

Nov 04, 2016 by [Mark Dillen](#)

Inflaming Public Opinion ^[1]

Further evidence that President Obama is prepared to take some political heat at home in order to improve America's standing abroad comes in the form of his decision on torture photos.

Obama said on Wednesday that publishing additional pictures, taken by U.S. servicemen in Iraq, similar to those previously published from the Abu Ghraib prison, "would not add any additional benefit" to the country's understanding of "what was carried out in the past by a small number of individuals." Instead he said it would "...further inflame anti-American opinion and to put our troops in greater danger."

Interestingly, except for the ACLU, Obama is not taking too many hits for his reversal. Media such as the LA Times remark on his "willingness to consider new perspectives and change his position, even when it angers his supporters, [in] stark contrast to predecessor George W. Bush's inflexibility..." Conservative voices, instead of crying "flip-flop," credit the President with displaying "wisdom."

It is likely the photos will eventually become public, perhaps as the result of a U.S. Supreme Court decision. When that happens, Obama cannot be blamed by Conservatives, since he will not have facilitated the release. And he will not be blamed by Liberals, since these excesses shown in the photos predate his time in office.

And he will have gained valuable time, particularly if the photos do not come out until after his trip to Cairo on June 4th and his speech to the Muslim world.

While displaying political finesse, Obama seems to understand that changing the Muslim world's view of the United States for the better is a tricky business. He has been enjoying exceptionally high personal popularity in these countries, but views of the United States overall have not correspondingly improved. He would probably trade a few points of personal popularity overseas for an increase in foreign support for American society and policies.

Time for more finesse.

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