



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on November 5, 2010

Obama's Bombay Nights Cost Americans and Indians

When Republicans take control of the nation's purse strings in January, one of the first things they could cut to save taxpayers money is the White House travel budget. In addition to earning the gratitude of Americans, it could also generate some goodwill among taxpayers in the countries the Obama family might otherwise visit since the citizens of those countries are forced to pay for security and put up with other inconveniences whenever the First Family shows up.



Earlier in the year, for example, Spain was graced with the presence of Michelle and Sasha Obama, plus 40 friends and 70 Secret Service agents, for five glorious days. "Even though the trip was mostly paid for by private funds," [wrote *The New American's* Dennis Behreandt](#), "taxpayers are still on the hook for \$75,000 per day, an enormous sum for a vacation, especially in the eyes of most Americans who struggle to make ends meet in a severe recession." Spanish taxpayers were forced to [foot the bill](#) for (and endure the inconveniences caused by) repaving local roads, committing 250 officers and military personnel for security, cordoning off a beach for a private party, and [shutting down much of the country](#) while the Obama entourage was en route to and from the airport.

These days the head honcho himself is preparing to make a state visit to India with an entourage and expenses that will dwarf that of the First Lady's vacation. Three thousand people, including a majority of the White House staff, will be on hand. The President, [according to the *Press Trust of India*](#), "will ... be protected by a fleet of 34 warships, including an aircraft carrier, which will patrol the sea lanes off the Mumbai coast during his two-day stay there." In addition, says the report,

Two jets, armed with advanced communication and security systems, and a fleet of over 40 cars will be part of Obama's convoy....

The President will have a security ring of American elite Secret Service, which are tasked to guard the President, along with National Security Guards (NSG) and personnel from central paramilitary forces and local police in Mumbai and [New] Delhi....



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Sources said 13 heavy-lift aircraft with high-tech equipment, three helicopters and 500 US security personnel have arrived in India ahead of Obama's visit....

All high-rise buildings in the vicinity of Mumbai's Taj Mahal hotel and Delhi's Maurya Sheraton hotel, where the US President will stay, are being sanitised and security personnel will be positioned on rooftops to prevent any air-borne attack.

The Ridge area — opposite Delhi's Maurya Sheraton hotel — has been illuminated by floodlights as part of the heightened security drill.

One might think this more than sufficient, but apparently it is not. Local officials have been removing coconuts from trees lest one of them fall and bop the President on the head, [according to the U.K. Telegraph](#).

Perhaps even more ridiculous — and certainly more expensive — is a plan put forth by advance U.S. security personnel to protect the President during his trip to and from the Gandhi museum: building a kilometer-long, 12-foot-by-12-foot, bomb-proof tunnel for Obama's motorcade. "The tunnel," [says India's Daily News and Analysis](#), "would be centrally air-conditioned, fitted with close-circuit television cameras, and will be heavily guarded at every point, including, of course, its entry and exit." It would be assembled in "just an hour" and "dismantled immediately after Obama leaves the area," the paper explains.

Considering that Mumbai was the site of significant Islamic terrorist attacks just two years ago, some of the security precautions may be justified. On the other hand, if Obama had to spend his own money to buy this kind of security, he would probably make the sensible decision to forget Mumbai and go straight to New Delhi. Yet even if some of the precautions are justified, many of them, such as the tunnel and the warships, seem like overkill. Is this excessive amount of security really necessary? If so, why?

Less than a century ago it was possible for ordinary citizens to knock on the front door of the White House, just as they would at any private residence, and stand a chance of talking to the President. When William McKinley resided at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, he and his wife greeted trick-or-treaters at the door. Franklin Roosevelt, during his time in office, would sometimes have a picnic with friends by the side of the road in Georgia. It was understood that the President was no better or more important than the average person and that few people would even have reason to harm him (though McKinley later learned otherwise). A children's reader from the early 20th century [put it](#) succinctly:

How are emperors and kings protected?

By great troops of guards; so that it is difficult to approach them.

How is the president guarded?

He needs no guards at all; he may be visited by any person like a private citizen.

Today, however, the President, whether at home or abroad, is guarded far more heavily than emperors and kings of old. There can be but one explanation for it: As head of the U.S. government, which seeks to impose its will on the entire world and threatens anyone who gets in the way with [summary execution](#), the President of the United States has a great many enemies, both foreign and domestic. Were the U.S. government, including the executive branch, confined to its constitutional limits, the President would have very little to fear because neither Americans nor foreigners would have much cause to resent his presence.

An Indian official [estimated](#) that the cost of Obama's trip to Americans alone will come to \$200 million



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per day — a figure the White House denies while declining to provide its own reckoning. The cost to Indians in both money and personal inconvenience must be enormous as well. Except for those few who expect to benefit financially from the visit, most would probably prefer that Obama stay in Washington. Judging from the election results, most Americans would probably prefer that he stay in India.

Congress would do well to cut back on presidential gallivanting. Then, to ensure presidential safety and taxpayer savings in the future, legislators ought to dismantle the American empire by bringing the troops home and ending foreign aid and intervention and decimate Washington's domestic empire by slashing taxes, spending, and regulations. Government officials who leave other people alone can themselves expect to be left alone.



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