yesterday:

"The only way I get this stuff done is if I'm consulting with the Pentagon, with Congress, if I've got bipartisan support and frankly, the current environment is not conducive to those kinds of thoughtful consultations," Obama told reporters following a meeting with the presidents of Russia and Kazakhstan. "I think the stories you guys have been writing over the last 24 hours is pretty good evidence of that." ...

On Tuesday, Obama said his comments, though not intended for public consumption, were "not a matter of hiding the ball — I'm on record" about wanting to reduce nuclear weapons stockpiles. Though he spoke bluntly to Medvedev, Obama insisted that the thrust of his remarks was in line with what he said in his Monday speech at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies and in other public statements.

Read the *New York Times* [coverage](#) of Obama's explanation this morning to get an idea of how fast the media is trying to sink this story. The spin is that Obama was simply being pragmatic. Of course he can't deal with an issue as complex as missile defense during an election year, what with all those radical Republicans in Congress trying to sabotage his chances in November, and the media jumping all over every little perceived controversy. "I think the stories you guys have been writing over the last 24 hours is pretty good evidence of that," Obama told reporters this morning. Can you believe the nerve of the press to actually report on the president's hot-mic conversation with Medvedev?

If Obama had been caught on the hot mic saying, "This is my reelection year. After my election, I can actually get something done on this," that might mesh with his excuse today that he can't "get this stuff done" because the politically-charged election year "is not conducive to those kinds of thoughtful consultations."

But Obama didn't say that. He said: "This is *my last* election. After my election, I have more *flexibility*." That doesn't sound like someone who is primarily concerned about reaching a bipartisan agreement with Congress. That sounds like someone implying that he can personally offer more after he's no longer beholden to voters (the key words being "my last election").

As Charles Krauthammer [explained](#) on Fox News last night:

'This is my last election.' That's his way of saying with a nod and a wink, 'Look, you guys have a free hand because you run a dictatorship, your elections are rigged. Well, ours aren't rigged, but once I get passed my last election, I'm unleashed. I can do anything I want.'

And what he's saying is, 'you know that reset I began three years ago where I completely undermined our allies in Eastern Europe. I cancelled the missile defense system and I began a process in which our supremacy in missile defenses is now negotiable, which the Republicans have never allowed to be negotiable.'

'Well, after election day, I can't speak about it now of course because it's my last election and Americans won't actually like that — after election day, I'll be open.'

This speaks to the deepest concerns conservatives have about an Obama second term.

Bloomberg News

Romney Gains Backers as Party Leaders Push to End Race

by Lisa Lerer and Kathleen Hunter

Republican leaders across the party's ideological spectrum are lining up behind front-runner [Mitt Romney](#) in an escalating effort to conclude the presidential primary battle and close ranks before the general election.

Even as Rick Santorum vowed from the steps of the U.S. [Supreme Court \(1000L\)](#) to continue his challenge to Romney, calls for an end to the contest echoed yesterday across Capitol Hill. Some Republicans fear a prolonged fight could damage their party's prospects in November.

"Every day we continue to have a protracted primary is one less day you can get prepared for the big race in November," Senator Johnny Isakson, a Georgia Republican who hasn't endorsed a candidate, said in an interview.

A series of elected officials, business leaders and party activists have raised similar concerns in recent days, urging Republicans to unite around Romney, the former [Massachusetts](#) governor, to avoid further damaging the standing of their nominee against President Barack Obama in the November election.

"With all due respect to my fellow conservative leaders determined to oppose Governor Romney, that is not a worthy endeavor," [Al Cardenas](#), chairman of the American Conservative Union, wrote in an opinion article for the Daily Caller [website](#) yesterday. "It's time to unite behind a worthy presidential candidate, build our organization and raise the resources necessary to defeat the liberal electoral machine."

'Grueling Primary'

The American Conservative Union, founded almost 50 years ago by magazine editor and syndicated columnist William F. Buckley Jr., sponsors the annual Conservative Political Action Conference in [Washington](#) that draws an array of Republican activists.

