

# White House denies rumors about Obama and Sikh temple

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(RNS) The White House has denied reports that President Obama will avoid a Sikh shrine while visiting India next week because the required head covering might have fanned false rumors about his faith.

"The decision we made was driven by ... the interests of time, how to best advance our common interests with India in these three days," said Ben Rhodes, a deputy national security adviser on Wednesday (Oct. 27).

Sikh leaders had hoped the president would visit the temple, which they consider their holiest site. Obama has been dogged by persistent -- and false -- rumors that he is not Christian, but Muslim.

Rhodes, who briefed reporters on the trip that begins Nov. 5, said the president is not able to go everywhere the administration considers for an overseas trip.

Obama will visit a museum dedicated to nonviolence advocate Mahatma Gandhi, as well as Gandhi's grave. He also will celebrate the Hindu holiday of Diwali with students at a school in Mumbai.