



Gibbs Takes Off Gloves to Challenge Reporters, Hosts Who Cross Obama

White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs has singled out media personalities Jim Cramer, Rush Limbaugh and Rick Santelli in the course of less than two weeks.

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Jim Cramer. Rush Limbaugh. Rick Santelli.

What do they all have in common? Most likely, none of them is getting invited to the White House Christmas party.

All three media personalities have been singled out by President Obama's press shop in the course of less than two weeks. White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs, in doing so, has shown an unusual willingness to spar with cable and radio hosts who take shots at his boss.

The rebuttals have ranged from playful ribbing to disdainful scolding.

Talk show host Limbaugh has drawn the most ire from the White House. Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel called him out on Sunday for saying he wants Obama to fail, after Obama told Republican lawmakers not to listen to people like Limbaugh several weeks ago.

Gibbs followed up Monday, calling on conservative pundits to challenge Limbaugh on air.

"Do they want to see the president's economic agenda fail? You know, I bet there are a number of guests on television throughout the day and maybe into tomorrow who could let America know whether -- whether they agree with what Rush Limbaugh said this weekend," Gibbs said. But then he took a shot at those who applauded Limbaugh during his address to the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington over the weekend.

"You know, I'd like to think, and I think most people would like to think, that we can put aside our differences and get things done for the American people. We'll say, in watching a few cable clips of Mr. Limbaugh's speech, his notion of presidential failures seemed to be quite popular in the room in which he spoke," he said.

Gibbs repeated his call for Republicans to speak up on whether they agree with Limbaugh Tuesday. Limbaugh has said that while he wants Obama to fail, he doesn't want the economy to fail.

Donald Rieck, executive director at the Center for Media and Public Affairs, said the Obama team, which studies have shown received far more favorable press treatment during the campaign than its rivals, is apparently having trouble acclimating to a more critical press post-Inauguration Day.

"If they're going to do this, to jump like that every time someone says something provocative about them, it's going to be an awfully long tenure for Gibbs, because there's a way to let this roll off your shoulders," he said.

Gibbs didn't stop at Limbaugh, who Democrats eagerly claim speaks for the Republican Party in the absence of a clear leader. (House Republican Leader John Boehner asserted Wednesday that the White House was intentionally elevating Limbaugh to distract from their budget.)

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