Joining Cardenas in backing Romney were Senator [Mike Lee](#) of [Utah](#), a favorite of anti-tax Tea Party activists; Representative Kevin McCarthy of [California](#), the third-ranking House Republican; and Carly Fiorina, former chief executive officer of [Hewlett-Packard Co. \(HPQ\)](#)

"After a long and grueling primary, it is clear that Mitt Romney is the best candidate to face President Obama," McCarthy said in a statement that called on Republicans to "unite and work together" to win the White House.

Romney is well within reach of securing his party's nomination, leading his rivals in delegates, fundraising and endorsements.

Betting on Romney

After winning a 12-point victory in the March 20 Illinois primary, Romney has 568 delegates of the 1,144 needed to secure the nomination, according to an Associated Press tally. Santorum trails with 273, followed by former House Speaker [Newt Gingrich](#) with 135 and Representative Ron Paul of [Texas](#) with 50.

"If I was asked to put \$100 down today, I'd be putting it on Romney," Senator Dean Heller, a Nevada Republican who doesn't plan to endorse a candidate, said in an interview.

Though he lags in delegates, Santorum has won 11 of the 32 primary contests, largely on the strength of his support among lower-income and born-again Christian voters. His most recent win came in Louisiana's March 24 primary, in which he defeated Romney by 22 percentage points.

That victory fueled Santorum's effort to continue his campaign. Although most of April's primaries are in regions favorable to Romney, Santorum is seeking a breakthrough in [Wisconsin](#). The state's Republican electorate is more rural and working-class than in most of the Midwest, and he plans to campaign there during much of the next week as he seeks a win in the April 3 contest.

Contentions

[Romney Does the "Tonight Show"](#)

by Naomi Decter

Did my ears deceive me? Was that the "Tonight Show" audience Tuesday night giving Mitt Romney big ovations? On everything from [foreign policy](#) to [health care and the tax code](#) to [Rick Santorum](#)?

They cheered when Mitt said President Obama shouldn't have [hinted](#) to Dmitri Medvedev – even away from a hot mic – that there would be more "flexibility" on missile defense once Obama was reelected. They cheered when Mitt said that if Vladimir Putin was really on our side, he would be fighting for freedom, not for oppression. They cheered when Mitt said he hopes to be the Republican nominee (and laughed when he spontaneously suggested Santorum as press secretary in a Romney administration). They cheered when Mitt said we should encourage businesses to bring foreign profits back to the U.S. They even cheered when Mitt said it's a dangerous world, and we shouldn't reduce the size of our military! Oh, and there was a smattering of applause for Marco Rubio; maybe a few tourists from Florida?

Not quite the reaction one might have expected from a sophisticated audience in La La Land.

And, by the way, as for the stiff, awkward, plastic Romney of legend? If he ever existed, he certainly didn't put in an appearance at Jay Leno's desk. In fact, Romney was at ease, relaxed,

smart and funny throughout. Really. Check out in particular his brief free associations on possible VP candidates.

Investors.com

[In his own words: Mitt Romney with Jay Leno](#)

by Andrew Malcolm



From time to time we forgo any commentary to let someone's words stand by themselves. This morning we're doing that with edited excerpts from Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney's latest appearance Tuesday on the 'Tonight Show with Jay Leno.'

JAY LENO: No one is dropping out (of the GOP race). Is a brokered convention a concern? Do you think it will get to that?

MITT ROMNEY: I don't think so. I think it's more likely that we'll rally around a candidate. I hope it's me.

(Applause.)

MITT ROMNEY: And I think if we wait until the end of August to have a nominee, it makes it a lot tougher to be successful in replacing our President. And I know there are some who think President Obama ought be re-elected. I'm not one of them. I think it's time to get someone new.

(Applause.)

JAY LENO: Rick Santorum this week in one breath, the same day, he said, you were the worst possible guy to run against Obama, and the same day he said "I'd be his Vice President."
(Laughter.) What are your thoughts on that?

