

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

You Can Bank on It ^[1]

An overseas trip by a U.S. president is always costly, logistically challenging, and full of colorful backdrops. President Obama's trip to Japan, Singapore, China and Korea is no exception. If anything, there will be more excitement than usual, since it is his first trip to the region as President and there is still tremendous foreign public interest in this appealing, young, intelligent leader, his inspiring speeches, and his photogenic wife.

Why, then, is the mood so downbeat among the U.S. press corps — the “traveling press” — as they begin covering this trip?

The discouraging U.S. jobs reports with alarming unemployment rates provide part of the answer. Another reason: Obama's narrow win in the House vote on health care last Saturday revealed his Democratic Party to be quite divided. A respected poll showed the American public, never very warm toward Congress as an institution, now tending to favor Republicans over Democrats there. Finally, the national tragedy of Ft. Hood, followed by an especially somber Veterans' Day holiday, drove home the pressures on the U.S. military as it tries to cope with insurgent warfare in extremely complicated circumstances.

When the President returns home, there will be an announcement to make on Afghanistan strategy, while health care reform and regulation for Wall Street are debated. More heavy lifting for a President reported to be losing weight.

Maybe, after all, this is a good time for the President to experience a change of scene — even if it will seem in Beijing like he's on a visit to America's banker.

Hopefully, the East Asian public will be drawn into the novelty of the visit and the “traveling press” of the American media will report on the public esteem that Obama enjoys abroad.

One thing you can bank on: the White House will not be looking for photo ops in opulent surroundings. American public diplomacy and White House politics are both best served by images of a hard-working and popular President seen focusing on the tough issues. That part should not be difficult.

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