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## Obama returns to US with full tray

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WASHINGTON: It was ties off and jackets off in Northern Ireland, but it'll be the gloves coming off for Barack Obama as he touches back down in Washington.

Even as he got down to business with world leaders on Monday, a CNN poll showed the president's approval rating dropping from 53 per cent a month ago to 45 per cent.

At home, the scandal of Edward Snowden's NSA leaks has hit especially hard.

The man who was angered by his predecessor's "warrantless wiretappings" now appears to have taken that scheme much further, but he says US citizens have nothing to worry about.

"What I can say unequivocally is that if you are a US person, the NSA cannot listen to your telephone calls, and the NSA cannot target your emails," he said in a television interview.

However that is a justification, some say, won't wash.

Jim Harper, Director of Information Policy Studies at the CATO Institute in Washington, said: "The claims of President Obama and other executive branch leaders about the scope and nature of secret programmes are things that the American people should not accept, simply because they're secret. Let's bring the facts to light, let's bring the evidence to the court of public opinion, in the open."

Obama may have also been preaching peace to young fans in Berlin, but the man who once voted against war can't shrug off the looming Syrian crisis. But after a tense meeting in Ireland, it's clear that there'll be no cooperation from Russia's Putin.

Disagreements over peace talks with the Taliban also add to a list of foreign policy headaches that won't go away.

Amy Walter from the Cook Political Report said: "Whether it's NSA spying, whether it's drone policy, whether it's what we're doing in Syria, whether it's about what we will continue to do in Afghanistan or Iraq -- those are the kinds of issues that are going to play out not just for this

President but for the next President. In fact, I think these are the kinds of issues we're going to see a lot of in the primaries for the 2016 presidential election.”

Adding to all of those problems is the ongoing trial of Wikileaks whistleblower Bradley Manning and Obama's failure to close Guantanamo Bay, which only adds to the president's already full tray.