MITT ROMNEY: It's a world of politics.

JAY LENO: What did you think when you watched that? What did you think:

MITT ROMNEY: Well, you know, you're on all the time when you're running for office. Everything you say is being followed by, you know, a small camera of some kind that someone has. You don't always get every word just right. And so you have to give people a little bit of slack, I think.

And in this case, Rick Santorum is a good guy. He's running a good campaign. We have some differences in background, and differences on some issues, but basically a good guy. And, you know, I'm happy with him saying that he would be like to be part of an administration with me. Nothing wrong with that. If he's the VP, that's better.

(Applause.)

JAY LENO: But did he endorse you in 2008?

MITT ROMNEY: He did. That was a very big thing. He was kind enough to endorse me and said that I'm a real conservative, a true conservative. And I think those words were actually the most credible, given the fact he was not at that time a candidate. So, I keep on going on those words.

JAY LENO: I watch this and I go, all these issues that come in, which, I mean, to me, this seems to be jobs and defense and economy. All these other things, where did this -- how did this all get involved?

MITT ROMNEY: You're absolutely right. Look, the country faces extraordinary challenges. And you know that. The debt that we have is making us look more and more like Greece. People want better jobs and higher incomes. The median income in America is down, the cost of living, cost of gasoline is up. We face a potentially nuclear Iran.

There's some real changes we face. And somehow the -- I don't know what it is. The media or various talk shows are interested in looking at all the periphery instead of focusing on the big issues. But when the votes come and people make up their mind, I think they focus on what's most important to them.

JAY LENO: So, tell me about Vice President. What are you looking for?

MITT ROMNEY: I haven't actually put a list together at this stage.

JAY LENO: Come on.

MITT ROMNEY: It would be presumptuous. I'll tell you what.

JAY LENO: Yeah.

MITT ROMNEY: I can do you a favor with this. I'll choose David Letterman. We can help us both in that.

JAY LENO: Well, there you go. There you are.

(Laughter.)

Now, I'll give you a list of candidates, you give me one word on each person. Let's see. Give me one. Chris Christie?

MITT ROMNEY: How about a couple of words, maybe?

JAY LENO: Chris Christie?

MITT ROMNEY: Okay. Indomitable.

JAY LENO: Indomitable.

MITT ROMNEY: Yeah.

JAY LENO: All right.

(Laughter.)

MITT ROMNEY: A man of strong will.

JAY LENO: Strong will.

MITT ROMNEY: Great strength.

JAY LENO: A man of girth.

MITT ROMNEY: Indomitable. No, just, if you attack Chris Christie, you're going to get more than you bargain for. He comes back hard and strong.

JAY LENO: Marco Rubio?

MITT ROMNEY: The American dream.

JAY LENO: Okay. That's three words.

(Applause.)

MITT ROMNEY: I know, three words. All right. American dream.

JAY LENO: Okay. Paul Ryan?

MITT ROMNEY: Paul Ryan. Creative.

(Applause.)

JAY LENO: Nikki Haley?

MITT ROMNEY: Nikki Haley. Energetic.

JAY LENO: Donald Trump?

MITT ROMNEY: Huge.

(Laughter.) (Applause.)

JAY LENO: Rick Santorum?

MITT ROMNEY: Press secretary.

JAY LENO: Press secretary.

(Applause.)

JAY LENO: Now, this whole election, at least to me, it seems to be about the economy, or it should be about the economy. What would you change about the tax code? What would you do there?

MITT ROMNEY: What I want to do with tax code is create more growth that creates more jobs, and puts more people in a position to have rising incomes, and to pay their taxes. So how do you create a tax code that encourages small businesses to hire?

And the answer is, you bring down the marginal rates, at the same time you get rid of some deductions and exemptions, or you limit them, so that you stay with a code that's progressive. But you bring down those top tax rates, you get rid of some of the special deals, and by doing that you encourage investment and hiring of American workers.

(Applause.)

