

Obama to visit largest mosque in Indonesia

by [Adelle M. Banks](#)

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(RNS) President Obama plans to visit one of the world's largest mosques during his trip to Indonesia in November, the White House announced Thursday (Oct. 28).

The visit to Istiqlal Mosque on Nov. 10 will precede a speech about U.S. outreach to Muslims throughout the world, said Ben Rhodes, a deputy national security adviser.

Rhodes said the mosque visit does not reflect an attempt to overcome the recent controversy over whether an Islamic community center should be built near Ground Zero.

"When we planned to go to Indonesia in March, we planned to go to this same mosque," Rhodes said, adding that the president has visited prominent mosques when he has traveled to other countries with Muslim majorities.

The speech in Indonesia will likely draw a large crowd, administration officials said, due to the president's popularity in that country. He lived several years of his childhood in Indonesia with his mother and stepfather.

The announcement of the mosque visit came the day after the White

House denied reports that Obama will avoid a Sikh shrine while visiting India earlier in the trip because the required head covering might have fanned false rumors about his Christian faith