



## **Romney Returns To States After Troublesome Foreign Trip**

### **Obama campaign bashes Romney as he returns from rocky road**

By REBEKAH METZLER

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It's safe to say that Mitt Romney's safe foreign trip to Europe was anything but. Despite his campaign setting a remarkably low bar for the Republican presidential hopeful's three nation tour, Romney's week-long trip has been panned from Europe to America.

"It should have been a nothing trip, but yet in a number of instances he said things that unnecessarily created headlines," says Justin Logan, director of foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute.

From drawing rebukes from Prime Minister David Cameron and London Mayor Boris Johnson in England after questioning the country's readiness for the upcoming Olympics to claiming Palestinians' 'culture' was holding them back economically (rather than living as an occupied territory), unflattering headlines followed Romney wherever he went. The comments on Palestinians also came under fire from pro-Palestinian leaders, causing some to question how well a President Romney could work to garner peace in the volatile region.

Logan says at least politically, those were the least harmful remarks from Romney.

"The sad fact is, in terms of American politics, being mean to Palestinians is definitely not a bad thing," he says, adding that part of Romney's trip was fundraising from Americans living abroad. "Saying things that are boneheaded and unnecessarily provocative may not be intended to serve aims in whose light they are viewed as boneheaded and provocative."

The trip culminated with a frustrated traveling U.S. press corps shouting provocative questions at the former Massachusetts governor in Poland looking for clarifications over the controversial statements he previously made, only to be chastised by a traveling press aide who told them to "kiss my ass."

"Given the missteps in England, his campaign person screaming at reporters in Poland, the general popular perception of the trip was it didn't go very well," Logan says. "The first rule of diplomacy is don't get into an argument about something that doesn't matter. He goes over and he's undiplomatic about the Olympics. You have to ask yourself, what was he thinking?"

Ultimately, Logan says the negative headlines won't hurt Romney. For one, most voters aren't tuned in that closely to the election right now. For another, he adds, this is a campaign that will be determined by the American economy and not foreign policy.

But that didn't stop President Barack Obama's campaign from trying to capitalize on the poor showing.

"Gov. Romney showed on this trip that he may not have the discipline to handle those delicate diplomatic interactions that are required for a president of the United States," said Robert Gibbs, a senior Obama campaign adviser on a conference call with reporters. Gibbs added that he was surprised Romney "did not take any opportunity to meet with Americans serving in our armed forces on his trip."

Colin Kahl, another campaign adviser and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East, said Romney's comments abroad, like his foreign policy speeches so far in the campaign, lacked substance.

"Just like all his other speeches, including the VFW speech before he left, billed as major foreign policy addresses, there was really no there there," he said.

In reaction to the Obama campaign criticisms, the Romney camp said the Republican will "unapologetically" stand up for "America and the enduring values of freedom."

"President Obama has weakened America's position in the world and frayed relationships with our closest allies—all while earning effusive praise from the likes of Hugo Chavez," said Ryan Williams, a Romney campaign spokesman in a release. "Gov. Romney has laid out a foreign policy that will strengthen our interests, ensure our security, and let our friends know they have a partner in the White House."

Romney will return to campaigning in the United States, after his stops in England, Israel and Poland, on Wednesday. His campaign, trying to turn the page from the poorly-reviewed trip, released a new minute-long advertisement on Tuesday featuring a relaxed Romney talking about his work at his venture capital firm Bain Capital, saving the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics, and his time as governor of Massachusetts.

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