JAY LENO: You said something interesting a while back. What is the tax rate for corporations in most of the rest of the world?

MITT ROMNEY: Well, it's in the 20s. Some nations are lower than that. Our corporate tax rate is 35 percent. So I would want to bring that rate from 35, down to 25. Get rid of some of the special breaks and special deals so we keep the same revenue coming in, but have a lower tax rate so it's a more attractive place for people to come and invest. But do you know that 54 percent of American workers in the private sector work in business that are taxed at the individual tax rate, not the corporate tax rate?

JAY LENO: Right.

MITT ROMNEY: So when the President says he wants to raise that tax rate from 35 to 40 percent, he'll kill jobs and small business. And I want to take that tax rate, bring it down to 28 percent so we can create more jobs.

(Applause.)

JAY LENO: Today the Supreme Court is debating health care. This is unprecedented. It's like three days. This is a huge deal. They're debating this. Suppose they don't overturn it? Suppose they let it stand? What do you do then if you're elected?

MITT ROMNEY: Well, day one, I will grant a waiver from Obamacare to all 50 states. Just like the President's been doing with the unions, and so forth.

(Applause.)

MITT ROMNEY: So, that's number one. And I'll also file legislation to repeal it entirely, and replace it.

JAY LENO: What do you replace it with, though?

MITT ROMNEY: What you do is you give to the states their Medicaid dollars to care for their own poor in the way they think best, and then you allow people, individuals to buy insurance on their own account, on the same tax advantage basis that companies buy insurance today. So people can own their own insurance. As they go from job to job they won't have to worry about getting a condition that would keep them from getting insured.

JAY LENO: Well, what about pre-existing conditions in children? I know people who could not get insurance up until this Obamacare and now they're covered. Their pre-existing condition is covered.

(Applause.)

MITT ROMNEY: People who have been continuously insured, let's say someone's had a job for a while but insured, then they get real sick and they happen to lose a job, or change jobs, they find, gosh, I've got a pre-existing condition, I can't get insured.

I'd say no, no, no. As long as you've been continuously insured, you ought to be able to get insurance going forward. See, you have to take that problem away. You have to make sure the legislation doesn't allow insurance companies to reject people.

JAY LENO: Tell me your feeling on this open mike incident with President Obama. That doesn't seem that weird to me. You talk with someone and then they say, "You know, when I get re-elected we'll have more flexibility." That seems like politics as usual. Some things people would say, no?

MITT ROMNEY: I don't think so. Russians are not politics as usual. You have a nation which would like us to continue to withdraw our missile defense system. I think it's critical for us

to have a missile defense system. I think the President's decision to pull our missile defense out of Poland was a very serious error. I think his reduction of missile defense in Alaska was an error.

And to say, "Look, you know, I can't talk about this right now, but I'll have more flexibility after I'm elected," suggests he has a different agenda he's going to pursue once the American people aren't watching. I think it's the wrong course. I thought it was, frankly, a revealing --

(Applause.)

MITT ROMNEY: -- and alarming.

JAY LENO: I mean, here's what the Russian President said. He was talking about you, and he said today, "One needs to look at his watch. We're in 2012, not the mid 70s." And it doesn't seem like Russia is our enemy anymore. I mean, they're turning into us. They have Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonalds, and they love cars, and wear fancy clothes. I mean, they're more like us than people we perceive as our enemies. Aren't they?

MITT ROMNEY: Well, I don't want to call the Russians someone like us exactly. The Russian people certainly are people like us. But you have Vladimir Putin and Mr. Medvedev and they're continuing to support Iran, and to keep us from putting in place crippling sanctions against Iran as it pursues its nuclear weaponry. They continue to support Assad, Bashir Assad, in Syria.

They continue to support people like Chavez and Castro. I mean, they basically stand up for the world's worst actors. And when America tries to put pressure on those actors with sanctions or other UN actions, Russia always stands up for what I would consider to be the world's worst leaders.

