

'Nonsense, you should know better': Barack Obama rebukes reporter

16/07/2015 13:02 by admin

Washington: US President Barack Obama today rebuked a reporter from a major news outlet who asked a question about American citizens languishing in Iranian jails at a time when he led a successful negotiations with Iran on the nuclear deal.

"The notion that I am content as I celebrate with American citizens languishing in Iranian jails, Major, that's nonsense, and you should know better," Mr Obama told Major Garrett, White House reporter for CBS News who asked the question.

"As you well know, there are four Americans in Iran, three held on trumped-up charges that, according to your administration, one whereabouts unknown," said Mr Garrett, a long time White House reporter.

"Can you tell the country, sir, why you are content, with all the fanfare around this deal, to leave the conscience of this nation, the strength of this nation, unaccounted for in relation to these four Americans?" he asked.

"Last week, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said under no circumstances should there be any relief for Iran in terms of ballistic missiles or conventional weapons. It is perceived that was a last-minute capitulation in these negotiations. Many in the Pentagon feel you've left the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff high out to dry. Could you comment?," Mr Garrett asked.

"I've got to give you credit, Major, for how you craft those questions," Mr Obama responded.

"I've met with the families of some of those folks. Nobody's content. And our diplomats and our teams are working diligently to try to get them out," he said.

"Now, if the question is why we did not tie the negotiations to their release, think about the logic that that creates. Suddenly, Iran realizes you know what? Maybe we can get additional concessions out of the Americans by holding these individuals. Makes it much more difficult for us to walk away if Iran somehow thinks that a nuclear deal is dependent in some fashion on the nuclear," explained the president.

"And if we had walked away from the nuclear deal, we'd still be pushing them just as hard to get these folks out.

That's why those issues are not connected. But we are working every single day to try to get them out, and won't stop until they're out and rejoined with their families," Mr Obama said.

The US, he argued, is not taking the pressure off Iran with respect to arms and with respect to ballistic missiles.

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