So, if they were like us, they'd say, "You know what, get rid of Assad." They'd say, "Iran, you may not have nuclear weapons. That is unacceptable. We're going to put in place crippling sanctions against you. Kim Jong Un open up your nation and let people have freedom." If they were like us, they'd be speaking in favor of freedom, as opposed to opposing it.

(Applause.)

JAY LENO: Okay. Now let's talk about Afghanistan. What do you make of this whole situation? We're going to be pulling out, what now, you felt we shouldn't have said what the deadline was?

MITT ROMNEY: I don't think you publish deadlines. When you're in a conflict you don't say, "We're getting out as of this date," regardless of the circumstances. I think that communicates to your opponent and to the other people who are trying to gauge how much they can depend on you, whether you're going to be there for them or not.

And so I think you have timelines in own your mind that you're working towards. So, I think it was a mistake to say the specific date we withdraw. I think it was a mistake to say the day we would end our combat operations. I think the president made a mistake in not giving the number of troops that were necessary for the surge.

And believe that we have a potential of doing in Afghanistan what happened in Iraq, which is we pulled out without a status of forces agreement that would leave enough troops behind to give a greater certainty to our success in our mission there.

The President's proposing reducing our number of active duty personnel. And you raised, I think a very legitimate concern. My view is we should be adding 100,000 active duty personnel, not reducing our military budget and reducing the number of people who can be in conflict protecting America.

It's a dangerous world. Let's not reduce our military.

(Applause.)

I'll take a lot of what Washington does and send back to the states. And I'm talking Medicaid and food stamps, and housing vouchers, and training programs. Give the money back to the states and they can run programs for their own poor in the way they think best.

(Applause.)

JAY LENO: Governor, I hope we can talk again. Will you come back and see us again?

MITT ROMNEY: You bet ya.

JAY LENO: Thank you, sir.

Townhall **Geraldo's Point** by Thomas Sowell

It is not often that I agree with Geraldo Rivera, but recently he said something very practical and potentially life-saving, when he urged black and Hispanic parents not to let their children go around wearing hoodies.

There is no point in dressing like a hoodlum when you are not a hoodlum, even though that has become a fashion for some minority youths, including the teenager who was shot and killed in a confrontation in Florida. I don't know the whole story of that tragedy, any more than those who are making loud noises in the media do, but that is something that we have trials for.

People have a right to dress any way they want to, but exercising that right is something that requires common sense, and common sense is something that parents should have, even if their children don't always have it.

Many years ago, when I was a student at Harvard, there was a warning to all the students to avoid a nearby tough Irish neighborhood, where Harvard students had been attacked. It so

happened that there was a black neighborhood on the other side of the Irish neighborhood that I had to pass through when I went to get my hair cut.

I never went through that Irish neighborhood dressed in the style of most Harvard students back then. I walked through that Irish neighborhood dressed like a black working man would be dressed -- and I never had the slightest trouble the whole three years that I was at Harvard.

While I had a right to walk through that tough neighborhood dressed in a Brooks Brothers suit, if I wanted to -- and if I could have afforded one, which I couldn't -- it made no sense for me to court needless dangers.

The man who shot the black teenager in Florida may be as guilty as sin, for all I know -- or he may be innocent, for all I know. We pay taxes so that there can be judges and jurors who sort out the facts. We do not need Jesse Jackson or Al Sharpton or the President of the United States spouting off before the trial has even begun. Have we forgotten the media's rush to judgment in the Duke University "rape" case that blew up completely when the facts came out?

If the facts show that a teenager who was no threat to anyone was shot and killed, it will be time to call for the death penalty. But if the facts show that the shooter was innocent, then it will be time to call for people in the media and in politics to keep their big mouths shut until they know what they are talking about.

Playing with racial polarization is playing with fire.

Much has been made of the fact that the teenager was unarmed. The only time I have ever pointed a loaded gun at a human being, I had no idea whether he was armed or not. All I knew was that I could hear his footsteps sneaking up behind me at night.

Fortunately for both of us, he froze in his tracks when I pointed a gun at him. If he had made a false move, I would have shot him. And if it had turned out later that he was unarmed, I would not have lost a moment's sleep over it.

You know that someone was unarmed only after it is all over. If he attacks, you have to shoot, if only to keep the attacker from getting your gun.

It so happened that the man I pointed a gun at was white. But he could have been any color of the rainbow, and it would not have made the slightest difference.

Let the specific facts come out in the Florida case. That is why we have courts.

Have we forgotten the Jim Crow era, with courts making decisions based on the race of the defendants, rather than the facts of the case? That is part of the past that we need to leave in the past, not resurrect it under new racial management.

Who is really showing concern for the well-being of minority youngsters, Geraldo Rivera who is trying to save some lives, or Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, and others who are hyping this tragic episode for their own benefit?

Race hustlers who hype paranoia and belligerence are doing no favor to minority youngsters. There is no way to know how many of these youngsters' confrontations with the police or others in authority have been needlessly aggravated by the steady drumbeat of racial hype they have been bombarded with by race hustlers.

Daily Mail

[Forget your five-a-day: Popcorn has 'more antioxidants than fruit and vegetables'](#)

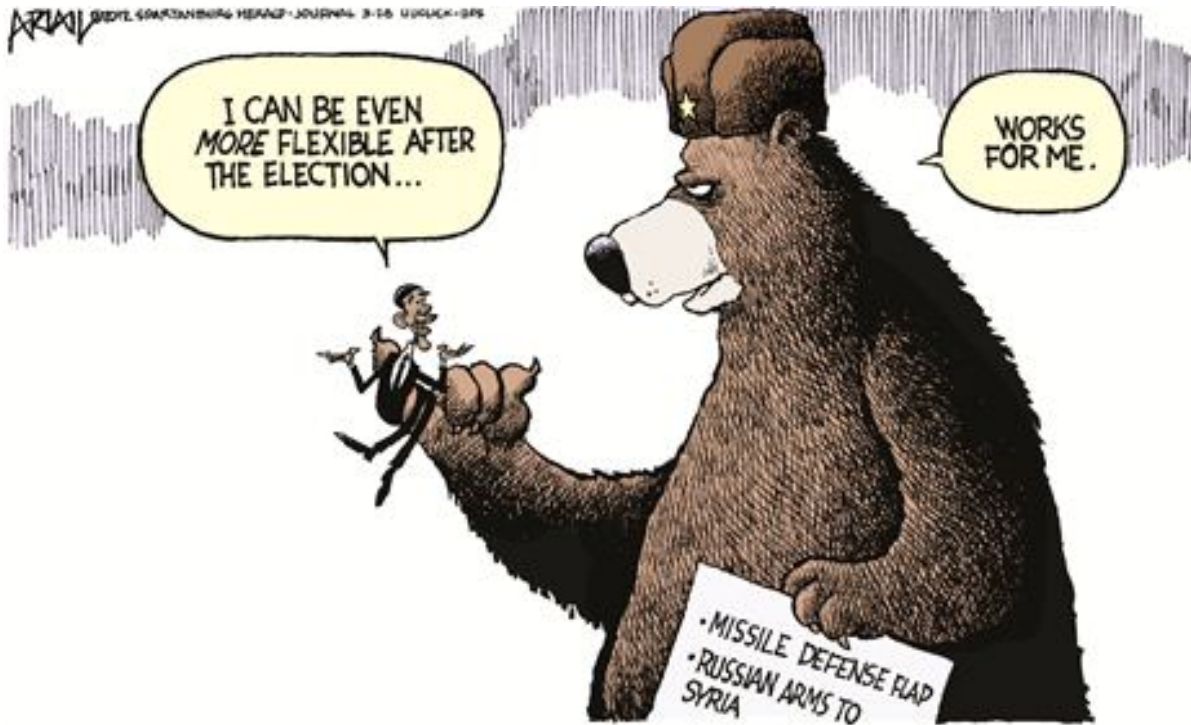
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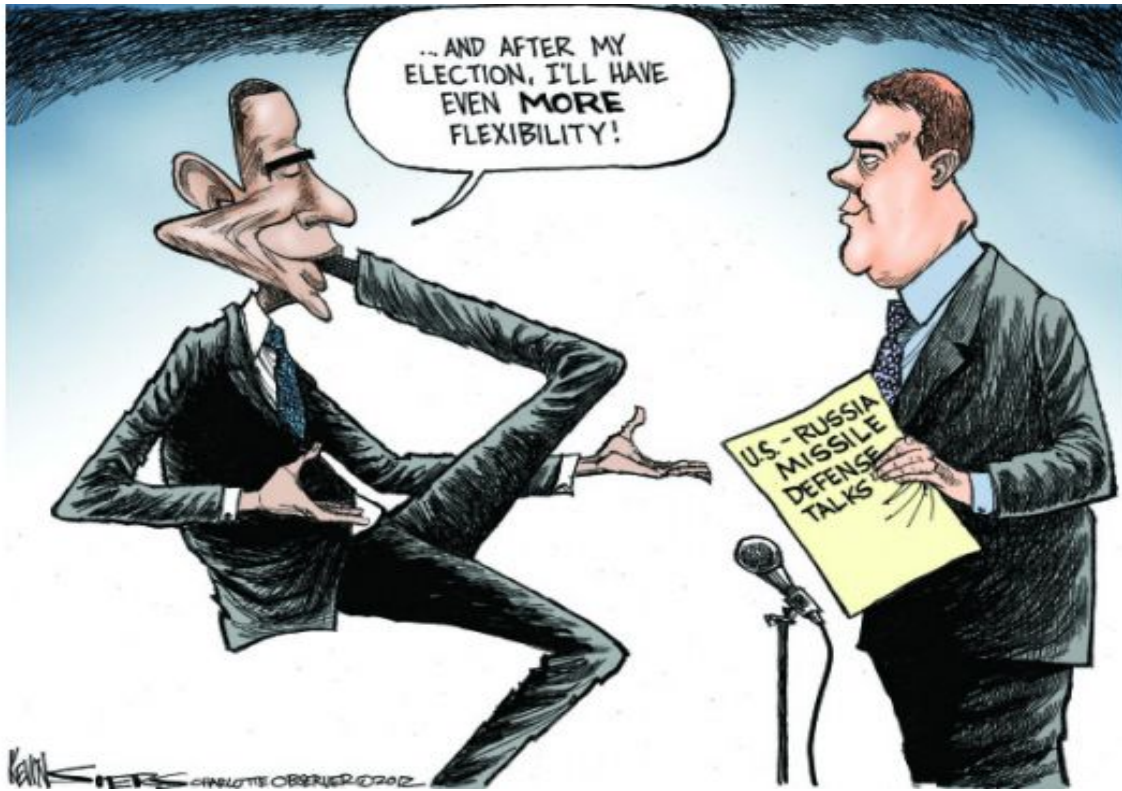


As well as being a great diet food, popcorn also contains a high level of antioxidants, which help fight harmful molecules.

Plain popcorn has already been hailed as a great diet food for its low calorie content but now a group of scientists claim it may even top fruits and vegetables in antioxidant levels. Antioxidants - known as polyphenols - have huge health benefits as they help fight harmful molecules that damage cells. Popcorn was found to have a high level of concentrated antioxidants because it is made up of just four percent water while they are more diluted in fruits and vegetables because they are made up of up to 90 percent water.

Researchers discovered one serving of popcorn has up to 300mg of antioxidants - nearly double the 160mg for all fruits per serving. They also found that the crunchy hulls of the popcorn have the highest concentration of antioxidants and fiber. The scientists from the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania unveiled their discovery at a meeting of the American Chemical Society in San Diego. Researcher Joe Vinson said: 'Those hulls deserve more respect. They are nutritional gold nuggets.'





I'LL HAVE MORE FLEXIBILITY AFTER MY ELECTION....



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Time to hang it up...

